June 22, 2020

To: CHP Clients

From: John Colbert

RE: Reimagining Workforce Preparation grants

Tomorrow, the Department of Education will publish in the Federal Register a $127 million FOA, Reimagine Workforce Preparation Grant Program (RWP), which was funded as part of the CARES Act.

RWP grants are designed to support States with the highest coronavirus burden create or expand short-term education and training opportunities and/or or career pathways programs that help citizens return to work, become entrepreneurs, or expand their small businesses. States can also work with postsecondary institutions to create or expand small business incubators through shared facilities and resources that will help small businesses recover and grow and new entrepreneurs thrive.

States that were hardest hit by COVID-19 disruptions and projects that seek to address the needs of Minority-Serving Institutions and distressed communities will be prioritized. States need to ensure its proposal meets the needs of the state and engages a full range of education and workforce stakeholders.
Please find below the key components of this FOA.

Eligible Applicants:	State Workforce Development Boards
Number of Applications:	One per state
Range of Awards:	$5,000,000 - $20,000,000.
Average Size of Awards:	$15,000,000.
Est. Number of Awards:	8-9.
Project Period:	Up to 36 months
No match requirement	
Applications due:	August 24th
Awards to be made:	October 2020.
Additional information:	A webinar will be held on this competition on June 29th at 2:00PM – please register [here](#)
Recommended page limit:	25

Goals with funding:
- Create new education and training opportunities designed to help dislocated workers quickly return to employment, expanding postsecondary options and opportunities;
- Support entrepreneurship in stabilizing both the local economy and institutions of higher education, thus helping restore pre-pandemic economic growth.

Eligible Subgrantees:
- IHEs;
- local workforce development boards;
- business trade and professional organizations;
- non-IHE postsecondary and employer-based education and training providers;
- work-based learning or apprenticeship intermediaries, such as WIOA Title I training providers;
- National Apprenticeship sponsors, and Standards Recognition Entities;
- State, regional, local, public, and private agencies

Priorities: This FOA contains two absolute priorities and three competitive preference priorities. Applications must meet one of the two absolute priorities. Each State Workforce Board may submit only one application under this competition that addresses either absolute priority, but not both.

<u>Absolute Priority #1</u>

- Projects that will focus on:

  (a) Grantees are invited to propose the development or expansion of short-term education programs, including career pathways programs, to help prepare unemployed or underemployed individuals for high demand jobs in their community or region; and/or

  o the development or expansion of industry sector-based education and training programs that lead to a credential that employers in a given sector recognize and reward
  o Applicants <u>must</u> propose a project that focuses on <u>one or more</u> of the following activities:
    - 1) helping displaced workers return to gainful employment;
    - 2) helping new workers enter jobs within in-demand industry sectors or occupations (as identified at the national, State or local level);
    - 3) transitioning underemployed workers to new fields, or
    - 4) assisting small business owners to gain the skills needed to create new businesses or grow current businesses and become more resilient; and/or

  (b) Funding the creation, development, implementation, replication, or scaling of industry sector-based education and training models and programs that:

    - (1) are initiated and organized by employer stakeholders, which may include business leaders, trade associations, professional societies or community businesses organizations;
    - (2) may partner with institutions of higher education or other post-secondary education and training providers; and
    - (3) may include the engagement of third-party intermediaries, which are organizations that help bridge the gap between employers and educational institutions to the benefit of students.

- Projects under Absolute Priority 1(a) and 1(b) may include:
  o apprenticeships and other work-based learning programs and
  o must provide individuals the opportunity to earn badges, certifications, micro-credentials, licenses, or other credentials that employers affirmatively signal will contribute to qualifying a candidate for employment or promotion in an in-demand industry sector or occupation.

- Bonus points
  o <u>Competitive Preference Priority 1</u> --Distance Education.
    - The extent to which an application that proposes a project in which the short-term educational programs and training programs include didactic education that will be principally delivered through distance education.
    - Up to five extra points
  o <u>Competitive Preference Priority 2</u> —Serving Lifelong Learners in Distressed Communities.
    - The extent to which an application proposes a project that focuses on the unique needs of individuals who reside in rural communities or Opportunity Zones, and that is designed to enable economic growth and development in those regions.
    - This could include focusing primarily on:

- o in-demand jobs available to individuals in these communities,
- o aligning education and job training opportunities with the strategic planning goals for economic development in the community,
- o meeting the unique needs of individuals who may have challenges related to transportation, childcare or limitations in access to technology associated with living and working in these communities.
  - ▪ Up to three points.

