
WIOA Rapid Response Funding
for
Illinois Talent Pipeline Management

Request for Application

(Program Year 2016)

**Illinois Department of Commerce and
Economic Opportunity**

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act—Rapid Response
Request for Application

	<i>Page Number</i>
I. General Information	
A. Grantor Agency	1
B. Program Goal	1
C. Funding	1
D. Types of Training	2
E. Eligible Respondents	2
F. Requirements	2
G. Agency Contact	2
II. Program Description	
A. Background	3
B. Approach	4
C. Project Types	6
D. Department Responsibilities	8
III. Application and Program Requirements	
A. Company Identification – At Risk Documentation	8
B. Partnership Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding	8
C. Project Schedule	8
D. Allowable Costs	9
E. Project Reporting	9
F. Pre-Award Survey	9
G. Monitoring - Fiscal and Programmatic	9
H. Performance	9
IV. Client Eligibility / Applicant WIOA Ability	
A. Serving WIOA Clients	10
B. Applicant’s WIOA Ability	10
C. Related Links	10
V. Review and Selection Procedures	
A. Applicant Capacity	11
B. Documentation of Need	11
C. Project Quality / Coordination	11
D. Cost Effectiveness / Return on Investment	11

I. General Information

A. **Grantor Agency:**

The Office of Employment and Training (OET) of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (Department of Commerce) administers Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds and is issuing this Request for Application (RFA) for companies to use this funding to meet their hiring and training needs.

B. **Program Goal:**

Department of Commerce will award grants for demonstration projects providing Rapid Response services to businesses and workers impacted or at-risk of being impacted by company closures or layoffs. Grantees will facilitate or provide skill upgrade training to WIOA eligible dislocated workers or incumbent workers at-risk of losing their jobs.

C. **Funding:**

1. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Rapid Response Funds support this RFA. It is anticipated that Department of Commerce will award \$3-5 Million in Rapid Response Illinois Talent Pipeline Management grants.
2. Grant awards will generally not exceed \$500,000; however, Department of Commerce may elect to award amounts over this based on strength of application or strength of performance during the grant period. If at any time prior to the grant award or after an award is issued the applicant requests to change the number of trainees to be served, the grant award may be proportionately adjusted at Department of Commerce's sole discretion.
3. Funding will support occupational skill upgrade training in sectors included in the Illinois Pathways initiative. The sectors include Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources; Architecture and Construction; Energy; Finance; Health Science; Information Technology; Manufacturing; Research and Development; and Transportation, Distribution and Logistics (www.illinoispathways.com). Department of Commerce will also consider projects targeting WIOA eligible Veterans considered dislocated workers due to separating from the military (*does not include Veterans considered a dislocated worker due to separating from a post-military service job*), especially those separating after participating in Operation Enduring Freedom (*War in Afghanistan*) or Operation Iraqi Freedom/New Dawn (*War and Occupation in Iraq*).
4. In order to ensure all funds are expended prior to their expiration, Department of Commerce may, at its sole discretion, unilaterally increase or decrease a grant award based on grantee performance. Department of Commerce will review progress regularly with grantees to understand the factors impacting performance and may provide technical assistance to improve performance. Department of Commerce will provide notification prior to adjusting the grant award.
5. Funding will be provided on a reimbursement basis, and will be prorated dependent upon the grantee meeting performance targets established for each type of training. Each grant will have enrollment and outcome goals specific to the types of projects funded. Penalties for missing performance targets may be applied at the grantor's discretion.

D. Types of Training:

Grant funds awarded may be used for the following types of training:

- On-the-Job and/or Work-based Training for unemployed workers
- Registered Apprenticeships for unemployed and existing workers
- Class Size Training for unemployed workers
- Customized Training for unemployed workers
- Skills Upgrade Training (Incumbent Worker Training) for existing workers

E. Eligible Respondents:

Department of Commerce will accept applications from local Workforce Boards or their designated entities, private sector for-profit and non-profit employers, educational institutions, and private sector for-profit and non-profit training providers or other entities, such as employer and industry associations, chambers of commerce and other organizations with the ability to engage employers to facilitate training and job placements.

