**Webcast Transcript: Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grants (SCC) Prospective Applicant Webinar**

**Slide 1:**

**Cheryl**: Welcome to the pre-recorded webcast for Prospective Applicants for ETA’s Funding Opportunity Announcement 20-07, titled Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grants (which we’ll refer to as Strengthening Community Colleges, or SCC).

Slide2:

Thank you for joining us for today’s Webcast. To help you follow along, we recommend you have a copy of the FOA handy when viewing this Webcast. Additionally, when applying for ETA competitive grants, we recommend that you use our Web-Based Toolkit for Prospective Applicants at the link on this slide.

Slide 3:

**Cheryl:** Today, you’ll be hearing from Robin Fernkas, Director of the Division of Strategic Investments (DSI); myself, Cheryl Martin, a Program Manager in DSI; and Eugenie Agia, who is a Workforce Analyst in DSI. We are from what is often called the DOL Program Office for this grant.

Slide 4:

**Cheryl**: You’ll also hear from two representatives of ETA’s Office of Grants Management:

* Melissa Abdullah is the Grants Officer for the SCC grant; and
* Drew Canger is the Lead Grants Management Specialist for this Funding Opportunity.

While the FOA is open, all questions about this grant must be directed to Drew Canger, for whom contact information can be found on page 84 of the FOA, and later in these slides.

Slide 5:

**Cheryl**: Today we will focus on three key areas of the FOA:

* Program Purpose and Design, and Expected Outcomes
* Eligibility, Partnerships, and Priority Consideration; and
* Application Submission Requirements

I’ll turn it over to now to Robin Fernkas to get us started… Robin?

Slide 6:

**Robin:** Thanks, Cheryl. Good morning or afternoon everyone. Thank you so much for joining us today. Welcome to this webcast for prospective applicants for the Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grants. We are glad that you are making the time to view this important presentation, and we believe it will be helpful for you preparing your response to this funding opportunity announcement.

In the next few slides I will go over the program’s purpose and design. Everything we say today is only a summary or highlights of the Funding Opportunity Announcement, or FOA. The FOA contains important information and we strongly encourage you to read it in its entirety.

Slide 7:

**Robin:** The Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grants (referred to as Strengthening Community Colleges or SCC) will build the capacity of community colleges to collaborate with employers and the public workforce development system to meet local and regional labor market demand for a skilled workforce.

As the nation recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, community colleges are critical partners for the public workforce system for retraining the workforce and building a pipeline of workers in health care, logistics, and other industries that will continue to face shortages following the current health crisis. These investments may also support the skill development needs and advancement of industries of the future, including artificial intelligence (AI), quantum information sciences (QIS), 5G/advanced communications, biotechnology, and advanced manufacturing.

This grant program aims to:

* increase the capacity and responsiveness of community colleges to address the skill development needs of employers and dislocated and unemployed workers, incumbent workers, and new entrants to the workforce;
* offer this spectrum of workers and other individuals accelerated career pathways that enable that enable them to gain skills and transition from unemployment to (re)employment quickly; and
* address the new challenges associated with the COVID-19 health crisis that necessitate social distancing practices and expanding online and technology-enabled learning and migrating services to a virtual environment.

Slide 8:

**Robin:** The SCC program is committed to building the capacity of community colleges to collaborate with employers and the public workforce system to meet local and regional labor market demand for a skilled workforce. To achieve this goal, all projects will address the first four core elements, as described in the FOA, and consortium applicants will also address a fifth core element, involving efforts to advance innovative systems change. Further, all applicants must incorporate results-based design into their projects, plan for a third-party evaluation, and develop a sustainability plan. The next few slides discuss these elements in more detail.

Slide 9:

**Robin:**

**The 1st Core Element is Evidence-based design:** Successful applicants will develop strategies based on the existing evidence base, and will be committed to using data for the continuous improvement of programs. To identify strong research that supports their program design, applicants may use one or more of the public clearinghouses listed in Appendix A. We’ll say more about that in a moment.

**The 2nd Core Element is Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement**. Projects will deepen employer engagement at all levels of program design and implementation, focusing in particular on increasing employer involvement at the strategic level. Successful applicants will work with their local and/or state workforce partners to identify one or more industry sector(s) in which they will focus and include the required employer partners, as described in Section III.A.3. SCC Partnerships. See Appendix B for resources on sector strategies and employer engagement.

