



## **BioInnovate Program FAQs August 15, 2024**

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC  
**DEVELOPMENT**  
AND COMMERCE





# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Techforce – BioInnovate Program FAQs

August 15, 2024

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## **1 Questions Submitted via Registration Form in ENGLISH**

### **1. What are the specific criteria for evaluating proposals, particularly in terms of alignment with industry needs?**

We will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria: Quality, Commitment to implementation, Continuity, Proposed resourcing, Co-investment, and Industry support— the letter being a significant factor to ensure the program achieves its intended impact of creating more job opportunities in high-demand roles within the life sciences industry. The specific evaluation criteria are detailed in Section 6.1 of the Grant Application Guidelines. Please review this section carefully to ensure your proposal aligns with these criteria.

### **2. How will the success and impact of funded projects be measured and assessed?**

We would like to hear your proposal for key performance indicators (KPIs) that will measure the success and impact of the proposed project. As part of the Application Package, we encourage you to outline the outcomes that can be achieved with the grant, such as the number of students served, expanded student demographics, improved employment rates, and other relevant metrics to assess the project's impact.

As noted in Section 2.4 of the Grant Application Guidelines, DDEC's performance goals are provided as a reference for setting your own KPIs for this application. Metrics will be evaluated periodically throughout the project, and progress reports will be required by the DDEC. Additional metrics may also be identified and requested as the project develops.

### **3. What types of expenses are allowable under the grant, and are there any restrictions on how the funds can be allocated?**

As outlined in Section 4.4 of the Grant Application Guidelines allowable expenses include those directly related to the implementation and success of the proposed project. Examples of such expenses could include costs associated with developing a hire, train, and deploy model, such as fees for trainers, materials development, and the setup of training facilities. For training providers or universities looking to expand enrollment, funds could be allocated toward marketing efforts, hiring additional faculty, and expanding infrastructure to accommodate more students. Additionally, expenses related to creating new programs tailored to the Life Sciences industry, such as curriculum development, acquiring specialized equipment, and forming industry partnerships, are also permissible. For employers seeking to reskill employees through apprenticeship programs, the grant may cover costs like curriculum development, apprentice wages, and certification fees.

However, it is important to note that there are restrictions on how the funds can be allocated. The grant is intended to fund activities that are directly tied to the execution of the proposed project. Indirect costs, such as administrative overhead or general operational expenses, are not covered. The focus is on ensuring that the funds are used in a way that maximizes the impact of the project, particularly in developing 21st-century skills for the workforce in Puerto Rico.

### **4. Is there any flexibility in the proposed budget and resourcing plan, and how should it be reflected in the proposal?**

Your proposal should clearly outline the proposed budget and detail how the funds will be allocated throughout the project. Once the grant is awarded, the approved budget will be formalized in the Grant Agreement. While the budget is expected to align closely with the initial proposal, any subsequent changes must be approved by DDEC in



accordance with the terms outlined in the Grant Agreement. Therefore, it's important to carefully consider and justify the budget in your proposal to ensure it accurately reflects the project's needs and objectives.

**5. What is the expected timeline for the grant period, including the possibility of extensions and the anticipated start date for projects?**

The program is expected to commence in September 2024, following the notification of awards to the selected grantees. Once the grant is awarded, the next step will be to formalize a contract that outlines the proposed project and establishes the terms of the relationship between DDEC and the grantee. After the contract is signed, grantees will have 12-15 months to complete the implementation phase. At this time, we are not considering the possibility of extending the awarded funds.

**6. What measures are in place to ensure transparency and fairness in the evaluation and selection of proposals?**

DDEC's BioInnovate Evaluation Committee will assess each submission based on the Evaluation Criteria outlined in Section 6.1 of the Grant Application Guidelines. Each member of the committee will independently evaluate the proposals, rating the proponent's adequacy for each criterion as low, medium, or high. After completing their individual assessments, the committee will convene to compare results and reach a consensus on the entities that will be awarded the grant. If a proponent seeks feedback on why their submission was not selected, they may contact the BioInnovate Team via email, and we will provide the requested information, upon request.

