Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development Initiative
Generation III Solicitation
Frequently Asked Questions

Question: What is the WIRED Initiative?

Answer: The Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) Initiative is designed to support the development of a regional, integrated approach to workforce and economic development and education. The ultimate goal of WIRED is to expand employment and advancement opportunities for American workers and catalyze the creation of high-skill and high-wage opportunities.

The Initiative provides regions with funding from the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and ongoing technical assistance and support from a cadre of experts to implement a transformational approach to their workforce and economic development systems at the regional level.

Currently, the WIRED Initiative consists of three generations of regions. The first generation of WIRED, which includes 13 regions, was announced in February of 2006. Each first generation WIRED Region receives $15 million over a three year period. An additional 13 regions – the second generation of WIRED– followed in January 2007. After receiving a small planning grant, these regions will now receive an additional $5 million over the next three years, bringing the total investment to more than $260 million for the first and second generations of WIRED.

Recently, ETA released a solicitation for a third generation of regions under the WIRED Initiative. The Department of Labor (DOL) is making $5 million per region available for this new round of grants.

Question: What is a region?

Answer: Economic regions do not typically correspond to political jurisdictions such as state, county, local workforce investment area or municipal boundaries. Similarly, state boundaries do not always match labor market areas as evidenced by Philadelphia's tri-state area or the greater Kansas City area, among others. WIRED Regions are geographical areas that face the same economic realities, such as labor shortages and changes in access to talent and leveraged resources. Through regional integration, WIRED

Regions transcend traditional labor market areas that are comprised of multiple jurisdictions within a state or across state borders.

Factors that contribute to the formation of a region include economic interdependence, such as common industries or sectors; assets, such as human and financial capital and infrastructure; and networks, such as leadership or investor networks.

Question: What role do Local Workforce Investment Boards have in the third generation of WIRED Regions?

Answer: Through strong regional partnerships, they are encouraged to work with Governors on the application process and implementation of the WIRED Initiative. Given that one of the significant goals for WIRED is to fully align the public workforce investments with a regional economic growth agenda, regional partnerships teams must include a senior representative of the workforce investment system within the region as the lead, or co-lead with at least one other regional partner, for the region's WIRED grant activities.

Question: What roles do employers, labor organizations, community colleges and community and faith-based organizations have in the WIRED Initiative?

Answer: Each of these entities – along with civic, investor, academia, entrepreneurial and philanthropic leaders – play a critical role in assisting the leadership of State and/or Local Workforce Investment Boards and helping to facilitate an environment that is conducive to innovation. Collectively, these entities help form the partnership that is ultimately responsible for shaping the discussion of a regional strategy, creating the capacity for economic transformation to occur and putting the plan into action.

Question: How many projects will be funded?

Answer: ETA anticipates issuing eight to 13 grant awards in May 2007. All award notifications will be posted on the ETA homepage at http://www.doleta.gov.

Question: How much funding is available for each project?

Answer: Individual grant amounts will be in the range of $5 million over three years.

Question: What is the funding source?

Answer: Grants awarded through the WIRED Initiative will be funded with H-1B fees as authorized under Sec. 414 (c) of the American Competitiveness and Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-277, title IV), as amended.

Question: What is the time-frame for the third Generation WIRED Initiative?

Answer: ETA announced the solicitation for the third generation of WIRED Regions on February 13, 2007. Governors are invited to submit applications by April 13, 2007. The period of performance will be 36 months from the date of execution of the grant documents.

Question: What types of technical assistance will be offered to grantees?

Answer: Throughout the WIRED Initiative, participating regions may receive ongoing intensive technical assistance crafted to meet the specific needs of those regions. ETA will provide 10 to 12 pre-approved technical assistance providers to assist the regions in the areas of entrepreneurship, economic and workforce development, career academies and identifying, mapping and leveraging assets and others.   The WIRED Initiative will also include extensive peer to peer contact. This includes ongoing opportunities to collaborate with federal partners and other WIRED Regions to share challenges and best practices. Additionally, WIRED Regions are provided with opportunities to work with experts from the workforce, education and economic development communities, in addition to leaders from the private sector and the innovation community (e.g., high-tech business leaders, university presidents, research lab directors).

Question: Will best practices be made available to the workforce and economic development systems?

Answer: A report on best practices will be compiled and disseminated to the workforce and economic development communities so that all regions, even those not selected to participate, will benefit from WIRED.

Question: Will ETA still hold grant competitions under the High Growth Job Training Initiative?

Answer: Yes, ETA will continue issuing grant competitions under the High Growth Job Training Initiative.

Question: Will ETA still hold grant competitions under the Community-Based Job Training Initiative?

Answer: If authorized by Congress, ETA will continue issuing grant competitions under the Community-Based Job Training Initiative.

