State of Oregon

FUTURE READY OREGON

WORKFORCE READY GRANTS

Round Two: Innovation in Workforce Programs

Request for Applications

HECC # 22-072

OregonBuys # S-52500- 00006139

Date of Issue:	April 10, 2023
Application Due Date:	June 23, 2023, 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time
Award Announcement:	October, 2023

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For questions, clarifications, or if you need this material in a different format, please contact the Future Ready Oregon team at FutureReadyOregon@hecc.oregon.gov

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The State of Oregon, acting by and through the Higher Education Coordinating Commission ("HECC"), is issuing this Request for Applications ("RFA") on behalf of the Office of the Executive Director.

The State of Oregon has committed to supporting the educational and training needs of Oregonians through the establishment of Future Ready Oregon, also known as [Senate Bill ("SB") 1545](#) (2022). Future Ready Oregon is a comprehensive $200M investment package that supports the education and training Oregonians need for family-wage careers, prioritizing historically underserved communities.

Workforce Ready Grants are one component of Future Ready Oregon and represent a total investment of $95M. Workforce Ready Grants will be made available to workforce service providers and community-based organizations that administer workforce programs in the health care, manufacturing, and technology industry sectors and prioritize equitable program participation by individuals from priority populations.

Workforce Ready Grants are being made available for application in phases. This application process is a part of Phase Two.

2. GRANT OPPORTUNITY AND PURPOSE

This RFA is for Round Two of Workforce Ready Grants. In Round One, HECC awarded $10 million in Capacity Building Grants. Round Two Grants will fund organizational investments and strategic partnerships and can be referred to as Innovation in Workforce Programs grants. Round Two grants are intended to broaden the type, number, and capacity of organizations that comprise Oregon's workforce system. By expanding representation in the workforce system, HECC hopes to increase the availability and usage of culturally and linguistically appropriate workforce services. Round Two Grants will fund new, innovative, and collaborative workforce development programming that centers the needs of the priority populations as defined in SB 1545 section 1(8)a-j:

(a) Communities of color;
(b) Women;
(c) Low-income communities;
(d) Rural and frontier communities;
(e) Veterans;
(f) Persons with disabilities;
(g) Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals;
(h) Members of Oregon's nine federally recognized Indian tribes;
(i) Individuals who disproportionately experience discrimination in employment on the basis of age; and

(j) Individuals who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Round Two Grant funds can be used for the following activities to address workforce development needs in health care, manufacturing, and/or technology industry sectors:

- **Provide direct benefits to individuals, including**
  - Providing paid work experience, including stipends and wages
  - Offering tuition and fee assistance for workforce programs
  - Providing wraparound workforce development services

- **Fund the creation and expansion of education and training programs, including Developing culturally and linguistically specific career pathways for obtaining certificates, credentials or degrees recognized by targeted industry sectors**

- **Expand the capacity of organizations to provide workforce development services (including but not limited to)**
  - Hiring staff or contracting for services
  - Development strategies around workforce programs including program development
  - Purchasing equipment, technology, or other supplies
  - Paying for administrative costs
  - Any other activities necessary to increase the organization's capacity to provide workforce programs in the health care, manufacturing, and technology industry sectors

The allowable cost period for the Round 2 Workforce Ready project activities will be July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2026.

Applying for or receiving funds in Round Two will not impact an applicant's ability or need to apply for future rounds of funding.

3. RFA SCHEDULE

The table below represents a tentative schedule of events for this RFA. All times are listed in Pacific Time. All dates listed are subject to change.

Description	Date	Time
RFA Issuance	April 10, 2023	
Optional Application Coaching and Guidance available through the Technical Assistance providers described in Section 7 below	April 10, 2023, to June 23, 2023	

Optional Information Sessions for Potential Applicants	Monday, April 17th, 2023	1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. (see Section 7 below)
	Tuesday, April 25th, 2023	4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. (see Section 7 below)
	Wednesday, May 3rd, 2023	1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. (see Section 7 below)
	Wednesday, May 10th, 2023	4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. (see Section 7 below)
Application Due Prior to	**June 23rd, 2023**	**11:59 p.m.**
Notice of Award (approximate)	August, 2023	
Issuance of Grant Agreement (approximate)	October, 2023	

4. COMMITMENT TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

Individuals within a community, and communities within a larger society, need the ability to shape their own present and future, and the HECC believes that workforce development and education are fundamental aspects of Oregon's ability to thrive. Equity is both the means to success and an end that benefits us all. Equity requires the intentional examination of systemic policies and practices that, even if they have the appearance of fairness, may in effect serve to marginalize some and perpetuate disparities. The data is clear that Oregon demographics have been changing to provide rich diversity in race, ethnicity, and language. Working toward equity requires an understanding of historical contexts and the active investment in changing social structures and practice over time to ensure that individuals from all communities have the opportunities and support to realize their full potential.

