



Government of Puerto Rico
Office of Management and Budget

Upskilling the Broadband Workforce in Puerto Rico: Community Recruiting Partners Grants Program

Notice of Funding Availability

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Deadline for Submissions: May 16th, 2024



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1. Introduction

The Puerto Rico Office of Management and Budget (OMB) through the Puerto Rico Broadband Program (PRBP) is seeking responses from qualified organizations (Respondents) to market workforce opportunities and assist in the recruitment of diverse, qualified talent for careers in broadband and telecommunications.

The PRBP was created in 2022 to ensure all Puerto Ricans have access to fast and reliable internet service, using both local and federal funds. The PRBP coordinates, authorizes, and executes the disbursement of broadband funding assigned to Puerto Rico, working with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and other key stakeholders. The PRBP adopted the Smart Island initiative in order to deploy key broadband infrastructure projects that will bring essential broadband infrastructure to all residents. To effectively execute its mission, the Smart Island initiative must ensure that Puerto Rico has the necessary broadband workforce, with the appropriate knowledge and skills, to build and maintain these projects. It is estimated that an additional 2,500 workers, including broadband technicians, construction workers, broadband engineers, and customer representatives, are needed by 2028 to meet the industry's workforce needs.

To meet these workforce needs as outlined in the Smart Island initiative, the PRBP is implementing a cross-functional approach by: rapidly convening ISPs and other industry leaders; engaging with academic institutions, training providers, unions, and other key stakeholders to develop plans to recruit and train talent; standing up a set of accessible career pathways to solve urgent workforce needs; and mobilizing community-based organizations to market opportunities and recruit diverse talent.

The OMB is issuing this Notice of Funding Availability (“NOFA”) to solicit proposals from interested Respondents to support marketing, recruitment, and outreach efforts to promote the growth of the broadband workforce in Puerto Rico for priority workforce roles. The priority roles for this project are Broadband Technicians, General Construction, and Client Support, as defined in the Appendix.

To address the broadband workforce shortage, the OMB has allocated \$450,000 to provide “Grants” to organizations (including foundations and non-profit organizations) to:

- Provide general information about broadband careers and available support programming (e.g., training programs, apprenticeships, hiring incentives) to clients / stakeholders.
- Provide direct, individual career pathway education to likely candidates for the broadband workforce.
- Track outreach and education efforts to clients, including the number of “impressions” (i.e., number of unique interactions or touchpoints to share information with clients) and informational material distribution to clients / stakeholders.
- Track the number of individual and group career pathway conversations with clients / stakeholders.
- Track conversion rate (i.e., number of people employed in the broadband industry) of “impressions” (i.e., number of unique interactions or touchpoints to share information with clients / stakeholders) and career pathway conversations.

Examples of projects that could be funded by this grant program include, but are not limited to:

- A community-based organization is seeking to market broadband job opportunities and would like funding to offer individualized broadband career counseling, as part of broader career counseling, and track outreach.



- A community-based organization is seeking to broadly market career opportunities in broadband and would like funding to distribute marketing materials and track distribution.

The OMB invites interested parties to submit their responses to this NOFA, which should include details on proposed use of funds, including innovative solutions to bring attention to the workforce opportunities described in this NOFA. If a Respondent is selected for grant funding in this round of funding, the OMB will contact the appropriate individual to communicate any further information required.

The deadline for this NOFA is May 16, 2024. Please send any queries to FAQ@smartsland.pr.gov.

2. Project Objectives & Outcomes

Objectives:

- Create broadband employment opportunity awareness within communities.
- Attract students to broadband-related training programs in PR.
- Connect candidates to employers and broadband workforce initiatives (e.g., apprenticeships, scholarships) in PR.
- Support candidates with the employment navigation process.

Outcomes:

- Increased number of candidates interested in broadband careers.
- Increased enrollment of students in broadband training programs.
- Increased number of candidates that join the broadband workforce.
- Successful implementation of broadband infrastructure investments in Puerto Rico.

3. Funding Mechanism

Funding for this grant program will come from the PRBP's local funds, called the Puerto Rico Broadband Infrastructure Fund (PRBIF), under the OMB. The PRBP was created by the Governor of Puerto Rico through Executive Order 2022-40 on July 11, 2022. The primary purpose of this program is to coordinate, authorize, and execute the disbursement of local and federal funds assigned to the construction of broadband infrastructure in Puerto Rico.

This grant program does not require matching funds.

