



## **New Jersey Economic Development Authority**

### **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (“RFI”)**

**[2024-RFI-229]**

**for**

### **Apprenticeship Training Centers Planning and Construction Grants**

#### **1. INTENT/SUMMARY OF SCOPE**

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (“Authority”), an independent Authority of the State of New Jersey, is seeking information and ideas from qualified entities (“Respondents”) that provide or have experience with USDOL Registered Apprenticeship programs (“Apprenticeship/s”) with perspectives on establishing new apprenticeship training locations in Overburdened Communities. As defined by New Jersey’s Environmental Justice Law, Overburdened Communities (OBCs) are census block groups with:

1. At least 35 percent low-income households; or
2. At least 40 percent of the residents identify as minority or as members of a State recognized tribal community; or
3. At least 40 percent of the households have limited English proficiency

A map of New Jersey’s Overburdened Communities may be found here: [OBCs Map](#)

The Authority is considering establishing a grant program that would support the planning and implementation of new or expanding training facilities for Registered Apprenticeship programs and fund costs for the planning, construction or renovations of facilities. In November 2023, the New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDOL) announced the investment of \$10 million to expand apprenticeship training centers to meet the growing need for skilled workers as New Jersey experiences an unprecedented surge in infrastructure and public works initiatives. In partnership with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), NJDOL’s funding will support the expansion or development of new training facilities. Under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the NJDOL and NJEDA executed in February 2024 NJEDA will develop a competitive program that will solicit proposals from entities based in New Jersey that are affiliated with a successful USDOL Registered Apprenticeship. The MOU will enable a

deepened and expanded collaboration between the two agencies across a range of workforce and economic development initiatives, to reduce barriers to training and employment and help New Jersey employers retain qualified workers.

The State is considering support for the construction of physical training facilities in OBCs to eliminate transportation barriers to training and employment for local residents. The State may also consider support for plans that strategically locate facilities near public transportation hubs that allow swift and inexpensive access for residents of OBCs.

The program shall encourage ongoing diversity and inclusion within New Jersey's Registered Apprenticeship programs, which aligns with the Murphy Administration's goals to expand access to apprenticeship programs and increase equity and fairness in our economy.

Qualified entities do not need to be located within the State of New Jersey to provide a response and the Authority welcomes perspectives from entities both inside and outside of the state.

Through this RFI, the Authority is seeking information from respondents on the needs, challenges, opportunities, and best practices to build or expand physical locations in OBCs for apprenticeship training facilities as well as associated costs for planning, construction, and potentially operations for USDOL Registered Apprenticeships.

The NJEDA is interested in receiving comments, questions, recommendations, facts, information, ideas, and responses that will help the Authority better understand the registered apprenticeship landscape, especially in regard to physical locations of training facilities, and details that NJEDA should consider when developing a program that would support the construction of new and/or expanding facilities.

In addition, this RFI seeks to:

- Understand the scale, similarities, and differences of various training facilities in New Jersey, including those solely dedicated to apprenticeship training and other locations (e.g., community colleges)
- Understand the challenges and solutions to placing apprenticeship training facilities in OBCs that allow for easy access to local residents and eliminate transportation barriers for those residents
- Better understand the factors involved in siting and constructing training facilities
- Gain greater insights into the demand for new training facilities and the related apprenticeship programs throughout New Jersey
- Collect information on specific best practices, programs, and approaches to expanding training facility access for residents of Overburdened Communities
- Learn about existing models that should be explored when developing facilities construction programs for apprenticeship training

- Learn about the most beneficial features of apprenticeship training facilities and programs

## 2. **BACKGROUND**

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority serves as the State’s principal agency for driving economic growth. The Authority is committed to making New Jersey a national model for inclusive and sustainable economic development by focusing on strategies that help build strong and dynamic communities, create good jobs for New Jersey residents, and provide pathways to a stronger and fairer economy. Through partnerships with a diverse range of stakeholders, the Authority creates and implements initiatives to enhance the economic vitality and quality of life in the State, and to strengthen New Jersey’s long-term economic competitiveness.

Governor Murphy’s Economic Development Strategic Plan, “The State of Innovation: Building a Stronger and Fairer Economy in New Jersey” specifically highlights “investing in people” as a strategic priority and critical to the State’s economic development strategy. The plan commits resources to expand New Jersey’s Apprenticeship Network, among other efforts, to prepare workers with the training and skills needed for high-quality career opportunities. The New Jersey Apprenticeship Network provides a path for state residents to enter high-skilled careers through paid, registered apprenticeships, which may include college credit.