F. Requirements:

1. All applications must be sent electronically to Department of Commerce to be considered for funding. Applications must be submitted to wioaitalent@illinoisworknet.com. Applicants must submit one complete PDF document; additional documents that are not included in the PDF file will not be accepted as part of the application. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis throughout the fiscal year. The deadline to be considered for a Program Year 2016 grant is May 15, 2017. Any application received after this deadline may be considered for review at the discretion of the Department.
2. All applications must fully address the Application Requirements listed in this RFA.
3. All respondents must be in compliance, or agree to comply, with the following Federal and State laws and related regulations in order to be considered for an award:

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Public Law 113-128) including but not limited to:

- a. Equal Employment Opportunity / Nondiscrimination Provision and will comply with the physical, programmatic and accessibility requirements;
- b. Protection of Personally Identifiable Information;
- c. Jobs for Veteran Act (Public Law 107-288);
- d. Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973 as amended (42 U.S.C 4001);
- e. Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 as amended (42 U.S.C. 4151);
- f. Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, (41 U.S.C. 702 et seq., and 2 C.F.R. § 182);
- g. Hotel Motel Fire Safety Act (15 U.S.C. 2225a);
- h. Buy American Act (41 U.S.C 10a);
- i. Copeland "Anti-Kickback" Act (18 U.S.C. 874 and 40 U.S.C. 276c);
- j. Davis-Bacon Act, as amended (40 U.S.C. 276a to a-7);
- k. Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act (40 U.S.C. 327-333);
- l. Rights to Inventions Made Under a Contract or Agreement;
- m. Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.) and the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.), as amended;
- n. Byrd Anti-Lobbying Amendment (31 U.S.C. 1352);

- o. Uniform Administrative Requirements found at 2 CFR Part 200 and the US Department of Labor Exceptions found at 2 CFR 2900;
- p. Applicable State of Illinois Laws; and
- q. State Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Policies.

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II. Program Description

1. Background

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Public Law 113-128) requires the states to provide Rapid Response in the case of a permanent closure or mass layoff at a plant, facility, or enterprise, or a natural or other disaster, that results in mass job dislocation. States are required to assist dislocated workers in obtaining reemployment as soon as possible and provide assistance adapted to the particular closure, layoff, or disaster. Department of Commerce is making funds available for projects that provide documentation for specific companies that need assistance with these types of events.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) issued guidance in 2012 (Training and Employment Notice 09-12) that directs the states to adopt a strategy for layoff aversion with Rapid Response funding. DOL considers a layoff averted when: 1) a worker's job is saved with an existing employer that is at risk of downsizing or closing; or 2) a worker at risk of dislocation transitions to a different job with the same employer or a new job with a different employer and experiences no or minimal unemployment. Department of Commerce is issuing a Request for Application seeking training projects for existing employees to obtain skills upgrades.

Broadening the scope of Rapid Response activities enables the Department of Commerce to work with employers to assist them in maintaining a competitive workforce. Department of Commerce will fund projects that specifically identify employers that serve WIOA-eligible dislocated workers from layoff events; projects for recently separated Veterans; projects that connect employers and WIOA eligible dislocated workers with short-term, on-the job and customized training programs; registered apprenticeships before or after layoff and prior to new employment; and projects that effectively combine multiple programs such as registered apprenticeships with work based learning and/or classroom training. This RFA will also fund incumbent worker projects to assist existing employees with needed training.

Training projects must provide workers with new skills to retain their existing job or quickly transition to a new one and maintain financial stability. The value for employers is remaining competitive in the global economy and saving operational, overhead and productivity costs by training current, reliable employees rather than going through the process of replacing them.

2. **Approach**

States may provide Rapid Response services to employers and workers impacted by large-scale layoffs to assist workers in retaining employment when feasible, or obtaining reemployment as soon as possible. Workers from multiple employers may be clustered by skill or sector for the purposes of declaring a Rapid Response event. Services include the provision of emergency assistance adapted to the particular closure, layoff, or disaster.

- State Rapid Response funds may be used for projects that serve dislocated workers from identified closures, mass layoffs, an individual who is self-employed or disasters.
- State Rapid Response funds may be used for projects that serve post 9/11 era Veterans that are recently separated from military service. State Rapid Response funds may be used for projects that serve the dislocated spouse of a member of the Armed Forces on active duty.
- State Rapid Response funds may be used for projects that connect employers and workers with short-term, on-the job and customized training and training apprenticeships before or after layoff and prior to new employment.