**A 3rd Core Element is Enhanced Career Pathway Programs and Accelerated Learning Strategies**. Under this FOA, applicants will make enhancements to existing, successful career pathway programs. While Core Element 5, below, focuses on career pathway development at the *systems* level, Core Element 3 emphasizes making enhancements to an existing career pathway *program*. At both the program and systems levels, the primary aim of career pathways under this FOA is to enable faster credentialing and entrance into the workforce for program participants. Note that single institution applicants will be reporting participant-level data for a cohort of participants that are enrolled in the enhanced career pathway program.

Career pathway programs enhanced through SCC will include several types of accelerated learning strategies, as described in the FOA under Core Element 3. See also Appendix C for more information and resources on career pathway strategies.

**The 4th Core Element is Strategic Alignment with the Workforce Development System**.An important capacity-building goal for community colleges is to increase their agility and responsiveness to the needs of employers and workers in their regional economies. To achieve this goal, community colleges must work closely with employers, the workforce development system, and other educational entities. These joint efforts must seek to build capacity and strengthen systems and structures that organize workforce development along sector-based career pathways, and to create strategies that are more efficient by removing silos and minimizing duplication within and across federal, state, and local programs.

**Finally, the 5th Core Element is Innovative Systems Change,** which applies to consortium applicants only. To catalyze systems change in workforce development, **consortium applicants will choose one focus area** for which to propose strategies:

* *Accelerated Learning Pathways*. Consortium applicants choosing this option will engage partners in building policies and practices that will support the enhancement or expansion of state, regional, or local career pathway systems, with the goal of significantly increasing the number of individuals that enter into and complete credit-bearing certificate and degree training programs in high-wage, high-demand fields. OR
* *Statewide Data Integration and Use*. Consortium applicants choosing this option will work to improve the integration and use of education and workforce development system data with the aim of guiding student decision-making about programs and careers, while meeting workforce needs.

Slide 10:

**Robin: There are several other aspects of Program Design.**

**One is Results-Based Design.** All applicants must follow a results-based process for designing and managing their grant-funded projects, that incorporates a gap analysis, a logic model, and a project work plan.

**Another aspect of Program Design is the Third-Party Evaluation**. After grant award, each successful awardee will procure a third-party evaluator to design and execute an implementation evaluation for their project. Applicants are encouraged to consider utilizing an adaptive, or developmental, approach to their implementation study to obtain benefit from the evaluation throughout the life of the project. While procurement will occur after grant award, the cost of the study – which should not exceed five percent of the applicant’s overall budget -- must be included in the overall grant budget and budget narrative. Evaluation milestones stated in the FOA must also be included in the project work plan. Grantees will also participate in a national evaluation, if one is conducted by the Department.

**Finally the Program Design must include a Sustainability Plan**. All applicants will develop a plan describing how they intend to sustain the capacity built through the grant and build on key grant innovations (and, for consortium applicants, systems change) after the grant period of performance ends.

I will now turn it over to Eugenie Agia, my DSI colleague, to talk about other aspects of program design.…Eugenie?

Slide 11:

**Eugenie:** Thanks Robin.

As noted in relation to Core Element One, applicants must base their program design on a level of evidence that is appropriate to the project proposed. Applicants may use one or more of the clearinghouses listed in Appendix A to cite research supporting their program model or identify another clearinghouse or database that rates studies based on the strength of their design.

Here, we highlight the Department’s Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (or CLEAR). CLEAR identifies and summarizes many types of research, including descriptive, implementation, and impact studies. In addition, CLEAR assesses the quality of research that looks at the effectiveness of particular policies and programs.

Of particular note, CLEAR reviews studies that examine the effectiveness of community college policies and programs that are intended to improve academic persistence, degree/certificate completion, and labor market outcomes of community college students. Each individual study profile includes a summary of the study, findings, and implications. DOL has recently added 121 causal studies in the community college topic area to its CLEAR database.

CLEAR conducts a review for each study in the database and provides causal evidence ratings that are intended to estimate the impact of a particular policy or intervention. CLEAR has three evidence ratings (high, moderate, and low) that apply to the strength of causal evidence; that is, the higher the causal evidence rating, the stronger and more credible the evidence.

Finally, while CLEAR does not rate implementation studies, it describes technical qualities that should be present in such studies.

The FOA also shows a link to studies done by the US Department of Labor, which is the last link on this slide. A number of recent studies related to the Department’s Trade Adjustment Assistance Career and Community College Training grants are anticipated to be by approximately mid-to-late August 2020. We encourage you to check back at this link for these valuable resources.

