



Economic Development Administration Good Jobs Challenge

Request for Proposals

Release Date: December 3, 2021

Due Date: December 20, 2021

I. Overview

On July 22, 2021, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) released a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), "FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act Good Jobs Challenge Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)," also referred to as ARPA Good Jobs Challenge NOFO.¹ As outlined in the NOFO, EDA seeks to fund "qualified organizations to form sectoral partnerships. These partnerships will work collaboratively to grow regional economies and their associated workforces by building training programs that meet the existing and emerging skills needs of employers and that help workers enter quality jobs and advance along their chosen career path." The EDA is especially interested in funding proposals that advance equity in the workplace and contribute to the resiliency and growth of regional economies.

As a recognized leader in designing and implementing workforce interventions that are driven by industry partnerships, the National Fund for Workforce Solutions and its collaboratives are well-positioned to obtain a grant through this NOFO. The National Fund for Workforce Solutions' mission is to **collaborate with workers, employers and communities to advance a skilled workforce, promote good jobs, and invest in equitable outcomes**. As a network of over 30 regional communities across 25 states with over 90 industry-led partnerships, the National Fund tests and scales workforce development strategies through four integrated solutions.

In addition to expanding training opportunities delivered through industry partnerships, the National Fund is highly qualified to strengthen strategies to advance racial equity and inclusion (REI), improve job quality, leverage co-investment models, change systems, and equip workers for success in multiple regions across the country. Through this RFP, the National Fund seeks to competitively procure multiple collaboratives that it will identify as proposed subrecipients in its proposal to EDA. The National Fund will work with selected grantees to further develop the proposal prior to submission by January 26, 2022.

The National Fund seeks to obtain an EDA grant to deepen investment in existing regional workforce interventions across its four solutions and/or expand existing

¹ See Funding Opportunity Number EDA-HDQ-ARPGJ-2021-2006964 for complete details.

promising practices across its network. If selected for an award, the National Fund for Workforce Solutions does not intend to develop new interventions under this grant.

II. Proposed Project

The National Fund will develop and submit a proposal that fully meets the requirements outlined in the NOFO and incorporates its four integrated solutions and associated tools that address workforce problems and advance racial equity and inclusion.

A. Project elements required by EDA

The ARPA Good Jobs Challenge NOFO intends to “assist communities and regions impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic has caused, and continues to cause, economic injury to U.S. communities and regions in devastating and unprecedented ways.” EDA seeks to get Americans back to work by creating and supporting effective training programs that will connect the in-demand and emerging skills needs of employers with qualified workers and help workers find and keep quality jobs and advance along their chosen career path. EDA will select proposals that aim to develop and deliver such programs through sectoral partnerships with “proactive employer engagement and mobilization and employer commitments to hire.”

More specifically, the ARPA Good Jobs Challenge is designed to help get Americans back to work by investing in (1) developing and strengthening regional workforce training systems that support sectoral partnerships, (2) designing sectoral partnerships, and (3) implementing sectoral partnerships that will lead to high quality jobs. The goal of regional workforce training systems is to create and support effective training programs that will connect the in-demand and emerging skills needs of employers with qualified workers and help workers find and keep quality jobs and advance along their chosen career path.

EDA will fund projects at various stages, specifically system development, program design and program implementation, and will work directly with grantees to determine when projects may proceed to each stage. EDA describes the stages as follows:

- System development: Developing and strengthening regional workforce training systems that support sectoral partnerships
- Program design: Designing sectoral partnerships
- Program implementation: Implementing sectoral partnerships that will lead to high-quality jobs

The National Fund will limit the scope of its proposal to the program design and/or program implementation stage(s).

The EDA outlines additional required project elements in NOFO.

B. Project elements proposed by the National Fund for Workforce Solutions

The National Fund’s proposal will focus on strengthening and expanding sectoral partnerships (industry partnerships) that drive and inform training and other interventions that help prepare and connect lower wage workers, especially workers of color, to in-demand jobs and career advancement opportunities.

