
Washington envisions a nationally recognized fully integrated One-Stop system with enhanced customer access to program services, improved long-term employment outcomes for job seekers and consistent, high quality services to business customers. In order to achieve this vision, the WorkSource Standards & Integration Division sets a common direction and standards for Washington's WorkSource system through the development of WorkSource system policies, information memoranda, and technical assistance.

WorkSource Advisory Bulletin 10-06

**TO: Workforce Development Councils
WorkSource Area Directors
Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board**

FROM: Amy Smith-Rubeck, Deputy Assistant Commissioner

DATE: May 18, 2011

SUBJECT: Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge Grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration

1. Purpose:

This advisory provides information on the Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge grant expected to be released by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration before the end of this month (May 2011).

2. Background:

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) is planning to release the Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge grant announcement before the end of May. The grant represents \$33 million in combined funding from three federal agencies – the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA), the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA), and the Small Business Administration (SBA). Technical assistance resources will come from another 13 federal agencies and bureaus. The Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) announcement will contain more information on each federal entity's role.

The grants will support the development of approximately 20 competitively selected high-growth industry clusters in urban and rural regions. Grants will be focused on Regional Innovation Clusters (RICs). Preliminary information suggests that the awards will focus on groups that take a regional approach to develop their grant proposals.

Grant funds can be used to support and accelerate a range of measurable outcomes including innovation, commercialization, business formation and expansion, job creation, development of a skilled workforce, increasing exports, sustainable economic development and global competitiveness.

The Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge represents the implementation of a number of Obama Administration policy priorities, including the acceleration of bottom-up innovation strategies in urban

and rural multi-jurisdictional geographies.

RICs are a tested approach for developing regional economic prosperity. The Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge is designed to accelerate the benefits of RIC-based economic development, including business formation and expansion, job creation, and enhanced competitiveness in U.S. regions by coordinating federal resources to support the development of self-identified high-growth clusters. The Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge is a project of the Taskforce for the Advancement of Regional Innovation Clusters (TARIC) in partnership with federal agencies. TARIC was created by the White House to provide support to RICs. TARIC-affiliated agencies offer unique resources and expertise to help advance the long-term economic health of all regions in the U.S.

The Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge also represents the implementation of the regional innovation programs called for in the America COMPETES reauthorization legislation (Public Law 111-358) passed by Congress and signed by the President on January 4, 2011.

Clusters are networks of interconnected firms and supporting institutions that accelerate innovation, business formation and expansion, and job creation. Clusters may not conform to traditional regional geographies like political jurisdictions or federally-defined metropolitan statistical areas. Globally competitive industries may be anchored in a given region as the foundation of a cluster, but have networked assets (supplies, investors, research partnerships) in other states or abroad. Well-known clusters include information technology in Silicon Valley, pharmaceuticals in North Carolina's Research Triangle Park, financial services in New York City and energy in Houston. Clusters can also span state lines as they do in the Idaho-Oregon-Washington food manufacturing cluster.

Here in Washington, industry clusters were codified in state statute under Substitute House Bill 1323, which directs the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, Department of Commerce, and Economic Development Commission to identify, target and assist strategic industry clusters and to also include industry clusters in both the workforce and economic development statewide strategic plans. The statute also provides that Employment Security labor market information and analysis is to be part of the cluster identification process. The statute further directs local workforce development councils to work with local associate development organizations to assist regional industry clusters.

Interested applicants are encouraged to begin laying the groundwork for their grant partnerships and proposals and monitor the EDA's grants website (<http://www.eda.gov/InvestmentsGrants/FFON.xml>) and the federal government's grants website (<http://grants.gov/>) for the coming announcement.

3. References:

Federal Register, Volume 76, No. 81, April 27, 2011, p. 23543, Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, The Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge: a Coordinated Initiative To Advance Regional Competitiveness.

4. Website:

<http://www.eda.gov/InvestmentsGrants/JobsAndInnovationChallengeFAQ>

<http://frwebgate1.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/PDFgate.cgi?WAISdocID=EColqg/33/2/0&WAIAction=retrieve>

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