



1. What is defined as an “Engineering Degree” in this NOFA?

Engineering Degree refers to a successfully completed undergraduate diploma in any of the Engineering fields. For this NOFA, there is a list in Appendix 2 of the roles of Engineers for which retention bonuses can apply with an amount of \$7,000.

2. What qualification needs to be proven for the retention bonuses of \$7,000 for broadband engineers and \$3,500 for broadband technicians?

For the \$7,000 an official engineering degree will be required in order to request the reimbursement of the retention bonus. For the technicians, no engineering degree will be needed. In any case it will be required to prove that the role performed is the one that has been submitted in the proposal.

3. In Appendix 3 there is a Form. Do you want to receive a formal proposal, or do you just want answers to each of the questions on the form?

The expected proposal is the Appendix 3 filled out. We will consider any attachments or appendixes, but they are not required.

4. Is Retention bonus funding only available for new hires?

Correct, they are only available for new hires after the date of Award of the funds included in this NOFA. Moreover, they cannot be applied to an employee that is coming from another company in the broadband industry.

5. Can grant funds be used for existing employees for apprenticeships programs?

Yes, the funds under Program 1 (Apprenticeships) can be leveraged for existing employees, subject to the compliance with the rest of the requirements (including the registration and participation in a Registered Apprenticeship Program in a broadband technical field).

6. Can funds be used to pay trainers?

Yes, the funds under Program 1 (Apprenticeships) can be used for any of these five topics:



- Hire program coordinator(s) responsible for supporting program development, aligning with training institutions and educational providers, coordinating with the Registered Apprenticeship Program, applying for Federal funding, and coordinating with PRBP office.
- Sign contracts with external training providers for faculty training, curriculum development, and marketing.
- Make investments in equipment/facilities necessary for learning, requiring prior program approval.
- Acquire external assistance for launch.
- Administer funds to apprentices in the form of salaries to increase accessibility and appeal of the programs.

7. Can funds be used to hire a program coordinator to be responsible for the apprenticeship program and compliance?

Yes, as detailed in the first bullet of the previous question.

8. Can we use internal certified employees as trainers?

Yes, in-classroom training for Registered Apprenticeship Programs has to be done by subject matter experts, and that can be one of your employees or an external provider (either an educational institution or a person from another company)

9. Is it possible to have less than 10 or 45 employees as each program requires?

Those numbers are just the maximum of funding that each Respondent can request under this NOFA from the Puerto Rico Broadband Program. However, there would be no specific maximum for application to the WIOA funds for Registered Apprenticeship Programs. Moreover, for this NOFA you don't need to ask for funding for a minimum of employees. Please request the funding depending on your needs.



10. Do new employees need to be hired at the same time or can hiring be done over the course of the funded period?

Hiring can be done over the course of the funded period, and reimbursement can be claims as well along the course of the period as the different employees reach the 6- and 12-months tenure to receive the retention bonuses.

11. Can grant funds be used to provide test equipment, safety equipment, tools, and other materials necessary for the apprentice?

Yes, as specified in answer to question 6 in the third bullet, so we encourage you to leverage the funding for that. However, this will require prior program approval.

12. Is there a specific type of performance evaluation which we need to complete in order to comply with the requirements? Do you have KPIs you want included?

It is up to you to define how / with which KPIs you want to track the performance of the employees with retention bonuses or the apprenticeships. You can use that criteria in your contract with the new hires to link the performance to the retention bonuses.

13. Where can we find out information about applying for federal funding for WIOA apprenticeship program?

We have uploaded the presentation on the Webinar that we have conducted, and in the second section of that presentation you have all the details to register a Registered Apprenticeship and to request funding from WIOA. You can also find the right contact details of the representatives from the Department of Labor in Puerto Rico.

14. Since this is a reimbursement program, how long will it take to receive reimbursement once proof of payments has been submitted?

Assuming that all requested materials and evidence are correctly submitted, the finance team is expected to complete the payments within a month, more details will be shared after the partners are selected.



15. Are funds only considered for roles in Puerto Rico? Can they be applied to roles in Puerto Rico that work for the mainland US?

Funds are targeted at and will prioritize employees working in Puerto Rico and for Puerto Rico. However, if you are intending to apply the funds to a different situation, please share details in the proposal and we will study the situation.

16. Can other roles that are not engineers or technicians (i.e., network specialists) be considered for the retention bonuses?

As stated in the NOFA, funds are prioritized for broadband engineers and technicians, in particular to the ones specified in the lists in Appendix 1 and 2. However, you are more than welcome to make alternative proposals, including the description of the roles and the rationale of why you have a hiring/retention need for those roles.

17. Could you elaborate on the requirement of 144 hours and 2,000 hours required in the Registered Apprenticeship Programs?