The National Fund will describe its current solutions framework and associated tools and practices, while also highlighting the employer partnerships and workforce programming already underway and led by the selected regional workforce collaboratives.

The National Fund plans to target one or all of the following industries, with the final selection dependent on the focus of the collaboratives selected through this RFP: **healthcare, construction and skilled trades, and manufacturing.**

In addition to emphasizing its significant experience supporting and growing industry partnerships across the country, the National Fund will also highlight the unique framework and value it brings to workforce development. Namely, the National Fund and its regional collaboratives are increasingly recognized by experts and practitioners as leaders in advancing job quality, systems change, and REI in the workforce ecosystem. The National Fund will work with selected collaboratives to incorporate a REI framework and **all** four integrated solutions into the delivery of its sectoral partnership training efforts.

The National Fund’s proposal will stress the importance of adopting a comprehensive, systems-level approach in implementing a regional workforce training system. In order to achieve equity in the workplace, regions must go beyond designing and delivering demand-driven training in partnership with employers. By addressing job quality and systemic barriers to worker success, regional collaboratives are more likely to connect a larger number of lower wage workers — especially workers of color — to employment. Collaboratives are also more likely to facilitate the retention and career advancement of lower wage workers, even after grant funds are fully expended.

While the National Fund anticipates and appreciates the need for selected grantees to customize their activities to meet the needs of their regions, applicants must be fully committed to incorporating all four National Fund solutions, actively promoting REI practices, and using the National Fund’s existing resources and tools where appropriate and beneficial. The National Fund will work with selected grantees to refine the proposed scope of work from the menu of potential activities identified for each solution in the table below.

Solution	Possible Activities (Non-comprehensive)	Existing Resources
Equip Workers for Success	Deliver the full range of skills development and supports: training, upskilling, apprenticeships, wraparound services, and interventions that promote worker engagement, voice, satisfaction, and well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Trauma Informed Approach to Workforce • CareerSTAT Resource Center • Financial Wellness Guide
Change Systems for Improved Outcomes	Incorporate systems thinking into the development and delivery of interventions. Assessment and evaluation of root causes; development and delivery of strategies to change systems, especially those that contribute to racial disparities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toolbox for the Systems Change Mindset • Advancing Workforce Equity: A Guide for Stakeholders

<p>Activate Employers to Make Jobs Better</p>	<p>Engage and activate employers and industry partnerships to make jobs better. Provide technical assistance to employers to assess job quality, center worker voice and adopt new or improved practices that support recruitment, retention and advancement, especially of workers of color.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships : • Job Design Framework • Job Quality Maps • Evaluation Framework²
<p>Co-Invest for Impact</p>	<p>Bring together local investors around a shared strategic vision for workforce development. Pool or align resources from philanthropic, corporate, public, and other funders to support the Good Jobs proposal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics of a High Performing Collaborative • Sustainability Guide for Funder Collaboratives

Additional Proposed Project Elements

Racial Equity and Inclusion

Although not required, EDA strongly encourages efforts to reach historically underserved populations and areas, communities of color, women, and other groups facing labor market barriers such as persons with disabilities, disconnected youth, individuals in recovery, individuals with past criminal records including justice-impacted and reentry participants, serving trainees participating in the SNAP, TANF, and WIC, and veterans and military spouses.

Further, EDA will base 15% of its evaluation of each proposal on the extent to which it includes a plan for “ensuring that the project’s benefits are shared across all affected communities and fairly between employers and workers. This includes the extent to which the application demonstrates the ability to serve trainees that benefit from federal and state programs like SNAP, TANF, and WIC.”

While EDA’s vision for equity is not limited to addressing racial disparities, the National Fund is especially interested in bringing race to the forefront in its proposal in order to promote workforce equity. This is especially critical when considering the devastating and disproportionate impacts of the pandemic across communities of color.

The National Fund will work with selected grantees to implement one or more of the following strategies:

- Recruit, engage and support businesses owned by people of color in industry partnerships or industry-specific work.
- Outreach directly and engage job seekers or workers of color in the development and/or delivery of training and other interventions.
- Build the capacity of employers, workforce organizations and other stakeholders to adopt trauma-informed strategies.

