ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name:** Economic Development Administration ("EDA"), U.S. Department of Commerce

- **Federal Funding Opportunity Title:** Accelerating Industry-Led Regional Partnerships for Talent Development

- **Announcement Type and Date:** Initial announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity ("FFO") publishing EDA's application submission requirements and review procedures for applications received under EDA's Research and Evaluation Program, as authorized by section 207 of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended ("PWEDA") (42 U.S.C. § 3147). Effective date: Friday, November 14, 2014.

- **Funding Opportunity Number: EDARegionalTalent2014**

- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 11.312, Economic Development – Research and Evaluation.

- **Dates:** To be considered timely a completed application must be transmitted and time-stamped at www.grants.gov no later than Friday, January 9, 2015 at 11:59 pm Eastern Time. Any application received after Friday, January 9, 2015 at 11:59 pm Eastern Time will be considered non-responsive and will not be considered for funding. This announcement solicits applications for a single research project and it is anticipated that one award will be made. EDA expects to notify the applicant selected under this FFO by February 13, 2015.

- **Applicant Submissions:** Applicants are advised to carefully read the application and submission information provided in section IV of this announcement. Applicants must submit applications electronically at www.grants.gov.

- **Eligible Applicants:** Pursuant to Section 3(4) of PWEDA (42 U.S.C. § 3122(4)) and 13 CFR § 300.3 ("Eligible Recipient"), eligible applicants for and recipients of EDA investment assistance include a District Organization; an Indian Tribe or a consortium of Indian Tribes; a State; a city or other political subdivision of a State, including a special purpose unit of a State or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions; an institution of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education; or a public or private non-profit organization or association acting in cooperation with officials of a political subdivision of a State.

- **Federal Funding Opportunity Description:** EDA seeks to continue to build on its strong foundation of place-based regional economic development and partnerships within

this funding opportunity. EDA seeks a non-profit "national partner" that will work with a Federal team led by the Department of Commerce, to launch a learning exchange to identify, promote, and expand upon successful best practices for industry-driven regional partnerships for talent development. The learning exchange is a mechanism to identify, understand, and elevate best practices, facilitate peer learning and deepen knowledge, spark replication and advancement across regions, and inform the long-term public investment in talent development.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

Accelerating Industry-Led Regional Partnerships for Talent Development

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I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Overview

Ensuring robust economic growth, a thriving middle class, and broadly shared prosperity will require a significant expansion of the skills and knowledge of American workers over the next few decades. However, even as millions more Americans seek the postsecondary education and training necessary to secure good jobs that pay family-sustaining wages, employers continue to report difficulty finding the appropriately skilled workforce they need. In a time of intense global economic competition, the United States must find innovative and cost-effective ways to ensure that businesses have the skilled workers they need to grow and prosper and that job seekers have the education, skills, and industry-recognized credentials they need to participate fully in the economy.

Education, workforce, and economic development agencies are critical partners in the development, implementation, and funding of systems that build the knowledge and skills necessary for the U.S. economy to thrive and compete globally. Recently across multiple Federal agencies, there has been a deepening focus on ensuring workforce development is "job-driven." (*See* pp. 8-10 of the July 2014 White House report: Ready to Work: Job Driven Training and American Opportunity). Varied efforts have been developed to promote industry-led, job-driven strategies, including cluster and sector-based strategies and career pathway strategies, and the opportunity exists to scale the most effective models.

The success of economic development has become increasingly reliant on the availability of an appropriately skilled workforce to meet the localized industry demands of a region. The availability of a skilled workforce is often cited as a primary reason for industry site selection. Over the past few years a number of economic and workforce development partnerships have emerged across the nation, often seeded by Federal and state funding, philanthropic funding, and industry funding. Regional, job-driven workforce partnerships are successful when leadership works across institutional silos to grow the region's economy and develop career paths for

workers. An effective talent "ecosystem" must involve: (a) public-private partnerships that include both the supply and demand sides of workforce training; (b) identification of the region's competitive sectors; and (c) aligning workforce training and economic development efforts to lead to quality jobs for workers and a robust talent pipeline for large and small employers.

Effective initiatives of these kinds exist across the country, and there are few workforce development challenges that have not been addressed at least on a limited scale. Through a public-private partnership, EDA seeks to identify, support, and disseminate successful, comprehensive, regional workforce development models featuring industry-driven regional partnerships that align with local economic development goals and that incorporate elements of the Job-Driven Training Checklist from the recently released Ready to Work report.

JOB-DRIVEN TRAINING CHECKLIST

- Creating regional collaborations that are industry-led and include active participation and engagement from organizations that represent the following: (a) business and industry; (b) business and industry intermediaries and/or consortia (c) state and/or local government leaders; (d) regional and/or local economic development; (e) secondary, post-secondary, and adult-education; (f) regional and/or local workforce development; and (g) organized labor and/or community based organizations.

- Working up-front with employers and/or consortia of employers to determine local or regional hiring needs and designing training programs that are responsive to those needs including the identification and promulgation of industry-recognized and industry-valued skills and credentials;

- Offering work-based learning opportunities with industry including on-the-job training, internships, and high-quality pre-apprenticeships and Registered Apprenticeships – as training paths to employment;

- Using data to drive accountability, to inform what programs are offered and what is taught, and to offer user-friendly information for job seekers to choose programs and pathways that work for them and are likely to result in training-related jobs including utilization of Federal, state, and third-party data sources (e.g., EDA's Cluster Mapping Tool.);

- Measuring and evaluating employment and earnings outcomes;

- Promoting a seamless progression from one educational stepping stone to another, and across work-based training and education, so individuals' efforts result in progress.

This funding opportunity seeks to identify and expand practices and strategies that help align these various job-driven efforts within a broader, comprehensive frame of regional economic development in order to accelerate place-based, partnership-focused, industry-led talent development strategies. Successful regional ecosystem partnerships should recognize the region's economic advantages and result in fewer companies asserting that they cannot find an appropriate quantity of skilled workers, increased information on job availability, increased

regional hiring rates and wages, increased new business investment (as domestic and foreign investors can easily connect with or develop partnerships) and a decline in regional unemployment (to the extent that mismatches result in increased local unemployment rates).

In particular, EDA seeks to review the attributes of successful regional or local partnerships for talent development, analyze the types of activities that have the greatest impact, and identify best practices based on this review that will enable policymakers and practitioners to more effectively understand the role of the private sector, economic development, regional partners, and government in addressing critical skills needs. These best practices will be used, among other things, to scale and sustain the adoption and acceleration of industry-led regional partnerships for talent development and to inform future Federal, state, local and philanthropic initiatives.

EDA seeks to continue to build on its strong foundation of place-based regional economic development and public-private partnerships within this funding opportunity. EDA proposes partnering with a third-party entity ("national partner") to launch a learning exchange to identify, promote, and expand upon successful best practices for industry-driven regional ecosystems. A third party-led learning exchange is a mechanism to identify and elevate best practices, facilitate peer learning and deepen knowledge, spark replication, and inform the long-term public investment strategies regarding talent development.