**7. Could you provide details on the requirements or preferences for establishing partnerships with industry leaders or academic institutions?**

Proponents are strongly encouraged to establish collaborations with industry leaders, academic institutions, or relevant organizations to strengthen their applications. These partnerships can provide essential resources, expertise, and practical experiences, enhancing the overall impact of the proposed projects. Such collaborations demonstrate a holistic approach to education and training, ensuring that participants acquire both theoretical knowledge and hands-on industry experience.

Partnerships refer to collaborative agreements between the Proponent and educational institutions, such as universities or technical schools, or Life Sciences industry leaders. While partnership commitment letters are not mandatory at the time of application, they are highly encouraged. **Proposals should illustrate strong private sector relationships, solid employer linkages, and detailed plans for employer engagement and job placement.**

Examples of industry partnerships could include apprenticeship models, sponsored laboratories, industry professionals teaching at the institution, joint research initiatives, or co-developed curricula tailored to industry needs.

**8. What is the process for reporting progress and outcomes to the Department of Economic Development and Commerce (DDEC)?**

The process for reporting progress and outcomes to the DDEC will be detailed in the Grant Agreement between DDEC and the grantee. Typically, grantees will be required to submit reports on a monthly or quarterly basis, including key performance indicators, relevant metrics, and updates on ongoing implementation. Should the Proponent have specific recommendations regarding the format of these reports, they are encouraged to include



these suggestions in the Application Package.

**9. Can you explain the selection process for awarding grants and the key factors considered in making funding decisions?**

DDEC's BioInnovate Evaluation Committee will assess each submission based on the Evaluation Criteria outlined in Section 6.1 of the Grant Application Guidelines. Each member of the committee will independently evaluate the proposals, rating the proponent's adequacy for each criterion as low, medium, or high. After completing their individual assessments, the committee will convene to compare results and reach a consensus on the entities that will be awarded the grant.

**10. What are the expectations and specific requirements for the role of the Program Coordinator within the funded projects?**

The Program Coordinator is expected to be the primary advocate and steward of the project, responsible for both reporting progress and ensuring compliance with the project's objectives. As the main liaison between DDEC and the grantee, the Program Coordinator will ensure transparency and accountability throughout the implementation and monitoring phases. The Program Coordinator must be available, possess the necessary expertise, and have the capacity to effectively manage and execute the project.

The Program Coordinator can be a current employee. The program coordinator will ideally have a minimum of 3-5 years of experience in executing relevant programs but does not need to be specific project-management experience. Project Management certifications or degrees are not required. A track record of executing relevant programs is strongly encouraged.

**2 Questions Submitted via Registration Form in SPANISH**

**1. ¿Serían cursos de educación continua? ¿Certificaciones?, se podrán hacer acuerdos colaborativos con las diferentes empresas?**

La educación continua puede, efectivamente, ser vista como parte de un modelo de "stackable credentials," aunque su aplicación es más amplia y flexible. En nuestro caso, una certificación es un ejemplo claro de cómo se puede estructurar un programa educativo dentro de las tres alternativas que vamos a financiar: "short-form credentials," "stackable credentials," y "apprenticeship programs." La diferencia principal entre estos enfoques radica en la estructura y la duración del programa, así como en los objetivos específicos que cada uno busca alcanzar.

"Short-form credentials" ofrecen formación rápida y específica, ideal para adquirir competencias puntuales. Esto puede ser una certificación, por ejemplo, que sea acogida por la industria como suficiente para otorgar empleo.

"Stackable credentials" permiten a los estudiantes acumular credenciales a lo largo del tiempo, construyendo una trayectoria educativa más amplia y especializada.

"Apprenticeship programs" combinan la educación formal con la experiencia práctica, preparando a los participantes para roles específicos en el mercado laboral.

