Workforce Ready Grants Round Three
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Sector Specific RFAs

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FREE coaching and guidance on the application process is available for Applicants and prospective applicants through Technical Assistance Providers contracted by HECC. These providers can support you throughout the application process to help determine eligibility and give feedback on your application. You can find their contact information in **Section 1.4** of the RFAs. It is recommended that you contact them early in the application process.

A. Things to Note for Workforce Ready Grants Round Three:

Funds for Workforce Ready Grants Round Three are **federally-funded American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.**

1. Grantees will need to follow **federal reporting requirements** with guidance provided by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.
2. The project period is 2 years: **July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2026**.
3. Round Three project proposals must be sector focused and address the specific application prompts in the Requests for Applications (RFAs) to which you are applying. There are three RFAs—one for each sector (healthcare, manufacturing, and technology).

B. Eligible Applicants

1. Who can apply to Round Three Workforce Ready Grants?

a. To be eligible to receive awards, applicants must meet criteria defined in Section 2.1: APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS in the RFA.
b. Applicants must also meet the industry focus requirements for the RFA to which they are applying.

2. How is eligibility demonstrated?
   a. Applicants must complete the applicant certification sheet as a required attachment in their application that affirms their entity type.
      i. Note: In addition to being an eligible applicant type, the proposed project must also comply with all other requirements of the RFA.

3. Can those who are working to become a workforce service provider or community-based organization apply?
   a. Applicants must be one of the eligible applicant types at time of application.

4. Can existing organizations that meet the eligible applicant definition apply to receive funding for the existing projects or programs?
   a. Yes. Please see Section 2.2.2: ALLOWABLE USE OF FUNDS for additional details.

5. Are Local Workforce Development Boards (LWBDs) eligible applicants?
   a. Yes. The LWBDs are nonprofit workforce service providers.

6. Are universities and community colleges in Oregon eligible applicants?
   a. Not all universities and community colleges are eligible. Public and nonprofit universities and community colleges that provide workforce education, training, and career services are eligible applicants under the workforce service provider definition.

7. Are for-profit entities eligible applicants?
   a. No. Eligible applicants are defined in Section 2.1: APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS of the RFA.

8. Do applicants need to be registered in the OregonBuys systems?
   a. No. Applicants do not need to be registered in the OregonBuys system for eligibility to receive a grant.

9. Do applicants need to be registered to do business in Oregon through the Oregon Secretary of State office?
   a. If an entity is based in Oregon, yes, they must be registered with the Oregon Secretary of State.

10. Do nonprofit applicants need to be registered with the Internal Revenue Service as a 501c3 or other nonprofit type?
    a. No. However, they must be registered with the Oregon Secretary of State as a nonprofit corporation.

11. Are partnerships required to be eligible to apply for this grant?
    a. Partnerships are strongly encouraged as part of the project/program design. Senate Bill 1545 (Regular Session 2022)(hereafter, "SB 1545"), was written with the intent to encourage partnerships between industry employers, workforce service providers, community-based organizations, and governmental entities.

12. Can a project partner be a for-profit entity?
    a. Yes, a for-profit entity can be a partner on a project.

13. Can a coalition or group submit an application?
    a. Grant agreements are only made with one entity. One entity in the group will need to be the applicant.

14. Is there a definition of "workforce development services?"
    a. SB 1545, the legislation that established Future Ready Oregon, defines "workforce development" as services designed to help individuals attain employment and progress along career pathways and to help businesses better achieve business goals by more easily finding skilled employees. And further specifies that it includes: education and training services; apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship training programs registered with the State Apprenticeship and Training Council, labor market analysis, employment and reemployment services, employee recruitment and retention services; and convening, coordinating, oversight and evaluation services for business and state workforce agencies.

15. Do I have to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number assigned in SAM.gov?
    a. Yes. All organizations that are selected for funding must have a Unique Entity Identifier assigned to them in SAM.gov to enter into a grant agreement under this RFA.
    b. Any subgrantees and subcontractors will also need to obtain a UEI number from SAM.gov.
    c. Organizations may register **for free** directly at SAM.gov.

16. Are K-12 programs eligible for this grant?
    a. K-12 programs that offer workforce development services in the sectors of healthcare, manufacturing and/or technology are eligible to apply for the corresponding RFA(s).