B. **Definitions**

The terms "regional partnerships" and "regional eco-systems" are used interchangeably within this document, and in this context are meant to encompass active participation and engagement from the following: (a) business and industry; (b) business and industry intermediaries and/or consortium; (c) state and/or local government leaders; (d) regional and/or local economic development; (e) secondary, post-secondary, and adult-education; (f) regional and/or local workforce development organizations; (g) organized labor and/or community based organizations; and (h) other organizations that may be strong contributors to the regional eco-system for talent development such as philanthropic organizations, incubators and accelerators.

The term "industry-led" is meant to denote talent development activities at a regional and local level that are focused on meeting the skills needs of regional employers, with significant participation by those employers and industry consortia in the process. This does not mean that the activities do not involve public sector partners and/or business intermediaries, only that the process is driven by the specific training needs identified by industry partners.

The term "talent development" is synonymous with skills development or workforce development and is meant to encompass the breadth of job-driven training for new and incumbent workers. (*See* section I.A. for definition of Job-Driven Training.).

The term "learning exchange" is meant to describe the mechanism by which a national partner facilitates identifying and teaching of job-driven training best practices and peer learning of regional partnerships with defined outcomes to increase a region's economic competitiveness.

The terms "region" and "regional" are meant to represent local and regional "place-based" areas that are defined by the participating applicant areas including regions that may cross state boundaries.

C. **Desired Activities and Outputs**

EDA seeks to accomplish the following activities and outputs with this award:

a) Convene and facilitate learning across regional partnerships that have demonstrated success in addressing the talent development needs of business and industry.
b) Identify and understand the characteristics of successful industry-led partnerships, and the barriers to success at the local and regional level.
c) Develop best practice reports, learning tools, and case studies within and across regions to build, sustain, and scale existing and new regional partnerships for talent development that support regional economic development.

To accomplish these desired outputs, EDA will award a cooperative agreement to a national partner that will have responsibility to:

- Develop selection criteria and administer a competitive selection process to identify participating regions.
- Administer a learning exchange that includes:
    a. Convening participating regions at a national level to learn about best practices, successful tools, and implementation challenges.
    b. Visiting participating regional teams to facilitate development and adoption of best practices.
- Devise ways to disseminate "what works" strategies to regions not participating in the learning exchange to build on the learning exchange – after the lifespan of this award – to increase the sustainability, scalability, and expansion of regional partnerships for talent development.

D. **Indicators of Success**

EDA seeks to: (a) accelerate the understanding of successful regional partnerships for talent development to understand how and why industry-led regional partnerships lead to better outcomes for employers, workers and the regional economy; and (b) accelerate the adoption of industry-led regional partnerships for talent development. Regional partnerships can result in positive impacts including: fewer companies asserting that they cannot find an appropriate quantity of skilled workers; increased information on job availability; increased regional hiring rates and wages; increased new domestic and foreign business investment; increased job quality and job functions in targeted industries; and a potential decline in regional unemployment (to the extent that mismatches in skills and job availability inflate local unemployment rates.)

E. **What is the purpose of the Research and Evaluation Program?**

Through the Research and Evaluation ("R&E") program, EDA supports the development of tools, recommendations, and resources that shape Federal economic development policies and inform economic development decision-making at the local level. R&E program investments provide critical, cutting-edge research and best practices to regional, state, and local practitioners in the economic development field, thereby enhancing understanding and implementation of

economic development concepts throughout the country. EDA also regularly evaluates the impacts and outcomes of its various programs as a means of identifying policy and program modifications that will increase the agency's efficiency and effectiveness.

F. Statutory authorities for the Research and Evaluation Program

The authority for the Research and Evaluation program is section 207 (42 U.S.C. § 3147) of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended ("PWEDA"), and 13 C.F.R. part 306, subpart A. EDA's regulations, which will govern an award made under this announcement, are codified at 13 C.F.R. chapter III. EDA's regulations are accessible on EDA's website at http://www.eda.gov/pdf/edas_regs-13_cfr_chapter_iii.pdf .

II. Award Information

A. What funding is available under this announcement?

EDA anticipates that the award made under this announcement will involve an 18-month project period and plans to allocate up to $500,000 in no-year funds (appropriated under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (P.L. 113-76)) for this purpose through the Research and Evaluation program.

However, this funding period and funding amount is subject to the availability of funds at the time of award, as well as to DOC and EDA priorities at the time of award. Neither DOC nor EDA will be held responsible for application preparation costs. Publication of this FFO does not obligate DOC or EDA to award any specific cooperative agreement or to obligate all or any part of available funds.

B. What type of funding instrument will be used to make awards?

Subject to the availability of funds, EDA anticipates that an award made under this competitive solicitation will be in the form of a cooperative agreement. For a cooperative agreement, the nature of EDA's "substantial involvement" (to be included in the terms and conditions of the award) will generally be collaboration between EDA and the recipient on the scope of work. However, other possible examples of EDA's "substantial involvement" may include, but are not limited to: (i) authority to halt immediately an activity if detailed performance specifications are not met; (ii) stipulation that the recipient must meet or adhere to specific procedural requirements before subsequent stages of a project may continue; (iii) involvement in the selection of key recipient personnel; and (iv) operational involvement and monitoring during the project to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

C. What is the anticipated project period and completion timeframe?

EDA anticipates an eighteen (18) month project period, subject to the availability of funds, EDA policy, and satisfactory performance under the award. Applicants should ensure that their proposal and budget clearly specify how they will complete the scope of work outlined

above within this timeframe. A typical project period begins with an initial kickoff meeting between the recipient and EDA staff to discuss project scope and to ensure that all parties are in agreement as to project terms. After the initial meeting, the recipient generally submits a final work plan to EDA staff for review and approval. Progress and financial reports and project work will be submitted to EDA based on the dates agreed to during the initial meeting and as outlined in the award special terms and conditions.

The recipient will be expected to submit a draft report – in the form of a best practices and scalability toolkit to EDA at least 60 days before the end of the project period for EDA's review. Based on the agency's review, EDA may request technical and substantive revisions to the draft report. If these revisions are incorporated and the draft report is ultimately approved, EDA will then approve publication of a final research report and the recipient will brief EDA senior management on research methods and report results.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Pursuant to Section 3(4) of PWEDA (42 U.S.C. § 3122(4)) and 13 CFR § 300.3 ("Eligible Recipients"), eligible applicants for and recipients of EDA investment assistance include a District Organization; an Indian Tribe or a consortium of Indian Tribes; a State; a city or other political subdivision of a State, including a special purpose unit of a State or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions; an institution of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education; or a public or private non-profit organization or association acting in cooperation with officials of a political subdivision of a State.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

Generally, the amount of the EDA cooperative agreement may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of the project. However, under this announcement, the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development ("Assistant Secretary") has established a maximum EDA investment rate of up to 80 percent where the project (a) merits, and is not otherwise feasible without, such an increase to the EDA investment rate; or (b) will be of no or only incidental financial benefit to the recipient. *See* section 204(c)(3) of PWEDA (42 U.S.C. § 3144); 13 C.F.R. § 301.4(b)(4).

