

Workplace-Based Learning for Low-Wage, Lower Skilled Adults

Request for Proposals



August 2011

Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board
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Contents

- 1. Introduction 1**
 - 1.1. Background1
 - 1.2. Purpose1
 - 1.3. Eligible Learning Laboratory Partnerships2
 - 1.4. Funds Available and Project Duration3
 - 1.5. Scope3
 - 1.6. Partner Roles4
 - 1.7. Data Reporting and Evaluation6

- 2. General Information for Applicants 8**
 - 2.1. Application Timeline8
 - 2.2. Learning Laboratory Partnership Webpage8
 - 2.3. Bidders Conference Webinar9
 - 2.4. Submission of proposals9
 - 2.5. Revisions to the RFP9
 - 2.6. Responsiveness9

- 3. Proposal Contents 11**
 - 3.1. Cover Page11
 - 3.2. Project Abstract11
 - 3.3. Project Design11
 - 3.4. Budget Summary and Narrative12
 - 3.5. Letters of Commitment12

Attachment A – Cover Page

Attachment B – Budget Summary and Narrative

Attachment C - Criteria for Workplace-Based Learning Laboratories

1. Introduction

1.1. BACKGROUND

More than one out of three Washington high school graduates enters the workforce armed only with their high school diploma, working in mostly low-wage, low-skill jobs with limited growth potential. Washington's economy demands a more highly skilled workforce to keep our state's businesses competitive and to meet the personal and financial needs of the workforce. Meeting these demands requires reaching out to individuals already in the workforce and engaging them in post-secondary education.

On average, an individual needs at least one year of postsecondary education and a credential to have a job that pays enough to support oneself and one's family. Too often low-wage, under-skilled adult workers are not taking advantage of Washington's education system and its expanding online learning opportunities. These adult workers are frequently left out of these opportunities because they are unaware of the myriad learning options, don't have access to or understand the technology, cannot afford tuition, or do not have time for school. Without a postsecondary credential, many workers are faced with stagnant income, no possibilities for advancement, and ongoing problems achieving self-sufficiency. And Washington's employers continue to struggle to find well-qualified workers to help grow their business.

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) advocates for the greater use of distance learning to overcome educational barriers experienced by working adults. In 2008 the Washington State Legislature passed [ESSB 6295](#), creating the Workplace-Based Learning Initiative Steering Committee (Steering Committee). This committee identified policies addressing workplace-based education, including criteria for Workplace-Based Learning Laboratories (see Attachment C). The work of the Steering Committee prepared the Workforce Board to seek federal funding to pilot Learning Laboratories in Washington State.

1.2. PURPOSE

The Workforce Board recently secured a two-year grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to administer a Workplace-Based Learning Initiative ('Initiative'). With these funds, the Workforce Board will award contracts to three Learning Laboratory Partnerships, each headed by a higher education institution. The partners will collectively support the development, testing, delivery, and expansion of education and training for low-wage, lower skilled workers at their place of employment. The learning laboratories will be designed to enhance worker prospects for job and wage progress while meeting specific employer needs.

The Initiative is a natural evolution of the Steering Committee’s work. It will begin to bridge the physical and mental distances between the workplace and the classroom so that people who work can acquire meaningful education and training while advancing their careers and standard of living. The lessons learned through the Initiative will inform better deployment of Washington’s higher education resources in the workplace and create a culture and infrastructure that supports lifelong learning and long-term economic success. This framework will be used by federal policymakers and other states seeking to address the issues of under-skilled working adults.

Through the Initiative, incumbent workers will have new opportunities to participate in postsecondary credit-bearing pathway courses and increase their upward mobility through a well-defined career pathway.

1.3. ELIGIBLE LEARNING LABORATORY PARTNERSHIPS

A learning laboratory partnership will consist of a public or private 2-year or 4-year college or university (referred hereinafter as “college”), one or more employers, employees and a Workforce Development Council. In cases where employees are organized, appropriate union representation in the partnership is required. The college will serve as the contract manager, education provider, and fiscal agent for the partnership. The college shall submit the application on behalf of the learning laboratory partnership. Priority will be given to employer-employee partnerships, including labor-management training partnerships. Projects may be part of a registered apprenticeship program.

