



NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS
WORKFORCE ALLIANCE OF THE NORTH BAY
INNOVATION FUND

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Issue Date: December 1, 2017

The Workforce Alliance of the North Bay does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, disability, marital status, or national origin in employment or in its educational programs and activities. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Alternative formats will be made available upon request.

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A. Background

The Workforce Alliance of the North Bay (Workforce Alliance) is the Workforce Development Board for Marin, Napa, Lake, and Mendocino Counties. This service area has a population of 541,389 and a workforce of approximately 294,150. The Workforce Alliance envisions a sustainable balance between the employment needs of job seekers and the business needs of employers, to ensure a self-sufficient, skilled and diverse workforce in the region. Furthermore, the Workforce Alliance understands that economic vitality is characterized by an abundance of well-paying jobs and that the availability of a skilled workforce helps to assure the economic success of businesses and workers.

As outlined in the Workforce Alliance's local and regional strategic plans, several priority sectors and occupations were identified via labor market data analysis that play an important role in the North Bay economy. Furthermore, the Workforce Alliance works closely with partner organizations across all member counties to serve those with barriers to employment by providing them with resources and access to priority sector jobs and career pathways and ultimately

Wells Fargo and the Wells Fargo Foundation provide monetary support, expertise, and volunteers to national and local nonprofit organizations and causes that align with their business priorities, values, business expertise, and geographies. They are among the top corporate cash donors among U.S. companies, donating \$281.3 million to 14,900 nonprofits in 2016 to support financial education, community development, affordable housing, education, disaster relief, clean technology, job training, environmental education, and other critical social, economic, and environmental challenges around the world. Their philanthropic activities are focused on creating long-term, strategic relationships with nonprofits and other organizations to create innovative, sustainable solutions to meet local needs.

The Workforce Alliance and Wells Fargo share similar priorities and goals for the economic vitality of the North Bay, in the areas of workforce and economic development. Because of their shared interests, they are jointly funding and administering this Innovation Fund.

B. Purpose of the Innovation Fund

The purpose of the Innovation Fund is to support system-wide solutions which will lead to greater economic vitality for the residents and businesses in the four county Alliance region. Successful applicants will design, develop, or prototype different tools, methods and strategies than those the workforce stakeholders are presently using. Through a combination of seed funding and an initiative-wide support network, the Innovation Fund provides an opportunity for the workforce system to create unique services tailored to the needs of customers.

Each project must identify a challenge or gap that if successfully addressed, would significantly "move the needle" on employment and/or business productivity. The project should address a challenge that the workforce system is facing in increasing opportunity, effectiveness, and/or scale in addressing the training, placement, or advancement of career seekers and/or the advancement of key industry sectors in terms of business expansion or layoff aversion. Some projects may be tailored to meet the needs of more than one group, or more than one aspect of the workforce pipeline. Some examples of areas where projects may focus:

- Accelerating education, training or retraining of career seekers.

- Developing new ways of engaging industry (employers and/or labor stakeholders) to articulate skill needs, calibrate supply and demand, develop curricula and/or training modalities, or other strategies to match job seekers with employment.
- Increasing the use of existing, or development of new industry-valued skills credentials (e.g., certificates, licenses, digital badges, stackable credentials, etc.).
- Expanding or creating apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship or other “earn and learn” models (i.e., quality paid internships or other work-based learning opportunities).
- Improving work-based learning infrastructure that supports employers and/or that increases access and opportunities for working learners.
- Creating cross-system service alignment by bringing together systems and partners to provide support services (housing, mental health care, substance use counseling, etc.) to increase effectiveness of workforce services.
- Creating more robust services by braiding multiple funding sources or utilizing new funding models to increase scale or funding diversity.
- Improving job matching and assessment strategies to accelerate employment/reemployment.
- Improving employer recruitment and hiring strategies to benefit career seekers.
- Developing virtual (e.g., via use of technology) strategies to provide career seekers with services that will lead to employment.

C. Goals and Focus Areas

Too many Californians in the North Bay counties of Marin, Napa, Mendocino and Lake are in danger of being left behind, not making ends meet, and unable to create a middle-class life for themselves and their families. These career seekers face substantial challenges in finding good jobs and supporting themselves and their families in an era with volatile, rapidly evolving labor markets. At the same time employers in key industry sectors are looking to expand their businesses and are looking for career seekers to fill their vacancies. This Innovation Fund is intended to spur innovative and creative strategies that will improve the economy, help businesses expand/avert downsizing and help our North Bay job seeking populations connect to career pathways.

As such, The Innovation Fund may support projects in the following focus areas:

- Entrepreneurial support
- Business expansion and retention
- Innovative ways to connect youth and workers to career pathways in targeted/priority sectors

In addition to prioritizing projects in targeted sectors, priority will also be given to proposals with measurable outcomes, that leverage other funding, and that allow for innovation and experimentation that is not otherwise funded.

The Innovation Fund will also measure the success of all grantees against the following aspirational goals:

1. Improve labor market and skills outcomes for the target groups through 1,000 businesses positively impacted
2. 1,000 living wage jobs supported

These aspirational goals are purposely broad to be able to accommodate the objectives of a range of projects. Grantees will be required to report how their projects helped the region under the Workforce Alliance make progress towards those goals.