² The Job Quality Outcome Maps and Evaluation Framework are currently being finalized. They will be ready to use once the grant term begins.

- Deeply disaggregate data to recognize and address disparities in service delivery and outcomes across white workers and workers of color.
- Participate in liberation learning communities that provide coaching, technical assistance, and peer-to-peer support in advancing REI practices within and outside organizations.

Learning and Evaluation

In addition to meeting the data collection requirements described in the NOFO and in Section IV below, the National Fund may require selected grantees to do the following:

- Leverage the National Fund’s theory of change for each solution, adopting shared definitions of outputs and outcomes related to the project.
- Participate in a formal evaluation if the National Fund determines it can secure and provide the necessary resources and technical assistance to conduct an evaluation.
- Disaggregate baseline data by race and gender or have a plan to collect disaggregated baseline data during the initial phase of the project. The National Fund can assist with data collection and reporting, including access to JobsEQ, at the request of the collaborative.
- Collect and report disaggregated data at intervals determined by the National Fund. Proactively use disaggregated data to improve/redesign program and create new initiatives and/or strategies.
- Commit to tracking data related to shared outputs and outcomes across collaboratives.

C. Project Goals

The National Fund will work with selected applicants to finalize activities, outputs, and outcomes for the proposed project(s). EDA suggests a non-exclusive list of potential goals and metrics in its NOFO. Below are outcomes the National Fund plans to highlight in its proposal, along with outputs and outcomes that are unique to the National Fund’s solutions framework. **We will narrow the scope of these two lists prior to submission.**

From EDA NOFO:

- Establishing, strengthening, or expanding sectoral partnerships or regional workforce training systems to provide workers with good jobs and employers with skilled workers.
- Developing processes to translate employers’ needs for worker skills into training models and to identify skills that could be useful to employers that they are not currently using, helping employers to adopt a more high-wage, high-skill workforce strategy.
- Developing and executing outreach and recruitment plans to secure workers, particularly from underserved populations, to participate in the skills training program to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion in the targeted industry.
- Developing systems and processes to measure and track key outcomes and metrics of skills training program.
- Delivering technical assistance for employers on skills-based hiring practices to reduce bias, improve return on investment, and promote people-centered practices.
- Working with employers to adopt high-wage, high-skill workforce strategies.

- Securing and offering wrap-around services for workers to participate in skills training programs (e.g., transportation, childcare, career coaching/navigation services).
- Leveraging federal and non-federal funds to expand reach.

From NFWS Logic Models: This list of outcomes is derived from the National Fund's five-year strategic plan and related logic models. The outcomes listed below are those that map directly to the outcomes the EDA are looking to support with their investments.

1. Activate Employers to Make Jobs Better:
 - a. Increased number, scope, and quality of industry partnerships
 - b. Industry partnerships integrate worker engagement and human centered-design principles
 - c. Employers engaged in deep learning opportunities and understand the business case for job quality and racial equity
 - d. Employers implement job quality interventions
2. Equipping Workers for Success:
 - a. Training and education providers and employers have increased competency to incorporate worker centric and supportive practices into programs and the workplace which will lead to employers adopting equitable recruitment and hiring practices
 - b. Increased knowledge, skills, and ability of the ecosystem to implement worker engagement strategies
3. Change Systems for Improved Outcomes:
 - a. Increased knowledge of social determinants of work³ as contributors to workforce inequities
 - b. Utilization of racially disaggregated data to drive labor market improvements and address occupational segregation
4. Co-Invest for Impact:
 - a. Local private philanthropy funds are pooled and/or aligned with public workforce investments.

D. Federal Funding Requirements

The National Fund will provide support to grantees to ensure they are able to adhere to compliance and reporting requirements referenced in EDA's NOFO. The National Fund will conduct periodic monitoring visits as required by EDA and as it determines to be necessary. Interested collaboratives should review the NOFO to better understand the requirements of the federal funding that will be used for projects. Grantees are subject to all requirements specified in the NOFO and associated with Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.307, Economic Adjustment Assistance.

