

## **Notice of Availability of Funds Digital Literacy Demo Grant**

### **Background**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. To advance the purpose and intent of WIOA, the Midlands Workforce Development Board (MWDB) identifies, invests in, and supports educational and developmental strategies to better prepare a skilled workforce for current and emerging jobs. In alignment with these goals, the MWDB has identified a need to increase digital literacy as a key strategy to develop our workforce particularly as we utilize technology to expand WIOA and SC Works services beyond the walls of the Center. <sup>1</sup>

A digital skills gap exists in today's workforce. In a recent survey, roughly 1 of 10 adults indicated that they would have difficulty finding programs and services online, contacting potential employers via email, filling out a job application online, finding available jobs online and using computers to create a resume.<sup>2</sup> Further, the digital skills gap disproportionately affects low-income individuals, individuals with less than a high school education, and individuals with disabilities.

This digital skills gap is continually widened by the rate at which activities, such as GED attainment, job searches, and training, are becoming digitally-based. It is estimated that the ability to use the Internet to search for a job reduces an individual's average time unemployed by 25% and that around 50% of today's jobs require digital literacy – a percentage that is expected to grow to 77% in the next decade.<sup>2</sup> Increasing digital literacy is essential not just for the development of a skilled workforce, but to better equip Midlands residents with the tools they need to enter a successful career pathway. As such, \$100,000 has been earmarked by the MWDB to support new or established digital literacy programs in our area.

### **Program Purpose**

The funding set aside by the MWDB is to be used to support or establish digital literacy programs that will work to close the digital skills gap across the full Midlands service area (Richland, Lexington and Fairfield counties).

### **Period of Performance**

The funding earmarked by the MWDB will support digital literacy programs for a period of 6 months with an anticipated start date of April 1, 2019. The period will stretch across Program Years 2018 and 2019 and may be renewed for an additional 6-month period dependent on the available funding and success of the demo grant.

### **Eligible Applicants**

All public and private entities are eligible to apply for the Digital Literacy Demo Grant. Entities that are debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participation in Federal programs or activities are not eligible to receive grant funding. Additionally, entities that have failed to perform successfully and/or sustain fiscal integrity on previously awarded grants are not eligible to apply. Successful performance includes timeliness or compliance with applicable reporting requirements, conformance to the terms and conditions of previous Federal awards, and meeting or achieving the expected outcomes.

Each entity may only submit one application for funding. Entities with demonstrated expertise in workforce development or pre-existing digital literacy programs are strongly encouraged to apply.

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<sup>1</sup>PEW Research Center, Searching for Work in the Digital Era (2015)

<sup>2</sup> Colorado State Library, Benefits of a Digitally Literate Community (2012)

### **Instructional Model and Curriculum**

WIOA defines digital literacy as “the skills associated with using technology to enable users to find, evaluate, organize, create and communicate information.”<sup>3</sup> Each program funded by this grant must work to increase participants digital literacy skills through a curriculum that includes soft skills and employment preparation activities. Examples of employment preparation activities that involve digital literacy skills include, but are not limited to:

- Using a search engine to find jobs and information on career pathways
- Developing a resume and cover letter using word processing software
- Completing and submitting online applications

Job Ready U provides a free, online curriculum to state partners, business and educational entities to enhance participant employability skills through 11 skills modules. It is encouraged that each program incorporates soft skills development through the Basic Employability and Professional Work Ethic modules of SC Job Ready U. It is also recommended that program curriculums are supplemented by the Introduction to Computing, Computer Skills: Word, Computer Skills: PowerPoint, and Computer Skills: Excel modules of Job Ready U. Additional information about the Job Ready U program may be found at <https://dew.sc.gov/tools-resources/skill-training-initiatives/job-ready-u>. At minimum, successful proposals will incorporate the module topics into service delivery.

