

Request for Applications –

Governor’s Office of Science, Innovation and Technology

Introduction:

The Governor’s Office of Science, Innovation and Technology (OSIT) of Nevada was established by the Legislature (NRS 223.600) to promote, coordinate and align education, workforce, and economic development and diversification efforts in the areas of science, innovation and technology.

After being hit harder than any other state during the recession, Nevada’s economy is growing. The State’s economic development strategy has resulted in significant growth across a variety of industry sectors that require Nevada employees to have at least some training in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). However, employers often encounter difficulty finding workers with the skills they require. A skilled workforce is critical to Nevada’s continued economic development and diversification. Likewise, education and skills training help workers qualify for jobs that provide family-sustaining wages. In an effort to enhance Nevada’s workforce with in-demand, industry-recognized skills required by Nevada’s growing STEM economy, OSIT invites applications for a STEM Workforce Challenge Grant. First proposed as an economic development strategy by the Brookings Institution in its report *Cracking the Code on STEM*, and endorsed by the Nevada System of Higher Education, these grants were funded by the Nevada Legislature at the request of Governor Brian Sandoval.

Section I: Desired Outcomes

The State, through STEM Workforce Challenge Grants, seeks to spark the creation of lasting partnerships between industry and workforce training providers. These partnerships must result in the identification of STEM-specific skills needed by employers in Nevada and the creation of programs that provide the education and skills training to workers that match the needs of employers, are aligned with present and future labor market industry (LMI) needs in Nevada, and are sustainable after grant funds have been exhausted. Proposed projects should provide training for and develop the STEM-specific, in-demand skills of incumbent or displaced workers and/or traditional postsecondary students (18-24), leading to new or improved employment opportunities in Nevada.

Specifically, priority for funding will be given to applications that:

- Form strong partnerships across public and/or private sectors.
- Articulate a specific need for the proposed program, supported with relevant workforce data and LMI needs.
- Provide a needs impact analysis.
- Include specific, targeted goals and performance metrics.
- Where possible, provide training leading to nationally recognized industry credentials.
- Demonstrate sustainability beyond the grant period.
- Articulate how the application fits in with the broader goal of creating a STEM-educated workforce in Nevada.
- Have a communication or outreach plan to reach potential program applicants.

Section II: Award Information

A competitive process will be used to distribute grants of up to \$150,000 per award. Grantees will be required to match grant funding at least 1:1, with either cash, in-kind, or a combination of both. Proposals matching with cash will be

allocated additional weight in scoring. Grantees also will be required to include a detailed scope of work and a detailed budget in their applications. A total of \$1 million is appropriated for the current fiscal year. However, OSIT reserves the right to determine the number of awards for each grant cycle, based on funds available and projects selected.

All funding received from the state must be spent by June 30, 2016. However, projects may conclude at a time beyond June 30, 2016. All awardees are required to submit progress reports on project activities throughout the entire length of the reporting period, regardless of when state funds are spent.

Funds from a grant award must be used to support the development and implementation of programs intended to enable Nevada to meet the postsecondary education and skills training needs of workers in the STEM industries in Nevada. Funding must be used for initial start-up costs, defined as capital or programmatic costs, for the implementation of new programs or the expansion of existing programs. Funding cannot be used for maintenance or on-going expenses.

Section III: Eligibility Information

Eligible applicants for a STEM Workforce Challenge Grant include, but are not limited to, Nevada's Community Colleges or State College, private career colleges located in Nevada that provide technical training, Chambers of Commerce, non-profits, Regional Development Authorities (RDA's), businesses, employee associations, and city and county governments.

Section IV: Application & Submission Information

A comprehensive, well-written application provides all the information necessary for a complete evaluation. The OSIT review committee will use the rubric located on pages 5-8 to evaluate applications. A complete application will include eight (8) components: 1) Project Abstract; 2) Cover Sheet; 3) Needs Assessment; 4) Work Plan and Impact Analysis; 5) Sustainment Plan; 6) Evaluation & Data Collection; 7) Budget Plan; 8) Letters of Commitment. Incomplete applications or applications that did not follow the submission requirements, as of the filing deadline, will be disqualified and will not be scored for STEM Workforce Challenge Grant consideration.