Recomendamos la colaboración con la industria de ciencias vivas, quienes serán los posibles empleadores de las personas que obtengan las credenciales que este programa busca auspiciar. Queremos asegurar que los programas propuestos estén alineados con las necesidades y demandas del sector. Estas colaboraciones no solo refuerzan la

relevancia y calidad del programa, sino que también aumentan su atractivo tanto para los estudiantes como para los empleadores, proporcionando una sólida conexión entre la educación y la práctica profesional.

## **2. ¿Se puede comprar equipos y software para los adiestramientos “Hands-On” con estos fondos?**

Sí, es posible adquirir cualquier equipo o programa (“software”) necesario para la ejecución del proyecto utilizando los fondos, siempre y cuando se justifique adecuadamente. Tal como se indica en la Sección 4.4 de las “Grant Application Guidelines,” los gastos permitidos incluyen aquellos que estén directamente relacionados con la implementación y el éxito del proyecto propuesto. Es crucial que cada adquisición esté claramente alineada con los objetivos del proyecto para asegurar su aprobación. Este detalle debe estar incluido en el plan de inversión de capital, donde la entidad debe comunicarle al DDEC en qué planifica invertir los fondos otorgados.

## **3. ¿Autopiezas cualifican?**

No, este programa está diseñado para subvencionar programas de adiestramiento y capacitación destinados a roles de alta demanda en la industria de las ciencias vivas. Esto incluye, por ejemplo, roles directamente relacionados con procesos de manufactura en esta industria. Por ello, es fundamental establecer acuerdos colaborativos y contar con el respaldo de empresas del sector. Estas alianzas no solo fortalecen la justificación de los gastos, sino que también aseguran que el proyecto esté alineado con las necesidades y estándares de la industria.

## **4. ¿Interesan que los short-form credentials sean con crédito académico?**

En el caso de los “short-form credentials”, no es necesario que estas sean de crédito académico. Sin embargo, es fundamental que la credencial esté validada por la industria. Idealmente, la certificación o credencial obtenida debe confirmar la competencia adquirida en un área específica y ofrecer un valor reconocido en el sector. El objetivo es que quienes obtengan la certificación puedan avanzar en su carrera profesional y se vuelvan elegibles para roles de alta demanda en la industria de ciencias vivas. La intención es facilitar una mayor integración entre la educación continua y las oportunidades de empleo.

## **5. ¿Cuál es la expectativa en relación con los stackable credentials? ¿Un grado máximo de bachillerato, o puede ser una maestría?**

Los “stackable credentials” pueden aplicarse tanto a programas de bachillerato como de maestría, siempre y cuando cumplan con los criterios establecidos para este tipo de credencial. La clave es que cada componente del programa se integre de manera coherente y progresiva, permitiendo a los estudiantes acumular credenciales a lo largo del tiempo que conduzcan a la obtención de un título académico más avanzado.

Por ejemplo, un estudiante podría comenzar con un certificado especializado, que luego se apile hacia un grado de bachillerato, y eventualmente, estos mismos créditos podrían ser aplicados hacia una maestría en un área relacionada. Este enfoque flexible permite a los estudiantes avanzar en su educación y carrera a su propio ritmo, alineando sus estudios con sus objetivos profesionales y personales.

La estructura de los “stackable credentials” debe ser tal que cada etapa del programa agregue valor incremental, preparando a los estudiantes para roles más complejos y avanzados, ya sea en un nivel de bachillerato o de maestría. Sin embargo, la idea de esta subvención es capacitar personal para roles de alta demanda la industria de ciencias vivas, los cuales suelen ser “entry -level positions”.

**6. Me gustaría entender si para esta iniciativa están abiertos a programas complementarios a Áreas de biomedicina, como por ejemplo bootcamps de data analytics, blockchain, ciberseguridad, entre otros.**

No, a menos que los programas educativos estén directamente relacionados a la capacitación de talento para roles de alta demanda en le industria de ciencias vivas. Por ejemplo, capacitación para roles relacionados al proceso de manufactura de productos para ese sector. Por esta razón, enfatizamos en la importancia de establecer colaboraciones y obtener el respaldo de la industria de ciencias de la vida. Estas alianzas no solo fortalecen la justificación de los gastos, sino que también garantizan que el proyecto esté alineado con las necesidades y estándares de la industria.