Finding the Right Employer-Partners

Appropriate employer-partners are those who place a high value on the educational opportunities the project will offer their employees – while they anticipate benefits to their business such as reduced turnover, increased productivity, improved recruitment, ability to expand, and increased skills of supervisors participating as educational facilitators. Appropriate employer-partners:

- employ low-wage lower skilled workers
- offer career advancement opportunities within the organization to employees who gain skills
- commit their workplace as a component of a learning laboratory and as an extension of the college campus

The Workforce Board will aid public and private higher education institutions in identifying potential employers. Under contract with the Workforce Board, the Association of Washington Business and the Washington State Labor Council will contact their constituents across the state to encourage them to contact their local public or private higher education institution to explore the potential for a Learning Laboratory Partnership.

1.4. FUNDS AVAILABLE AND PROJECT DURATION

Using a competitive application process, the Workforce Board will award contracts to three (3) public or private higher education institutions in Washington to coordinate the Learning Laboratory Partnership as described in this RFP. On behalf of its partnership, an eligible college may apply for up to \$200,000.

At least one of the three projects selected will serve a rural area. At least one of the selected projects will be a workplace I-BEST project serving workers who are not yet college-ready. Resulting contracts will have a December 2011 start date and an April 30, 2013 end date. The period of performance of any contract resulting from this RFP is scheduled to begin in December 2011 and end on April 30, 2013. Amendments extending the period of performance, if any, shall be at the sole discretion of the Workforce Board. The Workforce Board's overall grant with the U.S. Department of Labor ends on June 30, 2013.

1.5. SCOPE

Learning Laboratory partners will collaborate to recruit and enroll a minimum of 30 low-wage, lower skilled employees. For purposes of this Initiative, low-wage is defined as an individual's annual income of less than \$36,000 or \$18 per hour. This figure is based on 75 percent of the average Washington wage (\$47,500 annually).

The college will provide distance learning/online instruction and other eLearning didactics, as well as necessary student supports, to ensure participating employees receive credit that can build toward an industry-recognized credential and/or degree. eLearning encompasses the multiple strategies that allow people to participate at a distance and engage the learning experience and fellow learners through the use of technology.

Educational Delivery and Course Content

A substantial part of the delivery of course content will be eLearning and computer-based. Other delivery methods may include a range of electronically supported learning and teaching tools, including hybrid education courses with face-to-face interaction and in-person instruction delivered at the worksite (see Criteria No. 7. in Attachment C). Employees will receive an orientation to the technology and eLearning methods employed by the project. Note: The college may use an orientation to on-line learning package that is already in use by the college.

The college will significantly enhance a currently available program or will design new credit-bearing distance learning courses to best meet the needs of the employer-partners and the employee's access to education and career advancement. The college will defend reasonable costs for curriculum development.

Course content will be focused on course work that assists employees to progress *toward* employment in high demand occupations within the business and industry, defined as an occupation with a substantial number of current or projected employment opportunities. Applicants should refer to the regional demand/decline lists at www.wilma.org/wdclists.

Successful proposals will outline how the education and training provided will ensure that participating employees make *measurable progress* on a well-defined pathway toward at least the tipping point of one-year of postsecondary education and an industry-recognized credential (the tipping point, however, does not have to be achieved during the life of the contract).

For proposals targeting employees who are not college ready and who need basic skills or preparedness for college learning, the proposal must outline how participants will make *measurable progress towards* gaining qualification to work in a high demand occupation within the business and industry through an workplace I-BEST delivery model.

Performance

- Each selected college shall enroll at least 30 low-wage adult workers.
- At least 24 adult workers enrolled by each selected college shall complete two credit-bearing pathway courses. (Delivering at least six credits is strongly encouraged. Completing six credits will benefit the employees who may later choose to apply for student financial aid.)
- Planned level of outcome: 80 percent of employer-partners will report a positive response to the learning lab experience, as measured through structured interviews conducted by the Workforce Board (see 1.6 Data Reporting and Evaluation).
- Planned level of outcome: 90 percent of participants who complete their training will be employed with the same employer-partner in the 3rd quarter after completing training (a Workforce Board follow-up responsibility).

1.6. PARTNER ROLES

College Role

The college will form a learning laboratory partnership consisting of one or more employers, employees, the local area Workforce Development Council (WDC) and any applicable Union representation. The college will deliver workplace-based instruction as described in section 1.5 Scope and in Attachment C. The college will design components that will provide greater access and success for low-wage working adults that could include:

- Initial assessment to identify the level of college readiness and any practical and/or personal needs that could pose-barriers to successful completion.