There are various strategies to ensure job retention. The first step in determining the appropriate strategy is to understand the “at-risk” indicators. In many cases, more than one “at-risk” indicator will apply to a given event. Below are some of the “at-risk” indicators Illinois has identified to determine if a business is in need of training assistance to maintain a competitive workforce.

- **Declining Sales** - A company has undergone or will undergo (must be confirmed) a significant loss in sales that puts part of their workforce in threat of layoff. Declining sales must be expressed in terms of X dollars or Y units for Z period of time (months or years); along with information that provides known or suspected reasons for the decline. When determining if a decline in sales is the cause of a potential layoff, have considerations been given to the industry as a whole; is the decline a percentage of the market; has product quality, production delays, or pricing contributed to the decline in sales; etc.
- **Supply Chain Issues** - A company loses a supplier or consumer that threatens the employment of part of their workforce, or acquires a new supplier that requires new skills to maintain the workforce. Supply chain issues must be accompanied by an explanation as to why the change occurred. When determining whether a supply chain issue will contribute to a potential layoff, have considerations been given to other suppliers' ability to provide same or like products; has the company considered alternative product(s) production and sales that would not require retraining of staff or layoff; can the new training required be conducted by the new supplier; etc. Supply chain issues must be supported by documentation of the factors causing the supply problem.

- **Industry/Market Trends** - The industry/market standards have changed to the point where new training is needed to retain the current workforce. For example, have the employer's customers asked for production or delivery of products to be handled in a specific way that requires skill upgrade training? When considering whether industry/market trends may cause a potential layoff, has the company consulted with industry experts to determine if assistance is available to assist with upgrades to the manufacturing process or employee knowledge, or contacted other companies in the industry to share upgrades in skills training or equipment, etc.
- **Changes in Management Philosophy or Ownership** - A company has undergone a new approach to conducting business or new ownership requires new skills to maintain the employment of part of the workforce. Changes in ownership are generally the result of a lack of profitability, but may also occur where a company is profitable, but not profitable enough (this level of profit may meet the profit requirements of another owner) or the current owners do not have the resources to take advantage of new business strategies. An owner may also pass away unexpectedly without a succession plan in place. New or changes in philosophies will generally accompany new ownership. Changes in philosophy may also occur when operations no longer meet their core business application or are viewed as excess capacity to their overall operations. When considering changes in ownership or philosophy as the cause of a potential layoff, has new ownership been determined (including such options as employee stock ownership plans), have alternatives been considered in the restructuring of the company that might reduce the number of layoffs, have community groups and labor organizations been involved in the discussions to lend their expert advice, etc.
- **Worker Does Not Have Necessary Skills** - A worker's skills or functions are no longer relevant to the employer's production process and the worker is at-risk of losing their employment without undergoing training to acquire new skills. A lack of necessary skills may be the result of a change in philosophy or product line or a change in the industry demands that results in the need for new technologies and abilities by the current workforce. Products and production lines are ever changing as they adapt to the needs of the market. With this change comes a need for evolution of the skill set of the workers. When considering if the lack of necessary skills is the cause of potential layoffs, has it been determined which workers have the ability to attain new relevant skills, are there other considerations to be made with an increase in skills such as new equipment/machinery needs or safety devices, etc.
- **Strong Possibility of a Job If a Worker Attains New Skills** - The worker is in a position that is subject to layoff, and by acquiring new skills training he/she can move into a position that is not subject to layoff. New skills attainment may avert a layoff for individuals within a company or may make them more attractive to other companies. When considering whether the new skills will provide a strong possibility to prevent layoffs, what considerations have been given towards where the positions would be moved (in-house or with a new company), does the company have the capacity to expand another line of product (new or existing) to support the workers subject to layoff, has the business community shown a need and capacity for additionally trained workers, are the

workers willing to relocate if the new opportunities are with another location of the same company or with a new company in a different locale, etc.

- **Other “At-Risk” Indicators** - Additional causes for potential layoffs may exist that the company and local area need to outline in making a case for assistance for incumbent workers. There may be other criteria that the Local Workforce Area (LWA) can gather with the consultation of the employer that puts part of their workforce “at-risk” for layoff (e.g., trend in company layoffs).