**7. ¿Los puestos en la propuesta deben ser los mismos registrados en WIOA?**

No es un requisito que los puestos en la propuesta sean los mismos registrados en WIOA. Sin embargo, el DDEC recomienda que las entidades se registren en la **Lista de Proveedores de Capacitación Elegibles de WIOA**. Esto permite a los proveedores de capacitación, instituciones y empleadores acceder a subvenciones federales de WIOA, las cuales pueden ser aprovechadas para escalar y mantener la continuidad sus programas.

Además, al registrarse, obtendrán acceso al ecosistema más amplio de WIOA, que incluye recursos, mejores prácticas y comunidades que pueden ser de gran valor para el éxito y la sostenibilidad del programa.

**8. ¿Hay límite de puestos o personal en la propuesta?**

No hay un límite estricto en la cantidad de puestos o personal que se pueden incluir en la propuesta, siempre y cuando se asegure que cada rol esté bien justificado y alineado con la implementación exitosa del programa propuesto.

Es fundamental que se incluya al menos un “Program Coordinator”, quien será responsable de la ejecución, la coordinación y el informe del proyecto. Este coordinador debe estar comprometido con el proyecto, ya sea a tiempo parcial o a tiempo completo, y debe contar con una experiencia mínima de 3 a 5 años en la ejecución de programas similares. Su papel es esencial para garantizar que el proyecto se desarrolle de manera efectiva y cumpla con los objetivos establecidos. Además, es necesario contar con el compromiso activo de **profesores y socios empleadores**, quienes brindarán apoyo general en la implementación del programa. Su participación es clave para asegurar que el programa esté alineado con las necesidades educativas y laborales, proporcionando una formación relevante y de alta calidad.

La propuesta debe demostrar claramente cómo cada miembro del equipo contribuirá al éxito del programa, asegurando que todos los roles estén estratégicamente definidos y que el personal esté bien cualificado para sus responsabilidades.

**9. ¿Puede esta propuesta enfocarse en adquirir componentes adicionales para llevar nuestro programa a un nivel más elevado y así continuar adiestrando y readiestrando a futuros técnicos y mantenernos a la par con las demandas de la industria de Bioprocesamiento donde este tipo técnico es tan necesario?**

Sí, la propuesta puede ser para adquirir componentes adicionales con el fin de llevar su programa a un nivel más avanzado. Además, la industria de Bioprocesamiento cae dentro del alcance y objetivos de este programa. Sin embargo, es fundamental que los fondos se utilicen específicamente para incrementar la capacidad del programa,

lo que se traduce en un aumento tangible en el número de estudiantes capacitados/adietrados/certificados.

La intención debe ser que cualquier mejora o expansión del programa no solo mantenga a su institución a la vanguardia de las demandas de la industria de ciencias vivas, sino que también amplíe el alcance y el impacto del programa. Al hacerlo, se asegura que más técnicos calificados estén disponibles para satisfacer las necesidades críticas de la industria, lo que a su vez fortalece la relevancia y sostenibilidad del programa a largo plazo.

#### **10. Certificación de Desarrollo, Manufactura, Regulatorio, y Comercialización de Dispositivos Médicos, ¿estaría incluido en la subvención?**

Sí, todas esas opciones son viables, siempre y cuando cuenten con el respaldo de la industria de ciencias de la vida. El objetivo es que todas las personas capacitadas a través de los programas subvencionados por BioInnovate sean empleables una vez obtengan su certificación. Por ello, enfatizamos la importancia de establecer alianzas y obtener cartas de apoyo de la industria. Es esencial que cada opción esté alineada con las necesidades y demandas del sector, para asegurar su relevancia y efectividad dentro del programa propuesto.

