

## NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name:** Economic Development Administration (EDA), U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC)
- **Notice of Funding Opportunity Title:** FY 2023 EDA University Center Economic Development Program Competition
- **Announcement Type and Date:** Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) dated May 4, 2023
- **Funding Opportunity Numbers:**
  - Austin Regional Office: EDA-UC-2023-AURO
  - Denver Regional Office: EDA-UC-2023-DRO
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 11.303, Economic Development – Technical Assistance
- **Dates:** The deadline for receipt of applications is 11:59 pm Eastern Time/8:59 Pacific Time on July 10, 2023. Applications received after this deadline will not be reviewed or considered. Applications only will be accepted electronically through Economic Development Grants Experience (EDGE) at [sfgrants.eda.gov](https://sfgrants.eda.gov). Applicants are advised to carefully read the application and submission information provided in section D of this NOFO.
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** This NOFO announces the availability of funding for EDA’s FY 2023 University Center Economic Development Program Competition. This program funds technical assistance provided by an accredited institution of higher education or a consortium of accredited institutions of higher education that is focused on one or more of the following program focus areas: advancing regional commercialization efforts, advancing high-growth entrepreneurship, cultivating innovation, encouraging business expansion in a region’s innovation cluster(s), developing a high-skilled regional workforce, and increasing the resiliency of a region. EDA solicits competitive applications from accredited institutions of higher education and from consortia of accredited institutions of higher education that are located in and have programs targeting only geographic areas served by EDA’s Austin and Denver Regional Offices:

Austin Regional Office	Serves: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas
Denver Regional Office	Serves: Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, Nebraska, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming

- **Eligible Applicants:** An accredited institution of higher education, including a community college, junior college, tribal college, Historically Black College and University (HBCU), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), or other Minority Serving Institution (MSI) that meets EDA’s eligibility requirements as an accredited institution of higher education, or a consortium of accredited

institutions of higher education is eligible to apply for and to receive funding under the University Center Economic Development Program. See section C.1 of this NOFO.

- **Award Notification:** Subject to the availability of funding, successful applicants should expect to receive awards within approximately 75 calendar days from the application closing date and times set out in this NOFO. Awards will have an initial funding period of twelve months (as part of a five-year period of performance) with an estimated start date on or about October 1, 2023. See section F.1. of this NOFO for award notification information.

**FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT**

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## **A. Program Description**

### **1. Overview**

EDA's mission is to lead the Federal economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness, preparing American regions for economic growth and success in the worldwide economy. EDA fulfills this mission through strategic investments and partnerships that create the conditions for economic growth and improved quality of life by expanding the capacity of individuals, firms, and communities to maximize the use of their talents and skills to support innovation, lower transaction costs, and responsibly produce and trade valuable goods and services. The achievement of economic development potential results in regional economic ecosystems that foster globally competitive regions throughout the United States. The economic ecosystem is a multifaceted concept that links together a highly networked regional talent pool, innovation infrastructure (both tangible and intangible), research and science support systems, and a culture of collaboration sustained by institutions focused on advancing mutual gain for the public and the private sector.

Innovation is the key to greater productivity and global competitiveness, resulting in the creation of new and better jobs, a more resilient economy, and the attainment of national economic goals. Regional collaboration is essential for economic recovery and advancement because regions encompass the centers of growth and competition in the new global economy. Regions achieve greater results because of the presence of diverse economic agents and, more often than not, clusters of services and industry.

Quite simply, regions that work together will fare better than those that do not. Infusing more innovation and collaboration into America's regions has the potential to help communities create and retain higher-wage and sustainable jobs, leverage the flow of private capital, and strengthen America's ability to compete in the global marketplace.

EDA recognizes that institutions of higher education are critical players in the development of vibrant economic ecosystems. Universities are sources of significant economic development assets—such as faculty, staff, students, research and proof of concept centers, laboratories, and high-speed broadband networks—that can support regional economic growth. In addition, universities create significant knowledge spillovers and possess broader and deeper networks of expertise that can assist innovators and entrepreneurs. Potential university-based support for economic growth includes the commercialization of research, the conversion of intellectual property and ideas into products and services, and the support of regionally-owned strategies that support business expansion and job creation. Universities have also been leaders in addressing impacts of climate change on regional economic ecosystems and helping to facilitate environments conducive to trade and global exports by providing services for businesses to connect to international markets.

Through this NOFO EDA intends to advance university-based support for economic development in accordance with EDA's investment priorities, but also to pursue, where practicable, certain specific priorities related to equity, workforce development,<sup>1</sup> and climate change resiliency so that investments can benefit everyone for decades to come.

The purpose of EDA's University Center Economic Development Program (also referred to in this announcement as the University Center program) is to enable institutions of higher education and consortia of institutions of higher education to establish and operate University Centers specifically focused on using university assets to build regional economic ecosystems that support innovation and

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.commerce.gov/issues/workforce-development>.

high-growth entrepreneurship, resiliency and inclusiveness. University Centers collaborate with other EDA partners, such as Economic Development Districts (EDDs) by providing expertise and technical assistance to develop, implement, and support regional strategies that result in quality job creation<sup>2</sup>, high-skilled regional talent pools, and business expansion in a region’s innovation clusters.<sup>3</sup> Expertise and technical assistance may address, for example, workforce training programs, applied research centers, technology commercialization, feasibility studies, market research, economic impact analyses training, and other technical assistance to help communities foster vibrant economic ecosystems.

EDA encourages efforts to reach historically underserved populations and areas, communities of color, women, and other groups facing labor market barriers such as persons with disabilities, disconnected youth, individuals in recovery, individuals with past criminal records, including justice-impacted and reentry participants, individuals participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and veterans and military spouses, and underserved communities within [geographies](#) that have been systemically and/or systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic prosperity such as Tribal Lands, [Persistent Poverty Counties](#), and rural areas with demonstrated, historical underservice.

Since FY 2004, EDA has administered the University Center program as a competitive multi-year program. As presented in the table below and contingent upon availability of appropriations, EDA will hold University Center program competitions in two of its six regional offices on a rotating basis.

FY 2023 (this competition)	Austin Regional Office	Serves: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas
	Denver Regional Office	Serves: Colorado, Iowa (excluding Muscatine and Scott counties), Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming
FY 2026	Chicago Regional Office	Serves: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Muscatine and Scott counties in Iowa
	Philadelphia Regional Office	Serves: Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands, and West Virginia
FY 2027	Atlanta Regional Office	Serves: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee
		Serves: Alaska, Arizona, American Samoa, California, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Republic of Marshall Islands,

<sup>2</sup> For more information on what constitutes a quality job, see <https://www.dol.gov/general/good-jobs/principles>.

<sup>3</sup> For purposes of this NOFO, EDA defines clusters as geographic concentrations of firms, workers, and industries that do business with each other and have common needs for talent, technology, and infrastructure. Clusters are essentially networks of similar, synergistic, or complementary entities that are engaged in or with a particular industry sector; have active channels for business transactions and communication; share specialized infrastructure, labor markets, and services; and leverage the region’s unique competitive strengths to stimulate innovation and create jobs. Clusters may cross municipal, county, and other jurisdictional boundaries.

	Seattle Regional Office	Federated States of Micronesia, Nevada, Northern Mariana Islands, Oregon, Republic of Palau, and Washington
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EDA does not anticipate creating or funding any additional University Centers outside of this competitive solicitation unless a University Center grantee withdraws from the program or does not perform to EDA’s satisfaction. In such cases, the appropriate EDA regional office may choose to hold an intervening competition.

EDA encourages the submission of applications that will create and nurture regional economic ecosystems through science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skill development, workforce training opportunities including Registered Apprenticeships, applied research and development, technology commercialization, and targeted activities that cultivate entrepreneurship and improve regional economic development. A regional economic ecosystem supports innovation clusters through three main components:

- A highly networked inclusive regional talent pool, with specialized expertise relevant to the region’s innovation clusters (including connections along the supply chain and across disciplines so that researchers, academics, investors, suppliers, and entrepreneurs can efficiently share ideas and best practices);
- A support system for turning discoveries into marketable goods and services, including business counseling, incubation programs, and proof-of-concept centers; and
- Innovation infrastructure, both tangible and intangible, necessary to support innovation and resiliency such as education, workforce development, and financial infrastructure.