4. Funding Disbursement

Funding will be disbursed to the selected Applicants according to Applicants proposed budget and target outcomes. The total amount of funds available is \$450K. The OMB anticipates offering awards between \$50,000-\$100,000 to 4-6 institutions but, at its discretion, can offer flexibility for compelling proposals.

Proposed funding and awarding decisions are based on the anticipated availability of relevant funds. Should anything change, the OMB reserves the right to make adjustments based on the level of funding. Estimated amounts and dates are not final and are subject to change.



5. Scope of Work

Applicants must submit one Proposal Package including a maximum of 10 slides in PowerPoint or 8 pages in Word. Additional details can be included as appendix to the proposal.

The Respondent's Proposal should include the following contents:

- I. Key facts about the Respondent's existing and relevant programming. (Suggested 1-2 slides/pages)
 - Describe the Respondent's organization, infrastructure and capacity for broadband workforce marketing outreach and/or individual career counseling and/or digital equity efforts (e.g., size of staff, leadership, number of existing marketing programs, number of clients and reach).
 - Describe applicant's experience in launching other workforce marketing and career counseling programs, if any, including success metrics.
 - Provide details on existing career placement services and/or connections to employers.
- II. Interest and anticipated project outcomes. (Suggested 1-2 slides/pages)
 - Describe how the availability and quality of broadband workforce marketing outreach and/or individual or group career counseling will be provided or enhanced.
 - Share outcomes that can be achieved with a grant (e.g., number of clients served, number of employees expected to join broadband workforce, etc.).
 - Describe the approach and metrics the proponent will take track outcomes (e.g., number of clients who join the broadband workforce, "impressions," individual conversations. Use section 6.2 for examples)
- III. Key stakeholders that would be engaged. (Suggested 1 slide/page)
 - Dedicate accountable personnel of sufficient size who have experience in workforce development, client connection, or comparable endeavors.
 - Dedicate lead personnel that have experience in project management in projects of a comparable size.
 - Describe any existing or anticipated partnerships, and explain how they will be used to coordinate, provide services, and ensure that clients have access to high-quality employment options.
- IV. Challenges they anticipate and how they plan to overcome. (Suggested 1 slide/page)
 - Identify and describe the key project risks/barriers throughout the project timeline.
 - Describe possible solutions to address the risks.
- V. Proposed budget and resourcing. (Suggested 1-2 slides/pages)
 - Describe where funds will be allocated, including justification of expenses.
 - Demonstrate how the program will plan for future sustainability beyond the life of the grant. (e.g., the organization will include communication about broadband careers in current offerings, and such communication will continue to happen after this program)

6. Requirements

6.1 Key Requirements

Respondents must meet the following requirements:



- Have registered and active status with the Puerto Rico Department of State.
- Respondent has adequate resources to perform the project, or the ability to obtain them.
- Respondent has a satisfactory record of performance, integrity, and business ethics.
- Respondent has the necessary organization, experience, and technical skills.
- Neither Respondent nor any person or entity associated who is partnering with Respondent has been the subject of any adverse findings that would prevent the OMB and PRBP from selecting Respondent. Respondents shall provide a listing and brief description of legal actions for the past five years.
- Complete Proposal covering all necessary topics outlined in this NOFA.
- Upload required documents as attachments with response.

6.2 Performance Goals and Measurement

The OMB performance goals are provided as a point of reference for applicants when determining their performance goals for the purposes of this application. Metrics will be measured regularly on an agreed schedule throughout the period of work. Additional metrics may be determined and required as the project develops.

Metrics include:

- Number of “impressions” (i.e., number of unique interactions or touchpoints to share information with clients).
- Number of individual and group career pathway conversations with clients.
- Number of clients who pursue broadband as a career (e.g., number that directly join workforce, number that join apprenticeship programs, number that join broadband-related educational programs).
- Conversion rate of “impressions” and career pathway conversations.
- Penetration of underserved groups (e.g., percent of clients from low-income backgrounds, racial and regional diversity of client population).

6.3 Project Term

The period of performance for this grant will be approximately twelve (12) months, subject to possible extension to be agreed between the parties under the terms of the contract to be awarded. The anticipated implementation start date is May 27, 2024.

No obligation of funds will be allowed before or beyond the grant period of performance. Any grant funds not expended during the grant agreement period shall be returned to the OMB .