#### **11. ¿Por cuánto tiempo es la subvención?**

La subvención tiene una duración de 12-15 meses a partir de su inicio, durante los cuales se espera que se complete la implementación del programa. Este período está diseñado para asegurar que el proyecto se desarrolle de manera eficiente y cumpla con los objetivos propuestos dentro del tiempo estipulado.

#### **12. ¿Podré hacer más preguntas luego del Q&A?**

Todas las preguntas preliminares debieron enviarse durante el proceso de registro en la página web del programa, el cual estuvo abierto al público desde el 5 de agosto hasta el 9 de agosto. Sin embargo, durante la sesión de preguntas y respuestas (Q&A) en el Webinar, el cual se llevará a cabo el lunes, 19 de agosto, responderemos en vivo cualquier otra pregunta que pueda surgir. Por ello, es importante que asistan al Webinar preparados con todas sus dudas para aprovechar al máximo esta oportunidad.

### **3 Other FAQs - relevant to Short-form and Stackable credentials**

#### **3.1 Application scope**

##### **Can we submit our *application* in Spanish?**

Yes – you can submit your applications in English or Spanish.

##### **Can we apply for both Short-form *and* Apprenticeship program?**

Yes – you can apply for one or various of the modalities funded by the program: short-form credentials, stackable credentials and apprenticeship programs.

##### **Can we partner or receive collaboration from local universities, non from profit organizations, life science industry and/or entities expert in the subject to implement the proposed program?**

Yes - we look favorably on partnerships and collaborations that will enable accelerated progress in adopting and scaling innovative short form or apprenticeship programs. However, applications must drive impact for Puerto Ricans that can benefit from a short-form credentials or the apprenticeship programs.





**Our entity is comprised of more than one registered entity comprised of individual UEs (e.g. university campuses) -- can more than one apply for the grant?**

Yes - so long as each entity has a plan that attends different populations or geographical areas in the island. However, if DDEC identifies possible efficiencies in a joint application, that may improve the ROI on DDEC's investment, then such recommendation will be suggested. DDEC's goal is to increase the number of skilled persons entering the workforce, and/or increase high quality training for current level entry positions, therefore DDEC's open to multiple avenues for achieving that goal.

**The project term is indicated as 12-15 months, starting in September 2024. Should execution, spending, and performance metrics (e.g., program completeness) all occur within this timeframe?**

We encourage you to design proposals where execution, spending, and performance metrics (e.g., program completeness) are multi-year projections to help us understand the long-term impact and sustainability you will drive. The 12-month performance period describes the one-year implementation phase to stand-up your designed programs.

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 DDEC. Multi-year funding / spending projections will help us understand what alternative investment sources you will leverage to sustain the program beyond the 12-month performance period.

**Do the non-conflict of interest certification and the sworn statement count towards the 30-slide / 20 pages maximum submission?**

No - these can be considered addendums or attachments to your proposal outside of the page/slide count.

**Is there a specific format for the certification that all the information submitted in the proposal is correct (Section 3), and would it count toward the page/slide count?**

No - there is no specific format for certification and signature that all the information submitted in the proposal is true and accurate. It can be considered an addendum or attachment to your proposal outside of the page/slide count. However, it is important that the certification is signed by an authorized representative of the entity.

**Do the financial statements for the past two years need to be audited statements?**

No - your submitted financial statements do not need to be audited if they are not available. If you have audited financial statements, please include those in your application.

### **3.2 Funds & finances**

**Do the funds need to be used within 12-15 months of the award?**

Ideally, yes. Please provide a projected expense timeline with key milestones that will trigger requests for additional funds. DDEC will disburse funds based on the agreed-upon project milestones. Additionally, please note that DDEC does not reimburse expenses already incurred, so we appreciate your indication of when fund disbursements should be made to cover upcoming expenses in advance.

**If there was a "funding extension" or if available funds were to increase, would there be an additional RFP?**

This is not our plan at this time - while there may be additional Grant Application Guidelines on similar topics, we do not anticipate that funding and additional funding-related to this Grant Application will require additional proposals.



