



Funding Opportunity Announcement

Grant Application Guide

October 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR: TDLWD, TN Talent Initiative

ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE: Initial

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: **FOA-TN-MCTI-27-01**

KEY DATES: The closing date for receipt of applications under this Announcement is 09/25/2026. We must receive applications no later than 4:30 pm Central Time.

Submit all applications in response to this solicitation via email at tn.works@tn.gov. For complete application and submission information, including application instructions, please refer to page 14.

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Executive Summary

The Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) through TNWorks has launched the TN Talent Initiative, a statewide investment designed to strengthen Tennessee's workforce by expanding access to industry-recognized, short-term training opportunities aligned with regional labor market demand. This state-funded initiative will support cohort-based and bootcamp-style training models that equip Tennesseans with the skills and credentials needed to enter, advance, or remain employed in high-demand and emerging industries.

The TN Talent Initiative represents a strategic investment in Tennessee's regional workforce system. Through collaboration among employers, education and training providers, workforce and economic development partners, American Job Centers (AJCs), community-based organizations, and other regional partners, the initiative seeks to support training models that respond directly to employer needs and produce measurable workforce outcomes.

Projects funded through this initiative should demonstrate strong employer engagement, regional collaboration, and clear participant outcomes, including training completion, credential attainment, and employment placement or advancement. Applicants are encouraged to leverage existing workforce and education assets while delivering short-term, industry-recognized training cohorts that prepare participants for employment opportunities connected to participating employer partners.

TDLWD is committed to expanding access to workforce opportunities for individuals who face barriers to employment or education. Applicants are encouraged to develop targeted recruitment and support strategies that increase participation among priority populations, including unemployed and underemployed individuals, incumbent workers seeking to upskill, veterans, justice-involved youth and adults, rural communities, individuals with disabilities, and other underserved populations identified through regional workforce planning.

Through the TN Talent Initiative, TNWorks seeks to strengthen regional workforce ecosystems, increase employer competitiveness, and create clear, accelerated pathways to economic opportunity for Tennesseans.

Successful projects will build regional talent partnerships that connect employers, education and training providers, workforce organizations, and community partners to deliver cohort-based credential training responsive to documented regional workforce needs.

Program Purpose

The purpose of this Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) is to support cohort-based and bootcamp-style training models that prepare Tennesseans for employment or advancement in high-demand industries. Through the TN Talent Initiative, TDLWD seeks to invest in short-term, industry-recognized credential training that responds to documented regional workforce needs and connects participants directly to employment opportunities with committed employer partners.

The TN Talent Initiative recognizes that workforce challenges vary across Tennessee and are best addressed through regional collaboration. Applicants are encouraged to develop partnerships that bring together employers, education and training providers, Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), American Job Centers (AJCs), community-based organizations, economic development partners, and other regional stakeholders to recruit participants, deliver training, support credential completion, and connect successful participants to employment or advancement opportunities.

Projects funded through this initiative should demonstrate:

- Strong regional partnerships that leverage existing workforce and education resources;
- Employer-driven training models that lead to industry-recognized credentials and employment or advancement opportunities;
- Cohort-based or bootcamp-style program designs that allow participants to complete training in a defined, accelerated timeframe;
- Targeted recruitment and support strategies that expand access for priority populations and reduce barriers to participation; and
- Measurable outcomes that include enrollment, completion, credential attainment, employment placement, and incumbent worker advancement, as applicable.

Applicants must secure formal commitments from employers and other key partners demonstrating shared responsibility for project implementation and participant success. Partnership commitments should clearly define each partner's role in activities such as program design, curriculum validation, participant recruitment, supportive services, career navigation, training delivery, interviews, hiring, employment placement, incumbent worker advancement, or other project activities. Acceptable documentation includes partner-specific Letters of

Commitment, Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), partnership agreements, or other written agreements. Generic or form letters that do not clearly identify a partner's unique responsibilities will not be considered responsive to this requirement.

Through the TN Talent Initiative, TDLWD seeks to invest in regional workforce partnerships that deliver short-term credential training, respond to employer demand, and create accelerated pathways to economic opportunity for Tennesseans.

Alignment with Tennessee's Workforce Strategy and Investment Priorities

The TN Talent Initiative supports Tennessee's broader workforce strategy by investing in regional partnerships that prepare Tennesseans for employment in high-demand and emerging industries. Proposed projects should demonstrate how program design, partnerships, and anticipated outcomes contribute to a future-ready, employer-driven workforce ecosystem.

Applicants should clearly demonstrate alignment with the following guiding principles:

- **Industry-Driven Alignment** — Programs should respond to documented employer demand and regional labor market needs identified using Labor Market Information and comparable data sources. [Labor Market Information Tutorial Videos](#)
- **Equity and Access** — Projects should expand access to short-term training for priority populations and reduce barriers to participation and completion.
- **Collaboration and System Alignment** — Projects should leverage existing workforce, education, employer, and community resources through coordinated regional partnerships.
- **Innovation and Flexibility** — Programs should incorporate flexible, cohort-based, or bootcamp-style training models that support accelerated credential attainment and employment outcomes.
- **Accountability and Continuous Improvement** — Applicants should establish measurable outcomes and use performance data to evaluate and strengthen project effectiveness.