17. Is the HECC planning to award a certain number of grants?
    a. No, there is not a set number of awards for any of the RFAs.

18. Can a faith-based organization, with a religious affiliation as a requirement for employment in accordance with its organizational mission apply if it does not discriminate in any other category of employment, does not discriminate in any category for service delivery, and has a Title IX exemption for religious purposes in the State of Oregon?
    a. The nondiscrimination provision in the application certification sheet, as applied to grant opportunities, comes from ORS 659A.006. The certification sheet in the application allows for organizations that are exempt under ORS 659A.006 to meet the certification requirements.

C. Industry Sectors (General)

1. How do you plan to have evaluators review proposals with specialized industry sectors that a layperson may not be familiar with?
    a. Evaluators will be trained prior to reviewing applications and will be guided to score the application on the merits of serving program participants through workforce training in the key industries, not necessarily on the details of the curriculum, or the specifics of what they workforce training would look like in the specified industry sector.

2. What types of qualitative data, quantitative data, and lived experience can be used to support the need for the program in the industry sector and/or for participants?
    a. Applicants can use, but are not limited to, national, state, regional and local research and data appropriate for the industry sector to support the need(s) for the program or aspects of the proposed program. Further, applicants can use, but are not limited to, information from internal surveys, interviews, and data collected internally to the applicant or their partners to support the need(s) for the program or aspects of the proposed program.

3. Can I submit multiple applications?
    a. Yes, you can submit multiple applications for different projects. Each RFA has different sector focused application questions.
    b. Note: every funded project will have separate reporting requirements.

4. Can I submit applications to all RFAs?
    a. Yes, you can submit applications to all three sector-specific RFAs.
    b. Each sector specific application requires a separate application per project.
    c. Note: every funded project will have separate reporting requirements.

5. What happens if I apply to multiple RFAs with multiple projects?
    a. Each application will be reviewed according to Section 3.2: APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS in the RFA. As stated in the RFA, "HECC's final funding recommendations will consider statewide impact, ensuring broad geographic distribution, representative distribution with outreach to populations that will be served, and a diverse portfolio of projects. Award amounts will also consider scalability of the project or program, as well as impact on the project and participants."

D. Round 3H: Healthcare RFA (#23-141)

1. What industry sector must projects be focused on?
    a. The healthcare specific RFA identifies two focus areas: nursing career pathways and general healthcare career pathways. Applicant's projects/programs must be in one of these areas. See the RFA Section 2.2.1: PROJECT PURPOSE: HEALTHCARE PROJECT FOCUS AREAS for further details.

2. Are there specific definitions for healthcare?
    a. We are not providing specific definitions for industry sectors; however, applicants must describe how their project will prepare participants to obtain living-wage jobs with benefits in the targeted industry.

3. What are the specific requirements for the two healthcare focus areas?
    a. The specific requirements for the focus areas for the healthcare RFA, nursing career pathways and healthcare career pathways, can be found in Section 2.2.1 PROJECT PURPOSE: HEALTHCARE PROJECT FOCUS AREAS in the RFA.
    b. The specific review criteria for these two focus areas can also be found in Section 3.2.3: PHASE THREE - AGENCY REVIEW: HEALTHCARE APPLICATION REVIEW in the RFA.

4. How much is being awarded for the Healthcare focused RFA.
    a. Up to $18 million dollars will be awarded for the healthcare focused RFA.

   b. Up to $9 million dollars will be awarded to each focus area. However, the HECC reserves the right to redistribute these funds if it is in HECC's best interest to do so.

E. Round 3M: Manufacturing RFA (#23-174)

1. What industry sector must projects be focused on?
   a. The manufacturing specific RFA identifies two focus areas: 1) Outreach, Career Awareness and Exploration, and 2) Earn-and-Learn Opportunities. Applicant projects/programs must address one or both areas. See Section 2.2.1 PROJECT PURPOSE: MANUFACTURING PROJECT FOCUS AREAS in the RFA for further details.

2. Are there specific definitions for manufacturing?
   a. We are not providing specific definitions for industry sectors; however, applicants must describe how their project will prepare participants to obtain living-wage jobs with benefits in the targeted industry.