### **Expenditure of Funds**

Applicants may apply for funding not to exceed \$100,000 to be spent over a period of six months. During the grant period, funds may be used to support staff salaries and fringe benefits, equipment, supplies and facility expenses, as well as any other category as approved and outlined in the program budget. No more than 10% of the total grant budget may be used to support the purchase of equipment and supplies (including software and computers). Further no more than 10% of the total grant expenditures may be used to support grant administration. Grant administration includes all costs associated with performing overall general administrative functions, such as costs for financial, property and personnel management, costs for oversight and monitoring responsibilities, the cost of goods and services associated with administrative functions, travel costs associated with carrying out administrative functions and costs associated with data entry.

Additionally if a digital literacy skills curriculum is developed in support of the grant, it is required that the curriculum and any corresponding competencies are made available for sharing as a best practice.

Please note: This grant is issued through US Department of Labor federal funds. Funds must be used in accordance with all Federal statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of this grant, including the OMB Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance, 2 CFR 200).

In Compliance with the Uniform Guidance, 2 CFT 200.33, “equipment” is defined as any tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and a cost equal to exceeding the organization’s capitalization rate of \$5000 per item, whichever is lowest. Expenditures for “equipment” are unallowable unless they are made with prior written approval from the SC Department of Employment and Workforce via the MWDB.

The Uniform Guidance considers “information technology systems,” which includes software, to be “equipment”. Therefore, software purchases falling within the definition of “equipment” above will require prior written approval from DEW. Similarly the purchase of computers or laptops meeting the definition of “equipment” above will require prior written approval from DEW.

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<sup>3</sup> 29 USC 3111 §101(3)(7)(A) as defined in the Museum and Library Services Act (20 USC 9101 §202))

### **Partnership and Collaboration**

Due to the restrictions on the expenditure of funds for software and other information technology systems, it is strongly encouraged that the applicants partner and collaborate with relevant workforce, educational, and community partners. Computer training labs are available at SC Works offices in Columbia and Lexington five days per week, all day. A computer training lab is available at the SC Works office in Winnsboro is available one day per week, in the morning. Access to those training labs will be made available to the successful applicant(s) pending schedule coordination with the Midlands Center Operator's designee.

Additional collaborative sites must be demonstrated through Letters of Support that express the entity's intent to be a partner and specifically define the entity's role and responsibilities related to grant implementation. If awarded a grant, applicants must obtain a written agreement via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or a contract to partner with the entity no later than 3 months from the beginning of the grant.

### **Participant Tracking and Data Management**

Grantees are expected to utilize the SC Works Online Services System (SCWOS) to track participant activities and performance outcomes. Training will be provided to ensure correct use of SCWOS.

### **Grantee Orientation**

MWDB staff will provide an orientation to any entity awarded a Digital Literacy Demo Grant. It will cover financial and programmatic reporting, participant tracking in SCWOS, and general grant expectations. The orientation will take place in the MWDB administrative office.

### **Application Narrative**

Applicants for grant funding must clearly and completely respond to the following questions, highlighting throughout their ability, unique qualifications, and plan for implementing a digital literacy program. Failure to thoroughly and honestly answer questions will result in an incomplete application and disqualification. Please be sure to include any additional relevant information as necessary.

#### **1. Applicant Information**

- a. Provide the full name, mailing address, physical address, phone number and web address of the entity/organization applying for grant funding.
- b. Provide a point of contact for the application and program implementation, including the individual's name, mailing address, physical address (if different from mailing address) and email address.
- c. Provide a complete and thorough overview of the entity/organization applying for funding, including the organizational structure and demonstrated related experience.
- d. Provide the entity's Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and a summary of each Federally-funded grant or program the entity has administered, including the entity's fiscal and programmatic performance on the grant.

#### **2. Project Design<sup>4</sup>** Project plans should contain and address the following components:

- a. **Participant Selection:** Describe in detail the process that will be implemented to recruit individuals to participate in the program. How many participants does the program hope to serve? How will the program be promoted and will the program leverage partnerships in the outreach process? It is encouraged that applications demonstrate an effective method for improving digital literacy skills in at least one of the SC's priority populations identified by the State Workforce Board, as listed below:
  - Individuals with a Disability
  - Veterans

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<sup>4</sup> Please note: Facilities and equipment used during the grant must be accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities.