3. **Project Types**

It is anticipated that the Department of Commerce’s Office of Employment and Training will award \$3-5 Million in Rapid Response funding through this Request for Application to support demonstration projects using one or more of the following types of skill upgrades training:

- On-the-Job Training (OJT), *(new hire)*
- Registered Apprenticeship (RA), *(existing WIOA-eligible worker-OJT, or existing worker-IW)*
- Class Size Training (CST) for Dislocated Workers, *(unemployed)*
- Customized Training (CT), *(existing WIOA-eligible worker)*
- Incumbent Worker Training (IW), *(existing worker)*

The purpose of these training programs is to train existing employees who are at-risk of losing their jobs unless they obtain skill upgrades, or by providing training to unemployed individuals who require employer-specific training upon being hired or classroom based skill upgrades to be qualified to be hired. Each Rapid Response event is unique and may lend itself to a combination of these training types.

Regardless of the type of training, documentation of the need must exist and be provided to support the viability of the training. A real market need must be demonstrated and it must be documented by the company that without the training they are, or will be, negatively impacted to the degree that employees are at-risk of being laid off.

1. **On-the-Job Training (Work-based Learning)** provides skill upgrades to individuals hired with the expectation the trainee will be able to perform the tasks necessary for the position upon the completion of the training. OJTs are limited to six months of work time and are for new hires in full-time positions only. It is the employer’s responsibility to provide training. The grant will pay for wage reimbursements to the employer based on payroll records on a sliding scale, from 50 percent to 75 percent of wages (not fringe benefits) based on the number of employees at the worksite. OJTs are intended only for WIOA eligible dislocated workers, and require WIOA eligibility determinations, case management and reporting in IWDS. For additional program requirements and the wage reimbursement scale, refer to the latest version of WIA Policy Letter 13-PL-01, www.illinoisworknet.com/dceopolicies.
2. **Registered Apprenticeship** provides skills upgrades to individuals through a combination of academic training and on-the-job training. This training can be provided to WIOA eligible individuals that may be unemployed or employed, but at risk of layoff.

When establishing a Registered Apprenticeship program, the employer partner is responsible for contacting the Office of Apprenticeship to establish their sponsorship and establish and customize standards for the apprenticeable occupation and recruiting and leading apprentices as they learn and complete their certifications. Partnership with a Local Workforce Area would be necessary to fulfill requirements for OJT workers (see above). The workers would be members of the sponsor employer from the start. The Office of Apprenticeship and OET are partnering to provide technical assistance at any time, at no cost, and to ensure compliance with the company's and industry's standards.

Information on General Standards for the Registered Apprenticeship Program can be found at: <http://www.doleta.gov/OA/>

3. **Class Size Dislocated Worker Training** provides short-term skill upgrade training to help the unemployed re-enter the workforce in good paying occupations. Class Size Training is intended only for WIOA eligible dislocated workers, and requires WIOA eligibility determinations, case management and reporting in IWDS. If the applicant is not a training provider, a public or private training provider for the project must be selected through a procurement process. For additional program requirements, refer to WIA Policy Letter 13-PL-01, www.illinoisworknet.com/dceopolicies. Grantees may take advantage of existing bridge programs that provide contextualized learning as part of a customized training package. Work experience, while not appropriate as the sole activity of a Rapid Response grant, may play a role in a comprehensive strategy for re-employment when coupled with skill upgrade training.
4. **Customized Training for Dislocated Workers and WIOA-Eligible Employed Workers** provides skill training to WIOA eligible individuals that may be unemployed or employed. Grantees must enter into contracts with employers, who must pay at least 50 percent of training costs (wages may be used as match) and agree to hire individuals that successfully complete training. Customized training for employed individuals must relate to:
 - a. The introduction by the employer of new technologies;
 - b. The introduction to new production or service procedures;
 - c. Upgrading to new jobs that require additional skills or workplace literacy; or
 - d. Other appropriate purposes identified by the local board. Customized training requires WIOA eligibility determinations, case management and reporting in IWDS.
5. **Incumbent Worker Training** provides skill upgrades to workers already on an employer's payroll for 6 months or more, for the purpose of increasing productivity and staying competitive. Projects must provide skills that directly benefit the workers receiving the training by making them more qualified in their field of employment, and/or provide new skills for new product lines or processes. Training may be provided by the employer's in-house trainers or a public or private training provider may be selected through a procurement process.

Employers must contribute at least 10% of the total cost of the training. Grantees may negotiate employer contributions of up to 50% of training costs, depending on the size of the employer or other relevant economic factors. The maximum reimbursement rate is 10% for employers of 50 or less, 25% for employers of 51-100, and 50% for employers of over 100. Employee wages paid while in training may count toward the 10%-50% match.