3. What are the specific requirements for the manufacturing focus areas?
   a. The specific requirements for the focus areas for the manufacturing RFA can be found in Section 2.2.1 PROJECT PURPOSE: MANUFACTURING PROJECT FOCUS AREAS in the RFA.
   b. The specific review criteria for these two focus areas can also be found in Section 3.2.3: PHASE THREE - AGENCY REVIEW: MANUFACTURING APPLICATION REVIEW in the RFA.

4. How much is being awarded for the Manufacturing focused RFA?
   a. Up to $12 million dollars will be awarded for the manufacturing focused RFA.

F. Round 3T: Technology RFA (#23-175)

1. What industry sector must projects be focused on?
   a. The technology specific RFA identifies two focus areas: 1) reskilling and/or upskilling incumbent workers, and 2) career advancement. Applicant projects/programs must address one or both areas. See the RFA Section 2.2.1 PROJECT PURPOSE: TECHNOLOGY PROJECT FOCUS AREAS for further details.

2. Are there specific definitions for technology?
   a. We are not providing specific definitions for industry sectors; however, applicants must describe how their project will prepare participants to obtain good-paying jobs with benefits in the targeted industry.

3. What are the specific requirements for the two technology focus areas?
   a. The specific requirements for the focus areas for the technology RFA can be found in Section 2.2.1 GRANT PURPOSE: TECHNOLOGY PROJECT FOCUS AREAS in the RFA.
   b. The specific review criteria for these two focus areas can also be found in Section 3.2.3: PHASE THREE - AGENCY REVIEW: TECHNOLOGY APPLICATION REVIEW in the RFA.

4. How much is being awarded for the Technology focused RFA.
   a. Up to $10 million dollars will be awarded for the technology focused RFA.

G. Project Plan

1. Are projects/programs focused on youth eligible for funding?

   a. Project proposals for youth programs are eligible. Refer to state and federal labor laws when working with participants who are minors. Organizations working with minors, who are included in Vulnerable Populations, may have additional background check and insurance requirements as a part of their grant agreements. See Attachment F of the RFA for Sample Grant Agreement.

2. When should we plan to start the project?
   a. The allowable cost period begins July 1, 2024. If your application is selected for funding, once you have received an executed grant agreement you can request reimbursement for costs associated with allowable grant activities starting July 1, 2024. HECC will not issue any fund disbursements until an executed grant agreement is in place and required reporting has been submitted and approved.

3. Can the project end early?
   a. Yes. The project plan does not have to be the total length of the Allowable Cost Period (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2026).

4. Can an application contain multiple projects?
   a. If an Applicant proposes multiple projects, the Applicant must submit individual Applications for each project. See Section 1.1: BACKGROUND in the RFA.

5. Can funds be used for capital expenses, such as the purchase or lease of a building?
   a. Capital expenses are considered an allowable expense within a project. Depending on the scale of the project there may be further reporting requirements for capital expenditures.

6. Are there project plan types (such as capacity building or sustaining an existing program) that will score better than others? Is there a plan to fund a certain amount in each type?
   a. Project plans will be evaluated according to Section 3.2: APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS in the RFAs.
   b. There is no plan to award a specific number of proposals of any one type.
   c. Projects must include services to participants and may not be capacity-building only.

7. Is it required to indicate the number of participants being served in the project plan?
   a. Applicants should indicate an estimated number of participants your project intends to serve.

8. Is the number of participants served factored into the review/scoring process?
   a. This will not be a factor of the review and scoring process, as the number of participants served will vary based on the type of support the participant is receiving.

9. Why does the application limit the number of priority populations we can select?
   a. The application requests you identify 1-3 priority populations for which you will be doing intentional outreach. The evaluation items give applicants the opportunity to explain how they will support additional program participants and/or discuss how the project supports participants with intersectional identities.

10. Do I need to include Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) or letters of support in my application?
   a. These types of attachments are not required as a part of your application. There is space in the application to upload MOUs and letters of support if you would like to demonstrate the partnerships

listed in your application. These items will not be considered as a part of the evaluation criteria and do not hold any weight in the scoring process.

11. Can an organization apply for a Workforce Ready Grant even if they are already listed as partner in another organization's application?
    a. Yes
        i. Note: each funded project will have separate reporting requirements.