1. Project Abstract

The project abstract must succinctly summarize the proposed project and should include:

- A brief background of the project;
- Specific objectives and/or goals;
- Any unique features and innovation of the project;
- Collaboration and partnerships; and
- Expected results and/or outcomes.

The project abstract must be on one (1) page and cannot exceed more than 35 lines, and must be single-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font with 1-inch margins on all sides of 8 ½ by 11 size (letter size) paper.

2. Project Narrative

The project narrative must not exceed ten (10) pages, it must be double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font with 1-inch margins on all sides of 8½ by 11 size (letter size) paper. The following information must be contained within the Project Narrative:

A. Cover Sheet (1 point possible)

The cover sheet must not exceed one (1) page, is not included in the 10-page narrative limitation and must contain the following information:

- **Applicant Information**
Organization name, full mailing and physical addresses, phone number, fax number, federal tax ID number, DUNS number, and website (if applicable)
- **Project Information**
Title, county location, and proposed dollar amount
- **Project Director Information** (overall project responsibility)
Full name, title, mailing and physical address, day-time & evening phone, email address
- **Project Contact** (daily project contact – if different than director)
Full name, title, mailing and physical address, day-time & evening phone, email address

B. Needs Assessment (14 points possible)

Provide a clear and concise overview of the current state of the labor market and the skills gap faced by employers in the industry targeted by the application. Outline other efforts, if any, currently being undertaken to remedy this gap. Illustrate with local labor data.

C. Work Plan and Impact Analysis (35 points possible)

Provide a detailed work plan that describes the project and links the proposed grant activities with the needs identified in the Needs Assessment. The plan should include (i) the target industry; (ii) the target population; (iii) the desired end result; (iv) a timeline of activities; (v) measurable goals for each project phase; (vi) the stakeholders consulted; (vii) the estimated economic impact; (viii) the expected challenges; (ix) a communications or outreach plan to potential applicants; and (x) a governance plan that describes the roles of each partner, identifies the project manager, and the resources, including any in-kind contributions, that the partners bring to the project. The plan should also articulate how the program fits in with the broader goal of creating a STEM-educated workforce in Nevada.

The work plan must contain an impact analysis that includes measures such as the estimated number of recipients to be served, the cost per student, the cost per full-time employment, the targeted industries, the number of training recipients who will have full-time employment in the target industry as a result of grant-funded programs, and the effect on the local community specifically and the State more broadly.

D. Sustainment Plan (20 points possible)

Describe (i) how the project will provide long-term value to the target industry and population, and the state; (ii) how project activities will continue after the grant period including any changes in the roles of the partners; and (iii) future projected costs after the project period and how funds will be obtained.

E. Evaluation & Data Collection (14 points possible)

Describe (i) what data will be collected to determine success of project; (ii) how data will be used to improve the proposed project; (iii) who will evaluate the project and when (i.e., one-time, continuous); and (iv) how results will be shared with OSIT. This section should include performance evaluation measures. As a reminder, data collection is not a performance measure but used in developing and evaluating the measure.

3. Budget Plan– (10 points possible)

Applicant is required to submit a budget narrative for FY2016. The project must be completed on or before June 30, 2016. The budget must demonstrate a clear and strong relationship between stated objectives, goals, and activities. The budget narrative does NOT count towards the total page count of the project narrative. The budget narrative should be detailed, reasonable and adequate, cost efficient, and should align with the proposed work plan. From the budget narrative, the reviewer should be able to assess how the budget relates directly to the proposed project. The budget plan does not count towards the 10 page limit.

4. Letters of Commitment- (6 points possible)

Applicant is required to submit letters of commitment from each partner. Letters of commitment do not count towards the 10 page limit.

Submission Timeline and Instructions

Submit one (1) original signed application and six (6) copies of the application by 5:00 p.m., October 16, 2015 to:

Jodi Bass
Governor's Office of Science, Innovation and Technology
100 North Stewart Street, Suite 220
Carson City, NV 89701

Applications must be received, not postmarked, by the date above. Applications received after the date above will not be considered. Each section inside the grant should include headings and subheadings.

