

Workforce Investment Act – Governor Discretionary Funds

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

Mississippi Department of Employment Security

Request for Ideas and Concepts – Guidelines

Purpose

This Request for Ideas (RFI) focuses on spending that will occur to meet a portion of the workforce goals of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act). The purpose of the Recovery Act is to preserve and create jobs, promote the nation's economic recovery, and assist those most impacted by the current recession. With the additional workforce funding provided in the Recovery Act, and the increased employment and training services this funding will support, the workforce system will play a vital role in America's economic recovery by assisting workers who are facing unprecedented challenges to retool their skills and re-establish themselves in viable career paths.

Vision

The Recovery Act must be implemented expeditiously and effectively, with full transparency and accountability of the fund's expenditures. This investment of stimulus funds presents an extraordinary and unique opportunity for the workforce system to accelerate its transformational efforts and demonstrate its ability to innovate and implement effective WIN Job Center service delivery strategies. An expansive view of how the funds can be integrated into transformational efforts to improve the effectiveness of the public workforce system is encouraged. The needs of workers and employers are both important in developing thriving communities where all citizens succeed and businesses prosper. Recovery Act funds should increase services and training for workers in need. They should also a more innovative public workforce system enabling future economic growth and advancing shared prosperity for the State.

The goals of the Recovery Act coincide with the goals of the State Workforce Investment Board:

1. Mississippi will have a self-sufficient and fully-employed workforce that is educated, trained, comfortable with a structured work environment, and possessing a strong work ethic.
2. The Mississippi Workforce Investment Act (WIA) system will meet the needs of all businesses and individuals in a cost-efficient and effective manner.
3. The Mississippi workforce investment system will be transparent, accountable, inclusive, easy to use, and will maintain local workforce investment board authority.
4. The Mississippi workforce investment system will provide easy access to all Mississippians.

Recovery Act Funding - Areas of Focus

To accomplish these goals, this RFI focuses on the following strategies in an innovative manner:

- Sector strategy approaches that build partnerships of businesses, training providers, community organizations, and other key stakeholders around specific industries or sectors to address the workforce needs of businesses and the training needs of workers
- Sector strategies for renewable energy, broadband and telecommunications, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and other high-demand industry sectors identified in local areas
- Sector strategies that enable low-income, displaced and under-skilled adults to acquire the knowledge and skills for success in high-growth industry
- Regional approaches to couple workforce development with the local economic development strategies
- Strategies to meet immediate and/or long-term needs for trained workers in demand occupations with career advancement opportunities
- Projects targeted at groups who are not currently fully engaged in the workforce
- Approaches to serving rural populations, businesses and job seekers
- Approaches that focus on implementing online or blended (both online and hands-on) training programs which will target high-growth occupations

Process

It is the role of the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) to serve the Governor as the state administrative entity for the Recovery Act program including administering Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth grants to the local workforce investment areas and managing the Governor's discretionary funds and Rapid Response.

1. The MDES is seeking **brief** idea or concept proposals for the use of the Recovery Act's funds. These proposals should demonstrate how the idea/concept will assist the State in meeting the goals described above.
2. The MDES will evaluate submitted concepts for allowability and their strategic effectiveness in achieving the goals
3. The MDES may provide the results of the solicitation and its recommendations to the State Workforce Investment Board or a committee thereof for final recommendation to the Governor. The committee will consist of a representative of the Governor's Office, the MDES and a local workforce investment board.
4. If an idea/concept is approved by the Governor, the MDES will follow standard procurement procedures to issue a request for proposal for the activity.

Not all ideas/concepts may be approved or acted upon immediately. Some ideas/concepts may be deferred or aggregated with other ideas in ways that produce a greater statewide impact given

limited funding resources. If sufficient resources are not available, some ideas may be considered for funding in a subsequent year. Some ideas may not be funded.

A request for proposal is not an implied award of grant funds. **If an idea/concept is selected for implementation, it does not mean that the entity or individual that submitted the idea will be the entity or individual selected to deliver the services.** The Mississippi Department of Employment Security reserves the right to recommend project proposals that it believes best meet the objectives of the Governor and the intent of the State Plan and will have the greatest economic benefit for the State.