Because incumbent workers are employed at the time of their training, they are not enrolled in WIOA or reported in the Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS) case management system. Project reporting will be done through the Incumbent Worker Tracking System (IWTS). For additional program requirements, refer to WIA Policy Letter 07-PL-33, Change 4, www.illinoisworknet.com/dceopolicies.

4. Department Responsibilities

Department of Commerce's Office of Employment and Training will oversee the implementation of grants resulting from this RFA. Program staff will also maintain contact with the participating businesses and monitor progress and performance of the contracts. Department of Commerce may modify grants based on performance.

Funding for the activities outlined in this RFA will come from Federal funds and is subject to State and Federal legislative appropriation.

III. Application and Program Requirements

Applications must be submitted using the Department of Commerce Grant Application available at <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/iltalent>.

A. Company Identification – At-Risk Documentation

The specific name(s) of the company(ies) that will receive fundings/services from this grant opportunity must be submitted with documentation specific to each company that identifies the at-risk indicator(s) accompanied by detailed information/discussion that supports the at-risk indicator(s) as the factor on which the strategy is based. A completed At-Risk Documentation Form for each company needs to be submitted with the application to satisfy this requirement. (Attachment A of the Grant Application). Applications submitted that do not identify the specific company(ies) and/or provide the documentation required will not be considered for funding.

B. Partnership Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding:

Department of Commerce encourages businesses, community-based organizations, and public and private training providers to collaborate in addressing Rapid Response events. However, the Grantee will have ultimate responsibility for ensuring all partner agencies engage and follow through on any assigned tasks. Provide partnership agreements or memorandums of understanding (as opposed to letters of support) with all key partners detailing entity and contact information, responsibilities, functions, coordination, and financial contribution to the project.

Registered Apprenticeship applicants must provide evidence that the Office of Apprenticeship (OA) has determined the positions as apprenticeable, and have standards in place, certified by the OA.

C. Project Schedule:

The project period should generally not exceed twelve months. A modification to extend a grant may occur, but only at the discretion of the Department. All training must be completed by the end date of the grant.

D. Allowable Costs:

Costs that are necessary and reasonable and allocable based on the activity or activities contained in the scope of work. Funding for the activities outlined in this RFA will come from Federal funds and is subject to State and Federal legislative appropriation. Grantees are advised to contact the Department for technical assistance with questions or concerns prior to incurring costs.

E. Project Reporting:

Successful bidders will be required to submit regular reports to document the progress of the project as part of the grant requirements. These reports include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Quarterly Progress and Trial Balance Reports
- WIOA registrant information and reports for projects serving WIOA registrants using the Illinois Workforce Development System, or other reporting process as directed by the Department of Commerce
- Quarterly reports for projects serving incumbent workers using the Incumbent Worker Tracking System.
- Dislocation Event Tracking System (DETS) reporting
- Expenditure Reports

F. Pre-Award Survey:

Applicants that have not received a Department of Commerce WIOA grant prior to this RFA are subject to a Pre-Award Survey to be conducted by the Department of Commerce fiscal monitors. The survey will be completed prior to the grant being issued. The purpose of the review is to establish confidence the organization has a sound fiscal system established.

G. Monitoring:

Organizations funded through this RFA are subject to fiscal and programmatic monitoring visits. The organization must have an open door policy to allow for periodic visits to evaluate the progress of the project, and provide documentation upon request from the monitor.

H. Performance:

In instances where the Grantee is not an Local Workforce Area, performance measures and targets for the grant will be determined by the Department of Commerce. These grantees must work with the LWA to comply with eligibility, reporting and performance related requirements, and demonstrate that a viable approach to meeting these requirements has been developed with the Local Workforce Area. In instances where the grantee is an LWA, current negotiated performance measures will apply.

IV. Client Eligibility/Applicant WIOA Ability

A. Serving WIOA Clients

Applicants proposing projects that provide services to WIOA dislocated workers (individuals who have lost their jobs) must partner with a qualified WIOA provider unless the applicant is a recognized provider with an established history of successfully serving WIOA clients. Non-LWA applicants that are not qualified WIOA providers must enter into a Memorandum of Understanding developed and signed by the applicant and a Local Workforce Area that details, at a minimum, the applicant's and LWA's roles and responsibilities related to recruitment, eligibility determination, enrollment, performance requirements, and strategies.