- Youth with Barriers – ages 16-24 who are: low-income, basic skills deficient or English language learner, secondary school drop-outs, offenders, homeless, in foster care or aged out of foster care, pregnant or parenting or disabled.
- Long Term Unemployed
- Ex-Offenders
- Homeless

**b. Instructional Model and Curriculum Development**

1. Please provide a detailed description of the curriculum or instructional model. In addition, complete the Digital Literacy Competencies Worksheet (Attachment A). What competencies will be addressed through instruction?
2. How will the program integrate employment preparation activities and soft skills in alignment with its digital literacy curriculum or instructional model?
3. Will a pre-existing curriculum or instructional model be used? If no, will a curriculum be developed to meet program requirements? Which partner, if any, will assist in the development of the curriculum?
4. How will the curriculum be delivered?
5. If known, identify the physical location(s) where regularly scheduled classes will meet, the proposed days and times for instruction, and identify the proposed days and times participants will have access to program staff. Similarly, identify existing equipment and supplies that will be used in support of the program goals.
6. Existing programs: If the program will be using funding to supplement an existing program, please provide a thorough description of what the existing program offers and how the program plans to incorporate digital literacy skills in its existing curriculum.

**c. Implementation:** Provide a thorough and detailed timeline for the grant’s implementation.

**d. Project Outcomes:** Please list and thoroughly detail the applicant’s expected outcomes for this project. What digital literacy competencies will participants gain? How will you measure participant skills gain? Please describe any assessment you may use and how it incorporates digital literacy skills. What certificates or credentials will be available to participants as a result? Overall, how will this program work to close the digital skills gap?

**e. Sustainability** Thoroughly discuss your plan for sustaining the program after the grant ends.

**3. Partnerships and Collaboration**

- a. Partnership and collaboration is strongly encouraged in this program. Identify the organizations/entities that will partner or contribute to your digital literacy program. How will you engage your partners? How will partner resources and services be leveraged to promote the program to potential participants? How will partner resources be used to provide components of the program design? Identify opportunities for enrollment in WIOA or similar programs, especially for the provision of occupational specific training and supportive services.
- b. Attach letters of support from each organization /entity that will participate in the deployment of your digital literacy program. Letters of support should clearly express the organization’s intent to be a partner and specifically define the entity’s role and responsibilities.

**4. Budget and Narrative**

Use the attached Budget Planning Worksheet (Attachment B) template to develop a grant budget. If awarded a grant, you will be required to complete a detailed budget and to submit monthly Financial Status Reports (FSRs) on or before the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month.

- a. Salaries and Fringe Benefits: Identify the hourly wage, number of proposed weekly hours and number of weeks of all employees providing services through the grant. Clearly identify each fringe benefit to be received and the projected cost.

- b. Equipment and Supplies: Provide an inventory of the equipment and supplies that will be needed to fully implement the grant program, including a summary of the item(s) that will be used, and an estimated cost for each. How will each item further the goals of the grant?
- c. Participant Assessments: Provide an inventory of participant assessments that may be used in the program, including a summary of each and the estimated cost per assessment.
- d. Grant Administration: Provide a detailed explanation and inventory of the funding budgeted for grant administration purposes.
- e. Indirect Costs: Provide the indirect cost rate approved by the applicant’s cognizant agency, including a description of how the cost rate is applied. Attach a copy of the indirect cost rate agreement to the application for funding.
- f. Contributions: Contributions from partner entities are not required but are encouraged. When applicable, provide the amount and source of such funds.
- g. All Other Expenses: Provide a detailed description and inventory of all other expenses anticipated during the grant program, including those that do not fall into a preexisting budget narrative category.

**Evaluation**

Applications will be reviewed, evaluated and scored by a panel based on the criteria below and further explained in the attached rubric (Attachment C). Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Points (maximum)</b>
1. Project Design	45
2. Participant Population	5
3. Partner Collaboration	20
4. Expected Outcomes	20
5. Budget and Projected Costs	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

**Submission Process**

Applications are due no later than Noon, Friday, March 1, 2019 and should be submitted through email to [mwdb@midlandsworkforce.org](mailto:mwdb@midlandsworkforce.org). We encourage interested applicants to submit questions to the same address no later than February 15, 2019. Questions posed and their answers will be posted to the MWDB website no later than February 20 2019.