EDA will consider the nature of the contribution (cash or in-kind), the amount of any matching share funds, and fairly assess any in-kind contributions in evaluating the cost to the Federal government and the feasibility of the project budget (*see* section V. below). While cash contributions are preferred, in-kind contributions, fairly evaluated by EDA (as outlined in 15 CFR §§ 14.23 and 24.24), may provide the non-Federal share of the total project costs. *See* section 204(b) of PWEDA (42 U.S.C. § 3144). In-kind contributions, which may include assumptions of debt and contributions of space, equipment, and services, are eligible to be included as part of the non-Federal share of eligible project costs if they meet applicable Federal cost principles and uniform administrative requirements. Funds from other Federal assistance

awards are considered matching share funds only if authorized by the statute, which may be determined by EDA's reasonable interpretation of the statute. *See* the definition of "Local Share or Matching Share" at 13 C.F.R. § 300.3. The applicant must show that the matching share is committed to the project for the entire project period, will be available as needed, and is not conditioned or encumbered in any way that precludes its use consistent with the requirements of EDA investment assistance. *See* 13 C.F.R. § 301.5.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. How to Obtain an Application Package

Applicants may access the application package for this FFO electronically at www.grants.gov ("Grants.gov"). *See* section IV.D. of this FFO for detailed instructions on application submission.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

To be considered complete, an application package must consist of:

- All required forms;
- The Proposal, which includes the Executive Summary, Project Narrative, and Budget Description; and
- Addenda to the Proposal.

Applications that do not contain all required forms listed in each part, or that fail to adhere to the instructions in this FFO, may be considered incomplete and may not be considered for funding. Additional application materials not requested under this FFO will not be reviewed or evaluated.

Applicants are advised to carefully read the instructions contained in this FFO and in all forms contained in the application package. It is the sole responsibility of each applicant to ensure that a complete application package is received.

1. Required Forms

All applicants must include the following forms at the time of application submission. The forms should be uploaded as separate Adobe portable document format (PDF) files. All forms listed in this section will be available in the Grants.gov application package.

1. One **Form ED-900** (Application for Investment Assistance) and accompanying supporting documentation. One complete form per project is required. Please read the information below carefully for important instructions on required topics that must be included in Form ED-900 and the related Project Narrative.
2. One **Form SF-424** (Application for Federal Assistance) from each co-applicant, as applicable.
3. One **Form SF-424A** (Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs) per project.
4. One **Form SF-424B** (Assurances-Non-Construction Programs) from each co-applicant, as applicable.

5. One **Form CD-511** (Certification Regarding Lobbying) from each co-applicant, as applicable.
6. One **Form SF-LLL** (Disclosure of Lobbying Activities) from each co-applicant, as applicable.

The Form ED-900 is divided into lettered sections that correspond to specific program components that address EDA's statutory and regulatory requirements. The Form ED-900 details the sections and exhibits that must be completed based on program type. Because this announcement seeks Research and Evaluation Assistance applications only, an applicant needs to complete those sections of the Form ED-900 identified in the table below. Complete instructions are included in the Form ED-900.

EDA Program	**Required Form ED-900 Sections**
Research and Evaluation Assistance	Complete Sections A, C, and E and Exhibit B.

2. Proposal Content

The Proposal must clearly articulate the overall goals of the project, the specific and distinct Scopes of Work and concrete activities that will be accomplished under it. The Proposal must also demonstrate each applicant's capability to implement the proposed activities in accordance with the requirements of this FFO. Applications will be evaluated based on the Evaluation Criteria outlined in section V. **Applicants should carefully adhere to the page limits specified for each section of the proposal.** Pages beyond the specified page limit for each section will not be read or considered.

a) Project Narrative

The Project Narrative should address all activities that will be undertaken using the funds requested under this FFO, a summary of how these activities support the overall project's goals, and a clear vision for the final report. The Project Narrative may not exceed **15-single sided, 8.5x11-inch pages, with a minimum 12-point font and 1-inch margins**. Within the Project Narrative, applicants should address the following elements:

(1) Build and Manage a Consortia of Partners

EDA seeks a national partner to develop and manage a learning exchange which includes building and managing a consortia of national and regional partners. The ideal national partner for this work will build a team of partner organizations that are able to work collaboratively and with Federal partners and participating regions, and demonstrate:

- Subject matter expertise in the various aspects of a regional ecosystem for talent development, including industry consortia, economic development, workforce development, higher education, secondary education, and others.

- Functional expertise in the major components of the work, including leadership and facilitation of a learning exchange, workforce information and analysis, researching best practices with the ability to accelerate the number and impacts of regional partnerships for talent development.

EDA recognizes the importance of a singular, lead national partner for administrative and communications efficiencies. However, the national partner will require a consortium of partner organizations because of the level and depth required across subject matter and functional expertise. Thus, EDA seeks a singular, lead partner with a ready-made alliance of third-party partners that can work in subject matter and functional areas as needed. For example, the lead partner may have expertise in community college technical assistance and research related to talent development, but lack expertise in cross-regional learning exchanges. Or the lead partner may lack the staff capacity to deliver on-the-ground technical assistance within regions, or any number of other knowledge and skill areas. EDA envisions the partnership to include staff familiar with Federal programs that focus on industry strategies and employer engagement working collaboratively with the consortium of third-party partners to help accomplish that effort, with a strong, singular national partner in the lead.

(2) Develop the Features and Characteristics of a Learning Exchange

EDA seeks a national partner (working with a consortia of partners) to develop and manage a learning exchange to understand and accelerate regional partnerships for talent development. The national partner should competitively select participating regions based on established criteria (*see* section (3), below for issues the national partner's selection protocol may take into consideration). The process to create a learning exchange should address the following set of questions:

1) What are the features of a successful learning exchange? What is the balance between national meetings, on-site regional technical assistance, and quantitative and qualitative research in identifying, understanding, and elevating best practices through a facilitated peer learning approach? How long should the project run considering the balance between these approaches?

2) What is the appropriate number of regions to participate in a learning exchange? How will the applicant effectively balance the participation of regions that have demonstrated successful outcomes in regional eco-systems for skills development with regions that have not yet launched, or are still in the nascent stages of developing regional eco-systems for skills development?

3) How are industries identified and selected? Should regions be encouraged to self-identify their industries of focus, or should the national partner identify regions that are focused on industries of importance to all economies, regardless of region?

4) What process will be used to select regions and what is the related timeline?

5) How will agendas for national meetings of all participating regions be developed and what are the key elements of a successful agenda?

6) What are the key elements of a successful agenda for an on-site technical assistance meeting within a particular region?

7) How will programmatic silos be broken down so that participants share lessons learned from other regions with all types of partners?

8) How can in-person and virtual exchanges be utilized to allow the regional partner communities to learn from and build on each other's experiences?

9) What is the value for participation for applicant regions and how will that be clearly articulated to those considering applying?

10) How will the learning exchange be deemed a success in better understanding effective regional partnerships for talent development, help to accelerate the adoption of additional partnerships, and realizing the economic impacts as described earlier?