In addition, EDA encourages University Center program applications that:

- Align with the DOC Strategic Plan<sup>4</sup>, with a focus on advancing STEM skills and capabilities, supporting workforce training opportunities that meet the needs identified by local and regional employers, and/or enhancing manufacturing capacities within the region;
- Benefit distressed communities, in particular small, rural, and underserved communities<sup>5</sup>, by linking these communities to larger, more vibrant regional economies, including rural-urban linkages, thereby enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in regional economies;
- Present a clear plan for inclusive community engagement in the project to ensure that the economic benefits of the project will be shared by all communities in the project region, including any underserved communities. This plan should address the communities affected, barriers those communities may face in accessing benefits of the project, contemplated

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.commerce.gov/about/strategic-plan>.

<sup>5</sup> Distress, as delineated in the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended (42 U.S.C. § 3121 *et seq.*), may exist in a variety of forms, including high levels of unemployment, low income levels, large concentrations of low-income families, and significant declines in per capita income because of large numbers (or high rates) of business failures, sudden major layoffs or plant closures significantly adversely affecting a region’s economic base, military base closures, natural or other major disasters, depletion of natural resources or reduced tax bases, or substantial loss of population because of the lack of employment opportunities. See 13 C.F.R. § 301.3.

outreach efforts, and other planned steps to address identified barriers, as appropriate;

- Present a clear plan for collaborating with and assisting other EDA investment partners, award recipients, and stakeholders, including EDDs, Indian Tribes, and local and regional businesses;
- Encompass regional, Statewide, and multi-State programs, and create synergies within EDA’s Public Works, Economic Adjustment Assistance, and Partnership Planning programs;
- Offer services within a well-defined geographic region in the States and territories covered by the Austin and Denver Regional Offices, and provide a full range of economic development research and technical assistance services to EDA regional partners; and
- Tailor services to the region’s needs, including the needs identified by local and regional businesses, and each sponsoring institution’s (or consortium’s) strengths.

EDA will strive to avoid funding duplicative services among selected University Centers.

University Center applicants should demonstrate how they will integrate their programs across their respective institutions and regional stakeholders in order to increase the impact of programs that support economic development. Applicants should also demonstrate a record of success in fostering higher-skill, higher-wage private sector job creation, as well as the ability to collaborate with the private sector and leverage other sources of financial support.

Please note that applicants will be required to identify a program focus of the proposed EDA-supported University Center. See section D.2.a.i of this NOFO for additional details.

## **2. EDA Investment Priorities**

All projects considered for EDA funding under this NOFO must be consistent with at least one of EDA’s Investment Priorities:

1. Equity
2. Recovery & Resilience
3. Workforce Development
4. Manufacturing
5. Technology-Based Economic Development
6. Environmentally-Sustainable Development
7. Exports & Foreign Direct Investment

More information about these Investment Priorities, including definitions, can be found at <https://www.eda.gov/funding/investment-priorities>. The priorities may be updated from time to time, although they will not change during the application period for this NOFO.

## **3. Statutory Authority for the University Center Program**

EDA’s authorizing statute is the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended (42 U.S.C. § 3121 *et seq.*) (PWEDA). The specific authority for the University Center Economic Development Program is section 207 of PWEDA (42 U.S.C. § 3147), which authorizes EDA to make grants for the establishment of University Centers. EDA’s regulations at 13 C.F.R. parts 300–302 and subpart B of 13 C.F.R. part 306 set forth the general and specific regulatory requirements applicable to the University Center program. EDA’s regulations are codified at 13 C.F.R. chapter III and are accessible at [eCFR :: 13](#)



[CFR Chapter III -- Economic Development Administration, Department of Commerce](#). Likewise, PWEDA is available at <https://www.eda.gov/about/regulations>.

## **B. Federal Award Information**

### **1. What funding is available under this announcement?**

For FY 2023, EDA plans to allocate approximately \$8.4 million to the University Center program (\$2.4 million for the first year of awards under this competition). These amounts are based on funding levels appropriated through the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328). Annual awards for the University Centers selected in past years generally have been in the range of \$80,000 to \$200,000 each, and each participating region has generally made 8 to 10 awards. The Austin and Denver Regional Offices may choose to fund awards under this competition outside of these ranges. Subject to the availability of funding at the time of award, the funds allocated to the University Center program are anticipated to be available until expended.

### **2. What type of funding instrument will be used to make awards and how long will a project's period of performance be?**

Under this competitive solicitation, EDA may, subject to the availability of funds, award grants to selected University Centers. The awards will have a five-year period of performance, with an initial funding period of one year. The selected University Centers will not have to compete for the second, third, fourth, and fifth years of funding. **Funding beyond the initial year will be dependent upon the availability of funds and upon the recipients' satisfactory performance and progress in achieving milestones and program goals as determined by EDA and expressed in writing.**

### **3. Post-Approval Requirements**

In accordance with 13 C.F.R. § 306.7, EDA will conduct a performance evaluation of each University Center within three years after the initial start date of the award. EDA may conduct an additional performance evaluation prior to the end of the five-year award. The goal of these performance evaluations is to assess the University Center's contribution to providing technical assistance, conducting applied research, meeting program performance objectives, and disseminating project outcomes in accordance with the scope of work funded during the period of performance.

This performance evaluation will include the participation of at least one other University Center on a cost-reimbursement basis as part of the required peer review process.

Two weeks before the recipient's scheduled peer review, the University Center must provide EDA with an abstract of its original proposal, a copy of its presentation on the University Center's performance, and any relevant papers or work product for dissemination to the peer reviewer(s). The recipient should be prepared to respond to questions about their presentation and engage in a discussion about areas of weakness, best practices, and opportunities for further engagement with other EDA stakeholders.

Recipients may also be occasionally asked to participate in various events, including conferences, meetings, and webinars, during the period of performance to share best practices and discuss the program's challenges and opportunities. The topics for these events may not be limited to accomplishments and program progress. Recipients shall provide EDA with an electronic copy or links to recorded webinars of any presentations suitable for posting on EDA's website.

As part of the required progress reports (*see* section F.3. of this NOFO), recipients will be required to provide an overview of how activities of the University Centers are fulfilling the needs of their target

regions. For example, University Centers could identify how their activities result in a change in per capita income or help assist businesses, or they may submit a summary of their technology commercialization activities. Recipients are required to comply with all terms and conditions of the award, including specific award conditions required by EDA.

**C. Eligibility Information**

**1. Eligible Applicants**

An accredited institution of higher education, including a community college, junior college, tribal college, Historically Black College and University (HBCU), Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) or other Minority Serving Institution (MSI) that meets EDA’s eligibility requirements as an accredited institution of higher education, or a consortium of accredited institutions of higher education is eligible to apply for and to receive funding under the University Center Economic Development Program. See section 3(12) of PWEDA (42 U.S.C. § 3122(12)) and 13 C.F.R. § 300.3. A university-affiliated research institution also is eligible to apply for and to receive funding under this NOFO, provided it demonstrates (e.g., through a letter or other documentation from the university president or chancellor) that it maintains the full and integral support of the university with respect to its economic development activities. For applicants applying as a consortium, one accredited institution of higher education must be identified as the lead applicant that would have primary responsibility to EDA and to the other members of the consortium for implementing an award. An organization that is affiliated with and directed by an accredited institution of higher education and that is in good standing may partner with an accredited institution of higher education or consortium to participate in a proposed project.

Pursuant to this NOFO, EDA is soliciting applications from accredited institutions of higher education and from consortia of accredited institutions of higher education to operate University Centers in (and have programs targeting) only the following geographic areas served by the Austin and Denver Regional Offices:

Austin Regional Office	Serves: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas
Denver Regional Office	Serves: Colorado, Iowa (excluding Muscatine and Scott counties), Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming

**2. Cost Sharing or Matching**

Generally, the amount of an EDA award may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of the project.<sup>6</sup> Projects may receive an additional amount that may not exceed up to 30 percent of the total project cost, based on the relative needs of the Region in which the project will be located, as determined by EDA.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development has the discretion to establish a maximum EDA investment rate of up to 100 percent where the project (i) merits and is not otherwise feasible without an increase to the EDA investment rate; or (ii) will be of no or only incidental

<sup>6</sup> See section 204(a) of PWEDA (42 U.S.C. § 3144) and 13 C.F.R. § 301.4(b)(1).

<sup>7</sup> See section 204(a) of PWEDA (42 U.S.C. § 3144) and 13 C.F.R. § 301.4(b)(1).

benefit to the recipient.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, EDA's regulations provide discretion to establish a maximum EDA investment rate of up to 100 percent for projects of Indian Tribes.<sup>9</sup>

In-kind contributions may provide the required non-Federal share of the total project cost and can consist of contributions directly related to the proposed project, such as space, equipment, services, or forgiveness or assumptions of debt.<sup>10</sup> Funds from other Federal financial assistance awards are considered matching share funds only if authorized by statute, which may be determined by EDA's reasonable interpretation of the statute.<sup>11</sup>

EDA will fairly evaluate all in-kind contributions, which must be eligible in accordance with Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 C.F.R. part 200) (Uniform Guidance). The applicant must show that the matching share will: (i) be committed to the project for the period of performance, (ii) be available as needed, and (iii) not be conditioned or encumbered in any way that may preclude its use consistent with the requirements of EDA investment assistance.<sup>12</sup> To meet these requirements, applicants may submit for each source of matching share a commitment letter or equivalent document signed by an authorized representative of the organization providing the matching funds. Additional documentation may be requested by EDA to substantiate the availability of the matching funds.