³ The National Fund defines the social determinants of work as opportunities that surround a given job and affect a worker's ability to succeed in that job, such as the ability to live close to the workplace, reliable and affordable transportation, dependable family care, and workplace benefits like healthcare and paid leave. These opportunities support employment stability and worker well-being and impact workforce equity.

III. Peer Learning and Network Capacity Building

Awarded grantees will be expected to participate fully in peer learning and capacity building activities organized by the National Fund and/or EDA. The full scope of activities will be determined at a later date. Grantees will receive technical assistance from National Fund staff and other subject matter experts.

IV. Data Collection and Evaluation Expectations

While EDA does not specify a final list of required metrics, it does provide a possible list of metrics that will likely need to be tracked and reported:

- Number of workers participating in program, broken down by key demographics,
 - Demographic information on participants may include age, gender, race, ethnicity, income, disability status, justice-impacted status, and military status.
- Number of workers who complete the program broken down by key demographics,
- Number of workers placed into jobs, broken down by key demographics,
- Average wages of job placements,
- Average wage growth of job placements,
- Retention of workers placed,
- Amount spent on wraparound services, and
- Total average cost spent per worker.

In addition, “EDA will require additional data on activities, outputs, and actual impact of the funded investment, in part to fulfill the requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act. EDA anticipates that recipients will be expected to track their engagement activities within the scope of work, with project beneficiaries, and other project stakeholders. EDA further anticipates recipients will be expected to collect data, using surveys of beneficiaries or clients, if necessary, on the outputs and outcomes of their activities, such as the number of strategic plans or economic development tools developed, the number of new business partnerships formed, or the range of new capabilities acquired.”

EDA may also undertake a third-party evaluation and require grantees to fully participate. Such an evaluation may include “an implementation assessment across grantees, an impact and/or outcome analysis of all or selected sites/components within or across grantees, and/or a benefit/cost analysis or assessment of return on investment. Conducting an impact analysis could involve random assignment (which involves random assignment of eligible participants into a treatment group that would receive/have received program services or into control group(s) that would not/has not received program services or program services). EDA may require applicants to collect data elements to aid the evaluation. As a part of the evaluation, as a condition of award, grantees must agree to: (1) make records available to an evaluation contractor or contractors on participants, employers, and funding; (2) provide access to program operating personnel, participants, and operational and financial records, and any other relevant documents to calculate program costs and benefits; and (3) in the case of an impact analysis, facilitate the assignment of participants to program services, including the possible increased recruitment of potential participants; and (4) follow evaluation procedures as specified by the evaluation contractor(s) under the direction of EDA.”

In anticipation of EDA's potential data collection, reporting, and evaluation requirements, the National Fund plans to hire or assign fully dedicated personnel to lead the coordination and fulfillment of these requirements. Further, in the event EDA determines to undertake a third-party evaluation, the National Fund will adjust its evaluation plans accordingly to avoid placing an undue burden on subgrantees.

V. Award Amount and Eligible Uses

The National Fund will determine the amount of subawards in the event it is successful in obtaining a grant through the NOFO. Prior to submission of its proposal to EDA, the National Fund will work with selected grantees to develop a budget that aligns with the proposed outputs and outcomes in each region. The National Fund will base the total budget request on the number of regions and industries to be targeted.

The National Fund anticipates requesting a grant amount that will enable it to award three (3) year grants of up to \$900,000 to \$1,800,000 to each selected regional collaborative.

Please refer to the NOFO (Funding Opportunity Number EDA-HDQ-ARPGJ-2021-2006964) for details on allowable costs.

VI. Matching and Leveraged Funds

EDA does not require match or leveraged funds as a condition of an award, but both are highly encouraged. The National Fund will expect selected grantees to provide a letter of commitment that identifies and describes cash and in-kind resources that can be leveraged to deliver the proposed project.