Tips & Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- Ensure budget figures are mathematically correct, and the total of the budget summary matches the total on the title page;
- Use only whole dollar amounts;
- Observe page limits (any pages over the page limit, will not be reviewed);
- Use standard type, Times New Roman, Size 12 point font;
- Respond to all sections of the application; ensure the thread that ties the application sections together are related;
- Supplanting - Grant funds may not be used to replace federal, state, or local funds that are currently being used or are forthcoming;
- Spell out acronyms at initial use. Eliminate jargon whenever possible;
- If this is a continuation project, explain what has changed from the previous year;
- Do not assume reviewers are familiar with existing projects;
- Read the request for application (RFA) carefully; and
- Use local statistics rather than national statistics.

Section V: Application Review Information

Each proposed project will be evaluated for inclusiveness and succinctness of their application using the scoring matrix below.

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Points & Reviewer Score	Comments/ Recommendations
A. Cover Sheet	Maximum Points: 1 Reviewer Score	Comments/Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Applicant Information:</u> - Organization name, full mailing and physical addresses, phone number, fax number, federal tax ID number, DUNS number, and website (if applicable) - <u>Project Information:</u> - Title, county location, and proposed dollar amount - <u>Project Director Information:</u> Full name, title, mailing and physical address, day-time & evening phone, email address - <u>Project Contact:</u> Full name, title, mailing and physical address, day-time & evening phone, email address 		
B. Needs Assessment	Maximum Points: 14 Reviewer Score	Comments/Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is there a clear and concise overview of labor market and skills gap? - Is there a clear linkage between grant activities and local needs? - Is there illustrated assessment data? 		
C. Work Plan & Impact Analysis	Maximum Points: 35 Reviewer Score	Comments/Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is there an outreach plan to target potential applicants and industries, are the desired results and expected challenges met? - Are projected timelines of activities, measurable goals and economic impact met for each project phase? 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What would be the economic impact and the expected challenges to the project? - Is there a governance plan describing who the stakeholders are and what their roles are? 		
D. Sustainment	Maximum Points: 20 Reviewer Score	Comments/Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the project provide a long-term value to the target industry, population and state? - How will project activities continue after grant period, including changes in partner roles? - What will future projected cost be obtained after project period? 		
E. Evaluation	Maximum Points: 14 Reviewer Score	Comments/Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is there a process to what data will be collected to determine success of project? - How will data be used to improve the proposed project? - How will results be shared with OSIT? 		
3. Budget Plan	Maximum Points: 10 Reviewer Score	Comments/Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is a budget plan submitted with application? - Does budget plan demonstrate a clear and strong relationship between stated objectives, goals and activities? - Is the budget detailed, reasonable, adequate and cost efficient? - Does the budget plan align with the proposed work plan? 		
4. Letters of Commitment	Maximum Points: 6 Reviewer Score	Comments/Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has the applicant submitted a letter of commitment from each partner? 		

Section VI: Award Administration Information

Grant Review and Selection Process

Eligible applications are reviewed, evaluated, and competitively scored by a review committee using the scoring matrix located in Section V. Applications selected to receive a grant award will enter into a contract with OSIT in compliance with the State of Nevada regulations. OSIT reserves the right to award all, part or none of available grant funding during this grant round. In cases where the ranked applications may “tie”, OSIT reserves the right to consider Section C “Work Plan and Impact Analysis” scoring independently to determine placement.

To avoid disqualification, all application areas must be concise and complete; certifications must be signed and dated; objectives must be measurable. Denial letters, with scoring disclosure, will be sent to applicants that are not funded.

Grant Commencement and Duration

Project implementation must be initiated within sixty days (60) from the starting date indicated on the grant award. Requests for an exception to this rule must be justified and submitted in writing within thirty days of award. At the discretion of OSIT, the grantee risks losing the award if the project does not commence as required.

All grant funding must be spent by June 30, 2016. Grantees must specify in their application the length of the proposed training program, if the initial training period will end after June 30, 2016 (see reporting requirements below). Projects must demonstrate sustainability beyond the initial reporting period. By submission of the grant application and acceptance of the award, the grantee is certifying its intention to continue and sustain the program beyond the initial grant implementation award. There is no expectation of funding beyond awarded grant funds.

Match Requirements

There is a 1:1 match requirement, cash or in-kind, for this grant. However, up to eight (8) preferential points are awarded to applications that include cash match. Additionally, up to four (4) preferential points are awarded on projects that provide a match of more than 1:1. Grantees that have been awarded projects that have in-kind valuation must include those activities in their program and evaluation reports. “In-Kind match” means materials, volunteer labor, or other methods of contribution that an applicant provides toward offsetting the total cost of the project and reduces the amount of the grant that will be needed from OSIT to complete the project. All in-kind match is subject to review and prior approval.

