



## Colorado SECTORS Planning Grants *Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA)*

### Introduction

Across the nation, industries and families face an enormous challenge in these uncertain times to remain competitive and keep workers employed. Colorado's long-term economic outlook is strong and diverse, and offers a high quality of life and rich opportunities to both employers and workers. But the nature of work is changing and increasingly complex skills are required in most if not all industry sectors.<sup>1</sup> For those sectors to remain competitive as the economy recovers, they must be able to access a highly skilled workforce. In Colorado, many industries have had to rely on skills and talent from outside the state. If this continues, the state risks leaving large numbers of Coloradans behind.

In response to the current challenges we face, Colorado's Governor Bill Ritter, the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC), and the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) recognize that a skilled workforce is the single most important driver in determining the state's future competitiveness. More than ever before, Colorado needs tools to bolster our economy and to leverage limited public resources under a new Administration in the current economic climate. Regions that understand how to leverage their human capital investments to strengthen their unique regional industry base and provide more opportunities for individual economic advancement will thrive. Toward that goal, CDLE and CWDC believe that statewide adoption of sector initiatives is the framework to transform the workforce development system to better meet the needs of Colorado's industries and workers. This is a statewide economic development strategy to help workforce regions, employers, educators, economic developers, and other potential partners to transition workers and connect the unemployed and underemployed to careers in growing industries.

Sector initiatives are industry-specific, regional partnerships that address employers' needs for skilled workers, and workers' needs for good jobs. Sector initiatives focus intensively on the workforce needs of a specific industry over a sustained period, often concentrating on specific occupations, and always engaging multiple employers to analyze industry needs and design customized solutions. See **Attachment A** for additional information on sector initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> "The State of Colorado's Talent Development: Competing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Economy," prepared for the Colorado Workforce Development Council by the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, 2007.

## Why Sector Strategies in Colorado?

Throughout the country, state strategies that support regionally based, industry-driven sector initiatives are increasingly at the center of state workforce and economic development policies. As a member of a National Governors Association Policy Academy on State Sector Strategies, Colorado joins numerous states that support regional sector initiatives with a goal of statewide adoption.

For Colorado, sector initiatives are a new way of doing business and the model for systemic change as we move ahead. Pursuing sector strategies in a coordinated, strategic way will:<sup>2</sup>

- 1. Help the state and its businesses stay strong and diverse in a struggling economy.** Colorado has enjoyed a strong economy in which there are significant workforce opportunities and needs in industries ranging from hospitality and tourism to health care to energy to high-tech employment. But as the economy recovers from the recession, we will need to create opportunities across a wide spectrum of industries through sector initiatives to connect the available employment opportunities with industry needs.
- 2. Build a Gold Collar and STEM-ready workforce that is essential to sustaining the state economy.** Colorado is a leader in the high-tech economy. Continued strength in this area will depend on regions' ability to grow and sustain a "gold collar" workforce, or highly-educated employees that support the existence and growth of technology sectors in their capacity as high-level technicians. Gold collar employees do not necessarily require 4-year college degrees, but they do require significant post-secondary education. Sector initiatives can potentially play a critical role in filling the pipeline to high-tech industries with skilled workers.
- 3. Help fill the gap left by the 1.2 million 65+ workers estimated to retire in the next two decades.** The graying of Colorado's population over the coming decades will be a tsunami-like demographic force that will create a large retiree-replacement workforce demand that can only be met if regions plan for changes now. Sector initiatives can identify impacts and solutions related to this shift by bringing together employers within the same industry, who are likely worried about the same challenges but unable to address them alone.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from "The State of Colorado's Talent Development: Competing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Economy," prepared for the Colorado Workforce Development Council by the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, May, 2007.

4. **Offer a “Grow Our Own” solution to the Colorado Paradox.** The Colorado Paradox is the state’s documented challenge of a highly educated adult workforce imported from other states and countries, juxtaposed with the realities of poor in-state high school graduation rates and low post-secondary education completion rates. Building on the initial work of the Metro Denver WIRED Initiative, Sector initiatives are a promising model to directly address the needs of regional industry for skilled labor while designing solutions that recruit, retain and support local workers to meet those needs.

## **Key Elements of Planning Grants**

The CWDC and the CDLE announce the availability of Colorado SECTORS Planning Grants, which will be awarded through a competitive process to partnerships of two or more Workforce Regions or sub-regions of the Rural Consortium. This cross-regional partnership of two or more Workforce Regions or sub-regions will be referred to in this solicitation as a “super-region.” Funds will be made available to conduct start-up efforts necessary to launch a regional sector initiative. Up to six planning grants will be awarded and up to \$75,000 is available to each super-region.