(3) Develop Selection Protocol for Participating Regions

The national partner will be required to develop a selection protocol that includes a request for proposals, selection criteria, and a transparent and timely process in conducting the selection of regions for participation in the learning exchange. Considerations that should inform the national partner's development of competitive regional selection protocol may include, but are not limited to:

- How should these, or other, selection protocols be weighed to select regional participants through a competitive process?
- What type of partners should be on the regional partnership team? Which partners should be required and which should be suggested?
- How should the region be identified?
- What type of workforce information and analysis should be identified as part of a region's expressed interest in participating in the project? How has the region used existing Federal, state, and third-party data sources to make its case for participation?
- What should be the balance between in-demand occupations and those occupations that may be in less demand but are critically hard to fill?
- To what extent should applicants have demonstrated success in one or more related initiatives such as sector strategies, cluster development, career pathways, or others?
- How does the regional effort align to other initiatives in the region and/or the state (e.g., is the state part of any similar learning exchanges or academies)?
- What are the elements of "industry-led" in a region and how should these be factored into selection criteria?
- Who should be the "applicant" from an interested region? Should the lead applicant be industry consortia only, or should additional organizational and

partnership types be considered (e.g., governmental, non-profit, lead business, etc.)?

- How has the region demonstrated success or interest in supporting the elements of the Job-Driven Training Checklist?

- What commitments and outcomes will the national partner require of participating regions? These might include:

  - ✓ Identifying an appropriate team of key partners that will travel to national meetings of all participating regions for peer and facilitated learning among participating regions.

  - ✓ Convening a regional meeting of key partners plus other interested regional stakeholders that will be attended by Federal and national learning exchange "faculty."

  - ✓ Participating in national webinars including developing and delivering potential presentations if requested.

  - ✓ Promulgating best practices across programmatic silos at the regional level (e.g., economic developers should not just share lessons learned from other regions with other economic developers, but rather all partners are sharing lessons learned with all other partners).

  - ✓ Developing a "final report" for their region at the end of the learning exchange, which should document lessons learned, partnerships achieved, outcomes and metrics, etc.

  - ✓ Participating in case study research that will be highlighted in a report to inform the field of practice and help to scale existing and/or new partnership efforts.

(4) Research Products and Services

Applicants are encouraged to identify products and services that can inform the participating regions in the learning exchange as well as other regions around the nation that are not direct participants. Products and services should inform both the field of practice within and across regions and also national policy. Products and services should also demonstrate the extent to which we have achieved the desired outcomes including greater understanding accelerating the adoption of best practices.

At a minimum, the following deliverables are required, and the applicant should identify how they plan to meet each of the requirements including quantity, level, and depth, and also identify any products and services beyond those identified:

- Region-specific or subject-specific case studies and/or issue briefs;

- In-person and virtual gatherings within the learning exchange so that regions learn from each other;

- Webinars and other learning tools so that learning is spread beyond participating regions;

- Final Report in the form of a toolkit due to EDA at end of project that compiles individual region reports, synthesizes lessons learned, and outlines a forward-looking plan to provide ongoing learning to scale successful regional partnership models.

(5) Project Management

A primary focus of the effort will require outcomes-focused project management of the learning exchange including:

- Coordinating with Federal Project Manager;

- Developing regional selection process and protocol;

- Planning and facilitating cross-regional and intra-regional meetings;

- Coordinating faculty from Federal agencies and the consortia of partners for on-site technical assistance;

- Developing webinars and white papers;

- Other activities that will help to keep the regions interested and engaged throughout the lifespan of the effort;

- Ensuring desired outcomes of the learning exchange are achieved; and

- Other activities to be determined, or suggested by the selected national partner.

Any information disseminated to the public under this announcement is subject to the Information Quality Act (Pub. L. No. 106-554, Section 515). Applicants are required to comply with the Information Quality Guidelines issued by EDA pursuant to the Information Quality Act, which are designed to ensure and maximize the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of information disseminated by EDA.

b) **Budget Description**

A separate budget narrative must be created and submitted to describe the costs associated with each line item on the Form SF-424A. Supporting documentation listing the components of these categories must be included. The budget narrative should include a personnel plan listing all positions proposed to be charged to the project whether as Federal or non-Federal costs. The personnel plan must include the position titles, salaries, percentage of time dedicated to the project, and amount of salary charged to the project for each staff member assigned to the project. The sum of all salaries charged to the project must equal the amount on the "Personnel" budget line item on Form SF-424A. The personnel plan should provide a description of how the personnel will carry out the proposed plan, including the adequacy and previous performance of the proposed team to carry out project activities.

c) Schedule of Major Milestones and Deliverables

All Applicants must submit a schedule detailing the expected start and end date of all major milestones and deliverables described in the Project Narrative. The schedule should be outlined in months, such that an evaluator could easily discern in how many months the Applicant could start the project from the date of project award, in how many months each of the key project milestones and deliverables will be accomplished from the date of project award, and the anticipated number of months after the date of project award that the project will be completed, not to exceed the 18-month award period.

1. Addenda to the Proposal

Applicants must also submit the following Addenda to the Proposal in PDF format. Applications that do not include the required Addenda may be considered incomplete and/or non-responsive and may not be reviewed.

a) Resumes of Key Personnel

Applicants must attach the resumes of key project staff, which should not exceed two pages in length (per resume). Resumes should be compiled and uploaded together as one PDF file.

b) Additional Requirements for Non-Profit (if applicable)

In addition to all applicable items listed above, EDA applicants that are non-profit organizations must submit the following:

- A certificate of good standing from the State of its incorporation;
- A copy of the organization's Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws;
- A copy of the most recent (not older than 18 months) IRS Form 990 (Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax) (without attachments or schedules).

c) Copy of Current, Approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if Applicable)

a. If facilities and administrative costs (sometimes referred to as indirect costs) are included in the budget, the applicant must include a copy of its current Facilities and Administrative Cost Rate Agreement or documentation establishing that it has a pending application. An applicant that does not have a current Facilities and Administrative Cost Rate Agreement negotiated and approved by the Department of Commerce (or by the applicable cognizant Federal agency) may propose facilities and administrative costs in its budget. However, the applicant must prepare and submit a facilities and administrative cost allocation plan and rate proposal or a negotiated indirect cost rate as required by 2 C.F.R. part 200 "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards." The allocation plan and the rate proposal must be submitted to EDA's Office of Regional Affairs (or applicable cognizant Federal agency) within ninety days from the award start date.

The maximum dollar amount of allocable facilities and administrative costs for which EDA will reimburse a recipient shall be the lesser of the: (i) line-item amount for the Federal share of facilities and administrative costs contained in the EDA-approved budget for the award, or (ii) Federal share of the total

allocable facilities and administrative costs of the award based on the cost rate approved by EDA (or applicable cognizant Federal agency); provided that the cost rate is current at the time the costs were incurred and provided that the rate is approved on or before the award end date. *See* Section B. Paragraph 5 (Indirect Costs and Facilities and Administrative Costs) of the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements (77 FR 74634, December 17, 2012). The applicant should include a statement in its budget narrative if the applicant does not have, or has not applied for, a Facilities and Administrative Cost Rate Agreement.