Slide 12:

**Eugenie: In addition to Program Design, a key component of the FOA is Expected Outcomes.**

We encourage you to pay specific attention to the expected outcomes, which are different than for some other ETA grants.

In addition, the SCC grant program identifies **different** sets of outcome measures for single institution and consortium applicants. **Single institution grantees** will report on capacity-building performance outcomes ***and*** track participant performance outcomes for a cohort of participants.

**A single institution applicant must specify grant-specific targets for each of three capacity building performance outcomes**. **Your three capacity-building performance outcomes targets (and the related outputs, milestones, and deliverables in the work plan) form the basis of the Department’s assessment of grantee performance for single institutions.**

Single institution applicants must provide quantitative capacity-building performance outcome targets , as described below, that show baseline and end-of-grant outcomes. See the sample worksheet for this in Appendix G of the FOA. **Please note: Applicants must develop three outcome targets that are specific to their grant; the examples provided in the FOA (pgs. 44-45) are for illustrative purposes only.**

Single institutions must develop Capacity Building Performance Outcomes for:

* Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement
* Enhanced Career Pathway Programs and Accelerated Learning Strategies
* Strategic Alignment with the Workforce Development System

Individual institution grantees will also be required to track eight participant outputs and outcomes for a selected cohort of students throughout their grants. Descriptions and definitions of terms for these are found on pages 45-46 of the FOA. Note that applicants are **not** required to provide targets for these participant outputs and outcomes, nor will they be used to monitor grantee performance. Grantees will utilize DOL’s Workforce Innovation Performance System (WIPS) to track these outputs and outcomes. DOL will provide additional information after grant award; however, single institution applicants must budget for data collection and reporting and include these activities in their project work plans.

Slide 13:

**Eugenie: The Expected Outcomes for Consortium Applicants are different than for single institutions.**

First, consortium applicants will not track and report on participant outcomes.

Second, consortium applicants must provide more quantitative system change performance outcome targets.

**A consortium applicant must specify two grant-specific targets for each of the four outcome areas specified in the FOA. For consortium applicants, your eight systems change performance outcomes targets (and the related outputs, milestones, and deliverables in the work plan) form the basis of the Department’s assessment of grantee performance for consortium grantees.**

The four outcome areas are as follows:

* + Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement
	+ Enhanced Career Pathway Programs and Accelerated Learning Strategies
	+ Strategic Alignment with the Workforce Development System
	+ Innovative Systems Change. For this outcome area, consortium applicants will select the two outcomes under the option that they chose for Core Element 5, either:
		- *Accelerated Learning Pathways, or*
		- *Statewide Data Integration and Use*

**Consortium applicants must develop eight quantitative system change outcome targets that are specific to their grant project; the examples provided on pages 55-56 of the FOA are for illustrative purposes only.** These targets must include baseline and end-of-grant outcomes. See the sample worksheet in Appendix H of the FOA.

I will now turn it over to Cheryl Martin to talk about some additional aspects of the FOA. ….Cheryl?

Slide 14:

**Cheryl:** Thank you, Eugenie. In the next few slides we will touch on Award Information, Eligibility, Partnerships, and Priority Consideration.

Slide 15:

**Cheryl: Here is information about Awards.**

* Funding under this FOA will be provided in the form of grants.
* We expect availability of approximately $40 million to fund approximately 8-16 grants.

* Single institution applicants may apply for up to $2 million. Consortium lead applicants may apply for up to $5 million. The minimum for both types of applicants is $1 million. Awards made under this Announcement are subject to the availability of federal funds. In the event that additional funds become available, we reserve the right to use such funds to select additional grantees from applications submitted in response to this Announcement. Subject to receiving sufficient applications of fundable quality, DOL intends to award at least 75 percent of grant funds to consortia applicants, and the remaining 25 percent of grant funds to single institution applicants.

Slide 16:

**Cheryl: Let’s turn to Eligible Lead Applicants:**

* For the purposes of this FOA, the eligible lead applicant must be a community college that is a public institution of higher education (or IHE) as defined in Section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act and where the most common degree awarded is an associate degree. The FOA provides a link to a database that shows an institution’s designation as a community college.
* The lead applicant must apply either as a single institution lead OR as a consortium lead that represents a consortium of IHEs. Consortium members may include community colleges and public and private, non-profit four-year IHEs, as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act.
* For consortium applicants, the Department is requiring IHEs to apply for this funding as a consortium of colleges that will undertake systems change within one state, or across one or more community college districts within a state system. Single institution applicants will undertake capacity building at one institution.
* Each applicant lead must partner with the required partners (which are discussed next) to form an SCC Partnership; otherwise, the applications will be considered non-responsive and will not be considered.