Absolute priority #2

- Grantees are invited to submit applications that help colleges and universities work with affiliated small businesses incubators:
  - o to ensure that institutions can sustain their operations at a time when enrollments are declining, and campus buildings may be underutilized;
  - o support high-quality job growth, the establishment of small businesses important to the local economy or the development of technology commercialization.
- Proposals must include:
  - o a plan to provide education, training and mentorship; offer shared facilities, services, space or equipment;
  - o facilitate partnerships and networks among business leaders that help entrepreneurs start or expand their core businesses or develop business adjacencies that will enable them to move into new markets, products or services.
- Bonus points
  - o Competitive Preference Priority 3—Serving Entrepreneurs and Businesses in Distressed Communities
    - ▪ (a) applicant will include at least one minority-serving institution of higher education
    - ▪ An applicant must identify the minority-serving institution of higher education with which it will partner; or
    - ▪ (b)The applicant will locate the IHE-affiliated business incubator in a rural community or Opportunity Zone in order to support the business development goals of those communities and to enable businesses that are located in those regions and that employ individuals who live in those communities to thrive.
    - ▪ An applicant must provide the census tract numbers of the Qualified Opportunity Zone(s) in which it proposes to provide services.
    - ▪ Up to three points

Requirement for credentialing

- Short-term educational programs or career pathways programs created or expanded under Absolute Priority 1 must lead to certificates, badges, micro-credentials, licenses, or other workplace-relevant credentials that respond to the needs of employers or facilitate entrepreneurship.
- Short-term educational and career pathways programs supported under this program must create opportunities for individuals to more rapidly prepare for, and over time adapt to, changing workplace needs or to start or grow a small business.
- By definition, career pathways programs must also enable participants who have not already completed a high school diploma or equivalent.

Allowable uses of funds Absolute Priority 1

- develop and implement short-term education and training programs and/or career pathways programs, hire qualified instructors, procure necessary equipment and supplies, and subsidize tuition and fees for individuals enrolled in these or existing short-term educational, workforce development or career

pathways programs so that they can quickly gain entry to the workforce or become entrepreneurs without taking on debt.

- o Funds may also be used to provide student uniforms, protective gear, student support services and transportation vouchers for all students, as well as childcare support for student-parents who are enrolled in education and training programs supported by programs developed under this grant program.
- o Unlike traditional degree and certificate programs which are typically designed by educators, this grant program is designed to support efforts led by State Workforce Development Boards, in partnership with groups of employers, industry organizations, and education and training partners to identify workplace competencies, develop curriculum and assessments that help workers gain and demonstrate those competencies, and establish a credentialing system that employers will use to make hiring and promotion decisions within their organizations.
- o The Department encourages applicants to review existing occupational frameworks and incorporate them, to the extent possible, in their efforts. The program does not seek to fund the development of new occupational frameworks where existing frameworks that have been endorsed by employers or industry sectors already exist.

Uses of funds under Absolute Priority #2

- support the development of small business incubators located on the campuses of, or developed in association with, colleges and universities.
- Provide short-term educational and training programs or continuing education courses to help entrepreneurs establish and grow their businesses, comply with or exceed industry standards, and meet State and occupational health, safety and licensure requirements.
- Mentorship from faculty and other business professionals, and typically offer shared space, services, staffing and equipment to help small businesses get started and grow.
- Small business incubators create new opportunities for colleges and universities to expand their offerings and create new revenue streams so that institutions can also become entrepreneurial at a time when declining enrollments and COVID-19 related disruptions may result in longer-term underutilization of campus facilities. In this regard, these funds assist in the stabilization of institutions and the local economy.