Allowable Activities

General

- Disseminating a list of eligible providers of youth activities;
- Conducting evaluations;
- Providing technical assistance to local areas that fail to meet local performance measures;
- Assisting in the establishment and operation of one-stop delivery systems;
- Conducting research and demonstrations;
- Implementing innovative incumbent worker training programs,
- Implementing innovative programs for displaced homemakers;
- Implementing programs to increase the number of individuals in non-traditional training and placement;
- Operating a fiscal and management accountability information system;
- Providing additional assistance to local areas that have high concentrations of eligible youth to carry out local activities;
- Implementing other allowable Workforce Investment Act activities for eligible youth, adults and dislocated workers; and
- Implementing allowable Workforce Investment Act Rapid Response.

Availability of Funds

Funds must be expended by the end of PY 2010 (June 30, 2011). It is the Congress' intent, as well that of the Administration, that the majority of these funds will be utilized within the first year of availability.

Evaluation

Idea/concepts proposals will be evaluated to determine the degree to which they meet the guidelines noted above in purpose, goals, and opportunity areas.

Proposals will also be evaluated based on the plan for enhancing both the public workforce development system and its capacity to deliver knowledge-based training for current and future workers.

Emphasis will be given to proposals that concentrate workforce development resources in ways that will produce the greatest collaboration and private-public partnerships, expand programs that lead to more and higher wage jobs, and increase best practices in the State.

Request for Ideas – Instructions

Proposals are limited to five pages. Proposals should be single sided and double-spaced on 8.5-inch-by-11-inch pages with 12 point font and 1-inch margins with numbered pages.

Please provide idea/concept proposals that answer the following questions. Responses to each topic should be numbered in the same manner as follows.

1. Identify the proposing entity or individuals and title of the activity.
2. Identify which area(s) of focus identified above the idea/concept will address.
3. Briefly answer the following questions:
 - What are the unique challenges or opportunities in the State that the idea/concept will address?
 - What are the regional or statewide impacts to be delivered by this project?
 - Discuss whether there are other resources that could be used to fund this project.
4. Describe how this project will help achieve the long-term goals of the State as described above.
5. Describe how this project fits into one or more of the allowable activities described above.
6. Describe the project's envisioned collaborations, private-public partnerships and the team building.
7. Briefly describe the project plan, timeline and estimated resource (funding) requirements. Describe any possible leveraged funding available.
8. Describe the measurable outcomes that will be delivered as a result of this project.
9. Describe how this project will become self-sustaining, leverage private investment and be institutionalized. Identify a possible ongoing leader and champion.
10. Identify who or what this project will benefit and describe how the project will help increase employment in Mississippi.

11. Specify the contact information. Include proposer's name, phone number, and email address.

Submission Instructions

Proposers may submit idea/concept papers in hard copy or electronic format (Word or .pdf files). However, proposers are encouraged to submit ideas/concepts electronically. To ensure that ideas/concepts are considered, proposals should be received by the Mississippi Department of Employment Security **no later than the close of business May 29, 2009.**

There will not be a proposer's meeting or conference for this Request for Ideas. Questions about the instructions or the intent of this Request for Ideas may be submitted to stimulus@mdes.ms.gov by the close of business May 8, 2009. Answers will be placed on the MDES website at www.mdes.ms.gov in the "RFP and Bid Notice" section no later than the close of business May 15, 2009. It will be each individual proposer's responsibility to check for the answers that are posted to the questions that are received. For further information regarding guidelines of Recovery Act funds, please view the Employment and Training Administration's Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 14-08 at <http://www.workforceatm.org/sections/pdf/2009/TEG14-08acc.pdf>

Idea/concept proposals and questions should be submitted to the Mississippi Department of Employment Security, Office of Grant Management, ATTN: Jeanine Lilly, 1235 Echelon Parkway, Jackson, MS 39213 or submit by email to stimulus@mdes.ms.gov.

Evaluation Criteria**Name of Concept Proposal:** _____**Is this project able to show that it meets or exceeds the following criteria?**

Evaluation Criteria	Comments
1) Does project demonstrate that it meets the funds stated purpose? <i>(10 Points)</i>	
2) Does project demonstrate how it will achieve the goals of the Recovery Act? <i>(10 Points)</i>	
3) Does project fit into one or more of the areas of focus for 2009? <i>(20 Points)</i>	
4) Does project demonstrate collaboration, public-private partnerships and an experienced team? <i>(20 Points)</i>	
5) Does the project have a reasonable plan, timeline and resource requirements? <i>(10 Points)</i>	
6) Does the project demonstrate measurable outcomes or tangible deliverables? <i>(10 Points)</i>	
7) Does the project demonstrate sustainability, private sector support and investment? <i>(20 Points)</i>	
8) Does the project propose allowable Recovery Act activities? Unallowable activities will not be considered for funding.	