As you can see in the Webinar presentation, Registered Apprenticeship Programs, entail a standard number of 2,000 hours of on-the-job training and 144 hours per year. In order to have the certification and get funding from WIOA or from this NOFA, you will need to comply with those specified hours of training for your employees. You can find more details on this in the Webinar presentation or referring to the contact people from the US Department of Labor.

18. Is the registration of the Registered Apprenticeship Program something independent from the submission of the NOFA?

Yes, it is something independent from this NOFA, and it is NOT a requirement to have an apprenticeship program registered to make a proposal by June 19th under this NOFA. However, for the funds relating to apprenticeships, we kindly ask you to explain what your plan would be to develop Registered Apprenticeship Programs. In order to receive the reimbursement, on the requirements will be to have your apprentices under a Registered Apprenticeship Program.



19. In the submission on Wednesday, do we need to show evidence that we have registered a Registered Apprenticeship Program?

No, as stated in previous questions, the only ask for the submission on June 19th is Appendix 3, which should include a plan on how you intend to develop the Registered Apprenticeship Programs and register them. But there is no need to have evidence of the actual registration, which can happen at a later date.

20. Can you define what does “New Hire” means under this proposal?

Under this proposal, retention bonuses are targeted only to new hires. This means that they can only apply to employees that begin having a full-time working relationship with your company after the Notification of Award of this NOFA. Grants for Apprenticeships are not targeted only to New Hires, but they can also include current employees.

21. To participate under the Program 1, Do we have to include a career path and / or an apprentice program?

Yes, you will need to explain for which occupations you are requesting funds. In Appendix 1 of the NOFA there is a list of paths that can be included as part of your proposal for Program 1 (Apprenticeships). However, as stated in Paragraph #2 of Section 3 of the NOFA, “Proponents may propose alternative RAPs [Registered Apprenticeship Programs] to the ones detailed in the Appendix, providing the rationale to do so, which will be studied and considered by the PRBP.”

22. Can we enroll our employees under the “Apprenticeships” after the award is granted to educational or other institutions?

Part of a Registered Apprenticeship Program involves in-class training. That training can be performed by your own employees, by a third-party training provider or by an educational institution, and the decision of which one to choose is entirely up to the employer. Remember that in order to be eligible for the funds of Program 1 (Apprenticeships) of this NOFA, you will need to submit a proposal by June 19th, 2024, and that the grants can be used for both current and future employees within the time limits specified in this NOFA.



23. Do we have to submit a proposal for program 1 to enroll our employees to the “Apprenticeships”?

You can always enroll employees in a Registered Apprenticeship Program directly as these are programs designed and certified by the Department of Labor. This NOFA is supporting those programs with a grant of \$7,000 per apprentice to further incentivize the development of these programs in the broadband industry.

24. If we use part of the funds in this NOFA from apprenticeships to re-train incumbent employees, could that cover part of their salary or only training costs themselves?

Yes, those funds can be used to cover part of the salary of an incumbent worker, provided that those employees are enrolled in a Registered Apprenticeship Program that your company has developed and that the rest of the requirements in the NOFA are fulfilled.

25. In the proposal, where should we include the incumbent employees that we intend to re-train with a Registered Apprenticeship Program?

Please include the number in the tables of the first page, and then explain in the relevant boxes of the Form the details of which Registered Apprenticeships Programs and what types of employees they would be (i.e., new or incumbent).

26. Is there a required minimum of apprenticeships that have to be new employees?

No, you can decide if apprentices are new or incumbent employees and there is no minimum for any of those groups. Please explain the rationale for your proposal.

27. Can you elaborate on the concept of commitments reporting?

In the proposal we are looking to see your initiatives on HR and marketing commitments that you can make. The idea is to promote the broadband workforce not only with the incentives contained in this NOFA, but also with a holistic approach of initiatives.



At the same time that we are asking you to tell us in the proposal what commitments you would be able to make, we are also asking you to tell us how you would report those commitments to the PRBP if you become a selected partner.

28. Can marketing commitments be initiatives developed in collaboration with PRBP?

Yes, you can include both individual marketing initiatives done by your company or initiatives that could be done in collaboration with the PRBP (i.e., video testimonials of employees in your company)

29. The HR commitments need to be new initiatives to be developed by our company, or can we include the ones that we already have in place?

We kindly ask you to clearly differentiate those initiatives that are already in place with those that you are proposing to make from now on. The objectives of the program include improving the value proposition of the industry and increasing and retaining the broadband workforce. Therefore, we are specifically looking for incremental / additional initiatives that can improve the current situation.

30. Is there a maximum budget to allocate to training courses with third parties?

It is up to you to choose how and for how much you perform the training courses. This NOFA would cover \$7,000 per apprentices and one of the uses that you could give to those funds is to training courses.

Thank you.

We are looking forward to receiving your proposals!

Disclaimer:

Please note that this Q&A document has been updated on Friday 14th, answering all questions that have come to us through faq@smartisland.pr.gov by Wednesday June 12th and the ones that came in the Webinars held on Wednesday June 12th and on Friday June 14th.