Applicants are **strongly** encouraged to work with the appropriate EDA representative listed in section G of this NOFO to determine how in-kind contributions can be utilized to satisfy the matching share requirement for their respective project concept and application.

#### **D. Application and Submission Information**

An applicant **must submit a complete application**, as detailed in section D.2 of this NOFO, to be considered for funding. EDA may seek additional information or documentation from the applicant to clarify information presented in the application. Please see section E of this NOFO for more information on EDA's review and selection process.

EDA strongly encourages applicants to consult with the appropriate EDA representative listed in section G of this NOFO to discuss whether their project is in alignment with the requirements outlined in this NOFO. This consultation is limited to clarification of technical matters involving their proposed project, project alignment with EDA's mission and Investment Priorities, and all other relevant and publicly available information relating to general technical matters.

##### **1. Obtaining an Application and Electronic Submission through EDGE**

An applicant must obtain, complete, and submit an application electronically through the Economic Development Grants Experience (EDGE) at [sfgrants.eda.gov](https://sfgrants.eda.gov). EDA will not accept paper, facsimile, or email transmissions of applications except as provided below. In order to obtain and submit an application through EDGE, an applicant must register for an EDGE account at [sfgrants.eda.gov](https://sfgrants.eda.gov). As part of the registration process, you will register one Authorized Representative for your organization; however, multiple points of contact may be registered or added by the applicant to the application

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<sup>8</sup> See section 204(c)(3) of PWEDA (42 U.S.C. § 3144) and 13 C.F.R. § 301.4(b)(4).

<sup>9</sup> See 13 C.F.R. § 301.4(b)(5).

<sup>10</sup> See section 204(b) of PWEDA (42 U.S.C. § 3144).

<sup>11</sup> See the definition of "Local Share or Matching Share" at 13 C.F.R. § 300.3.

<sup>12</sup> See 13 C.F.R. § 301.5.

workspace to view or work on completing the application. The Authorized Representative will be the only official with the authority to submit applications.

**a. Verification of Submission**

Applicants should save and print written proof of an electronic submission made through EDGE. Applicants, specifically the Authorized Representative submitting the application and materials, will receive a time and date stamped email from EDGE confirming the submission and receipt of the application and other required documents.

Applicants should save and print both the confirmation screen provided on EDGE after the applicant has submitted an application and the confirmation email sent when the application has been successfully submitted.

It is the applicant's responsibility to verify that its submission was timely received and submitted successfully through EDGE. To see the date your application was submitted, log on to EDGE and click on the Submitted Application section from the Home Page. If you experience a systems issue with EDGE, see Section D.8. below for instructions.

**b. Alternatives to Submission through EDGE**

To accommodate an applicant's accessibility requirements, a paper version of this application may be obtained by contacting the appropriate POC listed in section G of this NOFO. Or if an applicant is otherwise unable to submit an application through EDGE for reasons beyond the control of the applicant, EDA, in its sole discretion, may pre-approve in writing submission via an alternate method (e.g., email).

**2. Content and Form of Application Submission**

A complete application includes all required documents outlined below in Table 1. All relevant forms must be signed electronically by the applicant's Authorized Representative; please see section I.2 of this NOFO for information on Authorized Representative requirements. The preferred electronic file format for attachments is Adobe PDF and, when appropriate, Microsoft Excel; however, EDA will accept electronic files in Microsoft Word. EDA will not accept paper, facsimile, or email transmissions of applications. Please refer to important information on submitting your application provided in section I of this NOFO.

All documentation and data submitted should be current and applicable as of the date submitted. Applicants are encouraged to contact the appropriate EDA representative listed in section G of this NOFO for technical assistance regarding application requirements. Additionally, EDA may reach out to the applicant to clarify application materials received.

An application that does not have all of the required components may be considered incomplete and not receive further consideration. See section E of this NOFO for information regarding application review.

Table 1: Required Application Documentation	
Project Design and Substance Information	
Project Narrative	
Applicant Capacity and Project Management	
Budget Narrative and Staffing Plan	
Matching Share Commitment Letters	
Resumes of Key Project Staff	
Forms and Supporting Documentation	
Form SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance)	
Form SF-424A (Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs)	
Form CD-511 (Certification Regarding Lobbying)	
Form SF-LLL (Disclosure Regarding Lobbying)	
Form ED-900 GA (General Application for EDA Programs)	
State Single Point-of-Contract (SPOC)/Executive Order 12372 Compliance Documentation (if applicable)	
Organizational Documentation (if applicable)	
Indirect Cost Rate Documentation (if applicable)	

**a. Project Design and Substance**

This section provides additional details on project design and subject documentation.

Table 2: Project Design and Substance Documentation	
Document	Number
Project Narrative	One per application
Applicant Capacity and Project Management	One per application
Budget Narrative and Staffing Plan	One per application
Project Sustainability	One per application
Resumes of Key Project Staff	One resume for each key staff member under the application
Matching Share Commitment Letters	One per matching share source

**i. Project Narrative**

All applicants must provide a Project Narrative of no more than ten (10) total pages with margins no less than one-half inch (0.5”) using Times New Roman font of size twelve (12) points in order to be considered for funding. **Material beyond the tenth page will not be read or considered.** The Project Narrative must provide for a five-year scope of work and for a timeline for implementation during the

five-year period of performance. Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide a clear and concise narrative that includes a compelling justification for the project and the expected outcome(s) that will result from the proposed project. Lengthy applications will not receive greater consideration. **A competitive application will contain the following elements in the Project Narrative:**

- **Cover page and Executive summary:** Includes a project title and a summary of no more than 250 words (note: this may be published on EDA’s website if your application is selected for funding).
- **Description of Service Region:** Identifies the primary service area, along with a description of the communities or regions to be served, and the communities’ or region’s needs and opportunities.
- **Geographic Service Region:** Define the geographic service region of the University Center. For purposes of this competition, a region is defined as “an economic unit of human, natural, technological, capital or other resources, defined geographically.” Geographic areas comprising a region need not be contiguous or defined by political boundaries but should constitute a cohesive area capable of undertaking successful economic development. See the definition of “Region” in 13 C.F.R. § 300.3.
  - Please include a map outlining your service region.
  - If your service region includes a geography smaller than an entire state, please provide county level FIPS codes for the applicable geographic service region.
- **Industries and Regional Strategies:** Describe the service region’s industries and existing regional economic development strategies. Applicants should identify linkages between the regional strategies and the proposed University Center’s activities. Applicants are strongly encouraged to support any claims with independent, third-party data, regional strategy plans, and existing impact studies.

Visit <https://www.eda.gov/grant-resources/tools> for a list of tools and resources funded by EDA that may be helpful in developing applications.

- **Economic Ecosystem:** Describe the current state of the geographic service region’s economic ecosystem, including the regional talent pool, innovation infrastructure, and support systems to facilitate commercialization of research and technology transfer, as well as the connections between economic ecosystem components and regional economic development strategies. Identify the proposed University Center’s measurable activities that will assist the proposed service area in filling economic ecosystem gaps and achieving regional economic development goals that are part of the regional strategy or strategies.
- **Partnerships:** List existing and potential partnerships with regional economic development stakeholders (e.g., regional planning organizations, Economic Development Districts), trade/export related entities (e.g., U.S. export assistance centers), and other relevant entities associated with the academic institution, and describe ongoing activities. Provide specific examples of the partnerships and the specific activities to be carried out by this partnership during the period of performance.
- **Targeted Beneficiaries:** As noted above, EDA strongly encourages University Centers that benefit distressed communities, in particular small, rural, and underserved communities, to link these communities to larger, more vibrant regional economies, thereby enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in regional economies. EDA encourages efforts to reach and achieve inclusive engagement with historically underserved populations and areas, communities of color, women, and other groups facing labor market barriers such as persons with disabilities, disconnected youth, individuals in recovery, individuals with past criminal records, including justice-impacted and reentry participants, individuals participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP),

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and veterans and military spouses. The applicant should identify the targeted beneficiaries of the proposed University Center and clearly describe the logical connection between the intended outcomes and the program activities in the proposed geographic service region. Describe, using specific examples, how the proposed program will positively impact the targeted beneficiaries in the proposed geographic service region. The applicant should present a clear plan for inclusive community engagement in the project to ensure that the economic benefits of the project will be shared by all communities in the project region, including any underserved communities. This plan should address the communities affected, barriers those communities may face in accessing benefits of the project, contemplated outreach efforts, and other planned steps to address identified barriers, as appropriate.