D. Eligible Applicants

Proposals may be submitted by:

- Established community-based organizations
- Public agencies
- Private non-profit agencies/institutions
- Private for-profit agencies/institutions
- Consortiums of the above (Joint Ventures)

This funding is not intended to support the development and start-up costs of a new organization.

E. Timeline

The amount of time allowed for the expenditure of a grant will depend on the scope of the project and the type of funding used to support it. Proposals should include an estimated timeline for the completion of the proposed project.

F. Award Amount

Grants may range from \$5,000 - \$50,000. The Workforce Alliance hopes to fund an initial round of grantees in **January 2018**. Thereafter, proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis.

G. Application Deadline

To be considered for the first round of funding, proposals should be submitted by **January 5, 2018.**

H. Submission Guidelines

Proposals will be evaluated on the following areas:

- Statement of need and how the project falls under one of the Innovation Fund's focus areas and supports one or both aspirational goals.
- Contractor qualifications, including relevant experience and outcomes from previous efforts.
- Collaborative partnerships, which will support the project.
- Timeline for the project.

- Explanation of funding request and budget. Respondents must include a budget narrative, which includes a justification for every line item of the budget.

As mentioned previously, priority will be given to proposals that support the Workforce Alliance's targeted industries, that will result in measurable outcomes, that leverage other funding, and that allow for innovation and experimentation that is not otherwise funded.

Proposals should not exceed 10 pages, excluding any attachments. Proposals should also include a cover sheet with the signature of the person authorized to submit the proposal on behalf of their organization.

Please send five hard copies and an electronic copy of proposals to:

Workforce Alliance of the North Bay
1546 First Street
Napa, CA 94559
Attention: Patricia Borrego

A. Final Selection

The selection process will include an initial screening of the responses to determine applicant eligibility. All qualified responses will then be evaluated by the Workforce Alliance and key partners and/or investors. The Workforce Alliance has the option of conducting oral interviews as part of the selection process. If the Workforce Alliance opts to conduct interviews, the Workforce Alliance may elect to only interview the most qualified respondents (based on the materials submitted).

B. General Information

Conditions of response package:

1. The proposal may not be altered in any way after submission.
2. The respondent agrees that the materials submitted become the property of the Workforce Alliance.
3. The respondent agrees to comply with all Alliance contracting requirements, including general liability, professional liability, workers' compensation and auto insurance coverage, equal opportunity and any other applicable federal, state, or local laws and regulations.
4. Respondent agrees that all costs incurred in developing this proposal are the Respondent's responsibility and at the Respondent's cost.
5. Respondent understands and agrees that any proposal may be rejected if it is conditional, incomplete and/or deviates from the specifications contained in this RFP.
6. Respondent understands and agrees that minor defects may be waived at the discretion of the Workforce Alliance.

Cancellation: The procurement process for this RFP may be delayed, suspended, or canceled if the Workforce Alliance determines that to take such action is in the best interest of the Workforce Alliance.

Extendibility of Procurement Justification: This RFP procurement process, and the submissions received as a result of it, may be used to justify contractor grant funding

decisions for other similar services and/or other funding that becomes available through the Workforce Alliance.

Awarding of the Contract:

1. All respondents will be notified in writing of the results of the evaluation of their submitted package.
2. The tentative award may be conditioned on the inclusion of changes/additional terms. Negotiations over specific terms and language may be required.
3. If the Workforce Alliance is unable to satisfactorily negotiate an agreement with a qualifying respondent, the Workforce Alliance may terminate negotiations with that respondent and proceed to negotiate with other qualified respondents. This process may be repeated until a satisfactory contractual agreement has been reached.

Right to Reject: The Workforce Alliance reserves the right to reject any and all proposals or any part of any proposal, to waive minor defects or technicalities, or to solicit new proposals on the same project or on a modified project which may include portions of the originally proposed project as the Workforce Alliance may deem necessary in its interest. The Workforce Alliance may also declare a failed procurement. A failed procurement occurs when no bids are received, or only one bid is received, or bids received do not meet responsiveness, or submission requirements or competition was determined inadequate. In the event of a failed procurement, the Workforce Alliance has the option to reissue the RFP or enter into a noncompetitive procurement, in which case the standards for a noncompetitive procurement must be satisfied.

If the Workforce Alliance determines that none of the proposals received offers a suitable solution to the request at a reasonable price, all proposals may be rejected. The Workforce Alliance will formally notify contractors of such rejection and/or of their non-selection under the RFP process.

Appeals Process: Following the review and announcement of qualified bidders, the Workforce Alliance will accept appeals regarding the proposal process and determination of pre-qualified bidders. If the dispute or protest cannot be informally resolved, the following procedures for an appeal must be followed:

Submission of a written appeal that includes the following items:

- The full name, address, and telephone number of the appealing respondent. A brief statement of the reasons for appeal, including citations to the RFP and other pertinent documents.
- A statement of the relief sought.

Appeals must be submitted in writing to:

Bruce Wilson
Executive Director
Workforce Alliance of the North Bay
1546 First Street
Napa, CA 94559

Request for appeals should be submitted within five (5) calendar days of the date of the letter notifying respondents of whether or not they met the minimum qualifications.

The decision by the Executive Director of the Workforce Alliance on all appeals is final and any affected parties will be notified in writing of the outcome.