DDEC has the right to flexibly increase the amount of funding available as part of this Grant Application as well.

**Can the funds be used for OpEx / SG&A expenses? For example, hiring a local team in Puerto Rico to execute the project.**

Yes - you can use funding for use cases that will directly help you expand the capacity of and improve your short-form credential program(s) and/or apprenticeship program(s).

Examples include but are not limited to funding for faculty / teams, marketing / brand awareness, paying for co-ops / internships, or equipment/systems support. We would encourage you to describe how the proposed investment is catalytic and sustainable, though, so if you are using funds for SG&A expenses, we would want to ensure that you can sustain higher enrollment numbers once these funds are depleted. If you are using grants to hire faculty or local teams, please describe how you would fund these roles in the longer-term and why this Grant would be catalytic to your operations.

**Will the grant funding amount be divided into two disbursements, one in September 2024 and another in June 2025, as mentioned in the Important Dates, or are those just guidelines, and disbursements will be based on the provider's work plan?**

No - dates related to funding are suggestions. As mentioned in Section 4.5 Payment Terms & Methods, funding will be awarded in multiple payments (first funding batch when the Grant is awarded, additional installments at agreed upon later dates dependent on your anticipated expense timeline, timely/complete monthly reporting on progress/KPIs and on-track status with outlined work plan).

**One of the evaluation criteria is co-investment. Can you share more information on how that criterion will be evaluated? Will it be during the funding program or after the funding program?**

Resources committed during or after the program funds are disbursed are eligible for consideration as co-investment and will be assessed as part of the evaluation process. The co-investment criteria aim to ensure that funding is catalytic and creates long-term change.

An indicator of "strong" co-investment would include thorough plans for sustaining the program once grant funds are depleted. We want to ensure the Proponent is considering the longevity of an investment in expanding short-form credential programs and/or apprenticeship programs. Additionally, a "strong" proposal will provide details on additional resources and co-investment that can be provided by its partner ecosystem, where applicable.

This will just be one factor across multiple, and it will be assessed relative to the other strengths of the proposal.

**Related to the short form credentials program, can the provider charge for its program offerings, or does the grant require providing the courses for free to the participants?**

Yes – If the provider was already charging for its offering because it corresponds to its day-to-day operations, (e.g. universities, higher education institutions) the provider can continue charging for its offerings for its short form credentials program. However, we will of course assess accessibility to students and market demand for programs at particular price points.

However, if there is a known expectation that courses are provided for free, then the DDEC fund is designed to support the non-for-profit organization.

**Can we use funds to contract professors? Offer students scholarships? Pay for co-ops or internships? Cover the infrastructure costs for equipment and systems?**



Yes - you can use funding for use cases that will directly help you expand the capacity of and improve your short-form credential program(s).

Examples include but are not limited to scholarships, funding for faculty, marketing / brand awareness, paying for co-ops / internships, or equipment/systems support. We would encourage you to describe how the proposed investment is catalytic and sustainable, though, so if you are using funds for scholarships, we would want to ensure that you can sustain higher enrollment numbers once these funds are depleted.

**Regarding the short-term credentials program, can we use funds to hire tutors and student mentors? Can we use funds to upskill faculty?**

Yes - you can use funding for use cases that will directly help you expand the capacity of and improve your short-form credential program(s). That includes hiring faculty, tutors, and student mentors if there will be a return on the investment.

You must also have a clear plan for how to pay faculty, tutors, and student mentors in a steady state after funds have been disbursed and the pilot is implemented.

**Can I use the funding on marketing campaigns?**

Yes - you are welcome to use funding on marketing campaigns. However, we are striving for long-term sustainability of programs. You will need to demonstrate how a one-time injection of marketing funds will lead to a long-term and sustainable impact on enrollment and retention / graduation.