C. Deadlines for submission

To be considered timely, a completed application, regardless of the format in which it is submitted, must be transmitted and time-stamped at www.grants.gov no later than Friday, January 9, 2015, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time. **Any application transmitted or received, as the case may be, after Friday, January 9, 2015 at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time will be considered non-responsive and will not be considered for funding.**

Applicants are advised that they are solely responsible for ensuring that EDA receives complete, timely, and accurate applications. EDA will not accept any changes, additions, revisions, or deletions to applications after the closing date and time have passed. EDA may contact an applicant for additional clarifications regarding its application after final evaluations by the review panel.

D. How to submit an application

Applicants are required to submit applications electronically in accordance with the instructions provided at www.grants.gov. EDA will not accept facsimile and paper (hard copy) transmissions of applications.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to start early and not to wait until the approaching deadline before logging on and reviewing the application instructions at www.grants.gov. Applicants should save and print written proof of an electronic submission made at www.grants.gov. If problems occur, the applicant is advised to (a) print any error message received; and (b) call the www.grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 for assistance. The Contact Center is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (except for Federal holidays). The following link is useful resources: http://www.grants.gov/help/help.jsp. If you do not find an answer to your question under "Applicant FAQ's." try consulting the "Applicant User Guide" or contacting www.grants.gov via email at support@grants.gov or telephone at 1-800-518-4726.

V. Application Review and Selection Process

A. **Evaluation criteria**

To apply for an award under this announcement, an eligible applicant must submit a completed application package to EDA in accordance with section IV. of this FFO. Applications that do not meet all requirements or that exceed the page limitations set forth in section IV.C. of this announcement may be considered non-responsive and may not be considered by the review panel. A panel comprised of at least three Federal employees will be formed to review applications. The review panel will evaluate applications and rate and rank them using the evaluation criteria identified below, sub-criteria will be weighed equally towards the respective criteria's point total.

1. Strategic Approach (30 points)

- Documented approach to meeting the elements identified in the Scope of Work including:
    - Develop features and characteristics of a learning exchange;
    - Develop competitive selection protocol for participating regions;
    - Provide technical assistance to regions in the areas of partnerships and/or talent development.

- Proposed method of developing learning exchange content across organizational and issue types including: (a) business and industry; (b) business and industry intermediaries and/or consortium; (c) state and/or local government leaders; (d) regional and/or local economic development; (e) secondary, post-secondary, and adult-education; (f) regional and/or local workforce development; and (g) organized labor and/or community based organizations. Demonstrated experience and success in:
    - Functional areas covered by learning exchange features including agenda development, speaker identification, and the protocol and plan for and timely selection of participant regions;
    - Working with Federal project manager and partnership team to iteratively frame the learning exchange;
    - The concept of "industry-led" public-private partnerships for talent development;
    - Leadership development within or across public and/or private sectors;
    - Using and leveraging Commerce and other Federal data sources with self-generated and/or other private party data providers.

2. Partnership Organization and Personnel (20 points)

Meet the proposed Scope of Work covering "Build and Manage a Consortia of Partners," including:

- Adequacy of the applicant's team to carry out the proposed work and achieve success;

- Qualified personnel that, as a group, demonstrate project management expertise, as well as demonstrated success in all aspects of the scope of work;
- The education, experience, and professional accomplishments of each organization and all key personnel;
- Adequacy of the applicant's team in the various subject matter necessary to deliver on-the-ground technical assistance to participating regions across different organizational and issue types including: (a) business and industry; (b) business and industry intermediaries and/or consortium; (c) state and/or local government leaders; (d) regional and/or local economic development; (e) secondary, post-secondary, and adult education; (f) regional and/or local workforce development; and (g) organized labor and/or community based organizations;
- Understanding of and demonstrated experience with the elements of the Job-Driven Training Checklist (as identified in Section I.A. of this proposal.);
- Previous performance of the organizations making up the team, as applicable;
- Quality of the partnerships and extent of partnership commitments;
- Appropriateness, quality, and availability of any facilities, materials and resources to be used in implementing the proposed plan.

3. Feasibility of Budget, Financial Match, Deliverables and Timeline (20 points)

Meet the proposed Scope of Work covering "Project Management" including:

- Strength of the proposed management plan to achieve the project goals and manage partner organizations and project staff;
- Completeness of a proposed schedule and budget, including the extent to which appropriate targets, metrics, and milestones are clearly defined;
- Strength of proposed financial match including documented commitments;
- Identification of how Federal funds will be used and how financial match will be used;
- Strength of partnership collaboration and interest in the concept as demonstrated by willingness of partners to contribute resources (financial or otherwise);
- Strength of the plan to work against key milestones and timeline dates, measure progress toward targets and the likelihood that metrics and milestones will be met;
- Proposed plan to work with Federal Project Manager and Federal Project Management Team;
- Extent to which challenges and risks are identified and mitigation strategies are proposed.

4. Research Products and Services (20 points)

Meet the proposed Scope of Work covering "Research Products and Services," including:

- Identification, analysis, and documentation of best practices to inform the field of practice in regional partnerships for talent development as well as inform national policy and future investments of Federal resources in talent development;
- Subject-specific case studies or issue briefs;

- Webinars (or other tools) to disseminate lessons learned or highlight best practices;
- Identification of a project report template to be submitted by each participating region covering lessons learned, major accomplishments, barriers to success, etc.;
- Final Report due to EDA at end of project in the form of a toolkit highlighting accomplishments, lessons learned, and a path forward to sustain, scale up, and accelerate efforts underway.

5. Sustainability and Scalability (10 points)

- Demonstrated success in sharing knowledge with regions that do not directly participate in the project;
- Demonstrated success in sustaining and accelerating momentum of a project after completion of the initial funding award;
- Demonstrated success in using project funds to take existing practices to scale within and after the length of the initial funding award;
- Demonstrated success in developing recommendations for how the original funders of a project can utilize additional funding opportunities to maintain and expand project success.

B. Review and Selection Process

As set forth below, EDA staff will review all applications received to ensure that they are complete and eligible to receive funding.

1. Review for eligibility and completeness

EDA staff will conduct an eligibility and technical completeness review of all applications received by the application deadline. Applications received from ineligible entities will not be considered for funding. Additionally, applications that do not contain all forms and required documentation listed in section IV.B. of this FFO may be deemed non-responsive and excluded from further consideration. EDA expects all applicants to complete and include all required forms and documentation. However, EDA, in its sole discretion, may determine that an omission is a non-substantive technical deficiency if it can easily and quickly be rectified or cured, and therefore, may continue its consideration of the application despite the deficiency.

2. Merit Review Panels

Merit Review Panels, comprised of at least three Federal employees, will evaluate the applications against the evaluation criteria enumerated in section VI.A. of this FFO and award up to 100 points to each application. Application scores will be determined by each panelist on an individual basis, and the average of the individual ratings will produce a panel score. For each competition, the Merit Review Panels will prepare a priority funding order for the applications—based on its consideration of the evaluation criteria—and recommend to the EDA Grants Officer, in such priority order, those applications that merit consideration for EDA funding.