12. Can project proposals include building a fundraising infrastructure to ensure program sustainability post grant-period?
    a. Yes, as long as the project proposal ultimately serves program participants in workforce development in the industry sector identified in the corresponding RFA.

13. Are background checks for employees within my organization required if I submit a project proposal?
    a. If your organization and/or employees intends to serve Vulnerable Populations (which include minors, persons with disabilities and the elderly) through grant activities and any employees/contractors/volunteers will be working unsupervised and in-person with those participants from Vulnerable Populations, you will have to perform background checks on employees and volunteers who work directly with those individuals. Please see Attachment F of the RFA for additional details.

H. Budget

1. Is there a minimum or maximum award amount that can be applied for?
    a. No. To review previous award amounts and funded projects, see the Future Ready Oregon website here:
    Round 1: https://www.oregon.gov/highered/about/SiteAssets/Pages/Future-Ready/Workforce-Ready-Grants-Round-1_Updated-7.25.2023.pdf
    Round 2: https://www.oregon.gov/highered/about/Documents/Future-Ready/Workforce_Ready_Grants_Round_Two.pdf

2. Is there a limit on administrative (indirect) costs?
    a. In accordance with Uniform Guidance, applicants will be held to a de minimis indirect rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC), unless the applicant has a current federally-negotiated indirect rate agreement (you will be required to submit verification if awarded).

3. What time span should be captured in the Project Budget?
    a. The Allowable Cost Period for this RFA will run from July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2026.

4. Can applicants request a portion of their funding up front?
    a. Grantees are required to submit a detailed budget by quarter across the allowable cost period within 45 days after the grant has been executed. Upon signing the grant agreement and completion and approval of the spend plan and required reporting documents, grantees will be able to request reimbursement for allowable project expenses incurred during the project period which begins July 1, 2024.
    b. Grantees will have the opportunity to request an initial disbursement.
    c. Before any payments are made to a grantee, grantee must submit required reporting documents for approval.

5. Is there an estimated cost per participant that applicants should aim for?
    a. There is no guideline for costs associated with each program participant. We anticipate the cost may differ significantly depending on the types of training and support a program participant may receive, as well as the geographic location in which they are receiving it.

6. What level of detail is required for the additional sources of funding, including federal, private sector, or philanthropic contributions leveraged?
    a. Dollar amount, funder, type of funder, and funding status (received or pending) will be asked for as part of the application. This is a required part of the application. If no other funding has been awarded or is pending, you may answer with “not applicable” or “N/A.”

7. Is it required to have leveraged funds? Is there an advantage to having additional leveraged funds?
    a. Please see section 3.2: APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS in the RFA, which includes details on the agency review criteria.

8. If awarded a grant, can applicants count the time spent applying as a project activity and include its expenses in their budget?
    a. No. Section 5: ADDITIONAL TERMS of the RFA states that, “All costs associated with Applicant’s submission of an Application are the sole responsibility of the Applicant and will not be paid or reimbursed by HECC or the State of Oregon.” Therefore, the time and costs spent applying are not an allowable use of grant funds.

9. Do you have to break up your budget to fit the listed categories on the provided template table, or can this be flexible?
    a. The budget template needs to be within the cost categories listed.

10. Can funds be used to provide training to the staff of the organization applying?
    a. Staff trainings can be a part of the proposal, but the overall project proposal must be that of workforce development for program participants.

11. How detailed does my budget need to be, and what do I do if I need to make changes?
    a. The budget submitted in your proposal should be a reasonable estimate of your intended costs. It can be adjusted during the grant agreement development. If you receive a notice of award, a program analyst will work with you prior to signing a grant agreement to ensure that your budget still meets your needs, and help you make any adjustments needed at that time. After signing a grant agreement, you can still make changes to your budget through grant amendments.

12. Can funds be used to subgrant or subcontract to another entity?
    a. Yes. The entity to which you subgrant or subcontract must be approved by the HECC. RFA Section 2.1 APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY AND OTHER REQUIRMENTS gives information about subaward and subcontractor requirements. Subgrantees and subcontractors will also be held to the same insurance and background check requirements and confidential information clauses as grantees. See RFA Attachment F – Sample Grant Agreement for more information.