SECTORS planning grants may be used to cover expenses related to:

- Conducting research to refine the industry/super-region of focus and to define the industry’s workforce challenges, including garnering input directly from employers within the industry of focus;
- Organizing and convening public and private members of the collaboration;
- Staff time to coordinate the initiative (including hiring of new staff).

The planning phase may last up to 6 months and grantees will receive support and customized technical assistance throughout this period to develop a successful implementation plan. At the conclusion of the planning phase, super-regions will submit the implementation plan for their sector initiative. The planning phase may be shorter than six months if the super-region can accomplish their planning objectives and prepare an implementation plan during this time. Grants will be awarded as implementation plans are received and reviewed. Up to \$300,000 will be available to super-regions of two or more Workforce Regions or sub-regions. Up to \$500,000 will be available to super-regions of three or more Workforce Regions or sub-regions. The total grant period is not to exceed 36 months, including both the planning and implementation phases.

## **Eligible Applicants**

The eligible applicant is a Workforce Development Region or sub-region of the Rural Consortium. A single Region or sub-region shall submit the application on behalf of a super-region – a partnership composed of at least two Workforce Development Regions or sub-regions. Each application should designate one Region or sub-region as the primary convener. A Region or sub-region may designate another organization with the responsibilities of SECTORS Initiative convener, but shall remain the fiscal agent and

shall be responsible for reporting activities and progress of the SECTORS Initiative to the CDLE and CWDC. In this case, the application must be jointly submitted by the Workforce Region or sub-region and designated convener.

The convener is an intermediary organization that will build in-depth knowledge of the industry, establish relationships with multiple employers across the super-region, conduct research to monitor the industry's changing needs, coordinate community resources to address industry staffing and competitiveness needs, and invest in potential and current workers in the industry to create enhanced opportunities. A variety of organizations can act as a convener, including employer organizations (such as chambers of commerce or trade associations), labor-management partnerships, local workforce investment boards or one-stop centers, training providers, faith- or community-based organizations, placement firms, or others. A consideration often factored into the identification of a convener is the potential for a conflict of interest that may directly impact the decisions of a partnership. To avoid such conflicts, conveners are not typically a single employer or a single training provider.

### **Technical Assistance and Resources**

As super-regions develop proposals for planning grants, each super-region that is applying may schedule one meeting or strategic planning session with a trained CDLE facilitator to support the development of a successful proposal. Contact Kate Anderson at [kate.anderson@state.co.us](mailto:kate.anderson@state.co.us) or 303-318-8984 to schedule a meeting. Questions about the application process and requirements may be sent in writing to Kate via e-mail. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) will be posted with answers in the SECTORS Team Room on e-Colorado.

Visit the SECTORS Team Room on e-Colorado to view news, research and other resources on sector initiatives. Go to [www.e-colorado.org](http://www.e-colorado.org), select "Team Rooms" in the top menu, and scroll to "SECTORS." You must register on [www.e-Colorado.org](http://www.e-Colorado.org) to access the Team Room and other resources.

Once the planning grants are awarded, technical assistance will be provided to grantees. Technical assistance may include group facilitation, one-on-one support, and workshops on topics of interest to the grantees. The types of technical assistance needed will be determined in collaboration with grantees. A Sector toolkit will also be available after the Sector Academy in February. **Attachment B** provides an outline of the toolkit modules that will be available to applicants.

## Looking Ahead: Implementation Grants

In the final stages of the planning phase, partnerships will submit an implementation plan. You will receive technical assistance during the planning phase to develop a successful implementation plan. Implementation plans will be reviewed and grants awarded as implementation plans are approved. Up to \$300,000 will be available to partnerships of two or more Workforce Regions or sub-regions. Up to \$500,000 will be available to partnerships of three or more Workforce Regions or sub-regions. The total grant period is not to exceed 36 months, including both the planning and implementation phases.

In order to apply for an implementation grant at the end of the planning period, each partnership must submit an implementation plan that includes the following:

- Clear, concise problem statement.
- Industry and Super-Region of Focus.
- Complete listing and letters of commitment from the leadership team that will drive the initiative. The team must include representatives from industry, education, and economic development, at a minimum. Each team member's role in the initiative must be clearly defined. A signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) must be included that details each partner's responsibilities. A convener must also be identified (this does not have to be the same convener as during the planning grant period), and a letter of commitment demonstrating the staff capacity and expertise of the convener must be submitted.
- A detailed work plan, including a three-year (minimum) sustainability plan.
- Benchmarks for success (including goal statements and related measures of success)
- Detailed budget and budget narrative.