3. Grants Officer's Decision

The Merit Review Panel's recommendations will be forwarded to EDA's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Regional Affairs ("DAS/RA"), who is the Grants Officer under this announcement. The DAS/RA has been delegated the authority to make the final decision on whether to fund an application and may select a project for funding that differs from the Merit Review Panel's priority recommendations based on any of the following four (4) Selection Factors or use these four Selection Factors to break a tie for applications that are otherwise considered equal in merit:

1) A determination that the selected application better meets the overall objectives of the Research and Evaluation program (*See* section I.E. of this FFO);

2) The ability of a project to start quickly;

3) The applicant's performance under previous awards; or

4) The availability of funds.

The DAS/RA's final decision must be consistent with EDA's and DOC's published policies. Should the DAS/RA make a selection that differs from the Merit Review Panels' ranked applications, the DAS/RA will document the rationale for the decision in writing. However, if EDA does not receive satisfactory applications, the DAS/RA may not make any selection.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award notification

Under this FFO, EDA expects to notify applicants of its decision in writing within 60 days of the application deadline. If an application is selected for funding, the EDA Grants Officer will issue the signed grant award (Form CD-450), which is the authorizing financial assistance award document and includes the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. A sample Form CD-450 is available at http://ocio.os.doc.gov/s/groups/public/@doc/@os/@ocio/@oitpp/documents/content/dev01_002513.pdf and the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions (January 2013) are available at http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/DOC_Standard_Terms_and_Conditions_01_10_2013.pdf.

By signing Form CD-450, the recipient agrees to comply with all award provisions. EDA will provide Form CD-450 by mail or two-day delivery to the appropriate business office of the recipient's organization. The recipient must sign and return the Form CD-450 without modification within 30 days of the date of EDA's signature on the form.

If an applicant is awarded funding, neither DOC nor EDA is under any obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with that award or to make any future award(s). Amendment or renewal of an award to increase funding or to extend the period of performance is at the discretion of DOC and EDA.

EDA will notify all applicants in writing. EDA will retain all applications in accordance with EDA's record retention schedule.

B. Administrative and national policy requirements

Administrative and national policy requirements for all DOC awards apply to this competition. These requirements may be found in the "Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements," published in the *Federal Register* on December 17, 2012 (77 FR 74634). This notice may be accessed at the Government Printing Office (GPO) website at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-12-17/pdf/2012-30228.pdf.

C. Reporting requirements

1. All recipients are required to submit financial, performance, and impact reports in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant award, generally no less than semi-annually. All project progress and financial reports must be submitted to the applicable EDA program officer in electronic format. Recipients will be required to provide updates on their progress towards meeting any output and outcome measures identified in their application, as well as any other metrics requested by EDA and identified in the grant special award conditions.

2. The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all sub-awards over $25,000. Please see the OMB guidance published at 2 C.F.R. part 170 (2014), which can be accessed at http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl.

3. EDA may require additional data on actual impact of the funded investment, pursuant to the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), to be submitted to EDA up to nine years after the grant award.

D. Regulations, administrative requirements, and cost principles

Specific regulations, administrative requirements, and cost principles govern the use of EDA funds. The general and administrative requirements for EDA awards are set forth in 13 C.F.R. parts 300–302. Specific application and award requirements for the Public Works program are set out at 13 C.F.R. part 305 and for the EAA program in subpart A of 13 C.F.R. part 307. EDA funds may not be used directly or indirectly to reimburse any attorneys' or consultants' fees incurred in connection with obtaining investment assistance pursuant to this competitive solicitation. *See* 13 C.F.R. § 302.10.

The uniform administrative requirements for DOC grants and cooperative agreements are currently codified at 15 C.F.R. parts 14 and 24, as applicable. Allowable costs under an EDA investment are determined in accordance with the following regulations (incorporated by

reference at 15 C.F.R. parts 14 and 24): (i) 2 C.F.R. part 220, *Cost Principles for Educational Institutions (OMB Circular A-21)*; (ii) 2 C.F.R. part 225, *Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments (OMB Circular A-87)*; (iii) 2 C.F.R. part 230, *Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations (OMB Circular A-122)*; and (iv) Federal Acquisition Regulation Subpart 31.2, *Contracts with Commercial Organizations*, codified at 48 C.F.R. § 31.2. Applicable administrative requirements and Federal cost principles are incorporated by reference into the terms and conditions of each EDA award. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, supplies, and other expenses that are reasonable and necessary for the completion of the scope of work.

Please note that on December 26, 2013, OMB published final guidance titled *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (OMB Uniform Guidance)* (https://www.Federalregister.gov/articles/2013/12/26/2013-30465/uniform-administrative-requirements-cost-principles-and-audit-requirements-for-Federal-awards), which streamlines the language from eight existing OMB circulars, including *Cost Principles (OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A-122)* and administrative requirements *(OMB Circulars A-102 and A-110)*, into one consolidated set of guidance applicable to Federal assistance awards. Once adopted, the *OMB Uniform Guidance* will supersede DOC's uniform administrative requirements set out at 15 C.F.R. parts 14 and 24. The DOC expects to adopt the *OMB Uniform Guidance* by December 26, 2014, meaning that the *OMB Uniform Guidance* will apply to all new awards and to additional funding to existing awards made after December 26, 2014. In addition, the audit requirements of the *OMB Uniform Guidance* will apply to audits of non-Federal entities beginning on or after December 26, 2014. Therefore, applicants should familiarize themselves with the *OMB Uniform Guidance*. Additional information on the substance of and transition to the *OMB Uniform Guidance* may be found at https://cfo.gov/cofar/.

E. OMB Circular A-133 audit requirements

Single or program-specific audits shall be performed in accordance with the requirements contained in OMB Circular A-133, *Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations*, and the related *Compliance Supplement*. OMB Circular A-133 requires any non-Federal entity (i.e., non-profit organizations, including non-profit institutions of higher education and hospitals, states, local governments, and Indian Tribes) that expends Federal awards of $500,000[1] or more in the recipient's fiscal year to conduct a single or program-specific audit in accordance with the requirements set out in the Circular. Applicants are reminded that EDA or the DOC's Office of Inspector General also may conduct an audit of an award at any time.

VII. Other Information

[1] This amount increases to $750,000 after December 26, 2014. 2 C.F.R. part 200. Administrative requirements and cost principles will apply to new awards and to additional funding (funding increments) to existing awards made after Dec 26, 2014. Subpart F, Audit requirements, will apply to audits of non-Federal entities for fiscal years beginning on or after December 26, 2014.

A. **Freedom of Information Act Disclosure**

The Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. **§** 552) ("FOIA") and DOC's implementing regulations at 15 C.F.R. part 4 set forth the rules and procedures to make requested material, information, and records publicly available. Unless prohibited by law and to the extent permitted under FOIA, contents of applications submitted by applicants may be released in response to FOIA requests. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information." Based on these markings, the confidentiality of the contents of those pages will be protected to the extent permitted by law.