- **Project Timeline:** Applicants must submit a detailed five-year timeline for project implementation that includes significant project benchmarks to gauge program success and accomplishments.
- **Program Focus:** Identify one or more program focus areas of the proposed EDA-supported University Center:
  - *Regional commercialization efforts*
  - *Advancing high-growth entrepreneurship*
  - *Cultivating innovation*
  - *Encouraging business expansion in a region’s innovation cluster(s)*
  - *Developing a high-skilled regional workforce*
  - *Increasing the resiliency of a region*

If the University Center will have more than one program focus, applicants should clearly indicate the anticipated percentage of time devoted to each focus. Applicants that are current or former EDA-funded University Centers are encouraged to demonstrate how the proposed program is different from or builds upon the previously funded University Center program. Competitive applications will identify how the proposed University Center will support regional economic resiliency and inclusiveness.

- **Project Fit with EDA Investment Priorities:** Applicants must address one or more of the EDA Investment Priorities in accordance with section A.2 of this NOFO. It is not necessary to demonstrate that the project address all EDA Investment Priorities. Applicants should address the Investment Priorities for which there is a clear fit and should strive to advance equity in accordance with EDA’s top investment priority.
- **Scope of Work:** No more than one page linked to the project’s purpose and key milestones, including deliverables that clearly indicate the specific activities that are part of the scope of work.

Table 3: Scope of Work Components
Overview of Scope of Work
Specific Activities
Anticipated Economic Impacts and Benefits

### Overview of Scope of Work

Present an overview of the scope of work, explaining how the proposed scope of work will address the specific economic ecosystem gaps identified in paragraph D.2.a.i above.

### Specific Activities

Describe specific activities to be undertaken by the University Center during the period of performance, including but not limited to providing technical assistance, conducting applied research, and disseminating information about, and the results of, the University Center's economic development activities.

- a. For purposes of the University Center program, "technical assistance" includes all economic development activities whether undertaken at the request of an entity outside of the sponsoring institution (or consortium) or directly by the applicant or co-applicants.
- b. Conducting applied research means the direct use of research to address a specific challenge, meet a specific need, or solve a specific problem experienced by innovators, entrepreneurs, economic planners, and cluster-based industries.
- c. Disseminating information about the activities of the University Center includes: (1) informing the University Center's target audience of available assistance; (2) publicizing research findings and best practices; and (3) demonstrating to EDA how measurable economic development outcomes will be realized during the period of performance.

EDA-sponsored University Centers engage in various activities to support the economic ecosystem of a region, including targeted commercialization of research, workforce development, and business counseling services. Examples of such activities include, but are not limited to:

- Coordinating with regional economic development organizations, such as EDDs, to support the development and implementation of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs);
- Assisting communities in identifying and defining their workforce talent pool and entrepreneurial capacity related to growing innovation clusters and growth strategies through strategic and sustainable economic development planning efforts;
- Supporting or accelerating technology commercialization and entrepreneurship by assisting in licensing and patenting activities;
- Supporting new product development by using student and faculty expertise and university laboratories and equipment to develop prototypes;
- Assisting entrepreneurs in the establishment of companies to commercialize technology or innovate products and services;
- Assisting existing businesses in increasing productivity and quality,



streamlining operations, and cutting costs through the introduction or extension of advanced manufacturing, quality management, and other processes and techniques;

- Supporting business development strategies and enhancing profitability through marketing and sales techniques, new product development analyses, and identification of new markets (including international markets);
- Supporting the regional talent pool through industry-led workforce development, professional and leadership development, and core business training; and
- Assisting communities in addressing financial challenges through innovative financing techniques.

*These examples are informational only and in no way limit the range of potential proposed activities.*

#### Anticipated Economic Benefits

The applicant should also identify the anticipated economic impacts and benefits to the University Center's service region, in particular the previously identified economically distressed communities—especially those that are small, rural, and underserved—and the target beneficiaries. Anticipated benefits may include, but are not limited to:

- Economic impacts of projects assisted as measured by direct, indirect, and induced output, jobs, and income;
- Longitudinal economic impacts over a defined period of at least three years after the University Center assistance is provided to the service region, including identified economically distressed regions;
- Investments of private sector capital;
- The percentage of University Center clients initiating action as a result of the technical assistance provided by the University Center;
- The percentage of University Center clients that achieve the anticipated results;
- Any activities that result in measurable outcomes leading to increased innovation, entrepreneurship, emerging and growing clusters, sustainable economic development practices, and improved resilience to natural or other disasters; and
- Activities that create or enhance inclusive networks supporting innovation, transfer of knowledge, and entrepreneurship.

#### ii. Applicant Capacity and Project Management

All applicants must provide a statement describing Applicant Capacity and Project Management capabilities. This should not exceed one (1) page with margins no less than one-half inch (0.5") using Times New Roman font of size twelve (12) points in order to be considered for funding. ***A competitive application will:***

- Discuss the sponsoring institution's (or consortium's) capacity and experience in successfully operating economic development technical assistance programs, especially those focused on regional commercialization, entrepreneurship, and innovation cluster and infrastructure development. Applicants are encouraged to document specific results of past economic development activities and programs.
- Identify other organizations in the proposed service area that provide potentially complementary or duplicative services.
- Outline the processes or strategies the proposed University Center will follow to maximize coordination and interaction with relevant entities, such as District Organizations, Indian Tribes, Councils of Governments, Regional Planning Commissions, and other University Centers, to minimize duplication of services and provide services not currently available. The proposed University Center should also consider engaging with technical assistance and/or membership organizations such as the University Economic Development Association (UEDA). This can be incorporated into the overall budget for the proposed project.
- Outline the processes or strategies for coordinating economic development efforts among private and public institutions in the proposed service area.
- Outline the processes or strategies for coordinating and accessing key resources of the sponsoring institution (or consortium) to support economic development efforts.
- Discuss past performance in administering economic development technical assistance projects.
- Applicants also should provide an additional two-page summary description of all personnel performing for the applicant under the proposed project.

### **iii. Budget Narrative and Staffing Plan**

The *Budget Narrative* should specifically address each budget line item (including both the Federal share and matching non-Federal share) and the Narrative total should match the total project costs listed in both line 18.g of Form SF-424 and the "Totals" calculated in Form SF-424A for the five-year period of performance.

- Non-Federal Share: The Budget Narrative should include itemized descriptions and valuations of any in-kind matching funds. The activities within the scope of work that are being completed with in-kind matching funds should be clearly identified. The non-Federal share, whether in cash or in-kind, is expected to be paid out at the same general rate as the Federal share; however, if the Budget Narrative proposes otherwise, applicants must also include information that clearly indicates what project elements the matching share funds will support and explain why deviation from paying out at the same general rate is required for the project to be implemented.
- Successful applicants under this NOFO must follow the applicable Federal procurement rules when selecting or entering into any vendor contracts.
- Applicants may use the optional budget spreadsheet available at <https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/university-centers>, to supplement the narrative.

The *Staffing Plan* must list all positions that will be charged to the Federal and non-Federal portion of the budget for each year of the five-year period of performance.

- The staffing plan must include position titles, maximum annual salaries, percentage of time dedicated to the project, and the total amount of annual salaries that would be charged to the project. The total amount of annual salaries that would be charged to the project must be consistent with the amount reflected on the “Personnel” budget line item on the Form SF-424A for each project year.
- Applicants may use the optional staffing plan spreadsheet available at <https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/university-centers/Gantt-Chart-Staffing-and-Budget-Template-Disclaimer>.

**iv. Project Sustainability**

Applicants must describe the sustainability of the proposed project beyond the period of performance by identifying:

- Sources of funding or a revenue model that supports proposed activities beyond the period of performance, without future EDA funding; and
- Additional resources and partnerships that will continue to support the project beyond the period of performance.

**v. Resumes of Key Personnel**

Applicants must attach the resumes of key project staff, each of which should not exceed two (2) pages in length. Resumes should be compiled and uploaded together as one PDF file. Pages outside of the 2-page limit will not be considered during review of the application.