## Required Proposal Components

Application packets must be completed in their entirety and must include all required components to be considered for funding. If you choose to include additional information as attachments, please ensure it is concise and synthesized for the reviewers. There will be an overall page limit of 20 pages. Required components include:

- Cover/Signature Sheet (see **Attachment C**)
- Proposal Narrative
- Letters of support from partners
- Budget Worksheet and Narrative (see **Attachment D**)

## Planning Grant Proposal Criteria

The proposal narrative should address the criteria outlined below. Points (out of a total of 100) are assigned to each component to provide applicants with a clear understanding of how the applications will be reviewed.

### 1. Organizational Capacity (20 points)

Why is your organization positioned to be the convener of your super-region? Describe your experience convening a wide range of partners around a sector initiative or other common goal. How can your experience be applied to this sector initiative to achieve success? How will the convener work together with the other Workforce Regions or sub-regions to ensure collaboration across the super-region? If the convener is a different entity than the Workforce region or sub-region, how will the convener and the Workforce region work together to align the planned activities with the budget and fiscal responsibilities?

### 2. Problem Statement (15 points)

What workforce and competitiveness challenge(s) do you seek to address? This is a hypothesis that you will likely refine or change based on the research conducted in your planning phase. If you have selected an industry of focus based on research, your hypothesis should begin to outline the skills challenges of that industry. If you have not selected an industry of focus, use this opportunity to outline what you *think you know* about your super-region's skilled labor pool and competitive industries, and the possible disconnects and gaps. What kind of further research is needed during the planning phase? How will this research be approached and carried out?

### 3. Super-Region (5 points)

What are you using as a preliminary definition of regional boundaries for your super-region? The super-region may expand or contract during the planning phase as you do further research in the context of your selected industry of focus.

### 4. Region's competitive situation (15 points)

What are the super-region's competitive strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges? This section may focus on the super-region's industry sectors, the labor market, projected growth, etc. You may be ready to identify and justify your industry of focus with data, or you may propose to use planning time to identify the industry of focus. In either case, it is expected that the planning phase be used to confirm the industry selection, and it is appropriate for the industry of focus to change if research dictates a more informed selection.

### 5. Partnerships (15 points)

What public and private partners will you need to recruit in order to create a strong leadership team to move forward? How will you work together to engage partners across different workforce regions or sub-regions to represent the whole super-region? What partners are already committed? Please provide letters of support from these partners. A letter of support typically states that if the proposal is funded, the

partner would support the initiative by participating on a leadership team or in some other role specified on the letter. Letters of support are not *required* since many partners will be brought on board during the planning phase. However the letters help the reviewers to objectively evaluate the level of commitment of other organizations named in the proposal.

#### **6. Objectives (20 points)**

What do you plan to accomplish during the planning phase to prepare for implementation? Set goals and an estimated timeline for the planning phase to achieve these goals. We understand that the timeline may change depending on the direction of your leadership team. The planning phase may not exceed six months. Outline any preliminary action steps that the initiative will take to reach these goals.

#### **7. Budget and Leveraged Resources (10 points)**

Submit a high-level budget and budget narrative that is reasonable to support the scope of work you have described. Use the budget worksheet in **Attachment D**. Applicants must provide leveraged resources equaling **at least 10%** of the amount requested. Federal and non-Federal funds qualify as leveraged resources. In-kind contributions from the applicant and partners such as time, space, equipment, and services provided at no cost to the grant qualify as leveraged resources. Proposals should indicate a willingness to participate in statewide evaluation and shared learning activities, as well as submitting quarterly progress reports to the CWDC/CDLE.

### **Format and Submission Requirements**

Complete applications must be received by the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment by **5:00 p.m., April 2, 2009**.

Proposals must be:

- Formatted in 12-point type with one-inch margins.
- 8 pages of narrative or less, not including cover page, budget, and any attachments.
- 20 pages or less total, including any attachments.
- Sent electronically to [kate.anderson@state.co.us](mailto:kate.anderson@state.co.us). If you do not receive email confirmation of receipt, please follow-up to confirm receipt of proposal by phone to Kate Anderson at (303) 318-8984.

Frequently asked questions will be posted with answers on the e-Colorado workforce portal in the "SECTORS" Team Room at [www.e-Colorado.org](http://www.e-Colorado.org).

## Estimated Timeline for Applications and Awards

February 12, 2009	Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA) released
February 17 -19, 2009	Colorado SECTORS Academy (mandatory to apply for planning grant)
February 23 - March 27	Super-regions may schedule one meeting or strategic planning session with a trained CDLE facilitator to support the development of a successful proposal ( <i>optional</i> )
5:00p.m., April 2, 2009	Planning grant applications due
May 15, 2009	Planning grants awarded
May - November 2009	Grantees receive technical assistance and facilitation as they develop successful implementation plans
November 15, 2009	Planning grants must be expended Implementation grants are awarded as they are reviewed/approved by CDLE, no later than November 15 <sup>th</sup>
Through April 2012	Grant period (not to exceed 36 months, including planning period)