B. **Past Performance and Non-Compliance with Award Provisions**

Unsatisfactory performance under prior Federal awards may result in an application not being considered for funding. Failure to comply with any or all of the provisions of an award may have a negative impact on future funding by DOC (or any of its operating units) may be considered grounds for any or all of the following actions: (1) establishing an account receivable; (2) withholding payments to the recipient under any DOC award(s); (3) changing the method of payment from advance to reimbursement only; (4) imposing other special award conditions; (5) suspending any active DOC award(s); and (6) terminating any active DOC award(s).

C. **Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System, and Central Contractor Registration**

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration (CCR), now a part of the System for Award Management (SAM) and is located at www.sam.gov and the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS), and will be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 C.F.R. parts 25 and 170 (2010). The guidance set out at 2 C.F.R. part 25 may be located at http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl, and the guidance set out at 2 C.F.R. part 170 may be located at http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl.

D. **Restrictions Governing Making Grants to Corporations Convicted of Felony Criminal Violations and/or Unpaid Federal Tax Liabilities**

Pursuant to sections 536 and 537 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (P.L. 113-76), applicable to this FFO because of the intended use of FY 14 no-year funds, execution by an applicant of the Representation by Corporations Regarding an Unpaid Delinquent Tax Liability or a Felony Conviction Under Any Federal Law (*see* Appendix A) will be required in a format requested by EDA before any award will be made under this FFO.

E. **Intergovernmental review**

Applications submitted under this FFO are subject to the requirements of Executive Order (EO) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs," if a State has adopted a process under EO 12372 to review and coordinate proposed Federal financial assistance and direct Federal development (commonly referred to as the "single point of contact review process"). All applicants must give State and local governments a reasonable opportunity to review and comment on the proposed Project, including review and comment from area-wide planning organizations in metropolitan areas.[2] To find out more about a State's process under EO 12372, applicants may contact their State's Single Point of Contact (SPOC). Names and addresses of some States' SPOCs are listed on the Office of Management and Budget's home page at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc. Question 19 of Form SF-424 allows applicants to demonstrate compliance with EO 12372.

F. **Implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

The U.S. Department of Justice has issued revised regulations implementing Title II of the ADA (28 C.F.R. part 35; 75 FR 56164, as amended by 76 FR 13285) and Title III of the ADA (28 C.F.R. part 36; 75 FR 56164, as amended by 76 FR 13286). The revised regulations adopted new enforceable accessibility standards called the "2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design" (2010 Standards). The 2010 Standards are an acceptable alternative to the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS). DOC deems compliance with the 2010 Standards to be an acceptable means of complying with the Section 504 accessibility requirements for new construction and alteration projects under 15 C.F.R. § 8b.18(c), as follows:

1. Public Recipients subject to Title II of the ADA may use either the 2010 Standards or UFAS where the physical construction or alternations commence on or after September 15, 2010 and before March 15, 2012 (*see* 28 C.F.R. § 35.151(c)(2)); and

2. Private Recipients subject to Title III of the ADA may use either the 2010 Standards or UFAS if the date when the last application for a building permit or permit extension is certified to be complete by a State, county, or local government (or, in those jurisdictions where the government does not certify completion of applications, if the date when the last application for a building permit or permit extension is received by the State, county, or local government) is on or after September 15, 2010 and before March 15, 2012, or if no permit is required, if the start of physical construction or alterations occurs on or after September 15, 2010 and before March 15, 2012 (*see* 28 C.F.R. § 36.406(a)(2)).

As of March 15, 2012, all new construction and alteration projects must comply with the 2010 Standards. In all cases, once a recipient selects an applicable ADA accessibility standard (i.e., the 2010 Standards or UFAS), that standard must be applied to the entire facility.

[2] As provided for in 15 C.F.R. part 13.

G. **Requirements pertaining to publications and data**

EDA has right of first review of any publications funded through this FFO. Additionally, all materials, data, and reports created through this effort must be made available on a publically available website where they can be accessed at no cost, and EDA retains rights to disseminate and share all resources and IP created through this project with its stakeholders.

VIII. Agency Contact

For additional information on the Research and Evaluation program or to obtain a paper application package for this announcement, please email RNTA@eda.gov. EDA's website at www.eda.gov contains additional information on EDA and its programs.

IX. Instructions for Application Submission via Grants.gov

Register early and submit early. In order to submit an application through www.grants.gov (Grants.gov), an applicant must register for a Grants.gov user ID and password. Note that this process can take between three to five business days or as long as four weeks if all steps are not completed correctly. To avoid delays, EDA strongly recommends that applicants start early and not wait until an approaching funding cycle deadline date before logging in, registering, reviewing the application instructions, and applying. Information about the Grants.gov registration process for organizations can be found at http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html Please note that organizations already registered with Grants.gov do not need to re-register; however, all registered organizations must keep their registration for System for Award Management (SAM), which includes the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) database, up-to-date through sam.gov or their applications will not be accepted by Grants.gov.

AOR requirement. Applicants must register as organizations, not as individuals. As part of the registration process, you will register at least one Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) for your organization. AORs registered at Grants.gov are the only officials with the authority to submit applications at Grants.gov so please ensure that your organization's application is submitted by an AOR. If the application is submitted by anyone other than your organization's AOR, it will be rejected by the Grants.gov system and cannot be considered by EDA. Note that a given organization may designate multiple individuals as AORs for Grants.gov purposes.

EDA will not accept late submissions caused by Grants.gov registration issues, including CCR and AOR issues.

Once an applicant is registered, the following list provides step-by-step instructions for accessing, completing and submitting an application via Grants.gov. Please also read the instructions posted at Grants.gov.

a. Ensure that you have installed a compatible version of Adobe Acrobat Reader on your computer, as incompatible versions of Adobe Acrobat Reader may cause errors. *See* http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/troubleshooting/verifying-adobe-reader.html. Navigate to www.grants.gov and select "Apply for Grants" from the left-hand menu.
b. Select the link for "Download a Grant Application" package.
c. Enter Funding Opportunity Number "EDARegionalTalent2014" and click on "Download Package."
d. Click on the "download" link under "Instructions and Application" for the instructions and application specific to the type of project and EDA program (Research and Evaluation) under which you are applying.
e. A new window should pop up. In the new window, click on "Download Application Instructions" to review the instructions posted on Grants.gov and "Download Application Package" when you are ready to begin the application.
f. Save the applicable application package to your computer or network drive. Note that the package file can be shared among multiple users; however, each user must have a compatible version of Adobe Acrobat Reader installed in order to save changes to the application package.
g. Click on each of the documents in the "Mandatory Documents" box and, after selecting each one, click on the arrow to move these into the "Mandatory Documents for Submission" box.
h. In the "Optional Documents" box, click on Form SF-LLL if non-Federal funds have been or are planned to be used for lobbying in connection with this competitive solicitation and then move this to the "Optional Documents for Submission" box. If you will be submitting your application via Grants.gov, also click on "Attachments" and move this to the "Optional Documents for Submission" box. The Attachments form allows applicants to attach any documents required as attachments under this competitive solicitation, such as a CEDS or letters of support.
i. The application package should pre-populate with all selected forms embedded. Complete all mandatory fields (highlighted in yellow) on the forms. Note that mandatory fields will vary based on the type of applicant and the type of assistance sought. On Form CD-511, type "not awarded yet" in the "project number" field. Save the application package at regular intervals to avoid losing work.
j. Attach any required attachments. The preferred file format for attachments is portable document format (PDF); however, EDA will accept electronic files in Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, or Excel formats. ·
k. When all mandatory fields have been completed, scroll to the top and click on "Check Package for Errors".
l. Click "Save".
m. Click "Save and Submit". At this point the applicant's AOR must be connected to the Internet and will be asked to enter their Grants.gov user id and password in order to submit via Grants.gov. As noted above, an AOR must submit the application for it to be validated by Grants.gov and received by EDA.