**vi. Matching Share Documentation (as applicable)**

Applicants must submit commitment letters or equivalent documents that demonstrate that *all matching funds* (whether cash or in-kind) from *all sources* (i.e., any applicant, any co-applicants, and any other sources of matching funds) referenced in the application will be available as needed and will be *unencumbered, unrestricted, and committed to the project*. Matching share commitment letters must be *signed by an authorized representative* of the source of the matching funds. Authorized representatives must have the authority to execute documents and to obligate and expend funds on behalf of their respective organizations.

**b. Forms and Supporting Documentation**

**i. Forms**

Applications must include the following documents, either per applicant or per application, as noted:

Form	Description	Number
ED-900GA	General Application for EDA Programs	One per application
SF-424	Application for Federal Assistance	One per applicant
SF-424A	Budget Information—Non-Construction Programs	One per application
CD-511	Certification Regarding Lobbying	One per applicant

SF-LLL	Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)	One per applicant
SPOC	State Single Point-of-Contract (SPOC)/Executive Order 12372 Compliance Documentation (if applicable)	One per application

***Special Instructions for Completing Form ED-900GA***

The following modifications to the general application instructions for Form ED-900GA apply to this competition and should be observed. Applicants are advised to read carefully as the following elements have been waived.

**In general**, certain sections of Form ED-900GA (described below) require project information that may be included in the applicant’s Project Narrative. To avoid redundancy, the applicant may make the following notation “See Project Narrative” (a cross-reference to the corresponding Project Narrative section is strongly encouraged) in the response boxes corresponding to these sections.

- **Section D.3 of Form ED-900GA.** Applicants under this NOFO are not required to submit a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) referenced in section D.3 of Form ED-900. Applicants should type “Not required for a UC” in the box following the “If Yes” statement.
- **Non-governmental applicants** must complete section J of Form ED-900GA and include all documentation required in that section except that applicants are **not** required to submit a resolution of (or letter signed by an authorized representative of) a general-purpose political subdivision of a State acknowledging that the applicant is acting in cooperation with officials of such political subdivision (section J.3). Notwithstanding the applicant’s self-designation, EDA may determine that public universities in certain States should be treated as “governmental” even if the universities utilize nonprofit organizations to structure their relationship with Federal grant agencies.

***Special Instructions for Form SF-424A***

Applicants must submit Form SF-424A for the entire five-year period of performance. In addition, applicants must attach five separate itemized budgets—including columns reflecting the Federal, non-Federal cash, non-Federal in-kind, and total amounts allocated to each budget line item—for each of the five years in the period of performance. Each of the five budgets should have equal total amounts for the Federal portion. Applicants should use the budget categories identified in “Section B – Budget Categories” of Form SF-424A, with sub-categories and explanations as necessary. The allowability of costs under a Federal award is determined in accordance with the provisions of subpart E (“Cost Principles”) of the Uniform Guidance. Generally, allowable costs include salaries, supplies, and other expenses that are necessary, reasonable, and allocable for successful completion of the scope of work.

***Special Instructions for a Consortium of Applicants – Complete Application Example***

If the applicant is a consortium, each member institution of the consortium must submit the following: Forms SF-424, CD-511, and SF-LLL. For example, if a consortium of three institutions of higher education submitted an application package, a complete application package would consist of:

- Three Forms SF-424 (one for each consortium member),

- One Form SF-424A,
- Three Forms CD-511 (one for each consortium member),
- Three Forms SF-LLL (please enter “N/A” or “None” in sections 10.a and 10.b of Form SF-LLL if the consortium member does not have lobbying costs to report),
- One Form ED-900GA, and
- One Project Narrative and other required attachments.

**ii. Supporting Documentation**

Applications must include the following documentation, as applicable, depending on a given project’s primary service area and the type and history of each applicant organization.

Documentation	Number
Organizational Documentation (if applicable)	For each applicant, depending on entity type
Indirect cost documentation (if applicable)	For each applicant

**1. Organizational Documentation**

Each applicant and co-applicant must provide documentation that supports each applicant’s or co-applicants’ *organizational status as an eligible entity* where applicable (section C.1 of this NOFO) (e.g., articles of incorporation, certificates of good standing, bylaws).

- Institutions of higher education that are 100% publicly controlled are not required to submit organizational documentation.
- Organizations affiliated with and directed by an accredited institution of higher education must submit documentation that demonstrates their status, as determined by EDA. For example, a nonprofit organization should submit the organization’s articles of incorporation, bylaws, and current certificate of good standing.

**2. Copy of Current, Approved Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)**

If facilities and administration (F&A) costs (sometimes referred to as indirect costs) are included in the budget, the applicant must include documentation to support the F&A rate it is using.

For most applicants, this will entail the submission of a copy of its current, approved and negotiated F&A rate agreement (F&A Agreement). Subject to the limitation on F&A costs set out in section D.6. below (i.e., F&A costs may amount to no more than 20 percent of the total project cost), the maximum dollar amount of allocable F&A costs for which EDA will reimburse a recipient shall be the lesser of (i) the line-item amount for the Federal share of F&A costs contained in the EDA-approved budget for the award, or (ii) the Federal share of the total allocable F&A costs of the award based on either (a) the cost rate approved by EDA (or applicable cognizant Federal agency), provided that the cost rate is current at the time the costs were incurred and provided that the rate is approved on or before the award end date, or (b) other acceptable documentation as indicated below.

If the applicant does not have a current or pending F&A Agreement, it may propose indirect costs in its budget; however, the applicant must prepare and submit an allocation plan and rate proposal for

approval within ninety days from the award start date. See 2 C.F.R. part 200 Apps. III, IV, V, VI, and VII for guidance. The allocation plan and the rate proposal shall be submitted to EDA's Office of Regional Affairs (or applicable cognizant Federal agency). If the applicant chooses to pursue this option, it should include a statement in its Budget Narrative that it does not have a current or pending F&A Agreement and will submit an allocation plan and rate proposal to EDA or the applicant's cognizant Federal agency for approval.

If the applicant does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) F&A Agreement, the applicant may elect to charge a *de minimis* rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs subject to the exceptions of 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f). The applicant should include a statement in its Budget Narrative that it does not have a current F&A Agreement and it is electing to charge the *de minimis* rate.

If the applicant is a State or local unit of government that receives less than \$35 million in direct Federal funding per year, it may submit any of the following:

- i. Certificate of F&A Costs from EDA
- ii. Acknowledgment received from EDA and Certificate of F&A Costs
- iii. Cost Allocation Plan approved by a Federal agency; or
- iv. A negotiated F&A Agreement.

### iii. Program Income

If the operation of the University Center is expected to generate program income as defined at 2 C.F.R. § 200.1, such amounts must be accounted for in the project budget and must be added to those budget line items pertaining to direct program delivery. Unless otherwise specified in the terms and conditions applicable to a specific award, program income must be added to funds committed to the project and must be used to further eligible program activities before expiration of the five-year period of performance. See also 2 C.F.R. § 200.307.

### 3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Applicants are required to: (i) be registered in SAM before submitting an application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier (UEI) in the application; (iii) make certain certifications (see also section H.5 of this NOFO); and (iv) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which they have an active federal award, or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency. EDA may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable UEI and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the EDA is ready to make an award, EDA may determine that the applicant is not qualified. Recipients will be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 C.F.R. parts 25 and 170. All subawardees must have a UEI before any subawards are made.

### 4. Submission Dates and Times

The closing date for receipt of applications for funding under the FY 2023 University Center Economic Development Program competition is **July 10, 2023**. The closing time for all applications submitted electronically via EDGE is 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time/8:59 Pacific Time on **July 10, 2023**. The date and time that an application will be deemed to be electronically received will be determined in accordance with the electronic submission instructions provided at EDGE for this NOFO. See sections D.7.a. and I of this NOFO for information regarding electronic submissions. **Applications received after the applicable closing date and time will not be considered for funding.**

In addition, please note the following:

- EDA will not accept any unsolicited changes, additions, revisions, or deletions to applications after the submission deadline.
- Throughout the review and selection process, EDA reserves the right to seek clarification from applicants whose applications are being reviewed and considered.
- Applicants may be asked to clarify objectives and work plans and modify budgets or other specifics necessary to comply with Federal requirements and provide supplemental information required by the agency before award. The Austin or Denver Regional Office may contact an applicant after review of all applications for the purpose of determining whether a proposed project can be completed with a modified scope of work acceptable to EDA or for a smaller budget than that proposed if EDA is unable to fund the full amount requested.
- See section E. of this NOFO for application review and selection information.