VII. Program Timeline

RFP Release: Friday, December 3, 2021

Proposals Due: Monday, December 20, 2021

Anticipated Grantee Selection Date: Friday, January 7, 2022

Grant Start Date: To be determined

Anticipated Grant Period: 30–32 months. Please note, the EDA is aiming to award funds by late summer 2022. Should the National Fund be awarded this grant, we will aim to begin the project within 30 days of signing the grant agreement with the EDA.

VIII. Eligible Applicants

Collaboratives are eligible if they have a signed collaborative agreement and are in good standing. Collaboratives not currently in the National Fund network may be eligible if the below criteria can be met prior to the start of the EDA grant period, anticipated late summer 2022 (Please see [membership FAQ](#) for more information). The National Fund typically requires new collaboratives to wait three months before they can receive funding, but the National Fund is waiving that requirement for this RFP.

Criteria

- Collaborative with a signed National Fund 2020–2024 Collaborative Agreement.
- An organization described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and exempt from taxation under Section 501(a) or if the Collaborative is not a 501(c)(3) organization, the collaborative must designate an organization to receive the funds.
- Employ a current site director or interim site director with active search for permanent director underway.

IX. Required Application Content

Interested collaboratives should apply by completing a proposal that responds briefly to the questions listed below. **Please limit your response to no more than three pages. Responses should be brief. Bullet points are acceptable for submission.** The National Fund developed the applicant questions to assess current capacity, existing employer relationships, and activities already underway for each collaborative. Responses are also directly aligned with information requested by EDA and will assist the National Fund in creating its proposal. Interested collaboratives should submit ideas that build on existing work, not create new programming. The National Fund will collaborate with selected grantees in January 2022 to solidify the proposed program activities and target outputs and outcomes.

1. **Industry (Sector) Partnerships.** Identify which industries your collaborative would prefer to focus on if awarded an EDA subgrant (you may select one, two or all three of the industries listed above). For each preferred industry please provide the information below:
 - a. How is this industry important to the growth and resiliency of your regional economy?
 - b. List the employers with which you have active partnerships. Only list those employers who are likely to provide you with a letter of support or commitment to help advance one or more of the outcomes for the EDA Good Jobs project. While the National Fund plans to describe the elements of Industry Partnerships (IP) in its EDA proposal, applicants do not need to currently meet all criteria for an IP to qualify for this opportunity provided they have evidence of strong partnerships with employers.

Please note that letters are not being requested or required as an attachment to your proposal. *The National Fund will ask selected grantees to secure at least two (2) letters of commitments by January 21, 2022. The letters will need to specify how the employer(s) is or will be involved in the development and delivery of the program and will ideally include a commitment to hire graduates.*

- c. If you have an established industry partnership, provide the following information:
 - i. Name of lead entity responsible for coordinating the industry partnership
 - ii. How long has the partnership existed?
 - iii. How many employers are a part of the partnership?
 - iv. Does the partnership have independent funding and dedicated staff?
 - v. Do employer partners regularly share data on worker outcomes and demographics? Or would they be willing to?

- d. To what extent are the following statements true about your employer partners in this sector (rate each 0-5):
- i. Employers are actively and consistently engaged in directing the work of the partnership and taking action in their own organizations.
 - ii. Employers are aligned along a common vision for meeting both the needs of the industry and workers.
 - iii. Employers are aligned around a shared commitment to job quality
 - iv. Employers are committed to incorporating worker voice into the planning process
 - v. The partnership is using labor market data and industry intelligence to understand employer and worker needs and established equitable goals and priorities
 - vi. The partnership is looking at disaggregated data and having conversations with employers and partners about racial equity
 - vii. Employers are developing career pathways within their own companies and reviewing their own hiring, retention, and advancement policies and practices
 - viii. The partnership is working with employers to identify and promote relevant skills-based, industry recognized credentials and work-based learning models
- e. Identify “difficult-to-meet” skills needs and the related target occupations. Please note that if the National Fund selects your proposal, it will request details on the number of workers that employer partners plan to hire over the grant period.

2. **Economic Development.** Does your collaborative have an existing relationship with the economic development agencies in your region that will enable you to obtain a letter of support?