Question: How may Governors apply for a WIRED Initiative grant?

Answer: Governors may submit applications by mail or online at http://www.grants.gov. Applications may also be hand-delivered to Ms. Laura Patton Watson at the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Division of Federal Assistance, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room N-4716, Washington, DC 20210 by 4:30p.m. on April 13, 2007. All application submittal instructions are available in the Solicitation for Grant Applications on http://www.doleta.gov/sga/sga/DOL-SGA-DFA-PY-06-09.pdf Applications must be received by 5 p.m. on April 13, 2007.

Question: Will late applications be accepted?

Answer: Any application received after 4:30p.m. (Eastern Time) on April 13, 2007 will not be considered unless it is received before awards are made and it (a) was sent by U.S. Postal Service registered or certified mail not later than the fifth calendar day before the date specified for receipt of applications (e.g., an application required to be received by the 20th of the month must be postmarked by the 15th of that month) or (b) was sent by U.S. Postal Service Express Mail or online to addressee not later than 5 p.m. at the place of mailing or electronic submission one working day prior to the date specified for receipt of applications.

Question: Who is eligible to apply for the grants?

Answer: Governors State Governors (for the purpose of this application the definition of State Governor includes the Governor of Puerto Rico and the Mayor of the District of Columbia) are the only eligible applicants for the WIRED Initiative. The Governor must submit an application on behalf of a specific, defined multi-county regional team of public and private partners. The application must clearly identify the state entity that will serve as the grant recipient, the state entity or local workforce investment board that will serve as the project's fiscal agent, and the sub-recipient that will have responsibility for administering the project on the Governor's behalf. The grant application form should contain the information of the state agency that is serving as the grant recipient.

Question: How many applications can each Governor submit?

Answer: Governors are permitted to submit up to two applications for regional or cross-state regional teams.

Question: If an application is for a cross-state regional team, will all Governors of the cross-state region have to sign-off on the application?

Answer: Yes, applications submitted for cross-state regions will require the signature of all the state Governors involved in the regional team, and the application must designate an entity as the grant recipient. The designated entity will be responsible for administering the project and serving as its fiscal agent.

Question: What should be included in the application package?

Answer: The proposal must consist of two separate and distinct parts, Part A – Financial Proposal and Part B – Technical Proposal. The Technical Proposal is limited to 25 double-spaced, single-sided, 8.5-inch-by-11-inch pages with 12-point font and 1-inch margins. In addition, the applicant may provide resumes, a staffing pattern, statistical information and related materials in attachments which may not exceed 10 pages. Letters of commitment from partners may be submitted as attachments and will not count against the allowable maximum page totals.

Question: How will the technical proposal be evaluated?

Answer: Five criteria will be used to evaluate the proposals for participation in the third generation of the WIRED Initiative:

> 1) Identification of the WIRED Region,
> 2) Regional labor market and economic landscape,
> 3) Strength of partnership,
> 4) Strategies for transformation and
> 5) Leveraged resources

Greater detail about the evaluation criteria is available in the Solicitation for Grant Applications at http://www.doleta.gov/sga/sga/DOL-SGA-DFA-PY-06-09.pdf

Question: Is there a cost sharing requirement?

Answer: Cost sharing or matching is not required for eligibility. However, aligning resources and leveraged funding is a key component for success in the WIRED Initiative. Therefore, applicants are expected to leverage significant resources at the Federal, state and regional levels when possible to advance their proposed transformational strategies.

Question: Will there be another opportunity for states to respond under this initiative in the future?

Answer: No. However, ETA plans to use a portion of the national reserve account to fund planning grants in some regions. These grants are targeted at areas responding to an economic shock or dislocation and seeking to begin the WIRED process of identifying their region, creating a leadership team and developing a regional economic strategy.

Question: For multiple state submissions, how does the proposal count towards each state's limit of two submissions?

Answer: Multi-state proposals count as a submission for each of the Governors involved.

Question: In a multi-state proposal, should one state be designated as the grant recipient?

Answer: Yes. The partners in the proposal should designate one state and one fiscal agent as the lead for the initiative.

Question: Must the definition of the region match the census definition of a MSA, or some other officially designated definition?

Answer: No. Each proposal should define the regional economy as you see it in your area.

Question: Are individual states being given guidance on how they will select only two applications?

Answer: No. The selection of applications is at the discretion of the Governor.

Question: Economic regions exist without being geographically contiguous – their economies linked by road, rail and air. Requiring that the participants be contiguous seems to preclude innovative approaches to integrating workforce and economic development. Is being contiguous an absolute requirement or can they be linked by a trade route?

Answer: Regional economies are typically defined as geographically contiguous areas. However, a proposal that makes an innovative case for a non-contiguous regional economy linked via road, rail or air will be considered. Non-contiguous areas that only share similar circumstances (e.g. separate BRAC communities) will not be considered.