## **5. Intergovernmental Review**

Applications submitted under this NOFO are subject to the requirements of Executive Order (EO) 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs,” if a State has adopted a process under EO 12372 to review and coordinate proposed Federal financial assistance and direct Federal development (commonly referred to as the “single point of contact review process”). All applicants must give State and local governments a reasonable opportunity to review and comment on the proposed Project, including review and comment from area-wide planning organizations in metropolitan areas. To find out more about a State’s process under EO 12372, applicants may contact their State’s Single Point of Contact (SPOC). Names and addresses of some States’ SPOCs are listed on the Office of Management and Budget’s home page at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf> (or similar website as updated). Question 19 of Form SF-424 allows applicants to demonstrate compliance with EO 12372.

## **6. Funding Restrictions**

As required under 13 C.F.R. § 306.6(d), at least 80 percent of EDA funding under a University Center program award must be allocated to direct costs of program delivery. Accordingly, regardless of the rate identified in an applicant’s indirect cost rate agreement with its cognizant Federal agency, the F&A costs chargeable to the Federal award (if any) for each project year shall not exceed 20 percent of the Federal award for that year. In addition, EDA is limiting the amount of unrecovered indirect costs that may be included as part of the matching share to 20 percent of the total project costs, less the amount charged to the Federal award.<sup>13</sup> For example, if the total project costs are estimated to be \$100,000 and the Federal award amount is \$50,000 (50 percent grant rate), a maximum of \$20,000 in F&A costs, allocated between the EDA share and the local share, may be included in the indirect cost line item of the proposed budget, and no more than \$10,000 may be charged to the Federal award.

Construction activities are not allowable under this competition and may not be charged to the EDA funds of the project or provided as matching share.

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<sup>13</sup> Pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.306(c), unrecovered indirect costs may be included as part of cost sharing or matching only with the prior approval of the Grants Officer. To calculate the amount of allowable unrecovered indirect costs under a University Center award, the following formula may be helpful: maximum unrecovered indirect costs = (total project costs x 20%) - indirect costs charged to the Federal award.

## 7. Other Submission Requirements

After EDA reviews an application, EDA may contact the applicant to request additional documentation to clarify or substantiate submitted application materials, depending on the type of project proposed. Examples of additional documentation may include, but are not limited to, title verification, documentation of the value of in-kind contributions, evidence all funding is available and committed to the project, or documentation required for environmental or legal compliance. This additional documentation will be required to ensure that the proposed project complies with all applicable rules and regulations prior to EDA's issuance of an award. EDA will provide applicants a reasonable amount of time to provide any additional documentation. Failure to provide complete and accurate supporting documentation in a timely manner when requested by EDA may result in the denial of an application.

## 8. EDGE Systems Issues

If you experience a systems issue with EDGE (i.e., a technical problem or glitch with the webpage) that you believe threatens your ability to complete a submission before a deadline, please (i) print any error message received; (ii) email the help desk at [GrantHDSupport@eda.gov](mailto:GrantHDSupport@eda.gov); and (iii) contact EDA using the contact information in Section G. of this UC NOFO. **Please be sure to track your issue using a case number given to you by the help desk.** Please note that problems with an applicant's computer system or equipment are **not** considered systems issues. Similarly, an applicant's failure to, e.g., (i) complete the required registration, (ii) ensure that a registered Authorized Representative submits the application, or (iii) notice receipt of an email message from EDGE are **not** considered systems issues. An EDGE issue is an issue occurring in connection with the operations of the website itself, such as the temporary loss of service due to unexpected volume of traffic or failure of information technology systems, both of which are highly unlikely. In the event of a confirmed systems issue, EDA reserves the right to accept an application in an alternate format.

Applicants should go to [sfgrants.eda.gov](http://sfgrants.eda.gov) and click on the Resources page for assistance in navigating EDGE and for a list of useful resources.

## E. Application Review Information

Throughout the review and selection process, EDA, at its sole discretion, may request from applicants written clarification or corrected or missing documents and require that applicants provide such clarifications or corrections in order to continue to be considered for an award under this NOFO. EDA will provide applicants a reasonable amount of time to provide any additional documentation. Failure to provide complete and accurate supporting documentation in a timely manner when requested by EDA may result in the rejection of your application. EDA may ask applicants to clarify application materials, objectives, and work plans, or modify budgets or other specifics as necessary to comply with Federal requirements.

### 1. Evaluation Criteria

EDA will evaluate applications based on the following core evaluation criteria, with each criterion weighted as indicated:

Summary of Criteria
Project Alignment with EDA Investment Priorities
Applicant Capacity



Responsiveness to NOFO

**Project Alignment with EDA Investment Priorities (25%)**

The proposed project's alignment with one or more of EDA's current Investment Priorities in accordance with section A.2. of this NOFO and should strive to advance equity in accordance with EDA's top investment priority.

**Applicant Capacity (35%)**

The capacity of the applicant to execute the required tasks successfully, as assessed by the extent to which the applicant addresses the following equally weighted factors:

- i. Demonstrates the ability to foster quality job creation and promote private investment in the regional economy;
- ii. Indicates the feasibility of the proposed project;
- iii. Describes how the results of the proposed project will be sustainable and durable; and
- iv. Demonstrates its organizational capacity, including its past experience in operating technical assistance programs.

**Responsiveness to NOFO (40%)**

The application's responsiveness to the objectives of this NOFO, specifically the extent to which the applicant addresses the following equally weighted factors:

- i. Proposes to provide service to a well-defined geographic area and to benefit distressed communities in that area. Competitive applications will address the economic development needs, issues, and opportunities of a defined area within the Austin Regional Office's or Denver Regional Office's respective geographic service areas and demonstrate that the proposed project will offer coverage to that area, including to distressed communities, especially those that are small, rural, and underserved, and historically underserved populations and areas. The application should present a clear plan for inclusive community engagement in the project to ensure that the economic benefits of the project will be shared by all communities in the project region, including any underserved communities. This plan should address the communities affected, barriers those communities may face in accessing benefits of the project, contemplated outreach efforts, and other planned steps to address identified barriers, as appropriate.
- ii. Describes the proposed technical assistance, applied research, and dissemination of information activities and explains how they will foster regional economic ecosystems. Competitive applications will identify one or more program focus area and articulate how the proposed activities will enhance regional commercialization efforts, advance high-growth entrepreneurship, cultivate innovation, encourage business expansion in a region's innovation cluster(s), develop a high-skilled regional workforce, and/or increase the resiliency of a region. Applicants are strongly encouraged to describe the proposed activities as specifically as possible, particularly with regard to how they will help to advance regional economic development goals.
- iii. Describes how proposed activities will drive regional economic development strategies and priorities and provide unique services and value to the defined geographic area.

Priority will be given to applicants that clearly explain how their proposed activities will advance existing regional economic development strategies and priorities by maximizing coordination with and leveraging the array of local, tribal, State, regional, Federal, and private sector economic development efforts occurring in the region.

- iv. Extent to which the proposed University Center leverages other university assets that support regional economic ecosystems and demonstrates the commitment and support (financial and nonfinancial) of the university's leadership. Priority will be given to applicants that clearly demonstrate how the proposed project relates to the expertise of their staff and academic programs and explain how they will leverage other university assets (such as economic analysis divisions, GIS capabilities, planning specialists, research centers, and commercialization or technology transfer offices) to support high-growth entrepreneurship, job creation, and business expansion in the region's innovation clusters.
- v. Degree to which the proposed University Center will engage EDA stakeholders and partners. Priority will be given to applicants that identify activities that will benefit other EDA investment partners and stakeholders (e.g., EDDs, Indian Tribes, regional planning organizations). These projects may include technical assistance to EDA stakeholders; training; technology commercialization; feasibility studies; data collection and analysis; specialized business counseling, incubation programs, and proof-of-concept centers; market and economic impact analysis to strengthen the implementation and realization of regional strategic plans; and short- and long-term intergovernmental and public/private sector planning efforts that help communities foster vibrant economic ecosystems.
- vi. Extent to which the proposed University Center has outlined measurable activities and outcomes associated with the scope of work. Priority will be given to applicants that clearly describe the metrics they will track and how economic impact will be measured.
- vii. Proposes to sustain success beyond the period of performance, including by:
  - (1) Demonstrated sustainable funding sources or likelihood for the project to succeed and be sufficient for ongoing activities;
  - (2) Adequacy of the plan to continuously identify needs and opportunities; and
  - (3) Strength of partnerships, level of commitment, and potential to take advantage of new opportunities to maintain the region's competitiveness.

## **2. Review and Selection Process**

### **a. Review for Eligibility and Completeness (Technical Review)**

EDA staff in the Austin and Denver Regional Offices will conduct an eligibility and technical completeness review (Technical Review) of all applications received by the above stated deadline (see section D.4. of this NOFO). EDA expects applicants to complete and include all required forms and documentation. **Applications that do not contain all forms and required documentation listed in section D.2. of this NOFO may be deemed nonresponsive and excluded from further consideration.** However, EDA in its sole discretion reserves the right to consider timely and otherwise complete

applications that may contain non-substantive technical deficiencies. Applicants that are ineligible for EDA funding will be informed that they are ineligible.