Creating a culture of equity requires monitoring, encouragement, resources, data, and opportunity. The HECC applies its Equity Lens (https://www.oregon.gov/highered/about/Documents/State-Goals/Equity-Lens.pdf) to all aspects of its work. Additionally, Future Ready Oregon as a concept, originated in the Racial Justice Council's Workforce Workgroup, with the intent to do things differently. That means investing differently, encouraging innovation, and intentionally bringing new partners into our workforce system. Future Ready Oregon also places an emphasis on serving priority populations which include, but is not limited to, communities of color, women, low-income communities, rural and frontier communities, veterans, persons with disabilities, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, members of Oregon's nine federally recognized Indian tribes, older adults and individuals who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community.

HECC has worked to operationalize the spirit of Future Ready Oregon and our commitment to

diversity, equity and inclusion in this grant making process through the following actions:

- Consulting with partners to inform our planning in an effort to develop an inclusive, low barrier grant process.
- Focusing the first round of funding on capacity building grants to enable a more diverse group of organizations the time and funding to plan and prepare for future workforce development activities and funding opportunities.
- Hosting a series of information sessions designed to provide potential applicants an opportunity to ask questions and receive guidance (see Section 7 below for more information)
- Contracting with Technical Assistance providers to provide potential applicants technical assistance and coaching through the funding application process (see Section 7 below for more information)
- Prioritizing priority populations in the scoring criteria (see Section 7 below for more information)
- Soliciting engagement in the scoring process from a diverse mixture of organizations, entities, and partners
- Providing funding upfront to applicants that demonstrate a need for immediate funds (see Section 6 below, and Attachment B, for more information)

5. GENERAL APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Eligible applicants must be either a workforce service provider or a community-based organization. Please feel free to reference the FAQ guide, section **Eligible Applicants** for further clarification about eligible entity types.

FAQ available on the HECC Grants and Contracts Website:

https://www.oregon.gov/highered/about/Pages/grants-contracting.aspx

All applicants must:
- be registered with SAM.Gov and have an UEI
  - https://sam.gov/content/home
- have an EIN through the IRS
  - https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/apply-for-an-employer-identification-number-ein-online

Workforce service providers include:
- nonprofit and public workforce education, training, and career services providers
- governmental entities including Tribal Governments that provide workforce development services

Community-based organizations include:

- nonprofit organizations that are representative of a particular community or specific segments of a community and are located within or in close proximity to the community they serve
- culturally-specific organizations who serve a particular cultural community, are primarily staffed and led by members of that community and demonstrate intimate knowledge of the lived experience of that community, including, but not limited to:
  - The impact of racism or discrimination on the community
  - Specific disparities in access to services and resources experienced by the community
  - Community strengths, cultural practices, beliefs and traditions

General Applicant Terms:

- HECC may require clarification to understand any of the applicant's scored criteria. Any necessary clarifications or modifications will be made before executing any award and may become part of the final Agreement.
- Submission of an Application does not constitute an agreement between the HECC and applicant, nor does it secure or imply that applicant will be selected to receive funding.
- All costs associated with applicant's submission of an application are the sole responsibility of the applicant and shall not be borne by HECC or the State of Oregon.
- By applying, applicant accepts all the terms and conditions of this RFA. No Grant Funds will be released prior to all program conditions being met and funding agreements executed.

6. GRANT AGREEMENT REQUIREMENTS AND FUNDING INFORMATION

- HECC anticipates awarding numerous Grant Agreements.
- The Grant Funds are federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act or ARPA. A draft of the reporting requirements is included in Appendix E.
- HECC reserves the right to reopen the RFA as necessary, as it deems in its best interest.
- HECC reserves the right to amend agreements resulting from this RFA for additional time and/or funds, if in HECC's best interest to do so.
  HECC may disburse awards upon execution of Grant Agreements, if articulated as a need by the Grantee in their application and if HECC's best interest to do so.