6.4 Cost Matching

There is no required match for this project. However, the applicant is encouraged to leverage other resources to maximize the impact of the project. Applicants are encouraged to braid funds, leverage human capital, and utilize other resources to maximize success for the project.

6.5 Allowable use of funds

The funds awarded in this NOFA must be used to assist the OMB and PRBP program awardees in the activities listed in Section 1.

In general, to be an allowable charge under the grant, a cost must meet the following criteria:



- Be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the award.
- Be determined in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.
- Be adequately documented.

6.6 Payable Terms and Method

Funding will be awarded in two payments, the first starts when NOFA is awarded, the second after 3 months dependent on on-time and complete reporting on general progress, outcomes and performance, and on-track status with outlined workplan).

Payment will be made upon presentation of invoices evidenced by the services provided and duly authorized by the OMB. Invoices must be detailed, specific and itemized accompanied by a description of the services provided as previously approved by the OMB. The OMB and PRBP reserve the right to review the correctness of invoices and perform the audits as it deems fit.

7. Proposal Submission

Responses to the NOFA submitted after the prescribed deadline will not be accepted. Proposals must include any exhibits, appendices and/or attachments to be deemed complete. All correspondence, documents and related information submitted by Respondents in connection with this NOFA shall be written in the English. If documents are submitted in a language other than English, a full English translation shall also be provided.

All applications must adhere to Proposal Package requirements, use the required format, and include all the requested information. Only one Proposal Package will be accepted from each applicant. A maximum of ten (10) slides in PowerPoint or eight (8) pages in Word will be accepted. Applicants have the flexibility to decide how they want to distribute up to ten (10) slides or eight (8) pages. All applications must include a certification and signature that all the information submitted in the Proposal is true and accurate. Clearly identify one designated contact person for the Proposal engagement.

Respondents should submit their responses to the smartisland.pr.gov website, including the following:

- Proposal package as described in the Scope of Work, as uploaded attachment.
- A detailed project plan, including timelines and milestones.
- A cost breakdown that includes projected expenses within the eligible expenses (see Eligible Expenses below).
- Additional supporting documentation added to the proposal as uploaded attachments.

7.1 Registration for Technical Assistance

To be considered a Registered Proponent and receive technical assistance on a proposal, the Proponent must email info@smartisland.pr.gov by April 23 at 4:30 pm sharing:

- name of the institution
- name of the person responsible
- email and phone number for contact
- In the subject line add “Outreach Partner NOFA | Interest from [name of your organization]”.

Please note that each Registered Proponent agrees to and shall be bound by all the terms and conditions of this NOFA.

Proponents that do not register by the deadline are still permitted to participate in the NOFA but might not



receive technical assistance during the process.

7.2 Questions & Answers

Any questions regarding this NOFA or the evaluation of Proposals shall be submitted in writing via electronic mail only to the following address: **FAQ@smartisland.pr.gov** and must reference this specific NOFA in the subject line of the email. No telephone inquiries will be accepted. Answers will be posted on PRBP’s website at **www.smartisland.pr.gov**. All information posted on OMB’s and/or PRBP’s website is deemed incorporated into this NOFA.

Questions must be submitted by April 26th, 2024, at 4:30pm; answers will be provided by April 30, 2024, at 4:30pm. The OMB reserves the right to extend this deadline based on the volume and timing of questions.

8. Response Evaluation

Responses to this NOFA will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Evaluation Points
1. Quality of Existing Programming – Assesses whether the Respondent has a track record of offering digital equity, workforce outreach, and/or community-based outreach and/or career counseling programs and meets the general qualifications of the proponent to work on projects or activities similar to those described in the NOFA.	45
2. Infrastructure & Capacity – Evaluates infrastructure and capacity for broadband workforce marketing outreach and/or individual and group career counseling. Evaluates leadership commitment/engagement, the availability of accountable personnel, and reach of existing or anticipated partnerships.	45
3. Innovation – Evaluates innovative thinking with regards to outreach to diverse populations.	10
Total	100

9. Selection Process

A committee of OMB staff and/or consultants will review the proposals and evaluate them based on the aforementioned criteria. The OMB, its staff and consultants reserve the right to request additional information from Respondents on an as-needed basis during the evaluation process. Following this, the OMB may enter negotiations with the Respondent to expand or contract the scope of work and adjust the grant amount accordingly.

10. Eligible Expenses

If granted an award, respondents may utilize grant funds for:

- Materials and labor for broadband workforce outreach and marketing.
- Other incurred expenses as approved by the OMB.