**b. Investment Review Committee (IRC)**

The Austin and Denver Regional Office each will convene an Investment Review Committee (IRC) that consists of at least three Federal employees to discuss and evaluate each application forwarded from the Technical Review to determine the extent to which it meets the evaluation criteria set out in section E.1. of this NOFO (Merit Review). The IRC will forward to the Grants Officer, in order of priority, all applications that it reviewed and recommend those that it determined merit consideration for funding.

**c. Grants Officer's Decision**

Applications recommended by the IRC and deemed fully compliant with applicable rules and regulations will be forwarded to the Regional Director, who is the Grants Officer under this announcement. Each Regional Director has been delegated the authority to make the final decision on whether to fund an application and may select a project for funding that differs from the IRC's recommendations based on any of the following selection factors:

- i. The application meets the overall objectives of section 2 of PWEDA (42 U.S.C. § 3121);
- ii. Economic distress of the region;
- iii. Financial and management capability of the applicant;
- iv. Availability of program funding;
- v. Geographic balance in distribution of program funds and EDA's portfolio;
- vi. Balance of diverse project types in the distribution of program funds;
- vii. Balanced funding for a diverse group of institutes of higher education, which may form part of a broader consortium to serve diverse populations and areas, including smaller and rural communities, within the regional office's territory;
- viii. The applicant's performance under previous Federal financial assistance awards (if applicable), including whether it submitted required performance reports;
- ix. The likelihood that the proposed project will achieve its stated results and catalyze additional resources;
- x. The probability that a project will start promptly and create jobs quickly; and
- xi. Whether the project will enable communities to become more diversified and more economically prosperous.

The Regional Director's final decision must be consistent with EDA's and the DOC's published policies.

**3. Review of Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov**

EDA, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (formerly FAPIIS). See 41 U.S.C. § 2313.

Each applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM. EDA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.206.

## **F. Federal Award Administration Information**

### **1. Federal Award Notification**

#### **a. Award Notification**

If an applicant successfully and timely completes all due diligence requirements and the application is selected for funding, EDA will notify the successful applicant in writing. This notice is not an authorization to begin work, however; work should not be undertaken until the award is signed by EDA and the applicant's authorized representative, as discussed below.

After initial notification, the EDA Grants Officer will issue the award (Notice of Award), which is the authorizing financial assistance award document and includes Specific Award Conditions and the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions (DOC ST&Cs) as described in Section F.2.b, below.

By accepting the Notice of Award, the applicant agrees to comply with all award provisions. EDA will provide the Notice of Award to the applicant's authorized representative through EDGE. The applicant's authorized representative must review and accept the Notice of Award without modification within 30 calendar days of the date of receipt.

#### **b. Unsuccessful Competition**

On occasion, competitive funding opportunities or competitive panels produce less than optimum results, such as a competition resulting in the receipt of no applications, a competition resulting in the receipt of only unresponsive or unqualified applications, or too few highly rated applications. In these circumstances, EDA shall take the most time- and cost-effective approach available that is in the best interest of the Federal Government. This includes (1) re-competition, (2) re-paneling, or (3) formal negotiation.

### **2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

#### **a. Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements**

Recipients of an EDA award will be bound by the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) as set forth in 2 C.F.R. part 200. See a copy of these regulations at: [eCFR :: 2 CFR Part 200 -- Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](http://www.ecfr.gov/2000-01-01/48-cfr-part-200).

#### **b. DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions**

EDA will apply the Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions (STCs) applicable on the date of the award. The STCs may be accessed at the following website: [http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants\\_management/policy/default.htm](http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/default.htm).

Recipients of DOC financial assistance are obligated to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities, in Federally assisted programs or activities.

#### **c. DOC Pre-Award Notification Requirements**

EDA will apply the Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements dated December 30, 2014, 79 Fed. Reg. 78,390. The Pre-Award Notice may be accessed at the Government Printing Office (GPO) website at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

### **3. Reporting**

#### **a. Reporting Frequency and Format**

All recipients are required to submit financial, performance, and impact reports in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant award, generally no less frequently than semi-annually. All project progress and financial reports must be submitted to the applicable EDA program officer in an electronic format to be determined at the time of award.

#### **b. Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006**

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.FSRS.gov) on all sub-awards over \$25,000. Please see the OMB guidance published at 2 C.F.R. part 170, which can be accessed at: [eCFR :: 2 CFR Part 170 -- Reporting Subaward and Executive Compensation Information](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/section-qr.cgi?sid=31&url=/02/cfr/part170/section170.101-170.102&id=31&id1=170&id2=101-102&id3=170.101-170.102&id4=170.101-170.102&id5=170.101-170.102&id6=170.101-170.102&id7=170.101-170.102&id8=170.101-170.102&id9=170.101-170.102&id10=170.101-170.102&id11=170.101-170.102&id12=170.101-170.102&id13=170.101-170.102&id14=170.101-170.102&id15=170.101-170.102&id16=170.101-170.102&id17=170.101-170.102&id18=170.101-170.102&id19=170.101-170.102&id20=170.101-170.102&id21=170.101-170.102&id22=170.101-170.102&id23=170.101-170.102&id24=170.101-170.102&id25=170.101-170.102&id26=170.101-170.102&id27=170.101-170.102&id28=170.101-170.102&id29=170.101-170.102&id30=170.101-170.102&id31=170.101-170.102&id32=170.101-170.102&id33=170.101-170.102&id34=170.101-170.102&id35=170.101-170.102&id36=170.101-170.102&id37=170.101-170.102&id38=170.101-170.102&id39=170.101-170.102&id40=170.101-170.102&id41=170.101-170.102&id42=170.101-170.102&id43=170.101-170.102&id44=170.101-170.102&id45=170.101-170.102&id46=170.101-170.102&id47=170.101-170.102&id48=170.101-170.102&id49=170.101-170.102&id50=170.101-170.102&id51=170.101-170.102&id52=170.101-170.102&id53=170.101-170.102&id54=170.101-170.102&id55=170.101-170.102&id56=170.101-170.102&id57=170.101-170.102&id58=170.101-170.102&id59=170.101-170.102&id60=170.101-170.102&id61=170.101-170.102&id62=170.101-170.102&id63=170.101-170.102&id64=170.101-170.102&id65=170.101-170.102&id66=170.101-170.102&id67=170.101-170.102&id68=170.101-170.102&id69=170.101-170.102&id70=170.101-170.102&id71=170.101-170.102&id72=170.101-170.102&id73=170.101-170.102&id74=170.101-170.102&id75=170.101-170.102&id76=170.101-170.102&id77=170.101-170.102&id78=170.101-170.102&id79=170.101-170.102&id80=170.101-170.102&id81=170.101-170.102&id82=170.101-170.102&id83=170.101-170.102&id84=170.101-170.102&id85=170.101-170.102&id86=170.101-170.102&id87=170.101-170.102&id88=170.101-170.102&id89=170.101-170.102&id90=170.101-170.102&id91=170.101-170.102&id92=170.101-170.102&id93=170.101-170.102&id94=170.101-170.102&id95=170.101-170.102&id96=170.101-170.102&id97=170.101-170.102&id98=170.101-170.102&id99=170.101-170.102&id100=170.101-170.102).

#### **c. Performance Reporting, including Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA)**

EDA will require additional data on activities, outputs, and outcomes of the funded investment, in part to fulfill the requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). EDA anticipates that recipients will be expected to track their engagement activities within the scope of work, with project beneficiaries, and other project stakeholders. EDA further anticipates recipients will be expected to collect data, using surveys of beneficiaries or clients if necessary, on the outputs and outcomes of project activities, such as jobs created/retained, private investment attracted, the number of strategic plans or economic development tools developed, the number of new business partnerships formed, or the range of new capabilities acquired. EDA plans to collect this information using Forms ED-916 (Semi-annual Program Outputs Questionnaire for EDA grantees), ED-917 (Annual Capacity Outcomes Questionnaire for EDA Grantees serving clients), and ED-918 (Annual Capacity Outcomes Questionnaire for EDA Grantees). For more information, please refer to <https://www.eda.gov/performance/gpra>. EDA may also engage with leading research institutions to perform third-party program evaluations, which will require cooperation between the grantee, organizations within their service area, and the evaluating institution(s).