**Award Timeline**

February 1 2019 – RFP Issued  
 February 15 2019 – Questions due  
 March 1 2019 – Applications due  
 April 1 2019 – Grant(s) begin

**Attachments**

Attachment A – Digital Literacy Competencies Worksheet  
 Attachment B – Budget Planning Worksheet  
 Attachment C – Application Evaluation and Scoring Rubric

**ATTACHMENT A**  
**DIGITAL LITERACY COMPETENCIES WORKSHEET**

Please use this worksheet to describe in detail the competencies your digital literacy program plans on addressing, including strategies for achievement, integration of employment preparation activities, and integration of the Job Ready U soft skills curriculum. *Please note:* the space provided on this worksheet is not indicative of the number of competencies programs that are expected to be addressed. Attach additional worksheets as necessary.

Competency:
Strategy for achievement:
How will employment preparation activities be integrated into your strategy?
How will your strategy address the development of soft skills?

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**ATTACHMENT C  
EVALUATION RUBRIC**

**Instructions:** Use the rubric to evaluate and core complete applications. Using numbers 1-3, rate your opinion of how well the applicant’s proposal addresses the criterion listed below. Do not make assumptions about missing background or project information. Review only what is included in the application. Enter the raw score for each criterion in column 5. Total the raw score and enter it on the bottom of column 5. Provide comments on both the strengths and weaknesses of the applicant’s proposal to justify your score.

<u>Applicant Name:</u>		<u>Reviewed By:</u>		<u>Date Reviewed:</u>	
<u>Criterion</u>	<u>3 – Exemplary</u>	<u>2 – Adequate</u>	<u>1 – Need Improvement</u>	<u>Raw Score</u>	
<b>Project Design (weight – 45%)</b>	The project has a thorough and effective design with a well-defined plan of action for achieving the strategies in the competencies worksheet. The design aligns with grant objectives.	Adequate project design with defined action plan & strategies for implementation but design is somewhat unclear and/or disorganized. Application includes competencies worksheet, but strategies are unclear or not in alignment with grant objectives.	Project design is vague. No clear plan of action or strategies for implementation. Project design does not align with the objectives of the grant. Application either includes an incomplete competencies worksheet or none.		
<b>Participant Population (weight – 5%)</b>	The project addresses the skills gap by focusing on one or more of the priority populations identified in the grant.	The project addresses the skills gap in one or more of the identified priority populations but the focus on the populations is somewhat unclear and/or disorganized.	The project does not address the skills gap in one or more of the four priority populations identified.		
<b>Partner Collaboration (weight – 20%)</b>	Narrative includes a thorough and complete discussion on the inclusion and engagement or partners, identifying appropriate collaborative partners, each of which add considerable value to the program.	Narrative includes an adequate discussion on the inclusion and engagement of partners but only shows some indication of appropriate collaborative partners and lacks clearly defined roles and contributions expected of each partner.	Critical project partner(s) are missing from the project design and/or partner contributions are unclear.		
<b>Expected Outcomes (weight – 20%)</b>	The project is clearly aligned with the grant objectives and provides a framework for achieving multiple digital literacy competencies in the context of employment preparation activities and soft skills development.	The project is somewhat aligned with the grant objectives and/or the narrative does not describe a comprehensive method for achieving multiple digital literacy competencies.	The project is not aligned with the grant objectives and the narrative does not include any methods for achieving digital competencies.		
<b>Budget &amp; Projected Costs (weight – 10%)</b>	Application includes a reasonable and complete budget and budget narrative. Budget is linked to activities and outcomes and does not exceed project limitations.	Application includes a budget and narrative that is complete but only somewhat reasonable or detailed; budget items are directly related to activities and outcomes, and do not exceed limitations.	Application includes a budget and budget narrative that lacks required information and detail; budget items do not relate to activities and outcomes, and/or exceeds limitations.		
				<b>Total Raw Score (Max Score = 15)</b>	
<input type="radio"/> Recommended for Funding <input type="radio"/> Not recommended for funding				<b>Total Weighted Score (Max Score = 100)</b>	