Field limitations and special characters. Please be advised that Grants.gov provides the following notice with respect to form field limitations and special characters:

> **Are there restrictions on file names for any attachment I include with my application package?**
>
> Please limit file names to 50 characters and do not use special characters (example: &,-,*,%,/,#) in attachment names and application form fields (including periods (.), blank spaces and accent marks) or attaching documents with the same name. An underscore (example: my_Attached_File.pdf) may be used to separate a file name. Please note that if these guidelines are not followed, your application may be rejected.
>
> **What kind of information can be entered into form fields within my application?**
>
> Grants.gov application packages offer fields to enter a set amount of data. When the limit is reached for a certain field, you will no longer be able to enter data into that field. For every form, there are different limitations to the data that you are allowed to enter (this varies between agency and form). Refer to the agency instructions available for download with the application package for more detail.
>
> Do not use special characters (example: &,-,*,%,/,#) within the application form fields including periods (.), blank spaces and accent marks; an underscore may be used. Please note that if these guidelines are not followed, your application may be rejected.

In EDA's experience, use of apostrophes (') in file names and fillable fields of required forms has resulted in application submission issues. Accordingly, please periodically check the status of your application to make sure it has been validated, and use file naming conventions that do not negatively affect your application submission.

If a response exceeds the field limit requirements of any form, including Form ED-900, the applicant is advised to include the response as an attachment to the application. The applicant should move 'Attachments' to the 'Optional Documents for Submission' box in the application package, and clearly indicate in the form field that the information is included as an electronic file.

Verify submission was successful. Applicants should save and print written proof of an electronic submission made at Grants.gov. Applicants can expect to receive multiple emails regarding the status of their submission. Since email communication can be unreliable, applicants must proactively check on the status of their application if they do not receive email notifications within a day of submission.

An applicant should expect to receive two initial emails from Grants.gov: the first will confirm receipt of the application, and the second will indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system before transmission to EDA or has been rejected due to errors. Because it can take up to two business days after Grants.gov receives an application for applicants to receive email notification of an error, applicants should time their submissions to allow for application correction and resubmission by the applicable funding cycle deadline. Applicants will receive a third email once EDA has retrieved their applications.

EDA requests that applicants kindly refrain from submitting multiple copies of the same application package. Applicants should save and print both the confirmation screen provided on the Grants.gov website after the applicant has submitted an application, and the confirmation email sent by Grants.gov when the application has been successfully received and validated in the system. If an applicant receives an email from Grants.gov indicating that the application was received and subsequently validated, but does not receive an email from Grants.gov indicating that EDA has retrieved the application package within 72 hours of that email, the applicant may contact the applicable regional office representative listed in section VIII. of this announcement to inquire if EDA is in receipt of the applicant's submission.

It is the applicant's responsibility to verify that its submission was timely received and validated successfully at Grants.gov. To see the date and time your application was received, log on to Grants.gov and click on the "Track My Application" link from the left-hand menu. For a successful submission, the application must be received and validated by Grants.gov, and an agency tracking number assigned. If the date and time your application is validated and time-stamped by Grants.gov is later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, January 9, 2015, your application is late. If your application has a status of "Received" it is awaiting validation by Grants.gov. Once validation is complete, the status will change to "Validated" or "Rejected with Errors." If the status is "Rejected with Errors," your application has not been received successfully. Some of the reasons Grants.gov may reject an application can be found at http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs/grant-application-faqs.html. . For more detailed information on why an application may be rejected, please see "Troubleshooting Tips" at http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/troubleshooting.html.

Grants.gov systems issues. If you experience a Grants.gov "systems issue" (technical problems or glitches with the Grants.gov website) that you believe threatens your ability to complete a submission before an applicable funding cycle deadline, please (i) print any error message received; and (ii) call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 for immediate assistance. Ensure that you obtain a case number regarding your communications with Grants.gov. Please note: problems with an applicant organization's computer system or equipment are not considered "systems issues." Similarly, an applicant's failure to: (i) complete the required registration, (ii) ensure that a registered AOR submits the application, or (iii) notice receipt of an email message from Grants.gov are not considered systems issues. A Grants.gov "systems issue" is an issue occurring in connection with the operations of Grants.gov itself, such as the temporary loss of service by Grants.gov due to unexpected volume of traffic or failure of information technology systems, both of which are highly unlikely. In the event of a confirmed "systems issue," EDA reserves the right to accept an application in an alternate format.

Applicants should access the following link for assistance in navigating Grants.gov and for a list of useful resources: http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support.html. The following link lists frequently asked questions (FAQs): http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/general-support/faqs.html. If you do not find an answer to your question under the "Applicant FAQs," try consulting the "Applicant User Guide" or contacting Grants.gov by email at support@grants.gov or telephone at 1-800-518-4726. The Grants.gov Contact Center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Appendix A. Representation by Corporations Regarding an Unpaid Delinquent Tax Liability or a Felony Conviction Under Any Federal Law

In accordance with Sections 536 and 537 of the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2014 (Pub. L. 113-76, Division B) (FY 2014 Act), none of the appropriated funds made available by the FY 2014 Act may be used to issue a financial assistance award to any corporation that:

(a) Was convicted of a felony criminal violation under any Federal law within the preceding 24 months, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government; and/or

(b) Has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government.

For purposes of the below certification, a corporation is defined as an entity that has filed articles of incorporation in one of the fifty states, the District of Columbia, or the various territories of the United States including American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Midway Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, Republic of Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. (Note that this includes both for-profit and non-profit organizations.)

The below certification is required for all new financial assistance awards, and for all amendments to existing financial assistance awards, that are made to corporations (as defined above) and that are funded with appropriated funds made available to the Department of Commerce pursuant to the FY 2014 Act. This certification is further required to the extent that other FY 2014 appropriation acts contain the same or substantively similar prohibitions against the issuance of financial assistance awards to certain corporations.

Instructions: All recipients that are corporations (as defined above) must complete paragraphs (1) and (2) below, which must be signed below by an authorized representative of the corporation. Recipients that are not corporations are not required to complete this representation.

(1) _____ [insert name of corporation] certifies that it is ☐ is not ☐ (check one) a corporation that was convicted of a felony criminal violation under a Federal law within the 24 months preceding the signature date of this Representation.

(2) _____ [insert name of corporation] certifies that it is ☐ is not ☐ (check one) a corporation that has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreements with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability.

By: _____
[Typed name and title of the signing individual]
[Typed phone number of the signing individual]
[Typed email address of the signing individual]

Date: _____