Please note that, if selected, the National Fund will need your assistance to (1) describe how the proposed Good Jobs program aligns with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy⁴ (CEDS) in your region and (2) obtain at least one letter of support from either your local economic development agencies and/or a local unit of government. Prior to submitting the proposal to EDA, the National Fund will need selected applicants to find their local CEDS plan and identify one or more priorities the Good Jobs project will support.

3. **Racial Equity and Inclusion.** Does your collaborative have experience working with employers on REI? If yes, please rate your comfort level with having these kinds of interactions with employers, on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is “not comfortable at all” and 10 is “I speak fluent REI.” Please describe your commitment to and/or expertise in promoting racial equity and inclusion in workforce outcomes.

⁴ A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. A CEDS is the result of a regionally owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region. To find your CEDS, please visit: <https://www.statsamerica.org/ceds/> . To find your economic development district: <https://eda.gov/resources/>

4. **Co-Investment.** Please identify the current annual budget that supports your work in the each of the target industries you identified above and identify the portions that are public and private. Please list the top 3–5 funding sources for these efforts. Please note that while the National Fund will not require a 1:1 match for this investment, all selected applicants will be required to document some level of leveraged cash or in-kind resources.

5. **Capacity and Qualifications.** Describe the experience of the collaborative and its fiscal home in securing, implementing, and managing federally funded projects. If you do not have experience managing federal funds, describe any experience managing other public funds. Please share whether you have an accounting system in place that allows you to track expenses by funding source. Describe your current approach to collecting and tracking data related to job seeker or worker demographics and outcomes, as well as project activities. If you do not currently track job seeker-level data, please identify whether you require capacity building assistance from the National Fund to put such as system in place in order to meet EDA’s requirements.

Applications are due to the National Fund by 8 p.m. Eastern on December 20, 2021. All materials should be submitted electronically to the National Fund’s general email address (info@nationalfund.org) and cc’d to Abby Wood, program manager at awood@nationalfund.org. Any questions about the RFP should be directed to Michelle Rafferty at mrafferty@nationalfund.org. The National Fund will respond in writing to all questions submitted by December 13, 2021; questions and answers will be shared with all prospective applicants.

The National Fund will hold two applicant conferences and will record these conferences and publish recordings to nationalfund.org:

Thursday December 9, 2021 @ 3 pm ET. Register here:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYuf-yhrzwwHdLPsAhTsQ9pyO2RpPyOiTIY>

Monday December 13, 2021 @ 4 pm ET. Register here:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUof-yvpjsuE9H4zpDTcggOmgHArj51QLz>

X. Selection Criteria

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions will evaluate each proposal according using the following criteria.

Section	Criteria for Full Points	Total Points Possible
Industry Partnerships	Applicant has existing industry partnership or strong employer relationships in one or more of the target industries and provides evidence of the partnership’s effectiveness and current employer engagement. Applicant provides evidence that the target industry is important to economic growth and resiliency in their	40

	region and that a training intervention is needed to meet employer needs.	
Economic Development	Applicant has existing relationships with economic development agencies and/or has demonstrated commitment to establishing a relationship and securing a letter of support.	5
REI	Applicant provides evidence they are committed to advancing REI outcomes for workers.	15
Co-Investment	Collaborative has the ability to leverage additional public or private resources to support the outcomes of the Good Jobs project.	15
Capacity and Qualifications	Applicant demonstrates they have the necessary capacity and experience to successfully manage federally funded projects. If the applicant does not yet have experience and systems required for financial and program data tracking, they demonstrate an understanding and willingness to undertake activities to build capacity.	25
Total Possible		100

XI. Resources

- [EDA Good Jobs Challenge Website](#)
- [A Trauma-Informed Approach to Workforce](#)
- [CareerSTAT Resource Center](#)
- [Financial Wellness Guide](#)
- [Toolbox for the Systems Change Mindset](#)
- [Advancing Workforce Equity: A Guide for Stakeholders](#)
- [Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships](#)
- [Job Design Framework](#)
- [Characteristics of a High Performing Collaborative](#)
- [Sustainability Guide for Funder Collaboratives](#)