11. Ineligible Expenses

The following costs are ineligible for grant funding:

- Internal administrative activities.
- Fundraising activities.
- Computers or office equipment.
- Software, such as management or accounting software.
- Vehicles.
- Equipment owned or leased by the customer, including routers and modems, and any other costs beyond the network interface point.
- Operating expenses.
- Expenses incurred prior to the date of the grant award contract execution by all parties.
- Leases of less than one year.
- Payment of interest or principal on outstanding debt instruments, or other debt service costs.
- Fees or issuance costs associated with the issuance of new debt.
- Satisfaction of any obligation arising under or pursuant to a settlement agreement, judgment, consent decree, or judicially confirmed debt restructuring plan in a judicial, administrative, or regulatory proceeding.

12. Timeline

The following is the proposed timeline for this project:

Target Date	Event
April 16, 2024	Publication of NOFA
April 23, 2024	Registration Deadline – 4:30 p.m. Technical assistance will be provided to all Proposer’s who register as potential applicants to this NOFA by the deadline.
April 26, 2024	Questions & Answers Submission Deadline
April 30, 2024	Submission of PRBP’s Responses to Questions – 4:30pm
May 16, 2024	Proposal Submission Deadline – 4:30 p.m.
May 27, 2024	Notice of Award Expected
June 3, 2024	Expected Program Start ; Process to award first round of funding starts
August 16, 2024	1st outcome tracking / Respondent <> PRBP progress check-in
November 15, 2024	6 Months into Program; 2 nd outcome tracking / Respondent <> PRBP progress check-in; Second Round of Funding Expected to Be Awarded (subject to successful process / outcomes thus far)
February 17, 2025	3 rd outcome tracking / Respondent <> PRBP progress check-in



May 16, 2025	4 th outcome tracking / Respondent <> PRBP progress check in and Final Evaluation
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13. Appendix

Broadband careers in high demand for the next five years:


Career/Role	Industry estimated additional demand (next 5 years)	
	Minimum	Maximum
Broadband Technicians	875	1,310
Maintenance / field technician	430	645
Installers	135	200
Fiber splicer	125	185
Tower climber	65	100
Fixed wireless tech.	60	90
5G Microcell technician	60	90
General Construction	515	770
Civil construction laborer (incl. elect.)	160	240
Machinery operator	145	220
Other: welder, concrete, etc.	65	95
Construction manager	50	75
Client Support	375	560
Customer representatives	375	560



General Engineers	120	180
OSP engineer	45	70
Civil engineer	35	50
Project manager	20	30
Design engineer	20	30
General Skilled Support	100	155
Quality inspector	35	55
Safety lead	15	25
Permitting specialist	15	20
Procurement lead	10	15
Grant manager	10	15
Land surveyor	5	10
GIS specialist	5	10
Compliance officer	5	10
Broadband-related Engineers	70	105
RF engineer	55	85
Network architect or planner	15	20




Outreach partners potential deliverables (non-exhaustive)



Digital products / offerings

- 1 Website Development:** Create a dedicated website for broadband careers, including job listings, employee testimonials, and application instructions
- 2 Social Media Campaign:** Utilize platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook to share content about career opportunities and industry insights
- 3 Recruitment Video Production:** Develop videos showcasing the work, employee experiences, and the impact of broadband services, to be shared online and via social media
- 4 Email Marketing Campaigns:** Send out regular newsletters and job alerts to subscribers interested in broadband careers, highlighting new opportunities and company benefits
- 5 Q&A Forum:** Host regular online Q&A forums for potential candidates to address questions about the industry, specific job roles, and the application process, providing a platform for interaction and engagement



Non-digital products / offerings

- 1 Job Fairs:** Organize and participate in job fairs at local colleges, universities, and community centers to directly engage with potential candidates
- 2 ISP/Employers Panel Discussions:** Host panel discussions with ISPs and employers in the broadband sector to talk about career opportunities, industry trends, and to answer questions from the audience
- 3 Printed Brochures/Pamphlets Distribution:** Distribute informative brochures and pamphlets at career fairs, educational institutions, and community centers, providing insights into broadband career paths and job openings
- 4 Local Partners Engagement:** Partner with local community centers, libraries, and educational institutions to offer talks and workshops about the career opportunities in broadband
- 5 Community Job Boards:** Post physical job advertisements on local community boards in the institution and/or libraries, coffee shops, and community centers