



Quick Guides for Collaboratives

Funding Your Regional Workforce Collaborative

You've brought your collaborative's stakeholders to the table, identified your value proposition and set your priorities. Now it's time to fund the collaborative's operations and programs. Your local community foundation and other philanthropic entities are likely already on your radar. Consider the following additional funding sources and approaches.

Philanthropic Funding: Going Beyond Discretionary Grants

In addition to applying for discretionary grants, think about building relationships with philanthropic advisers or donor services staff at local community foundations, large financial institutions, and other organizations that have donor advised funds, field of interest funds, or trusts. Educate these staff members about the collaborative so they can connect interested donors with your work. Ask members of the collaborative to establish relationships with local giving circles that focus on target populations, geographies, or giving strategies.

Private Sector or Corporate Support

Besides grant funding from corporate foundations or corporate giving programs, the collaborative may wish to explore sponsorships to support convenings, events, publications, or other high-visibility activities. Collaboratives can also obtain in-kind contributions for consulting, legal, communications, information technology, or other professional services or get donations of space, software, or equipment to support operations and reduce costs. Look into leveraging the [Community Reinvestment Act](#) to encourage local depository institutions to participate in and contribute to the collaborative.

Public Funds

The ability to access public funding depends on the strength of your collaborative's relationships with public sector partners. It also helps if public sector partners see their mandate as broader than administering Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds. Collaboratives should demonstrate that the support of the public workforce system benefits everyone. Here are potential sources of public dollars:

- **Federal Grants:** Collaboratives interested in competitive federal funding should regularly check the [U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration](#) and [Grants.gov](#) for new announcements. Note that federal grants require significant fiscal management capacity, although they are also often large enough to be able to support collaborative capacity and activities.

- **Local WIOA funds:** Under certain conditions, local workforce boards have the flexibility to contract directly with institutions of higher education or eligible training providers if it would facilitate training for multiple individuals in high-demand occupations or if there is a proven training program offered by a community-based organization or other private organization, and if such a contract does not limit customer choice.¹ Regional collaboratives can work with their local boards to determine if direct contracts using WIOA funds can support training connected to the needs of a local industry partnership. In addition, WIOA provides flexibility for local areas to support employer services and coordination activities using adult and dislocated worker funds. This may allow the local board to support industry partnerships and related services to employers and collaborative work related to improving coordination, services, and linkages among different workforce-related programs and activities.² Be aware that although WIOA allows for these uses it does not specifically fund them, and so some workforce boards may be reluctant to use limited funding this way.
- **State WIOA Funds:** WIOA allows governors to reserve up to 15% of WIOA state allocations to support statewide or innovative projects. Historically, these funds have supported the implementation of career pathways, bridge programs, sector initiatives, and other workforce approaches considered innovative. Collaboratives seeking these funds should build relationships with their state labor and workforce leaders to better understand how these funds are allocated and to partner on strategies that advance the state's workforce goals. These funds could possibly support collaborative operations in addition to capacity building, coordination, and workforce training strategies.
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E&T) 50/50 funds:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture's SNAP E&T program helps SNAP recipients access training and supportive services to enter into the workforce or advance in their careers. Every state must operate a SNAP E&T program, but each can design it to meet local needs and requirements. SNAP E&T agencies can partner with providers such as community colleges, community-based organizations, and others that use nonfederal funds to provide education, training, and support services to SNAP recipients. Although SNAP E&T dollars cannot support collaborative operations, they may be used to enhance or expand services by allowing grantees to draw down reimbursement for nonfederal dollars spent on SNAP recipients. For more information, see the [National Association of Workforce Board's Workforce + SNAP E&T Community of Practice](#).
- **State workforce funds/grants:** Many states have established workforce training funds or other state competitive grant programs. These may be held at the state department of labor and workforce development, education, economic development, or even other departments, depending on the focus of the training/activity. Some states budget general funds or utilize funding generated from a [surcharge on unemployment insurance \(UI\)](#) to support workforce development programs and initiatives. For example, Texas has the [Skills Development Fund](#), and

1. See pages 9-10 of training and employment guidance letter WIOA No. 3-15, Operating Guidance for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Employment and Training Administration Advisory System, U.S. Department of Labor, July 1, 2015), https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_03-15_Acc.pdf

2. See page 16 of WIOA No. 3-15, https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_03-15_Acc.pdf

Massachusetts has the [Workforce Training Fund Program](#). Although funding from UI-supported funds is generally limited to businesses that pay into the funds, other state workforce grant funds, such as the Massachusetts [Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund](#) or the [Ohio Industry Sector Partnership Grant](#), may be more flexible and may even require a match from business, philanthropy, or other sources that are typically part of a collaborative. Look to these sources to support your collaborative's needs in training, industry partnership development, and coordination. Keep in mind that workforce boards are often but not always required partners on these grants.

- **Local workforce funds and grants:** Some cities and counties have competitive workforce funding grants or trust funds that collaboratives and their grantees whose programs and services benefit local residents may be able to access. Sometimes funds are generated by or attached to local development or hire requirements. Collaboratives should stay in close contact with local economic development organizations and local workforce and elected officials to learn whether and how to access these funding sources. For example, Boston's [Neighborhood Jobs Trust](#), funded by linkage fees based on the square footage of commercial development projects over 100,000 square feet, has long been a source of support for the SkillWorks funder collaborative and its occupational training programs and strategies that benefit Boston residents.