- Case managers to provide connection to social and other support services
- Coaching to succeed in the program and employment.
- Orientation to navigating post-secondary learning environments and strategies for success
- Learning provides stackable credentials.
- Credit for prior learning provided (these college level prior learning credits can count toward the project’s credit goals).

The college will be responsible for training the on-site Educational Facilitators and sustaining a working relationship with the educational facilitators throughout the project. The training will prepare the Educational Facilitators to support traditional faculty and extend the participants’ learning. The college will consult with the Workforce Board to assess the ultimate value of the role of Educational Facilitator as part of a workplace-based learning delivery model.

The college will convene and facilitate a project “learning community” which will bring together faculty, staff, students, administrators, and members of the partnership to help guide implementation and improve the program. Additionally, each college will commit time quarterly for key representatives to participate in an Initiative-wide learning community to discover lessons learned and to improve outcomes through the course of the project.

Employer Role

Working with the college, employer-partners are responsible to identify low-income employees who earn \$18.00 an hour or less and who would be appropriate for the project. Veterans and their spouses shall be given enrollment priority. Employers shall attest that participating employees are legal to work in the United States (a federal grant requirement). Employers also agree to provide the data to the Workforce Board to conduct an evaluation of employer benefit measures (see 1.6 Data Reporting and Evaluation).

Through a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the college, selected employers agree to have a number of their employees enroll and complete a minimum of two credit-bearing college pathway courses at their place of business.

Employer-partners will commit worksite learning space, employee learning time, technological access and support, and the leadership of experienced staff within the business who will provide coaching and mentoring as negotiated with their partner college (see elements in Attachment C, Criteria 12).

On-site Educational Facilitator Role

In coordination with the college, each participating employer shall identify one or more supervisors or other appropriate staff to serve as on-site Educational Facilitators. The Educational Facilitator shall be available on-site to coach the participating employees, monitor their progress and work in coordination with the college's faculty to support the success of the initiative for both the participant and the employer-partner whenever challenges arise.

Workforce Development Council Role

WDCs will play a key part in the learning laboratory partnership as they are well positioned to help the college identify local employers to participate in the Initiative and to provide labor market information to help identify high demand occupations in the region. Throughout the Initiative, the WDC will participate in the project's learning community. The college may subcontract with the WDC for supporting activities.

Employee Role

Employees will be engaged in the design and oversight of the project. Employees who participate in the Initiative will demonstrate an interest to complete two credit-bearing pathway courses. Employees will agree to participate in instructor led activities, on-line activities, as well as self-paced independent study as determined by the college. Employees shall agree to supply their Social Security number on college enrollment forms. Male employees must document that they are in compliance with Selective Service registration requirements (a federal grant requirement). The employees will not be charged tuition, books or supplies.

Union or Worker Representative Role (as applicable)

If the targeted workers are represented by a union, the union must be engaged in the partnership.

1.7. DATA REPORTING AND EVALUATION

Colleges will be required to gather student records and shared release forms, report quarterly participant performance information (such as enrollment and completion) using the college's Student Management System, and submit to the Workforce Board narrative progress reports and fiscal invoices following guidance and forms provided by the Workforce Board. Progress reports will also be distributed to the Learning Laboratory partners by the college.

The Workforce Board will evaluate the Initiative at its own cost. In addition to regular reporting, the college and participating employers will agree to participate in the evaluation. The Workforce Board will arrange structured interviews of college project staff, employers and employees.

The Workforce Board will also conduct and analyze the performance measures for business and worker impacts, including training completion rate, employment retention, earnings increases and the employer benefit measures such as reduced rate or cost of employee turnover, productivity increases and increased revenue.

2. General Information for Applicants

2.1. APPLICATION TIMELINE

Activity	Date
Issue Request for Proposals	August 29, 2011
Pre-Proposal webinars	September 27, 2011 and October 5, 2011
Due date for application *	November 21, 2011 by 3:00 pm
Application review committee convenes	November 28, 2011
Grantees notified of selection	November 30, 2011
Negotiate and execute contracts	December 2011
Select and train educational facilitators	January and February 2012
Customize curricula	January and February 2012
Implement workplace distance learning projects	March 2012 (educational delivery start date no later than March 26, 2012)
Final date for employees to complete training	March 31, 2013
Submit final project report	April 15, 2013
Contract end date	April 30, 2013

* This timeline allows almost three months for application development. The Workforce Board recognizes that eligible colleges will require time to identify employer-partners for their proposals and establish pre-award agreements.

