

Date, 2022

The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Herbert Clark Hoover Building, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Regarding Applicant: Worksystems  
In Cooperation With: The Columbia-Willamette Workforce Collaborative (CWWC)  
Initiative Name: Advancing Workforce Equity through Good Jobs  
Funding Opportunity No.: EDA-HDQ-ARPGJ-2021-2006964  
Funding Opportunity Title: FY 2021 ARPA Good Jobs Challenge NOFO

Dear Secretary Raimondo,

Clackamas County supports Worksystems' application to the U.S. Department of Commerce for the 2021 Good Jobs Challenge and the Columbia-Willamette Workforce Collaborative's initiative to cultivate a diverse, homegrown talent pipeline to meet the hiring needs of the Healthcare, Manufacturing, Construction and Tech sectors and create pathways to quality jobs for workers in the City of Portland; Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas Counties; and Clark County in SW Washington.

Building on the values and outcomes established by the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and Quality Jobs Initiative, equity, belonging, and inclusion will be a central focus of the project including efforts to engage and support historically excluded populations in accessing high-quality jobs. However, this is not just an opportunity for workers, *Advancing Workforce Equity through Good Jobs* is an opportunity for employers who have a responsibility to evaluate their workplace policies, practices, and cultures through an equity lens and to improve job quality for current and future workers. Industry-led development of the resources and best-practices to accomplish this are underway through the work of the CWWC's Quality Jobs Council.

*Advancing Workforce Equity through Good Jobs* is anchored by the Columbia Willamette Workforce Collaborative (CWWC), a longstanding partnership between the three Workforce Development Boards serving the region's 6- county, bi-state economic development district - Worksystems, Clackamas Workforce Partnership, and Workforce Southwest Washington. Worksystems will serve as the lead applicant for the grant and is working with a coalition of partners including government agencies, educational institutions, business leaders, workforce, labor, economic development, and community-based organizations. Since August, Worksystems and the Collaborative have convened regional stakeholders to develop a proposal that will transform the region's capacity to build and sustain the supply of highly qualified, diverse regional talent. It will create a coordinated regional structure that:

- Addresses regional labor and skills shortages by prioritizing the upskilling and placement of unemployed and low-wage earners
- Centers workforce equity and inclusion
- Develops direct-hire training programs
- Provides wraparound supports for families with young children
- Increases scale and efficiency
- Aligns resources and efforts
- Enables mutually developed guidelines, outcomes, and oversight
- Promotes systemic solutions and collective impact
- Supports networking and cross-learning
- Creates shared accountability

Insert paragraph listing local government agency name and description of jurisdiction and characteristics (population, demographics, etc.)

Clackamas County supports Worksystems' application as it scales up the *Advancing Workforce Equity through Good Jobs* initiative is committed to joining this regional effort to engage and support historically excluded populations in accessing high-quality jobs.

Sincerely,

Insert local elected name and title with signature. Add letter content to local government letterhead.

# GOOD JOBS CHALLENGE

## *Advancing Workforce Equity through Good Jobs*

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND

Job seekers and employers in the Portland-Vancouver Metro region of Oregon and Washington are struggling with the economic impacts and uncertainty caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic.

In response, *Advancing Workforce Equity through Good Jobs* partners are poised with a coordinated approach to implement a Good Jobs Challenge grant to address the region's workforce challenges and help people who are most likely to be left behind in the economic recovery. The *Advancing Workforce Equity through Good Jobs* initiative aims to get Americans back to work by building and strengthening regional systems and partnerships that bring together employers who have hiring needs with other key entities to train workers with in-demand skills that lead to good-paying and sustainable jobs.

In response to the regional Comprehensive Economic Development and Recovery strategies developed by Greater Portland, Inc. and System Lead Entity; years of bi-state multi-jurisdictional industry sector work and alignment of regional public workforce and education efforts; and a shared regional commitment to quality jobs, we will leverage these long-standing partnerships with the Good Jobs Challenge funds to support and advance the project's primary objectives to get more Americans working in high quality jobs.

Building on years of industry collaboration, *Advancing Workforce Equity through Good Jobs* is anchored by the Columbia Willamette Workforce Collaborative (CWWC), a longstanding partnership between the three Workforce Development Boards serving the region's 4 county, bi-state economic development district - Worksystems, Clackamas Workforce Partnership, and Workforce Southwest Washington. The CWWC will serve as the backbone organization and will use a coordinated regional engagement approach to bring together multiple entities including education, industry, economic development, culturally specific and responsive community-based organizations, and public agencies to collaborate to support the workforce needs of regional industry and workers and increase the economic resiliency of the region.