Since Governor Murphy took office in January 2018, the state has invested more than \$73 million in developing apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and work-based programs, contributing to the creation of 792 new Registered Apprenticeship programs, a 100 percent increase and the onboarding of 19,608 new apprentices. As of November 2023, the state had 8,826 active apprentices in 1,403 programs<sup>1</sup>. For more information on these programs, visit the [New Jersey Office of Apprenticeship](#) website.

The NJDOL Office of Apprenticeship has been instrumental in developing and strengthening apprenticeship programs throughout the state and increasing opportunities for both youth and adults. Working in close collaboration with the United States Department of Labor’s Office of Apprenticeship which registers programs, the state’s Office of Apprenticeship is a contact and technical resource for employers, educational institutions, trade associations, and current/future apprentices for all statewide New Jersey apprenticeship initiatives. Office of Apprenticeship grant programs provide opportunities to develop new and expand existing Registered Apprenticeship programs, including pre-apprenticeship and programs targeting high school and out of school youth, and women, minorities and veterans in construction trades.

---

<sup>1</sup> NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development

This RFI is a critical input into the Authority's efforts to expand apprenticeship training centers to meet the growing need for skilled workers in New Jersey.

### 3. RFI RESPONSE QUESTIONS

In submitting responses to this RFI, respondents are encouraged to answer any questions they consider relevant and to the best of their ability. Respondents do not need to answer all questions for their response to be considered. Answers are understood to be preliminary and non-binding. Respondents are free to go beyond the scope of the questions and/or structure responses as necessary to increase clarity and efficiency of responses. Respondents should also feel free to submit additional or alternate information as deemed supportive.

- I. Please provide information on you/your entity's background (name, location, organization), and your involvement or interest in USDOL Registered Apprenticeship programs.
  
- II. If you operate a registered apprenticeship program and/or apprenticeship training center:
  - a. Which registered apprenticeship programs do you operate and for which occupations is it approved?
  - b. Please describe the facility where training is provided:
    - i. Facility location – address including city, state, zip
    - ii. Do you own or rent the facility?
    - iii. Facility location type (e.g., union hall, community college, non-profit organization offices, etc.)
    - iv. Characteristics and size of the facility or spaces dedicated to training (e.g., classrooms, workshops, outdoor space, etc.)
  - c. What kind of equipment is housed within the training facility? What were the upfront capital costs to purchase and install the equipment? What equipment is most frequently used and what equipment do you wish you could access?
  - d. How many apprentices do you train annually at the facility? Are there regular cycles or seasonality to the use of the training center that we should be aware of?
  - e. If applicable, what was the cost to build and outfit your current facility (please choose a range below)? When was it built? What was the estimated cost per square foot?
    - i. Less than \$1 million
    - ii. Between \$1 and \$3 million
    - iii. Between \$3.1 and \$6 million
    - iv. Between \$6.1 and \$9 million
    - v. Greater than \$9 million
  - f. If applicable, what is the annual cost to maintain the facility or lease the space where training takes place (e.g., lease/rent, taxes, maintenance, heating/cooling)?
    - i. Less than \$50,000
    - ii. Between \$50,000 and \$100,000

- iii. Between \$100,100 and \$300,000
- iv. Between \$300,100 and \$600,000
- v. Greater than \$600,000

- III. Do you have any expansion plans that may involve the construction of a new facility or the renovation of an existing site? If so, please describe:
  - a. The reason for the potential expansion
  - b. Which location(s) have been selected or are under consideration? What factors have you considered and are important in selecting a location?
  - c. Expected construction budget
  - d. Expected funding sources
- IV. If you do not currently have any expansion plans, please describe how your current facility(s) meets the needs of current and future apprentices?
- V. If NJEDA was to establish a program to aid in the construction of new training facilities what would be most impactful supports to consider:
  - a. What types of activities/projects should be considered (e.g., planning grants, construction cost reimbursements, operational support programs, etc.)
  - b. What funding award amounts would be necessary to fund these priority activities?
    - i. Less than \$200,000
    - ii. Between \$200,000 and \$500,000
    - iii. Between \$500,100 and \$800,000
    - iv. Between \$800,100 and \$1.1M
    - v. Greater than \$1.1M
- VI. If any, in your opinion what are the major challenges/barriers to building or expanding new apprenticeship facilities in New Jersey?
  - a. Are they financial (e.g., construction/installation costs, operational costs, access to capital, enabling work required, investment payback period, etc.)?
    - i. What barriers do training providers face in accessing public and private capital?
  - b. Are there other barriers (e.g., lack of demand, regulatory, ERISA fund restrictions, operational issues, procurement timelines, property availability, space constraints, etc.)
  - c. Given the state's focus on Overburdened Communities, what other suggestions might you offer on how to address the need to increase access for participants in these communities?
- VII. Are there specific OBCs or other underserved communities (geographic locations or areas in New Jersey) that would be ideal for siting particular Apprenticeship Training Centers to target training for underserved populations? Are there specific locations near public transportation hubs that allow swift and inexpensive access for underserved populations? (please provide address)