B. Applicant's WIOA Ability

Non-LWA applicants that state they are a WIOA provider and propose serving WIOA clients without LWA assistance must submit documentation supporting their ability to carry-out the responsibilities of recruitment, eligibility determinations, enrollment, and meeting performance requirements. Documentation will contain, but not be limited to, listing the name(s) of the person(s) that will be responsible for recruiting, WIOA eligibility determinations, IWDS entry, case management, etc.

For projects serving incumbent workers where the applicant is not the Employer, a Memorandum of Understanding must be developed and signed by the applicant and the Employer that details, at a minimum, the Employer's commitment to train and retain workers and meet the incumbent worker requirements established in WIA Policy Letter No. 07-PL-33, Change 4.

C. Related Links:

Information regarding the Illinois Talent Pipeline Rapid Response Program is posted on Illinois workNet at <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/iltalent>

- Illinois Pathways Initiative
<http://www.illinoispathways.com>
- WIOA General Eligibility
<https://apps.il-work-net.com/WIOAPolicy/Policy/Index/6>
- WIOA Dislocated Worker Eligibility
<https://apps.il-work-net.com/WIOAPolicy/Policy/Index/8>
- WIOA On-the-Job and Customized Training Reference
<https://apps.il-work-net.com/WIOAPolicy/Policy/Index/137>
- Registered Apprenticeship
<http://www.doleta.gov/OA/>
- WIOA Incumbent Worker Training Reference
<https://apps.il-work-net.com/WIOAPolicy/Policy/Index/341>

V. Review and Selection Procedures

The applications will be reviewed by a team of Department of Commerce staff using the criteria listed below. Decisions to award grants and the funding levels will be determined per application based upon compliance with the requirements of this RFA. Based on the review, applicants may be selected to enter into negotiations with the Department of Commerce for a grant. The purpose of negotiations will be to arrive at acceptable grant terms, including budgetary and scope-of-work provisions. The final decision to make a grant award will be made by the Department of Commerce.

A. Applicant Capacity (15%)

- The applicants' capacity to successfully complete the project tasks within the proposed grant period
- The related experience of the applicant, sub-contractors, and partners
- The applicants' previous performance in administering similar grants and projects
- The qualifications of the applicants' staff to be assigned to the project

B. Documentation of Need (25%)

- The proposed project must address an allowable dislocation event or layoff situation
- Alignment of expected outcomes to the RFA. Will the project provide service to businesses and workers impacted or at risk of being impacted by company closures or layoffs?
- Demonstrated historic connection to the population targeted in the application

C. Project Quality/Coordination (30%)

- The industry sector, occupations and career pathways that the plan will address
- The types of training and the method of delivery that will be implemented including priority On-the-Job Training and Apprenticeship projects
- The number of participants, companies served, the participant recruitment plan, and the services provided to priority populations (Veterans, individuals with disabilities)
- The quality of the training providers and training outcomes (industry recognized skills, certifications)
- Coordination with key partners and strength of the partnership agreements/MOUs
- The innovative approach that will result in the permanent employment of participants
- The overall feasibility and quality of the work plan

D. Cost Effectiveness/Return on Investment (30%)

- The proposed project costs in relationship to planned outcomes, including cost per participant
- The reasonableness of the costs in relation to the proposed activities
- The applicant's commitment to secure the required leveraged and matching costs for Incumbent Worker and On-The-Job Training
- Applicants that are Local Workforce Areas must demonstrate that they will meet the 40% direct training expenditure rate and meet the 80% annual accrued expenditure rate for WIOA funds
- Identified specific work placements for permanent employment
- Actual matching funds are viewed favorably

Does the proposed project(s) result in a positive response to the following questions?

1. Does the project identify eligible job-seekers?
2. Is the training proposed to avert loss of employment appropriate?
3. Does the result of the project/training result in client placement in permanent employment?
4. Is the project an innovative use of statewide funds that is cost effective?

Office of Employment and Training reserves the right to request additional information from applicants during the scoring process if the project or budget information provided is unclear to the review team.

Office of Employment and Training at its sole discretion, reserves the right to reject all applications; to reject individual applications for failure to meet any requirement; to award in part or total; and to waive minor defects and non-compliance. Submission of an application confers no right to an award or to a subsequent grant agreement. All decisions of Office of Employment and Training on behalf of the Department of Commerce are final.