13. Can a subgrantee or subcontractor be a for-profit entity?

a. Yes. The entity to which you subgrant or subcontract must be approved by the HECC. RFA Section 2.1 APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY AND OTHER REQUIRMENTS gives information about subaward and subcontractor requirements. Subgrantees and subcontractors will also be held to the same insurance and background check requirements and confidential information clauses as grantees. See RFA Attachment F – Sample Grant Agreement for more information.

I. Application Format

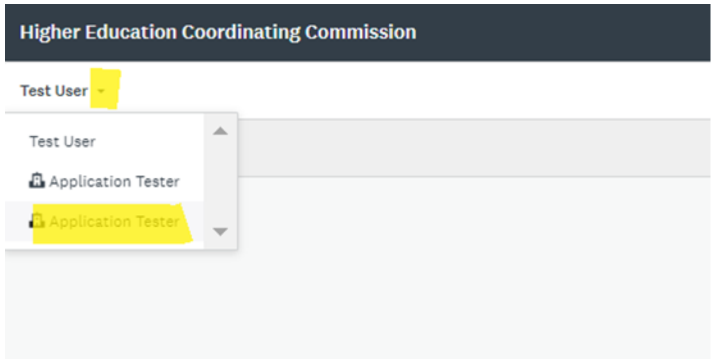
1. How are applications to be submitted?
   a. Applications must be submitted using the web-based application at the link posted in Section 3.1: HOW AND WHEN TO APPLY in the RFA.

2. Are there word limits for any of the application questions?
   a. Yes, there are word limits to the evaluation items that can be found in the RFAs, Attachment A, as well as in the online application itself. The word limits are meant to be large enough to allow for detail and short enough to encourage clear and concise responses.

3. Is the application available in additional languages?
   a. The application is web-based and Google Translate can be utilized to translate the application. Additionally, the required attachments have been posted in Spanish. Utilizing a web-based application also enables applications to adjust accessibility settings.
   b. We can also accommodate translation requests for the attachments in languages other than English and Spanish. Please contact the Single Point of Contact listed on the first page of the RFA.

4. When I follow the application link provided in the RFA, I do not see an apply button. Why not?
   a. When you follow the link, you should see a screen that has the box below displayed with a green “apply” button.
   b. If you are not seeing this box, it may be because you registered as an “individual” and the application is only open to “organizations.” You can update your registration to an “organization” by following these steps.
      i. Log in, go to your name in the top right corner and select “My Account” from the dropdown menu.
      ii. Scroll down to “Preferences”, select “Set Up Organizations”, and complete the prompts.

5. When I log into SurveyMonkey Apply to work on my application, it doesn’t allow me to continue my started application. Why not?
   a. SurveyMonkey Apply associates log-in information with individual accounts. When logging in to return to an existing application, you will need to switch from your individual account to the organization’s account, as the application was started by the organization. You can switch to viewing the site as an organization by following these steps:
      i. Log into your SurveyMonkey Apply account, click on your name to expand the list, select your organization from the drop down as shown below.



6. Can applicants submit more than one application?
    a. Yes, organizations can submit more than one application.

7. What file types can be uploaded for Attachments B, C, D, and E?
    a. The upload fields for Attachments B, C, D, and E accept the following file format types; .pdf, .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx, .ppt, .pptx, .png, .jpg, and .jpeg.
    b. Note: Only one file can be uploaded per attachment.

J. Resources Prior to Submission

1. How can I receive guidance, feedback, and review of my application materials prior to submission?
    a. Future Ready Oregon offers free application support through contracted Technical Assistance providers at no cost to prospective applicants. More information on the services they can provide, and their contact information can be found in the RFA Section 1.4: FREE SUPPORT IN PREPARING YOUR APPLICATION.
    b. Applicants are limited to 15 hours of assistance.
    c. Technical Assistance providers have experience in grant writing and nonprofit development. They can help applicants and prospective applicants throughout the application process, from determining eligibility to reviewing your grant application and providing feedback.

2. Is technical assistance available to provide feedback on my application from Round One and/or Round Two?
    a. Feedback can be provided upon request by contacting futurereadyoregon@hecc.oregon.gov