2.2. LEARNING LABORATORY PARTNERSHIP WEBPAGE

The Workforce Board maintains a [Learning Laboratory Partnership webpage](http://www.wtb.wa.gov/LearningLaboratoryPartnerships.asp) at www.wtb.wa.gov/LearningLaboratoryPartnerships.asp for applicants and other interested parties. Applicants should refer to this webpage for additional information on the Initiative, resources and updates.

2.3. BIDDERS CONFERENCE WEBINARS

Pre-proposal webinars are scheduled to be held on September 27, 2011 from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. and on October 5, 2011 from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Instructions for accessing the webinar will be posted at <http://www.wtb.wa.gov/LearningLaboratoryPartnerships.asp>. All prospective applicants should attend; however attendance is not mandatory. The Workforce Board will be bound only to written answers to questions. Questions arising at the pre-proposal webinar or in subsequent communication with the Workforce Board will be documented and answered in written form. A copy of the questions and answers will be made available online.

2.4. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Applicants must submit their application package electronically as an attachment to an email to Katherine Mahoney at kmahoney@wtb.wa.gov no later than 3:00 p.m. on Monday, November 21, 2011. The proposal and attachments must be submitted as Word files or PDFs. The Cover Page (Attachment A) must have a scanned signature of the college president to bind the applicant to the proposal. Applications that arrive after this deadline will not be accepted.

Eligible applicants may submit only one application. Proposals are **limited to 12 pages**, which includes a response to all criteria. The 12-page limit **does not** include the cover page, project abstract (500 words or less), budget summary, budget narrative, participant chart, or letters of commitment. Font size must be 12 point.

2.5. REVISIONS TO THE RFP

In the event it becomes necessary to revise any part of the RFP, addenda will be provided via email to all individuals who have made the Workforce Board aware of their interest. Addenda will also be published on www.wtb.wa.gov/LearningLaboratoryPartnerships.asp. You are responsible for sending your name, college, email address and telephone number to [Katherine Mahoney](mailto:Katherine.Mahoney@wtb.wa.gov) at <mailto:kmahoney@wtb.wa.gov> in order for your organization to receive any RFP addenda.

The Workforce Board reserves the right to cancel or reissue the RFP in whole or in part, prior to execution of a contract.

2.6. RESPONSIVENESS

All proposals will be reviewed by the RFP Coordinator to determine compliance with administrative requirements and instructions specified in this RFP. Proposals which fail to comply with any part of the RFP may be rejected as non-responsive. Applicants will be notified if their proposal is found to be non-responsive.

A panel of experts from labor, business, and education and training agencies will review applications meeting deadlines and minimum criteria. A scoring rubric will be adapted from the “Criteria for Workplace-Based Learning Laboratories” (Attachment C). If needed, an in-person or telephone conversation between the panel and the applicant will occur to more fully explore the strengths of the application or assist in the overall prioritization of projects.

Note: The scoring rubric will provide extra points for applications where the employer-partners commit to paying 50 percent or more of the costs for paid employee release time.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you have any questions or project ideas please contact Martin McCallum at 360-586-0151 or via email at mmccallum@wtb.wa.gov. For technical assistance in completing your proposal, contact Katherine Mahoney at <mailto:kmahoney@wtb.wa.gov>.

3. Proposal Contents

The proposal must contain:

3.1. COVER PAGE

Please use the attached template (*Attachment A*). The cover page must be signed and dated by the college president.

3.2. PROJECT ABSTRACT

Please provide a brief overview of your project (limited to 500 words). The summary should:

- include the name of the college or university and title of the project (not included in the 500 word limit);
- describe how the project supports the community access mission of your postsecondary education institution;
- succinctly describe the project concept and expected outcomes that include the number of employees who will be enrolled (minimum of 30) and the number who will complete two credit-bearing courses (minimum of 24);
- describe the course offerings, number of credits employees will receive, and the industry-recognized credential it will lead towards;
- outline the benefits to low-wage, lower skilled workers and to the participating businesses; and
- describe how your learning laboratory model will inform better deployment of the state's higher education resources in the workplace.