Incorporating the Next Gen Sector Partnership Model into the CWWC's existing industry engagement efforts will transform the region's capacity to build and sustain the supply

of highly qualified, diverse regional talent. It will create a coordinated regional structure that:

- Addresses regional labor and skills shortages by prioritizing the upskilling and placement of unemployed and low-wage earners
- Centers workforce equity and inclusion
- Development of direct-hire programs
- Wrap around support for families with young children
- Increases scale and efficiency
- Aligns resources and efforts
- Enables mutually developed guidelines, outcomes and oversight
- Reduces fragmentation and duplication
- Promotes systemic solutions and collective impact
- Supports networking and cross-learning
- Creates shared accountability

***Advancing Workforce Equity through Good Jobs* proposal will develop four interrelated program strategies during the grant application period:**



### **Improve Job Quality**

Building on the values and outcomes established by the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and Quality Jobs Initiative, equity, belonging, and inclusion will be a central focus of our project including efforts to engage and support underserved populations in accessing high-quality jobs. However, this is not just an opportunity for workers, *Advancing Workforce Equity through Good Jobs* is an opportunity for employers who have a responsibility to evaluate their workplace policies, practices, and cultures through an equity lens and to improve job quality for current and future workers. Industry-led development of the resources and best-practices to accomplish this are underway through the work of the CWWC’s Quality Jobs Council.



### **Direct Hire Training Programs**

*Advancing Workforce Equity through Good Jobs* will focus our regional workforce training systems on co-developing and supporting innovative and accelerated employer-driven training programs while expanding short-term training opportunities that will connect employers with qualified workers. Sectors of focus will include Healthcare, Manufacturing, Tech and Construction, all of which are identified as prioritized sectors in the region’s CEDS plan. Based on the current states of existing industry partnerships, each sector may include a System Development, Program Design and Program Implementation phase. Through these sector partnerships we will develop proven direct-hire training models that will rapidly re-career workers and move them into quality jobs. Characteristics of direct-hire training models include:

- Employer led development of training curriculum and program design to include identification of skill requirements and minimum hiring requirements (driver's license, drug screen, etc.) for entry into the program
- Employer engagement with program participants for industry and occupation exposure, sharing information on hiring practices
- Employer commitments to interview participants following program completion
- Alignment of hiring demand with the output of program completers
- Preparation for entry into middle-skill, quality jobs where workers can advance and grow
- Identified recruitment pipelines and processes for moving participants into the program
- Ongoing program evaluation for continuous improvement



## Community Outreach

*Advancing Workforce Equity through Good Jobs* will center workforce equity and inclusion by partnering with community-based organizations who have built trusted relationships with the communities we aim to serve by supporting worker connections to training and employment programs. Additional support and intentionality will be built to help workers find and keep quality jobs and advance along a chosen career path. The CWWC will leverage longstanding, formal partnerships between community based organizations and the public workforce system for outreach and services for underemployed and long-term unemployed community members who are most likely to be left behind in an economic recovery, including young adults, individuals with a disability, women, people of color, older adults, immigrants, and low-income individuals. Program outreach through these organizations will serve as the primary pipeline of workers to sector partners. Additionally, employer partners are committed to prioritizing BIPOC, LGBTQ+, women, people with disabilities and veterans for employment in high quality jobs.



## Wrap-around Supports

Wrap-around supports, including childcare and housing, are needed to enable people in poverty to participate in programs that will help them re-career. We must provide childcare support for people in poverty with young children or else the high cost of childcare will prohibit them from going through a training program and starting a new job. We must provide housing placement and eviction prevention for people who no longer have an income to pay their rent or else the impacts of homelessness will greatly reduce their ability to get back into a new job and career. And we must provide supports such as mental health and alcohol and drug treatment as we help people return to new careers after the traumatizing impacts of the pandemic. *Advancing Workforce Equity through Good Jobs* will leverage existing programs and local policy initiatives to provide workers with the supports they need to access and be successful in completing training programs and moving into quality jobs.

# PARTNER ORGANIZATION ROLES

Building a robust and industry-driven talent development pipeline requires the collaboration of many organizations, each with a critical role. The following list defines the potential roles of key partner organizations in the development of the four *Advancing Workforce Equity through Good Jobs* proposal strategies.

## **Business**

- Lead sector partnership activities
- Consistently inform worker demand and skill requirements
- Commit to hire at wages equivalent to grant requirements
- Commit to implement Quality Jobs strategies

## **Economic Development**

- Promote and support Quality Jobs strategy
- Actively recruit and engage new businesses in grant activities
- Participate in a shared regional strategy to coordinate business engagement

## **Community Based Organizations**

- Support talent recruitment and referral
- Prioritize BIPOC and other non-dominant populations
- Participate in a shared regional strategy to coordinate business engagement
- Support workers with Career Coaching through program, into employment and connections to wraparound supports

## **Higher Education**

- Implement business skill needs into training programs
- Focus on training identified occupations
- Participate in a shared regional strategy to coordinate business engagement

# PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

In November the Collaborative will be holding four, industry-specific, application development sessions to further develop program strategies, outcomes and goals, partner commitments and roles. These sessions will serve as the kick-off for sector-specific proposal development teams. Meeting invites will be sent to all individuals who attended the initial grant partner overview sessions in September and October. We encourage you to attend the sector session/s most relevant to your role and organization.

THE COLUMBIA-WILLAMETTE WORKFORCE COLLABORATIVE



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*These programs funded in whole or part through the U.S. Department of Labor. We are equal opportunity employers/programs. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.*