

SUBJECT: Upskill/Backfill – Phase 2 - Grant Funding Availability

Background

The Washington State Workforce Education and Training Coordinating Board has announced that \$480,000 is available in federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds, through Phase 2 of a competitive procurement process, to fund demonstration projects for a service design called “Upskill-Backfill”. The funds are WIOA 10% set aside.

The concept is that if current workers (incumbent workers) receive training leading to promotion (upskill), new hires may then fill the position vacated by the upskilled employee. In this demonstration design, training would be paid for with grant funds and employer contributions to increase the skills of the current worker, and to build the necessary skills of the job candidates who would fill the job vacancies open through the promotion of the upskilled workers.

Phase 1 resulted in grant funding for 7 demonstration projects statewide. Awards of 1 to 3 new grants are anticipated in the Phase 2 process just initiated. Phase 2 is in many respects the same concept, but there is a new focus on “cross regional Workforce Development Council collaboration” combined with a state-wide sector approach.

Phase 2 – Statewide Sector Funding - Required Partners

Under Phase 2, projects must focus on a specific industry sector operating across multiple workforce regions. In Phase 2, unlike the initial round of funding, applications must include a minimum of two Workforce Development Councils (WDCs) per application who will be co-leads for a project operating in each participating Workforce Development Area (WDA). Applications must also include:

- a partner-consortium reflective of the targeted industry sectors within the Workforce Development Regions submitting an application, including participating businesses and other partners;
- when a portion of the targeted industry sector’s workforce is represented by organized labor, that union or unions should also be included in the project’s governance structure.

Expected Outcomes

Grant funds are expected to be a catalyst for local partnerships to create structural change and permanent capacity increases sustained through preexisting funding streams.

Additional expected outcomes, among others, include:

- Businesses improve ability to compete and grow their workforce

- Current workers increase their income
- Unemployed individuals secure employment at livable wages at participating businesses
- Apprenticeship and other workplace learning opportunities are developed

Visit the State Workforce Board website for more information and complete grant funding application materials: <http://wtb.wa.gov/TAPAccelerator.asp>.

Applications Due: June 30, 2017

Awardees Announced: July 30, 2017

Final Date for use of Phase 2 funds: March 31, 2019.