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## **Consultation Guide on the Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) for ETA Partner Intergovernmental Organizations**

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### **Background:**

- The Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011 established the Workforce Innovation Fund (the Fund). Modeled after the President's FY2012 budget request, the Fund provides \$124.7 million to fund projects that demonstrate innovative strategies or replicate effective evidence-based strategies that align and strengthen the employment outcomes for program beneficiaries.
- Eligible applicants for these competitive grants are states, state agencies, consortia of states, or partnerships, including regional partnerships (which ETA interprets to include partnerships of Local Workforce Investment Boards).
- Specifically, the Administration intends that the Fund:
  - invest in projects that deliver services more efficiently and achieve better outcomes, particularly for vulnerable populations and dislocated workers;
  - support both structural reforms and the delivery of services;
  - emphasize building knowledge about effective practices through rigorous evaluation;
  - translate into improved labor market outcomes and increased cost efficiency and other measures in the regular formula programs; and
  - encourage the use of waivers to facilitate cooperation across programs and funding streams.

### **Goals: What do we hope to accomplish through a Consultation Process?**

With the overarching goals of improving service delivery and outcomes for jobseeker and employer customers of the public workforce system, it is critical that ETA make its investments wisely. The consultation process will help inform ETA on how to shape the Fund. The goals of consultation include the following:

- Raise awareness of the Workforce Innovation Fund – its intent and scope.
- Learn of cutting edge or innovative ideas that the workforce system may be interested in piloting and determine major strategies that may warrant replication on a broader scale.
- Obtain feedback on the desired balance between testing out new ideas and replicating existing ones.
- Determine effective ways to share outcomes and best practices from the investments with the workforce system.

### **Overview of Consultation Process:**

With a compressed time schedule to implement the Fund, we are embarking on a consultation process that provides opportunities for input through both in-person meetings and virtual forums, including:

- **Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs)** – Conduct meeting with IGOs to present paper and encourage IGOs to use this guide to consult with their constituencies and provide feedback.
- **State and Local Workforce Organizations** – Conduct two national virtual listening sessions for state and local leaders; and encourage ETA Regional Administrators to use guide to generate feedback in upcoming meetings or conference calls.
- **Congressional Members** – Meet with members of the key authorizing and appropriating committees.
- **Researchers** – Talk informally to well-known researchers in the workforce development field who have conducted recent studies to glean ideas on system innovation.
- **Foundations** – Reach out informally to Workforce Matters, an affinity group of workforce funders, and others to gather information on private investments in innovative workforce strategies.

### **Discussion Questions for Consultations with IGOs:**

#### **Implementing New Ideas:**

- What does your state or region consider its big ideas or strategies for advancing innovation in the workforce system?
- What elements make a program or strategy “innovative?”
- What new partnerships or relationships would states or local areas need to successfully innovate?
- Are there ideas that your state or region would like to implement that your state or region has not been able to due to statutory or regulatory constraints? If so, what are those ideas and what are the policy or programmatic barriers preventing your state or region from moving forward?

#### **Areas of Emphasis:**

- What should be the focus areas for the Workforce Innovation Fund?
- The Fund could focus on two possible areas:
  1. Systemic/Structural Innovations – For example:
    - Changes in state/local structures and policies that enable closer alignment of workforce development, education, and economic development systems.
    - Structural reforms that make it easier for state and local agencies to share data, combine resources, and develop integrated programs.
  2. Service Delivery Innovations – For example:
    - Leveraging new technology to improve services for job seekers and employers.
    - Implementing career pathway approaches that enable low-skilled youth and adults to succeed in postsecondary education and industry-recognized credentials.
    - Developing local and regional partnerships with employers, community colleges, community-based organizations, universities, and others to leverage resources and coordinate activities.

**Replicating Effective Strategies:**

- After 13 years, the WIA system has launched effective strategies that benefit customers and yield returns. Can you point to a few of these strategies or practices that you believe should be replicated? How do you know that they are effective?
- What kind of information would we need to obtain from the applicant to determine whether the strategy or practice is ready for replication?

**Measuring and Evaluating Results:**

- What are the key goals that we should be trying to achieve with the Workforce Innovation Fund? Possibilities include:
  - Lead to better employment outcomes for individuals
  - Meet the skill needs of employers
  - Accelerate learning and credential attainment
  - Increase efficiencies in the delivery of services
- What measurements beyond the common measures should be used to ensure continuous improvement during project implementation and to indicate success at the end of a project?
- Do states and local areas have the capacity to procure their own evaluations using a set-aside of grant dollars or leveraging other funds?
- What kind of technical assistance would grantees need to assist them in implementing an evaluation?

**Sharing Lessons Learned and Best Practices:**

- What steps can ETA take to facilitate the sharing of information and lessons learned from the Workforce Innovation Fund grantees?

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**Please share ideas and feedback with via email to:**  
**[Workforce.Innovation@dol.gov](mailto:Workforce.Innovation@dol.gov)**