Awards:

Absolute priority #1

- Awards to State Workforce Boards that make subgrants to business organizations, trade associations, continuing education providers employer-based educational organizations, labor organizations, education and training organizations and institutions of higher education to create or expand innovative education and training opportunities, primarily through short-term educational programs and career pathways programs that are responsive to rapidly changing economic conditions, provide new opportunities for education providers to help more individuals meet employer needs and workforce demands, and/or help entrepreneurs succeed in rebuilding their businesses and finding new opportunities for growth
- States develop mechanisms--such as creating competency exams and evaluations, developing tracking systems to monitor participant outcomes, and administering employer satisfaction surveys--for assuring the quality of short-term educational programs and for engaging business leaders in their development, implementation, and assessment.

Absolute priority number #2

- State Workforce Boards will make subgrants available to colleges and universities, and/or college or university-affiliated entities, to support the development or expansion of campus-based or campus-affiliated small business incubator programs and facilities. The goal under Absolute Priority 2 is to improve the sustainability of institutions of higher education, expand learning opportunities in the State,

support the continued employment of faculty and staff at educational organizations, and create new opportunities for entrepreneurs and small business owners to grow, become more resilient and thrive.

- Funds may be used to convert underutilized campus-based or campus-affiliated facilities to small business incubators, to hire staff to operate the facility, to subsidize wages of faculty and entrepreneurs-in-residence, to purchase or rent equipment that will serve as a shared resource for incubator occupants or support the work of the incubator's administrative staff, to subsidize the cost to participants of enrolling in short-courses or continuing education opportunities and to subsidize on a sliding scale the rent paid by small businesses that are operating out of or using space, facilities or shared equipment or services provided by the incubator.

Application requirements:

- Description of the State's coronavirus burden based on indicators and information factors that demonstrate the significance of the impact of COVID-19 on students, employers, small businesses and economic development
- Applicant's approach to addressing Absolute Priority 1 or 2.
    - This description must include:
        - a list of organizations and entities that will be included as partners in developing and implementing the planned activities,
        - an implementation plan and timeline for key grant activities and
        - a plan for how the applicant will collect data to report on the performance measures for this program.
        - the estimated number of students, businesses, and IHEs, if applicable, that the applicant intends to serve with grant funds.
        - list other sources of Federal funds it is seeking or has secured, under the CARES Act or other Federal grant programs, to carry out the same, similar or related activities to those proposed in the applicant's plan.
        - an analysis of State assets and collaborative efforts (including supports already provided from Federal and non-Federal sources) to respond to the economic impacts of COVID-19 and the need for short-term educational programs, including those that support small business owners and entrepreneurs and/or those that provide industry sector-based education and training programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials in the case of an application that addresses Absolute Priority 1 or the need for short-term educational programs and courses for small business and/or small business incubators (or similar entities) in the case of an application that addresses Absolute Priority 2.
        - description of the steps the State is taking at the time of the application to identify and address the State's immediate needs outlined in application requirement (2), including:
            - (a) For applicants addressing Absolute Priority 1(a)-–
                - (i) How the State is meeting the education, support, and mentorship needs of individuals who seek career preparation or advancement through short-term educational programs and career pathways programs;
                - (ii) Which short-term educational programs or career pathways programs will be the focus of the grant activities; and
                - (iii) Which occupations or occupational clusters will be the focus of the grant activities; or
            - (b) For applicants addressing Absolute Priority 1(b)—
                - (i) How the State will identify the industry sectors and sector leaders that will engage in developing and implementing sector-based education, training, and credentialing programs;

- (ii) Prior experience the State has in leading sector-based education and training activities, including in the development of sector-based apprenticeship programs;
- (iii) How the State will recruit businesses and employers that will participate in the program and rely on credentials earned through industry sector-based education and training programs to hire and promote employees; and
- (iv) Which educational providers, which may include IHEs or other post-secondary education and training providers, have experience in working with industry leaders or employers to develop or provide competency-based education programs and which educational providers have committed to partner with the applicant on the proposed project; or