Slide 17:

**Cheryl:**

**Grants will be awarded to an SCC partnership of public and private entities.**

* For single institution applicants, the SCC Partnership will be comprised of the lead applicant, the required workforce development system partner(s), the required employer partners, and any optional partners. In forming your partnership, you should consider which entities have the best ability to support the requirements described in Core Elements 1-4.
* For consortium applicants, the SCC Partnership will be comprised of the IHE consortium members including the lead applicant, the required IHE coordinating entity, the required workforce development system partner(s), the required employer partners, and any optional partners. Here again, when you’re forming your partnership, you should consider which entities have the best ability to support the systems changes described in Core Elements 1-5, and specifically the focus area you choose for Core Element 5: Innovative Systems Change.
* For both single institution and consortium applicants, to demonstrate the active involvement of the required partners, you must provide signed documentation of commitments from the required partners which demonstrate the engagement of high-level leadership for each entity being proposed as a required partner.
* I’ll describe each partner in greater detail on the next slide.

Slide 18:

**Cheryl**

**Both consortium and single applicants are required to partner with the workforce development system and with employer partners.**

* Both types of applicants must include in their SCC Partnership one or more partners from the publicly funded workforce development system. These organizations have local expertise in workforce development, and may provide leadership in implementing activities such as: understanding and analyzing the need for education and training in the local area; making local business connections; participant identification, assessment and referrals; supportive services; job placement; and performance tracking and reporting.
* All applicants must also include in their SCC Partnership an industry/trade association or a consortium of at least three employers. An industry/trade association or employer consortium must be able to demonstrate membership clearly aligned with the geographic area of the IHE consortium or single institution. An industry/trade association, also known as an industry trade group, business association, sector association, or industry body, is an organization founded and funded by [businesses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Business) that operate in a specific [industry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industry).

In addition, consortium applicants (only) are required to have the following partners:

* Consortium applicants must apply for this funding as a consortium of colleges that will undertake systems change within one state; or for states where community colleges are district-based, across one or more community college districts within a state. For the purposes of this FOA, a district (or equivalent entity) that includes only one or two community colleges does not, by itself, qualify as a consortium. However, districts that are geographically contiguous may form a consortium that includes a minimum of three community colleges. When a consortium is district-based, all of the colleges in the district (or districts) must be included. For consortium applicants whose states do not organize the community colleges by district, the FOA does not specify a minimum number of colleges for the IHE consortium.
* However, the Department encourages (but does not require) applicants to include all or a majority of the **community colleges** in a state, if feasible based on the project design.
* To support sustainability and scaling of the efforts funded by this FOA, consortium applicants must include in their SCC Partnerships at least one state-level or community college district-level entity, referred to in this FOA as the IHE coordinating entity. The state- or district-level entity will play an important role in supporting the system change and sustainability aspects of the grant. Examples of such entities are given in the FOA.

Slide 19:

**Cheryl: Okay that was the required partners, now I will turn to the optional partners.**

While the required partners reflect collaboration between higher education, employers, and the workforce development system, we strongly encourage you to collaborate with other partners as well, that can support and advance the work of your SCC Partnership. These include State Apprenticeship Agencies; federally funded programs, such as Adult Education and Perkins; American Job Center operators; economic development agencies; labor-management organizations; community-based organizations that provide social support and/or wrap-around services; and foundations and philanthropic organizations.

Slide 20:

**Cheryl: Finally…**

Applicants will receive priority consideration of two bonus points if the applicant has demonstrated in their abstract that at least one census tract in their target area is a qualified Opportunity Zone designated by the Secretary of Treasury; you will not receive additional bonus points for more than one opportunity zone.

More information on Opportunity Zones is available at the link shown on this slide, and on p. 27 of the FOA.

Slide 21:

**Cheryl:**

To summarize what we’ve talked about earlier, this slide provides a snapshot of some key differences in FOA requirements for single institutions and consortium applicants. Depending on whether you’re applying as a single institution or a consortium lead, you will want to be sure that you are focusing on the sections of the FOA that pertain to you.

For single institutions:

* The funding range is ...
* The project focus is …
* The eligible lead applicant is …
* The required partners are …. and
* The expected outcomes are …

For consortium applicants:

* The funding range is …
* The project focus is …
* The eligible lead applicant is …
* The required partners are …. and
* The expected outcomes are …

Details on this, and other differences, are included in the FOA, so as always, you will want to read it carefully.