### **3.3 Submission requirements**

**Do you have examples of in-scope roles and skills?**

This Grant is designed to support quality education providers and employers that offer certified apprenticeship training and/or provide short-form credentials for this industry. Biopharma, Biotechnology and Medical Devices technologies related programs and/or similar technical programs are in-scope for this initiative

**In our application, we state a projection to increase graduation rates of our short-term credential program to a total of 50 students per year. Is that the step change DDEC is looking for?**

Yes - we would like to encourage all providers to be bold and ambitious – but realistic - in their scale projections. We would love to see proposals that project impact in the 50s or 100s of students or employees in technical careers / tracks.

**Do we need a letter of partnership or support?**

Yes - please submit a letter of Support expressing the endorsement, encouragement, and affirmation of your short-form credentials or apprenticeship program. This letter is a crucial component of the application package and serves to provide additional insights and its suitability for the grant opportunity.

**Do we need letters of commitment for partnerships?**

No - they are not required but we would strongly encourage them where possible. It will ensure proposal robustness.

**Can I send you a hard copy over the mail?**

No - to ensure timeliness of submission deadlines, we would appreciate email submissions.



**Can I get a deadline extension?**

No - unfortunately, we cannot offer extensions. We are evaluating several applications and would like to ensure the selection process is as timely and fair as possible.

**What are the components that we should include in the application?**

Please refer to Section 3.0 of the Grant Application Guidelines - Application Package Instructions- for information on application guidelines.

**Where and how do I submit my application?**

Please submit your Proposal via email to the following DEDC email address: [21centurybioinnovate@ddec.pr.gov](mailto:21centurybioinnovate@ddec.pr.gov)

**What are the key dates in the application process?**

Please refer to Section 5.1 of the Grant Application Guidelines - Important Dates & Deadlines - for a list of application milestones.

**What is the purpose or value of registering for WIOA's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)?**

DDEC recommends entities applying over the short-term credential program, to register for WIOA's Eligible Training Provider List. It gives training providers, Institutions, and employers the ability to access Federal WIOA grants that can be leveraged to scale and sustain your short-form credential programs. You can also receive access to WIOA's broader ecosystem of resources, best practices, and communities.

**How important is it to have an established presence in Puerto Rico at the time of submission? For instance, working with local employers.**

We will not disqualify proposals if the proponent does not have an established presence in Puerto Rico. We would encourage you to submit applications that propose engagement with a robust partner ecosystem, regardless of local, national, or global presence. We do encourage applicants to partner with local employers, if possible, to help improve socioeconomic outcomes in Puerto Rico.

**Is there a specific weight assigned to the listed criteria, or are they all considered equally important?**

We will evaluate the quality of your proposals holistically. However, we encourage you to be as comprehensive as possible across all evaluation criteria to understand the relative strengths of your proposal's components. Please refer to Section 6.1 of the Grant Application Guidelines – Evaluation Criteria - for an indication of the weights assigned to each criterion.

**What curriculum delivery models are in-scope for these grants?**

We are open to all delivery models, including in-person, on-campus, online / virtual, or hybrid.

**What format does our submission need to be in?**

A maximum of 30 slides in PowerPoint or 20 pages in Word will be accepted. Applicants have the flexibility to decide how they want to distribute up to 30 slides or 20 pages.



## **4 Other FAQs - relevant to Short-form credentials**

### **4.1 Application scope**

#### **Do you have examples of in-scope roles and skills?**

This Grant is designed to support quality education providers and employers that offer certified apprenticeship training and/or provide short-form credentials for this industry. Biopharma, Biotechnology and Medical Devices technologies related programs and/or similar technical programs are in-scope for this initiative

**My question is related to the definition of short-form credentials. In the Division of Continuing Education and Professional Studies (DECEP) we offer non-credit short courses and certificates in a variety of areas. I want to confirm if this grant includes these types of non-credit short-form credentials or if it refers to academic certificates (that include accredited classes).**

Yes - the short-form credential grants include non-credit short-form credentials. If your certificates are not accredited or credit-bearing, we recommend you develop a plan to ensure that they are of industry relevance and can meaningfully contribute to improving employment outcomes for students.