- (c) For applicants addressing Absolute Priority 2 –
  - (i) How the State is currently providing education, training and support to entrepreneurs and small business owners;
  - (ii) How the State will build upon prior experiences with small business incubators or identify which kinds of small businesses it can best serve through one or more
  - small business incubators that are affiliated with one or more IHEs;
  - (iii) How the State will identify institutional partners, geographic location(s) or industry sector(s) to be served by one or more small business incubators developed with these grant funds;
  - (iv) The specialized assistance, facilities, shared equipment and other shared resources that will be provided by the proposed small business incubator; and
  - (v) Other sources of funding or continuing support that will enable the small business incubator to continue operating after the expiration of these grant funds.
- (5) Describe how the applicant will recruit unemployed or dislocated workers; workers seeking job transition or advancement; entrepreneurs; small business owners or other participants who would benefit from the education, training and/or business development opportunities that will be provided with grant funds, and how the applicant will determine participation if demand exceeds supply.
- (6) Provide an assurance that the applicant will provide information to the Secretary, as requested, for evaluations that the Secretary may carry out.

Application selection criteria

- 40 points - Highest Coronavirus Burden
  - In determining the States with the highest coronavirus burden, the Secretary considers the extent to which the State has a high coronavirus burden as follows:
    - (1) The extent to which the applicant is in the--
      - (i) Up to 20th percentile of coronavirus burden (4 points);
      - (ii) 21st to 40th percentile of coronavirus burden (8 points);
      - (iii) 41st to 60th percentile of coronavirus burden (12 points);
      - (iv) 61st to 80th percentile of coronavirus burden (16 points); or
      - (v) 81st to 100th percentile of coronavirus burden (20 points).
    - (2) The extent to which the applicant has a high coronavirus burden based on indicators and information factors identified by the applicant in response to Application Requirement 1. (20 points)

- 35 points - Quality of Project Services and Quality of the Project Design (up to 35 points).
  - The Secretary considers the quality of the services to be provided by the proposed project and the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the project services and the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. (up to 5 points)
  - In addition, the Secretary considers--
    - (1) The extent to which the proposed project is an exceptional approach to the absolute priority being addressed and includes a detailed project plan for addressing the absolute priority. (up to 10 points) (GEPA Waiver)
    - (2) The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses. (up to 10 points) (34 CFR 75.210)
    - (3) The likelihood that services to be provided by the proposed project (for applicants under Absolute Priority 1) will expand access to remote learning options and lead to improvements in student outcomes; or the likelihood that services to be provided by the proposed project (for applicants under Absolute Priority 2) will increase the number and success of small businesses in a state or region. (up to 5 points) (GEPA Waiver)
    - (4) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice. (up to 5 points) (34 CFR 75.210)

- Up to 25 points - Quality of the Management Plan and Adequacy of Resources
  - The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers--
    - (1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. (34 CFR 75.210) (up to 5 points)
    - (2) The extent to which the budget is adequate to support the proposed project. (up to 5 points) (34 CFR 75.210)
    - (3) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. (34 CFR 75.210) (up to 5 points)
    - (4) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and to the anticipated results and benefits. (34 CFR 75.210) (up to 10 points)

Credentials:
- The Department of Education wishes to ensure that individuals, employers, educators and training providers have access to the most complete, current and beneficial information about providers, programs and credentials supported with these grant funds.
- To this end, the Department requires that information about all credentials (including but not limited to badges, certificates, certifications, licenses, and degrees of all levels and types) and competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities) developed or delivered through the use of these Federal funds be made publicly accessible through the use of linked open data formats that support full transparency and interoperability, such as through the use of credential transparency description language specifications

Desire to help alleviate pandemic's impact on postsecondary education:

- The pandemic also had an unprecedented impact on the nation's colleges and universities, forcing most to abandon use of their ground-based classrooms and campus facilities and engage in various modalities of distance learning. With some already struggling under declining enrollments, and others concerned that students will wait out a semester before returning to campus, there is concern that many institutions will not be able to enroll enough students to continue the employment of faculty and staff and maintain campus operations through the end of the calendar year. As a result, institutions must become entrepreneurial in finding new ways to more quickly meet the needs of students, employers, and their local community - and to do so at lower cost and in ways that generate significantly less student debt.
- Institutions must find new uses for campus facilities that create novel revenue streams and expand the kinds of high-quality short-term learning opportunities available for students. In addition, States must do more to help those who lack a high school diploma or equivalency prepare for jobs and earn a post-secondary credential.