Reimbursement Notice

The STEM Workforce Challenge Grant is a reimbursement grant. Grantees are expected to pay for expenses upfront from their budgets and will be reimbursed for eligible expenses listed on the approved award budget after a review of the expense request form and appropriate backup. Under certain circumstances, an advance of funds for specific, approved start-up costs may be requested by the grantee.

Fiscal Responsibilities

All recipients of funding are required to identify a fiscal agent if the grantee is not its own fiscal agent. All recipients of funding are required to establish and maintain accounting systems and financial records to accurately account for awarded funds. Accounting systems for all projects must ensure the following:

- Funds are not commingled with funds from other grant sources.
- Funds specifically budgeted and/or received for one project cannot be used to support another.
- All grant awards are subject to audits during and within three years after the grant award reporting period has concluded.
- The accounting system presents and classifies historical cost of the grant as required for budgetary and auditing purposes.

Reporting Requirements

All recipients of funding are required to submit quarterly fiscal reports, quarterly progress reports, and a final evaluation. Recipients have the option of submitting monthly reports in lieu of quarterly reports. The final evaluation is due within thirty (30) days after the conclusion of the reporting period. The reporting period is defined as the period of time from the day the grant is awarded to conclusion of the training program for the first cohort of trainees. Grantees must specify the length of the program in their applications in order to calculate the reporting period. Grantees must continue to submit quarterly reports and a final evaluation even after all state funding has been spent. The quarterly reports and final evaluation must include the performance measures proposed in 2(e) of the application. OSIT maintains the right to withhold payments if reporting requirements are not met in a timely and efficient manner.

Additional Information

Financial obligations of the State payable after the current fiscal year are contingent upon funds for that purpose being appropriated, budgeted, and otherwise made available. In the event funds are not appropriated, any resulting contracts (grant awards) will become null and void, without penalty to the state of Nevada.

All materials submitted regarding this application for OSIT funds becomes the property of the state of Nevada. Upon the funding of the project, the contents of the application will become contractual obligations.

Reconsiderations

Any applicant whose application has been filed according to the rules governing the grant process and who is aggrieved by the awards made pursuant to these rules may request reconsideration.

Submit requests for appeal to the OSIT within five days of the posting of the grant awards. Requests for reconsideration must be in writing and clearly state how OSIT has erred in following the administrative rules governing the grant process or the procedure outlined in the program RFA. OSIT will schedule a public meeting to hear the reconsideration as expeditiously as possible so all funds can be distributed in a timely fashion, and a final decision will be rendered within 30 days subsequent to such meeting. Notice of the approval/denial of the appeal will be conducted by legal counsel. This procedure concludes the review process.

Bidding Process

The grantee must follow all applicable local, state and/or federal laws pertaining to the expenditure of funds. Proof of Invitation to Bid, contracts, and any other pertinent documentation must be retained by the grantee. Likewise, all local, state, and federal permits required for construction projects must be acquired by the grantee within 90 days after the contract is entered into.

Access for Persons with Disabilities

The grantee shall assure that persons with disabilities are not precluded from using OSIT grant funded facilities. Projects must meet requirements as set by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Maintenance and Operation

The grantee is responsible to see that OSIT grant funded projects are maintained and operated in a condition equal to what existed when the project was completed; normal wear and tear is accepted. Maintenance and operations standards should be adopted upon completion of the project.

Signs

Grantee shall post and maintain appropriate permanent signs or decals upon project sites or equipment acknowledging funding assistance from the appropriate grant fund upon start of the project or purchase of equipment.

Nondiscrimination

Projects funded with OSIT grant funds shall be available for public use, regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, or national origin.

In any instance that the grant notice, award, rules, regulations and procedures are silent – prior written approval is required.

Section VII: OSIT Contacts

Grant Administration Contact:

Jodi Bass
Governor’s Office of Science, Innovation and Technology
100 North Stewart Street, Suite 220
Carson City, NV 89701
775-687-0989
jbass@gov.nv.gov

Thank your interest in applying for STEM Workforce Challenge Grant funding. You will be contacted if further information is required. Do not begin your project or incur costs until you have received, signed and returned a grant document with STEM Workforce Challenge Grant.