Lastly, if you are interested in having your certificate or program fulfillment accredited, there are alternatives to develop accreditation for short-form credentials. For instance, Google Career Certificates are accredited by the American Council on Education (ACE).

#### **Are there specific programs you are looking for?**

No – we do not want to constrain your proposal to specific types of short-form programs. However, these must be developed for the Life science industry and to help address the workforce necessity on level entry levels.

### **4.2 Funds & finances**

**In 2023, the 21st Century Techforce project allocated \$50M for a Technical and Business Education Fund, and we identified a grant of only \$1M for this program - BioInnovate. Is the remaining divided by other initiatives or will it be for this Program?**

Prior fiscal plans allocated \$50 million for a 21st Century Technical and Business Education Fund. This \$50M will support multiple initiatives that will help launch DDEC's priority initiatives. They will not exclusively be used to support BioInnovate exclusively.

**Is \$400,000 the maximum amount of funds that will be awarded to individual companies? Or will applications requesting more than this threshold be considered?**

We will consider proposals requesting additional funding. However, we would like you to help us understand what is possible with a grant that could be up to \$400,000. Additionally, we would encourage you to clarify what the incremental impact and scale would be if you had access to additional funding.

### **4.3 Submission requirements**

**Under the Partnerships section, you reference an appendix on additional information for WIOA funds qualification. Is it the same information as the one accessed on the WIOA website through the link in that same section?**

Please see Attachment C of the Grant Application Guidelines for additional details on WIOA and the Eligible Training



Provider List. The link provided as a footnote under Section 2.2 of the Grant Application Guidelines directs you to the ETP registration. This is where your entity would register to become registered provider.

**Can the Program Coordinator (section 2.3) be a current employee? Is this coordinator the same individual as the key stakeholder described in section 3, V? Is specific project-management experience required? Is Project Management certification required for this individual?**

Yes - the Program Coordinator can be a current employee. The program coordinator will ideally have a minimum of 3-5 years of experience in executing relevant programs but does not need to be specific project-management experience. Project Management certifications or degrees are not required. A track record of executing relevant programs is strongly encouraged.

Under Section 3, the key stakeholders referenced include a broader group of lead personnel that will be involved in the design and implementation of the short-form credential program.

## **5 Other FAQs - relevant to Apprenticeship Programs**

### **5.1 Application scope**

**What qualifies as an apprenticeship program?**

An apprenticeship program is an employer-driven training educational model that combines on-the-job learning as a paid employee with related classroom instruction to increase an apprentice's skill level and meet job requirements. Apprenticeships programs help businesses develop highly skilled employees, reduce turnover rates, increase productivity, and lower the cost of recruitment.

**Can we expand the apprenticeship program to all our businesses position levels?**

Our primary focus is to assist the industry to address some of their entry level workforce hiring challenges. Therefore, the apprenticeship program will allow the industry to hire individuals with basic or associate degree studies and through the apprenticeship program provide them the skillsets and knowledge to fulfill industry requirements.

**We could be ready to launch the apprenticeship program way before fall 2024 term. Would you be OK with an early start on our part?**

Yes - if the applicant is already ready to launch its apprenticeship program prior to Fall 2024, we would welcome faster implementation. We would work with you to ensure that we have the appropriate performance metrics, dashboarding, and governance mechanisms in place to track rollout success.

### **5.2 Funds & finances**

**Can we use funds to hire Project Managers and/or Project Management services?**

This is allowable, but a clear link must be provided between onboarding Project Managers and expanding the capacity of your apprenticeship program in a sustainable way. We would need to understand how these positions will be funded once this initial injection of capital is depleted.

**Can we use funds to purchase equipment and software?**

Yes - you would be able to use funds to invest in infrastructure or equipment so long as you can prove that it will facilitate expanded employee capacity.



**Can we use funds to cover infrastructure costs, including facilities and labs?**

Yes - you would be able to use funds to invest in infrastructure or equipment so long as you can prove that it will facilitate expanded employee capacity.