Sector based strategies encouraged:
- Sector-based strategies can be equally or more effective than traditional college or university programs in providing short-term educational programs and training opportunities that help individuals
- Can be used to expand the number and types of education and training opportunities available to individuals, employers, and communities.
- Sector-based education, training, and credentialing strategies ensure the critical mass needed to sustain these programs and to ensure the long-term value of credentials earned.

Apprenticeships are eligible to be funded:
- Education and training opportunities can include Registered Apprenticeship Program Programs (RAP) and Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Programs (IRAPs), as well as other work-based learning and continuing education programs, and funds can support the development of curriculum or assessment tools as well as systems to maintain student records and verify credentials earned by students who complete these programs.

Wide range of additional uses of funding
- funds may also be used to provide student stipends for work-based learning opportunities; subsidize tuition and fees for short-term educational programs and career pathways programs; procure or rent equipment and supplies necessary for instruction and assessment; provide pre-apprenticeship, adult education and literacy activities, including integrated education and training; provide supportive services for participants, including childcare vouchers and transportation vouchers, career guidance and academic counseling; and develop and implement interoperable learning record systems that record and communicate to potential employers' verifiable information about an individual's credentials, skills, and achievements.

Evidenced based approaches encouraged:
- Applicants are encouraged to develop innovative solutions that move beyond traditional education and training regimes.
  - The proposed project design should be supported by evidence that meets the standard of demonstrates a rationale (as defined in this notice).
  - Applications may provide a framework that identifies key components on how the proposed strategy, program, or activity is informed by research or by the positive outcomes of earlier efforts that are similar to or serve as the foundation for the proposed project.
  - These positive outcomes must suggest the proposed activity is likely to improve relevant outcomes (as defined in this notice).
  - We encourage evidence that demonstrates a rationale for the proposed activity to ensure that some preliminary work has been done to demonstrate the merit of the proposal, while at the same

time inviting the broadest possible range of innovative solutions that may not yet have been tested at scale or evaluated through experimental or quasi-experimental design.

Performance Measures
- Performance Measures: We have established the following performance measures for the ESF-RWP Grants program:
  - (1) For applications addressing Absolute Priority 1
    - (a) The number of students served by the project; the percentage of students who enrolled in a program receiving grant funds who completed the program;
    - (b) The percentage of individuals who enrolled in a program receiving grant funds who were employed in the second quarter after exiting the program; and
    - (c) The percentage of individuals employed in the second quarter after exit who are employed full-time in an occupation that is directly related to the program of study; and
    - (d) The median earnings of individuals in (b) and (c).

  - (2) For applicants addressing Absolute Priority 2 –
    - The number of individuals who participated in the short-course or programs offered by the business incubator and one year after its completion had started a new business venture or maintained/expanded their existing small business;
    - (b) For small business owners who participated in a small business incubator, the number of employees employed at the start of their participation in this program, and at the end of their participation in the program and whether or not they were still in business one year after completing the program.
    - In addition, applicants must propose project-specific performance measures and performance targets consistent with the objectives of the proposed project.

Program Requirement:
- The following program requirement is established for the FY 2020 ESF-RWP Grants competition and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applications from this competition, in accordance with section 437(d)(1) of GEPA, 20 U.S.C. 1232(d)(1):
- Grantees must make information on all credentials (including badges, certificates, certifications, licenses, and degrees of all levels and types) and competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities) achieved as a result of funding under this program publicly accessible through the use of linked open data formats that support full transparency and interoperability. Such information must include the industry sector for or by which the credential was developed, the entities involved in the development of the credential, the competencies or skills assessed in awarding the credential, the form of assessment used to verify an individual's eligibility to be awarded the credential, and the body engaged in overseeing the awarding of such credentials.

Funding Restrictions
- Administrative Costs limitations: each eligible entity may charge an amount of administrative costs that is reasonable and necessary, consistent with 2 CFR 200, but DoED encourages the maximum amount of funds possible to be made for program services.
- TANF eligible participants - projects should be designed to cover a student's cost of attendance – including through funds provided by this grant, employer contributions, contributions made by trade associations or labor organizations, or other sources of funding - without requiring the student to take direct student loans. Additionally, students whose tuition and fees are covered by grant funds must be TANF eligible.