3.3. PROJECT DESIGN

To be no more than 12 page

Work Plan

The work plan must demonstrate quality and thoroughness, address the design elements described in this RFP and include a timeline for implementation and completion of key performance points. Please respond in detail to the following criteria as outlined in the Criteria for Workplace-Based Learning Laboratories (*Attachment C*):

- Workers and Industries (Criteria 1-5)
- Educational Delivery (Criteria 6-9)
- Employer Commitment and Benefits (Criteria 10-13)
- Sustainability (Criteria 14-16)

Leverage

The Workforce Board is interested in applications which coordinate and leverage these project funds with other private and public funds and resources. Describe how this project will leverage other resources and provide an estimate of the total value of anticipated leveraged funds.

Project Management

Identify the staff member who will be the project manager and any other staff members who will be assigned to work on the project. Indicate their qualifications and responsibilities, and include the amount of time each will be assigned to the project. Indicate the extent to which the project manager has experience with establishing and operating similar projects.

3.4. BUDGET SUMMARY AND NARRATIVE

See Attachment B

3.5. LETTERS OF COMMITMENT

Proposals must include signed and dated letters from members of the learning laboratory partnership detailing their commitment to the project, the role they will play and the resources they plan to deploy in the implementation of the project. This includes employer-partners, the local Workforce Development Council, labor representatives (where appropriate) and any other stakeholder whose participation will contribute to the success of the project.

Attachment A – Cover Page

College or University Name:
Contact Person:
Phone:
Email:
Project Title(s):
Associated CIP(s):

Amount Requested:

Note for community and technical college applicants: SBCTC requires that all digital software, educational resources and knowledge produced as part of this competitive grant be placed under the Attribution license from Creative Commons. This license allows other to use, distribute, and create derivative works based upon digital works, while still allowing authors to receive credit for their efforts. Please take the time to read the license and check the “I agree” box below.

I hereby allow the Workforce Board and SBCTC to distribute the digital software, educational resources and knowledge I create through this competitive grant under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>.

Printed, College or University President

Signature, College or University President

Date

Attachment B – Budget Summary and Narrative

College or University Name:

Project Title:

	Grant Funds Requested	Brief Description
Salaries and Benefits		
Travel		
Goods and Services		
Subcontracts		
Equipment ¹		
Tuition and fees		
Administration (5 percent maximum—direct costs only—indirect costs are not allowed)		
TOTAL ²		

¹ Any proposed equipment with grant funds must be described and justified. Program equipment is defined as a durable asset with a useful life of more than one year.

² A successful college applicant will later be asked to develop a projected quarterly expenditure chart.

Budget Narrative

Please detail your proposal's budget, including specific FTE and job titles, expected travel costs, the need for sub-contracting (if applicable), justification for equipment purchases if any and administration costs.

Attachment C - Criteria for Workplace-Based Learning Laboratories

Workers and Industries	Meets Criteria	Exceeds Criteria
1. The proposal is targeted at low-wage working adults.	The proposal outlines how it will serve the target learners: low-wage working adults. The proposal describes the population that is being targeted and describes how the training will help to make this population more upwardly mobile. The RFP defines low wage as having a participant annual income of less than \$36,000 and \$18.00 per hour. This figure is based on 75 percent of the average Washington wage, which is \$47,500.	
2. The proposal targets a particular industry or industry cluster and the skills needed.	The proposal describes the industry or industry cluster and the specific sets of skills and the industry recognized credentials (certificates, degrees) that are needed to support growth.	
3. The education and training leads to an industry-recognized certificate or a degree on a well-defined career pathway.	The proposal outlines how the education and training provided will ensure that participants make measurable progress on a well-defined career pathway toward at least the tipping point of one-year of postsecondary education and a credential. The tipping point, however, does not have to be achieved during the life of this grant.	