Reporting Requirements:

All Grant recipients will be required to provide quarterly performance and financial reporting as well as final, Grant close out reporting to Grant administrators at HECC. Please review Appendix E for a draft of the reporting requirements that may be included in the Grant Agreements. Quarterly reporting may include:

- Invoices – invoices must utilize a HECC provided template and budget categories and include a description of the funds used and work completed on a quarterly basis. Invoices will include an option for Grantee to request funding disbursements for the immediate next quarter.
- Fiscal Reconciliation – at the close of each quarter grantee must provide documentation to report how funds were expended from any funds that were provided in an up-front disbursement.
- Performance Reporting – answer qualitative questions related to program implementation.
- Participant Reporting – collect person-level information for each program participant related to demographic information, services, credentials earned, and outcomes known by the program.

Please see below for a sample reporting calendar:

Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4
Dec – Jan – Feb	Mar – Apr – May	June – July – Aug	Sep – Oct – Nov
Due March 31st	Due June 30th	Due September 30th	Due December 31st

Allowable Uses for Grant Funds:

Applicants shall provide a budget estimate for funding that details the following Allowable Costs:

- Fund the creation or expansion of education and training programs in the key sectors of healthcare, manufacturing, and technology
- Provide direct benefits to individuals, including stipends for "earn and learn" experiences, and funding to pay for education, training costs, and wraparound supports and services
- Expand the organizational capacity to provide workforce development services

These Round Two Grant funds are for the above-described Allowable Costs from the period of July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2026.

7. SUBMISSION

Resources Prior to Submission:

HECC will hold four optional Information Sessions for Potential Applicants. Attendees can expect to hear background information on Future Ready Oregon, learn more about the purpose of these Grants and how an organization's application will be scored. Attendees can ask clarifying questions about the application process and the Future Ready Oregon Program. Subject to technology limitations, HECC will post recordings of the sessions alongside the RFA on the HECC Grant and Contracting Opportunities webpage (https://www.oregon.gov/highered/about/pages/grants-contracting.aspx) as well as the Future Ready Oregon webpage (https://www.oregon.gov/highered/policy-collaboration/Pages/Future-Ready.aspx).

The optional Information Session dates and times are as follows:

- Session #1 Monday, April 17th 1:00PM – 2:00 PM
- Session #2 Tuesday, April 25th 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM
- Session #4 Wednesday, May 3rd 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM
- Session #5 Wednesday, May 10th 4:30 PM – 5:30 PM

Register* for sessions on the Future Ready Oregon webpage:
https://www.oregon.gov/highered/policy-collaboration/Pages/Future-Ready.aspx
*Once registered, an email with the link to the meeting will be sent to you. Email
FutureReadyOregon@hecc.oregon.gov if you do not receive this link.

HECC has contracted with the below-named contractors to provide potential applicants coaching and technical assistance through the RFA process. Potential applicants can expect to receive assistance and guidance in determining their eligibility and in preparing their applications from the Technical Assistance Providers.

This service is being made available to all potential applicants at no cost. To access this service please call or email one of the following options (they are not listed in any particular order):

Technical Assistance Provider #1:
Boules Consulting
https://boulesconsulting.org/
Marianne Boules
marianne@Boulesconsulting.org
818-599-2692

Technical Assistance Provider #2:
Grass Roots NW
https://www.grassrootsnw.com/
Bill Weissman
grassrootsnw@comcast.net
503-422-2502

Technical Assistance Provider #3:
Next Level Nonprofit Consulting LLC
https://nextlevelnonprofitconsulting.com/
Ann Craig ann@nextlevelnonprofitconsulting.com 541-829-1850
Lynn Egli lynn@nextlevelnonprofitconsulting.com 541-760-5435

Technical Assistance Provider #4:
Nonprofit Success Group
https://npsuccessgroup.com/
Nita Kirby kirby@nonprofitsuccessgroup.com
Robin Ortiz robin@nonprofitsuccessgroup.com

Technical Assistance Provider #5:

Se Puede
https://www.sepuedepdx.com/
Andrés Oswill
Andres@sepuedepdx.com

Technical Assistance Provider #6:

Wisdom Consulting
Jennifer Wisdom
jennifer@leadwithwisdom.com

Submission Requirements:

All Applications shall be submitted via the web-based Application found here:
https://oregonhecc.smapply.us/prog/workforce_ready_grants_round_two_innovation_in_workforce_programs
Submissions received after June 23, 2023, at 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time may not be accepted.

8. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following scoring rubric will be used to evaluate Applicant's response to all question prompts:

Workforce Ready Grants Round Two Scoring Rubric	
5 Outstanding	• Response fully addresses all question prompts and provides information in a thorough and complete manner and provides specific details and examples. • Response indicates the Applicant has a complete understanding of the prompts included in the question. • Response demonstrates the applicant possesses the capacity, expertise, and/or strengths to meet or exceed the expectations set forth in the project plan related to this prompt.
4 Above Average	• Response addresses all question prompts, some more thoroughly than others, and provides specific details and examples. • Response indicates the Applicant understands the prompts included in the question. • Response demonstrates the applicant possesses sufficient capacity, expertise, and/or strengths to meet the expectations set forth in the project plan related to this prompt.
3 Average	• Response addresses most question prompts, provides adequate information, and uses some details and examples to support their response to the question. • Response indicates the Applicant understands the prompts included in the question. • Response demonstrates that this applicant possesses some capacity, expertise, and/or strengths to meet the expectations set forth in the project plan related to this prompt.

2 **Below** **Average**	• Response addresses a few question prompts, provides some relevant information, and uses few details or examples to support their response to the question. • Response indicates the Applicant may not understand the prompts included in the question. • Response demonstrates the applicant possesses limited capacity, expertise, and/or strengths to meet the expectations set forth in the project plan related to this prompt.
1 **Inadequate**	• Response addresses none or very few question prompts, provides little or no information, and uses no details and examples to support their response to the question. • Response indicates the Applicant does not understand the prompts included in the question. • Response demonstrates the applicant does not possess the capacity, expertise, and/or strengths to meet the expectations set forth in the project plan related to this prompt.

Evaluation Item #1: Organization Description and Capacity (suggested 300 words max) 13 points

A. Please address the following prompts in your response:

1. Briefly describe your organization and explain its experience and effectiveness in providing workforce development opportunities to individuals from priority populations.
2. Provide evidence of capacity to deliver the proposed project/program.
3. What role do your participants play in the design, decision making, and evaluation of program services?

Evaluation Item #2: Partnerships (suggested 500 words max) 20 points

List the key partner organization(s) that will be directly involved in the proposed project/program and for each key partner, please answer the following prompts:

a. For each organization, please describe their unique contribution(s) and role in preparing this application, grant administration, grant management, budget/fiscal oversight, project/program activities, service delivery, and any other proposed function of this project/program.
b. For each organization, please provide a brief description of the organization and explain their experience and effectiveness in providing workforce development opportunities to individuals from priority populations.
c. For each organization, please provide evidence of their capacity to deliver the proposed project/program.

d. Please describe how each organization will contribute to the project/program's ability to identify, engage, and/or serve participants, increasing accessibility for priority populations to workforce programs and opportunities.
e. Differentiate historic partnerships from partnerships proposed for this specific project/program.

Which of these entities will you engage and collaborate with on this proposed project/program to increase accessibility for priority populations to workforce programs and opportunities? *(Check all that apply)*

☐ Workforce service providers
☐ Community-based and culturally specific organizations
☐ Kindergarten through grade 12 schools
☐ Community colleges
☐ Universities
☐ Education and training partners other than K-12, community colleges, universities
☐ Local workforce development boards
☐ Economic development organizations
☐ Private sector business and employer partners
☐ Industry associations
☐ Oregon's nine federally recognized tribes☐ Other (please specify)
_____

Evaluation Item #3: Cultural Competency (suggested 500 words max) 20 points

Please address the following prompts in your response:

a. For each organization involved in the implementation of the proposed project/program please describe the experience they have in serving individuals from the priority population(s) identified in Question #4.
b. For each organization involved in the implementation of the proposed project/program please describe how the staff, board members, and contractors – particularly individuals providing direct service – are reflective of the individuals and/or communities served? What lived experience, qualities and/or training give them the ability to work effectively with the priority population(s) identified in Question #4?
c. Please address any organizational capacity across the identified partnership to provide services to participants in multiple languages.

Evaluation Item #4: New and Innovative Programming (suggested 500 words max) 20 points

Please address the following prompts in your response:

a. Briefly describe the proposed project/program.
b. Please indicate what is new and innovative about your proposed project/program or approach.

c. Describe how your organization and key partners propose to advance equitable workforce education and training opportunities.
d. Describe how the proposed project/program intends to engage with employers in the targeted industry sector(s).
e. Identify the number of participants you expect to serve through this proposed project/program.
f. Indicate the timeline for implementation and identify major project milestones.