I will now turn it over to Melissa Abdullah in the Office of Grants Management. …Melissa?

Slide 22:

**Melissa:** Thanks, Cheryl. In the next few slides I will go over the application submission requirements.

Slide 23:

**Melissa:** Proposals submitted in response to this FOA must consist of four separate and distinct parts:

1. the Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance;
2. Project Budget, which consists of the SF-424A and the budget narrative;
3. Project Narrative; and
4. attachments to the Project Narrative.

It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that the funding amount requested is consistent across all parts and sub-parts of the application.

Slide 24:

**Melissa:** Applicants must include the items listed here. There is no exception to this requirement.

* The SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance – all applicants for Federal grant and funding opportunities must have a DUNS number and must supply their DUNS number on the SF-424. Applicants must also register with the System for Award Management (SAM)
* The Project Budget must consist of the SF-424A, Budget Information Form and the Budget Narrative

Each of these items are explained in more detail in the FOA, and all must be addressed in the application or it will be deemed non-responsive and will not be reviewed.

Slide 25:

**Melissa:** Applicants will most likely spend the majority of their time preparing the Project Narrative. This is where applicants demonstrate their capability to implement the grant project in accordance with the provisions of this announcement. Applicants should provide a comprehensive framework and description of all aspects of the proposed project. It must be succinct, self-explanatory, and well organized so that reviewers can understand the proposed project. The guidelines for preparing the Project Narrative are found in Section IV.B.3 and it will be evaluated using the criteria identified in Section V.A.

The Project Narrative is limited to 25 double-spaced single-sided 8.5 x 11 inch pages with Times New Roman 12 point text font and 1-inch margins. You must number the Project Narrative beginning with page number 1. We will not read or consider any materials beyond the specified page limit in the application review process.

Slide 26:

**Melissa**: In addition to the Project Narrative, applicants must submit attachments.

All attachments must be clearly labeled as Attachments. We will only exclude those attachments listed in Section IV.B.4 from the page limit. You must not include additional materials such as resumes or general letters of support. These will not be considered. You must submit your application in one package because documents received separately will be tracked separately and will not be attached to the application for review.

I’ll now turn it over to Drew to go over criteria and application submission.

Slide 27:

**Drew:** The checklist shown here should be used as a guide when preparing your application package to ensure that the application has met all of the screening criteria. Note that this checklist is only an aid for applicants and should not be included in the application package. We urge you to use this checklist to ensure your application contains all required items. If your application does not meet all of the screening criteria, it will not move forward through the merit review process.

Slide 28:

**Drew:** We have instituted procedures for assessing the technical merit of applications to provide for an objective review of the applications and to assist you in understanding the standards against which your application will be judged. The evaluation criteria are based on the information required in the application as described in Sections IV.B.2 (Project Budget) and IV.B.3. (Project Narrative). Reviewers will award points based on the evaluation criteria as shown in this chart. See the FOA for the full description of each criterion. Please note within the sections noted in this chart, there is different criteria for single institution applicants and consortium applicants. You must ensure you are responding to the appropriate criteria in your application.

Slide 29:

**Drew:** Applications must be received by 4:00:00pm (Eastern Time) on the closing date.

You can submit applications by regular mail, overnight mail, hand delivery, or online at www.grants.gov. The mailing address can be found in the FOA. Please reference FOA-ETA-20-07 in your application submission. See the FOA for details on how to submit your application.

Slide 30:

**Cheryl**: Thank you Drew, Melissa, Eugenie, and Robin. This concludes our prospective applicant webinar. Please read the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) at the website link on the slide (it’s also in the FOA), and please do check back frequently for newly posted FAQs. After reading the FAQs, if you have additional questions on the Strengthening Community Colleges Funding Opportunity Announcement, you can contact Drew Canger (whose email shows up as Steve), who is the grants management specialist listed as the contact in the Funding Opportunity Announcement.

Slide 31:

**Cheryl**: Thank you Drew, Melissa, Eugenie, and Robin. This concludes our prospective applicant webinar. Please read the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) at the website link on the slide (it’s also in the FOA), and please do check back frequently for newly posted FAQs. After reading the FAQs, if you have additional questions on the Strengthening Community Colleges Funding Opportunity Announcement, you can contact Drew Canger (whose email shows up as Steve), who is the grants management specialist listed as the contact in the Funding Opportunity Announcement.