- VIII. Are there any other factors the State should consider that may have an impact on the construction of new or expansion of existing training centers?
- IX. Are you aware of any best practices or successful models related to expanding and supporting construction for apprenticeship training programs that New Jersey should consider?
- X. What other strategies can the state employ to complement the construction of new training facilities in OBCs that would further eliminate barriers to participation and maximize access for local residents?
- XI. What are the barriers which we should consider addressing to successfully recruit and enroll minorities, women, and veterans in registered apprenticeship training programs? What suggestions do you have for encouraging the inclusion of minorities, women, and veterans in registered apprenticeship training programs and employment?
- XII. What innovations can training providers utilize to accelerate or improve apprenticeship training for a diverse and inclusive workforce?

4. **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (from Respondents to NJEDA)**

All questions concerning this RFI must be submitted in writing no later than 5:00 PM E.D.T., on 09-09-2024 via e-mail to: [WorkforceInnovation@njeda.gov.com](mailto:WorkforceInnovation@njeda.gov)

The subject line of the e-mail should state: **Questions-2024-RFI-229-Apprenticeship Training Centers Planning and Construction Grants**

Answers to questions submitted will be publicly posted on the Authority's website on or about 09/13/2024 at: <https://www.njeda.com/bidding/#RFI> as Addendum.

**IT IS THE RESPONDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO CHECK THIS URL REGULARLY FOR UPDATES.**

5. **RESPONSE DETAILS (Info Provided to Respondents Regarding Document Submission)**

All RFI responses must be submitted in writing no later than **5:00 PM E.D.T.** 09/24/2024 via e-mail to: [workforceinnovation@njeda.gov](mailto:workforceinnovation@njeda.gov)

The subject line of the e-mail should state: **RFI Response-2024-RFI-229-Apprenticeship Training Centers Planning and Construction Grants**

6. **FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS (from NJEDA) / ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Respondents may be invited to provide additional information to allow the Authority to better understand information provided.

7. **PROPRIETARY AND/OR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**

The Authority reserves the right to copy any information provided by the Respondents. The Authority reserves the right to use ideas that are provided by Respondents, applicants, stakeholders, or vendors. By submitting a Response, the submitter represents that such copying or use of information will not violate any copyrights, licenses, or other agreements with respect to information submitted or product solutions demonstrated, if applicable. Responses must clearly be marked for any information the Respondent deems Proprietary and/or Confidential.

8. **DISCLAIMER / NO OBLIGATION**

This RFI is not a request for qualification/proposal. It may or may not result in further action.

This RFI is issued solely as a means of gathering information regarding the Authority's desire to understand the types of products and level of service available in the market to meet the Authority's needs. Interested parties responding to this RFI do so at their own expense. There will be no monetary compensation from the Authority for the time and effort spent in preparing the response to this RFI. All expenses incurred are the sole responsibility of the Respondent.

Should the Authority decide to move forward and issue an RFQ/P or announce a program/product related to this RFI, Respondents need not have submitted a response to this RFI in order to be eligible to respond to the RFP. Should an RFQ/P be issued, responding to this RFI will not affect scoring or consideration for that process.

The Authority is under no obligation to contact Respondents to this RFI.

9. **NEW JERSEY OPEN PUBLIC RECORDS ACT**

Respondents should be aware that responses to this RFI are subject to the "New Jersey Open Public Records Act" (N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq.), as amended and including all applicable regulations and policies and applicable case law, including the New Jersey Right-to-Know law. All information submitted in response to the RFI is considered public information, notwithstanding any disclaimers to the contrary, except as may be exempted from public disclosure by OPRA and the common law.

Any proprietary and/or confidential information submitted in response to this RFI will be redacted by the Authority. A person or entity submitting a response to this RFI may designate specific information as not subject to disclosure pursuant to the exceptions to OPRA found at

N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1.1, when such person or entity has a good faith legal and/or factual basis for such assertion (i.e. information that may be included in another ongoing public procurement or solicitation). The Authority reserves the right to make the determination as to what is proprietary or confidential and will advise the person or entity accordingly. The Authority will not honor any attempt to designate the entirety of a submission as proprietary, confidential and/or to claim copyright protection for the entire proposal. In the event of any challenge to the Respondent's assertion of confidentiality with which the Authority does not concur, the Respondent shall be solely responsible for defending its designation.