<p>4. The proposal provides education and training that leads toward employment in a high demand occupation.</p>	<p>The proposal provides education and training that leads <i>toward</i> a high demand occupation within the business and industry defined as “an occupation with a substantial number of current or projected employment opportunities.” Where state data is not available evidence from local labor markets and local employers may be used. Note: For proposals targeted at students who need basic skills or preparedness for college learning through I-BEST, the proposal outlines how participants will make measurable progress towards gaining qualification to work in a high demand occupation.</p>	
<p>5. Worker representation</p>	<p>If the workers are represented by a union, the union must be engaged in the project.</p>	

Educational Delivery	Meets Criteria	Exceeds Criteria
<p>6. The proposal focuses on learning in the workplace.</p>	<p>The majority of instruction is delivered at the workplace.</p>	
<p>7. A critical core component of educational delivery is e-learning.</p>	<p>The proposal provides evidence that e-learning is a substantial part of the educational delivery of course content. The proposal outlines how the e-learning components provide greater access to postsecondary education for working adults as well as greater potential for successful completion of the program. The proposal also outlines how the participants will obtain an orientation to the technology and e-learning methods employed in this program, and outline an ongoing system of technology support for participants.</p>	<p>E-learning combined with workplace-based learning makes up most of the education and training to take place in this proposal.</p>

<p>8. “Faculty Extenders” are a key component of the delivery system.</p>	<p>The proposal includes “faculty extenders” (or educational facilitators) who are supervisors or other skilled employees at the worksite who serve as coaches, mentors, or instructors to support participant learning. Faculty extenders receive specific training in how to support traditional faculty and extend learning of participants.</p>	
<p>9. The proposal has other key modes of design and delivery that serve working adults.</p>	<p>The proposal outlines design components that will provide greater access and success for low-wage working adults that could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial assessment of participant to ascertain practical and personal needs that could pose academic or practical barriers to successful completion. - Case managers to provide connections and links to social and other support services - Coaching to succeed in the program and employment. - Orientation to navigating postsecondary learning environments and strategies for success. - Learning provides stackable credentials. - Credit for prior learning is provided. 	<p>Proposal outlines innovative strategies that target the needs of low-wage working adults to ensure success in postsecondary education and employment. e.g. Credit for prior learning is enhanced significantly for this program. or e.g. New stackable credentials are created for this program.</p>

Employer Commitment and Benefits	Meets Criteria	Exceeds Criteria
<p>10. The proposal provides education and training that leads to better wages and/or benefits for the employee.</p>	<p>The proposal provides clear evidence of how participation in this program will improve the employment and earnings outcomes for participants. These could include additional bonuses, benefits, and development of criteria for promotion.</p>	<p>The proposal outlines specific wage increases and career pathway of promotions.</p>

<p>11. The proposal identifies time and commitment involved to participate in “learning communities.”</p>	<p>The proposal outlines the time commitment for key representatives to participate in a “learning communities” initiative that will bring together the different projects to discover lessons learned and to improve outcomes through the course of the project. The proposal also outlines commitment to “learning communities” within the project bringing together faculty, staff, students and administrators to help guide implementation and improve the program.</p>	
<p>12. The proposal shows evidence of employer’s active support</p>	<p>Evidence of active support could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paid release time for employees and supervisors who participate in the program. - Employer provides space and equipment for participants to study. - Provides employee mentors. - Provides subject matter expertise in development of the curricula and course content. - Employer develops criteria for promotion upon completion of the program. - Employer performance management system integrates workplace learning. - Support for transportation. - Support for childcare. 	<p>Employer offers a significant percentage of employee participants a promotion upon successful completion of the education and training.</p>
<p>13. The proposal provides measurable benefits to participating employers</p>	<p>The measurable benefits might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced turnover. - Increased productivity. - Improved recruitment. - Ability to expand. - Increased skills of supervisors. 	

Sustainability	Meets Criteria	Exceeds Criteria
14. The proposal either creates a new education and training program available to employees or significantly changes and enhances a current program available to employees	The proposal outlines how this is a new program for employees at the workplace or how it significantly changes a current program and provides substantial additional components.	
15. The proposal addresses the needs for a diverse workforce	The proposal provides evidence of how it actively recruits diverse employees and outlines educational and support delivery methods that lead to the success of diverse program participants. The proposal includes components such as: Equal opportunity to selection of trainees.	The proposal outlines targets for percent of diverse employees expected to participate.
16. The proposal addresses how the project will support sustainability past the life of the grant.	The proposal indicates how shared investments of employers and educational institutions can reduce the cost structure of training to make training more sustainable over the long run.	