### **G. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts**

For questions concerning this solicitation, contact the appropriate EDA representative listed below. For more information about EDA programs, you may contact the appropriate EDA representative found on EDA's website at <https://www.eda.gov/contact/>.

#### Austin Regional Office

FY 2023 University Center Program Competition  
Economic Development Administration  
Austin Regional Office

903 San Jacinto, Suite 206  
Austin, TX 78701

*Designated Contact:*  
Lauren Duhon, [lduhon@eda.gov](mailto:lduhon@eda.gov)

Denver Regional Office

FY 2023 University Center Program Competition  
Economic Development Administration  
Denver Regional Office  
1244 Speer Boulevard  
Suite 431  
Denver, CO 80204

*Designated Contact:*  
Jane Reimer, [jreimer@eda.gov](mailto:jreimer@eda.gov)

## **H. Other Information**

### **1. Right to Use Information; Freedom of Information Act Disclosure**

The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, and also by Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

In addition, Department of Commerce regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this Notice of Funding Opportunity may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information that should be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information. In accordance with 15 C.F.R. § 4.9, the Department of Commerce will protect from disclosure confidential business information contained in financial assistance applications and other documentation provided by applicants to the extent permitted by law.

## **2. Notice of Government-Wide Procurement Restriction**

The general rule for Federal financial assistance is that contractors that develop draft specifications, requirements, statements of work, invitations for bids, or requests for proposals are prohibited from competing for the final procurement. Before the Uniform Guidance took effect, pursuant to the DOC grant regulations at 15 C.F.R. parts 14 and 24, the prohibition applied to institutions of higher education, hospitals, nonprofits, and commercial and international organizations but did not apply to States, local governments, or Indian Tribes. However, under 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.319 and 200.317 which are now controlling, only State recipients are expressly exempt from this prohibition. Despite this change, local governments and Indian Tribes may also take advantage of the exemption in two narrow circumstances: (i) if they are required (by statute, for example) to follow the State's procurement rules in full and without exception; or (ii) if they are required to follow a specific State procurement rule that creates an explicit conflict with the prohibition in 2 C.F.R. § 200.319(a) (i.e., there is a statute that requires or permits the local government or Indian Tribe to award the final procurement to the same contractor that developed the draft specifications). Absent one of these two scenarios, the local government or Indian Tribe must comply with the prohibition. Applicants are encouraged to contact the EDA representative listed for their state in section G. of this NOFO with any questions regarding application of this regulation.

## **3. Past Performance and Non-Compliance with Award Provisions**

Unsatisfactory performance under prior Federal awards may result in an application not being considered for funding. Failure to comply with any or all of the provisions of an award may have a negative impact on future funding by the DOC (or any of its operating units) and may be considered grounds for any or all of the following actions: (1) establishing an account receivable, (2) withholding payments to the recipient under any DOC awards, (3) changing the method of payment from advance to reimbursement only, (4) imposing other specific award conditions, (5) suspending any active DOC awards, and (6) terminating any active DOC awards.

## **4. EDA's Non-Relocation Policy**

Applicants are advised that if an application is selected for award, the recipient will be required to adhere to an award condition relating to EDA's non-relocation policy as follows:

In signing this award of financial assistance, Recipient attests that EDA funding is not intended by the Recipient to assist its efforts to induce the relocation of existing jobs within the U.S. that are located outside of its jurisdiction to within its jurisdiction in competition with other U.S. jurisdictions for those same jobs. If EDA determines that its assistance was used for those purposes, EDA retains the right to pursue appropriate enforcement action in accord with the Standard Terms and Conditions of the Award, including suspension of disbursements and termination of the award for convenience or noncompliance, which may include the establishment of a debt requiring the Recipient to reimburse EDA.

For purposes of ensuring that EDA assistance will not be used to merely transfer jobs from one location in the United States to another, each applicant must inform EDA of all employers that constitute primary beneficiaries of the project assisted by EDA. EDA will consider an employer to be a "primary beneficiary" if (i) the employer is specifically named in the application as benefitting from the project, and the applicant estimates that the employer will create or save 100 or more permanent jobs as a result of the investment assistance (if the jobs in question were originally located in a smaller community, EDA may extend this policy to the relocation of 50 or more jobs); or (ii) the employer is or will be located in an

EDA-assisted building, port, facility, or industrial, commercial, or business park constructed or improved in whole or in part with investment assistance prior to EDA's final disbursement of funds.

#### **5. NOFO Changes Communicated on Grants.gov**

EDA may make changes or additions to this NOFO. All changes will be communicated on Grants.gov. It is recommended that applicants set up a Grants.gov account and subscribe to this funding opportunity (“**EDA-UC-2023-AURO**” and “**EDA-UC-2023-DRO**”) in order to be notified of any updates or changes. DOC or EDA may cancel, modify, or withdraw this NOFO at any time. EDA is not obligated to make any federal award or commitment as a result of this announcement.

#### **6. Audit Requirements**

Single or program-specific audits shall be performed in accordance with the Uniform Guidance (*see* 2 C.F.R. part 200, Subpart F, “Audit Requirements”). The Uniform Guidance requires any non-Federal entity (i.e., nonprofit organizations, including nonprofit institutions of higher education and hospitals, States, local governments, and Indian Tribes) that expends Federal awards of \$750,000 or more in the recipient's fiscal year to conduct a single or program-specific audit in accordance with the requirements set out in the Uniform Guidance. Applicants are reminded that EDA or the DOC's Office of Inspector General also may conduct an audit of an award at any time.

#### **7. Certifications Required by Annual Appropriations Acts for Corporations and for Awards over \$5 Million**

As discussed in section D.3, all applicants are required to be registered in SAM before applying under this NOFO. SAM requires registering entities to certify compliance with all limitations imposed by annual appropriation acts. For corporations, this certification includes that the corporation:

- a. Was not convicted of a felony criminal violation under a Federal law within the preceding 24 months, unless a Federal agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government; and/or
- b. Does not have any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, unless a Federal agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government.

For financial assistance awards in excess of \$5 million, this certification includes that the entity:

- a. To the best of its knowledge and belief, has filed all Federal tax returns required during the three years preceding the certification;
- b. Has not been convicted of a criminal offense under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986; and/or
- c. Has not been notified, more than 90 days prior to certification, of any unpaid Federal tax assessment for which the liability remains unsatisfied, unless the assessment is the subject of an installment agreement or offer in compromise that has been approved by the Internal



Revenue Service and is not in default, or the assessment is the subject of a non-frivolous administrative or judicial proceeding.

## **8. Office of Inspector General Rights and Responsibilities**

The DOC Office of Inspector General (OIG) seeks to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department's programs, including deterring and detecting fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement. The OIG accomplishes this mission primarily through investigations, audits, and inspections of Department activities, including grants, cooperative agreements, loans, and contracts.

### **a. Disclosures**

Recipients of financial assistance originating from the U.S. Department of Commerce, including EDA, shall timely disclose, in writing, to the OIG and awarding agency, whenever, in connection with the award, performance, or closeout of this grant or subaward thereunder, the recipient has credible evidence that a principal, employee, agent, or sub-recipient has committed:

- (i) A violation of federal criminal law involving fraud, conflict of interest, bribery, or gratuity violations found in Title 18 of the United States Code; or
- (ii) A violation of the civil False Claims Act (31 U.S.C. §§ 3729-3733).

### **b. Reporting**

The OIG maintains a hotline to receive allegations of fraud, waste, or abuse. To report such allegations, please visit <https://www.oig.doc.gov/Pages/Hotline.aspx>. Upon request, the OIG will take appropriate measures to protect the identity of any individual who reports misconduct, as authorized by the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended. Reports to the OIG may also be made anonymously.

### **c. Whistleblower Protection**

Recipients, sub-recipients, and employees working on this grant award will be subject to the whistleblower rights and remedies established under 41 U.S.C. § 4712.

An employee of a recipient or sub-recipient may not be discharged, demoted, or otherwise discriminated against as a reprisal for disclosing information that the employee reasonably believes is evidence of: gross mismanagement of a federal contract or award; a gross waste of federal funds; an abuse of authority (*i.e.*, an arbitrary and capricious exercise of authority that is inconsistent with the mission of EDA or the U.S. Department of Commerce or the successful performance of a contract or grant awarded by EDA or the Department) relating to a federal contract or award; a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety; or a violation of a law, rule, or regulation related to a federal contract (including the competition for or negotiation of a contract) or grant.

The recipient or sub-recipient shall inform its employees and contractors, in writing, in the predominant language of the workforce or organization, of employee whistleblower rights and protections under 41 U.S.C. § 4712, as described above and at <https://www.oig.doc.gov/Pages/Whistleblower-Protection-Program.aspx>.