Question: Are private associations or employers allowed to partner with community colleges and/or universities for the WIRED Initiative grant?

Answer: Yes. WIRED seeks to galvanize these regional networks and build a leadership team consisting of civic, business, investor, academic, entrepreneur and philanthropic members.

Question: What is the role of the other Federal partners?

Answer: DOL has enlisted a host of federal agencies to assist with economic transformation in the WIRED Regions. Partnerships with Federal agencies include the Departments of Education, Commerce, Energy, Transportation, Defense and the Interior as well as National Science Foundation and others.

Examples of support from federal partners include the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration in infrastructure improvements, the U.S. Department of Energy's National Laboratories to promote technology transfer and access to their experts and the U.S. Department of Defense to improve STEM education and connect with Small Business Innovation Research grants. For more information, please visit http://www.doleta.gov/wired/about/federalPartners.cfm.

Question: Would a proposal with a single-industry sector focus be appropriate for a WIRED project?

Answer: We expect a proposal dealing with multiple sectors within a regional economy, not a regional economic strategy to deal exclusively with one sector.

Question: Generally, how will the initiative's geographic selections be made?

Answer: The ranked scores of the proposals will serve as the primary basis for selection of applications, in conjunction with other factors such as urban, rural and geographic balance.

Question: Can Workforce Investment Act (WIA)/Workforce Investment Board (WIB) funds be used for the application?

Answer: ETA expects that existing WIA programs and funds will be identified and leveraged in support of the region's economic strategy.

Question: Why is the governor's office involved?

Answer: The Governor has been designated as the applicant to ensure the leadership and commitment of the state in selected regions.

Question: Is a multi-state application preferred over an application from a single state?

Answer: No. Each proposal will be considered on its merits.

Question: If the regional economy crosses national boundaries, can funds and/or resources be used outside the U.S.?

Answer: No. H-1B grant funds must be used for projects in the United States to increase the skills of and opportunities for U.S. workers.

Question: What are the submission guidelines regarding the inclusion of budget documents?

Answer: Budget documents should be listed on the Budget Information Form. In preparing the Budget Information Form, the applicant must provide a concise narrative explanation to support the request. The narrative should break down the budget and leveraged resources by the activities specified in the technical proposal. Leveraged resources should be included in the budget narrative and charts within the narrative, but should <u>not</u> be included on the SF424A. Applicants may choose to identify the organizations that would receive funding for these activities, but this is not required. The narrative should also discuss precisely how the administrative costs support the project goals. The Budget Information Form can be found at:
<u>http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/sf424a.pdf</u>

Question: If my organization has a current DOL grant, can I use these grant funds to hire a grant writer or other professionals to assist with the preparation of a WIRED proposal.

Answer: No.

Question: Can equipment purchases over $5,000 be a part of a grant proposal?

Answer: It is intended that the grant resources not be used specifically for major equipment or IT purchases. However, equipment and IT purchases necessary to administer and carry out the purposes of the proposed

project must have grant officer approval prior to purchase and must be purchased in accordance with appropriate procurement regulations. Equipment purchases must also align with the H-1B legislation as outlined in the SGA Part II Award Information, Use of funds.

Question: If a proposal is selected for an award, is the new grantee required to "procure" the partners included in the original proposal.

Answer: If the named partner entity meets the definition of a "partner" as used by ETA, then the selection of the partner would not be considered a procurement action. A "partner" for these purposes is a partner that has played an integral role in the development of the scope of work; and the completion of the scope of work or attainment of grant outcomes is dependent on the full participation of that partner. Conversely, simply including an entity in the proposal or naming the entity as a "partner" in the proposal does not exempt the entity from competitive procurement requirements. Grantees are expected to comply with procurement requirements in the selection of service providers and in the purchase of goods to support the grant program.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More Information about the WIRED Initiative will be available via:

- A Virtual Prospective Applicant Conference on March 6, 2007 at 1:00 PM EST. Access information for the Virtual Prospective Applicant Conference will be posted on http://www.workforce3one.org.

- DOL's Employment and Training Administration Web site at http://www.doleta.gov/wired. This site includes answers to questions about the WIRED Initiative, tools for WIRED Regions, information on each WIRED Region and facts and resources on participating in WIRED.

WIRED Contact Information:

Technical questions regarding the WIRED Application Submittal Instructions may be faxed to Ms. Laura Patton Watson, Chief of the Division of Federal Assistance, Fax number (202) 693-3961 (not a toll-free number). You must specifically address your fax to the attention of Ms. Laura Patton Watson and should include the following information in your fax: SGA/DFA PY 05-04, a contact name, fax and telephone number.