Which of following activities will be included as part of the proposed project/program? *(check all that apply)*

☐ Fund the creation or expansion of education and training programs in the key sectors of healthcare, manufacturing, and technology by performing the following:

   ☐ Developing culturally and linguistically specific career pathways for obtaining certificates, credentials or degrees recognized by targeted industry sectors
   ☐ Purchasing equipment or other training-related supplies
   ☐ Other (please specify): _____

☐ Provide direct benefits to individuals, including stipends for earn and learn experiences and funding to pay for education, training costs, and wraparound supports and services (*check all that apply*):

   ☐ Providing paid work experience, including stipends and wages
   ☐ Offering tuition and/or fee assistance for workforce education and training programs
   ☐ Providing wraparound supports and services for workforce education and training participants, including but not limited to: childcare, transportation, housing, technology, clothing and/or equipment needed to be successful on the job or in the training program.
   ☐ Other (please specify): _____

☐ Expand the organizational capacity to provide these workforce development services (*check all that apply*):

   ☐ Hiring staff
   ☐ Developing organizational development strategies
   ☐ Purchasing equipment or other training-related supplies
   ☐ Other activities identified in a grant proposal as necessary to administer workforce programs described in the New and Innovative Programming section (please specify): _____

Evaluation Item #5: Program Benefit to Participants (suggested 300 words max) 13 points

Please address the following prompts in your response:

a. At the end of the application, you will be required to upload a project plan with specific activities. Please address how these activities contribute to the success of participants.
b. Identify the industry-recognized certificate(s) or credential(s) that will prepare participants to obtain living-wage jobs with benefits. Include any short-term pathways to employment, self-sufficient earning potential, and opportunities for economic mobility.
c. Identify any direct support services, incentives or other payments that will be provided to address financial needs of participants and support retention and successful program completion.

Evaluation Item #6: Culturally Responsive Training (suggested 300 words max) 14 points

Please address the following prompts in your response:

a. Identify how your proposed services and activities will address the needs of the Priority Population(s) served, with attention to barriers and disparities faced by these individuals.
b. Indicate if these services and activities are based on or aligned with promising practices, evidence-based practices, and/or cultural practices, or otherwise designed for the Priority Populations served.
c. How does the program ensure safe, affirming, and inclusive spaces for all participants?

Total: 100 Points

Miscellaneous Evaluation Information

Evaluation of applications are based on the criteria in this RFA. In appropriate circumstances, HECC reserves the right to partially fund applications in discrete portions or phases of the overall proposed work. If HECC chooses to partially fund an application, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice any applicants or affect the basis upon which the application, or portion thereof, was evaluated and selected for award, and therefore maintains the integrity of the competition and selection process. Funding applications through this RFA does not guarantee future funding. When, or if, additional funding becomes available, HECC reserves the right to issue additional awards under this RFA through the remainder of the biennium. These awards will not require further competition. Any additional selections will be made in accordance with the terms of this RFA and HECC.

HECC at any point reserves the right to reopen the RFA as necessary or may solicit programs if it is in the best interest of HECC.

9. PUBLIC RECORDS

All information and records submitted to the HECC are subject to disclosure under the Public Records Law, ORS 192.311 to 192.478. If Applicant believes that any information or records it submits to the HECC may be a trade secret under ORS 192.345(2), or otherwise is exempt from disclosure under the Oregon Public Records Law, Applicant must identify such information with particularity and include the following statement:

- "This data is exempt from disclosure under the Oregon Public Records Law pursuant to ORS chapter 192[insert] and is not to be disclosed except in accordance with the Oregon Public Records Law, ORS 192.311 through 192.478."
- If Applicant fails to identify with particularity the portions of such information that Applicant believes are exempt from disclosure, Applicant is deemed to waive any future claim of non-disclosure of that information.

10.   LIST OF ATTACHMENTS TO THIS RFA:
- Attachment A: Link to Workforce Ready Round Two Grant Application
- Attachment B: Project Budget
- Attachment C: Application Certification Sheet
- Attachment D: Draft Reporting Requirements
- Attachment E: Draft Background check and Insurance requirements
- Attachment F: Draft Participant Level Submission Template
- Attachment G: Project Performance Plan Template (45 days after signing)
- Attachment H: Annual Reporting Template (July 15)
- Attachment I: Project Plan