Note: Please see the Expected Performance section for clearly defined metrics by which each grantee will be evaluated.

Applicants should also describe how their proposed project advances one or more of the following investment priorities:

Deliver Regional Talent Cohorts

Deliver or expand cohort-based, bootcamp-style, industry-recognized training programs that respond to documented regional workforce needs and prepare participants for employment or advancement in priority industries.

Strengthen Regional Partnerships

Demonstrate meaningful collaboration among employers, education and training providers, Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), American Job Centers (AJCs), community-based organizations, economic development organizations, and other regional stakeholders. Partnerships should support participant recruitment, training delivery, credential attainment, employment outcomes, and long-term sustainability.

Expand Access to Workforce Opportunities

Implement targeted recruitment and support strategies for priority populations, including unemployed and underemployed individuals, incumbent workers, justice-involved youth and adults, rural communities, individuals with disabilities, and other populations identified through regional workforce planning.

Applicants should identify the counties they intend to serve and describe how the proposed project responds to regional workforce needs.

Align Training with Employer Demand

Employers should play an active role in identifying workforce needs, validating training content, supporting participant success, and creating interview, hiring, placement, or advancement opportunities for successful program participants.

Leverage Regional Workforce Resources

Applicants should build upon existing workforce infrastructure rather than duplicate services. Projects should leverage regional assets, including American Job Centers, Local Workforce Development Boards, postsecondary institutions, Adult Education providers, human services organizations, community-based organizations, and economic development partners.

Applicants should describe how participant supportive services will be coordinated through regional partnerships whenever practicable. The allowability of grant-funded supportive services, if proposed, may be evaluated and negotiated prior to award.

Promote Sustainability

Applicants should describe how partnerships, training cohorts, employer engagement, and workforce strategies will continue beyond the grant period.

Priority Industries

Projects funded through the TN Talent Initiative should prepare participants for employment in industries that are critical to Tennessee's economy and responsive to regional labor market demand. Applicants must demonstrate that the proposed training model aligns with one or more of the following priority industries:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Information Technology (IT) and Quantum Technologies
- Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics
- Construction and Skilled Trades

Refer to the Labor Market Information (LMI) webpage to obtain data for your region:
[Labor Market Information Tutorial Videos](#)

Eligible Applicants and Partnership Requirements

Grants funded through this Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) will be awarded to regional talent partnerships consisting of public and private sector organizations working collaboratively to address regional workforce needs through short-term, cohort-based training. Awards will be made to a designated Lead Applicant, who will serve as the grantee and assume full fiscal and administrative responsibility for the grant, including project implementation, financial management, training delivery coordination, and performance reporting.

To be eligible, the Lead Applicant must:

- Meet the eligibility requirements described below; and
- Demonstrate a collaborative partnership that includes employers, education and training providers, workforce development stakeholders, and

community partners committed to recruiting participants, supporting training completion, and achieving employment or advancement outcomes.

Eligible Lead Applicants

The following entities are eligible to serve as the Lead Applicant:

- **Public or Private Postsecondary Educational Institutions**, including Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs), community colleges, technical colleges, and universities authorized to provide workforce education and industry-recognized credential programs.
- **Workforce Development Organizations**, including Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) and nonprofit organizations with demonstrated experience administering workforce development programs or coordinating regional workforce partnerships.
- **Industry Associations and Employer Organizations**, including trade associations, employer consortiums, chambers of commerce, and other employer-led organizations representing Tennessee's priority industries.
- **Labor Unions and Labor-Management Partnerships** that provide or support workforce training and credential attainment.
- **State, County, or Local Government Entities** engaged in workforce, education, or economic development initiatives.
- **Community-Based and Nonprofit Organizations** with demonstrated experience providing workforce development, education, career navigation, employment services, or other programs that support participant success.

Required Partnership Components

Each application must demonstrate active collaboration among partners that collectively support participant recruitment, training, credential attainment employment, and long-term workforce development.

At a minimum, each Regional Talent Partnership must include:

- At least **three (3) employers** representing the targeted industry sector and committed to supporting participant employment outcomes;
- At least **one (1) education or training provider** responsible for delivering the proposed short-term training credential program; and

- At least **one (1) workforce system partner**, such as a Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) or American Job Center (AJC), to support participant recruitment, career services, and coordination with Tennessee's public workforce system.

Applicants are encouraged to include additional partners such as Local Education Agencies (LEAs), secondary Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, Adult Education providers, community-based organizations, economic development organizations, and other regional stakeholders that strengthen talent pipeline development, participant success, and regional workforce capacity where applicable.

Partnership Documentation

Applications must include documentation demonstrating each partner's commitment to the proposed project.

Acceptable documentation includes:

- Letters of Commitment;
- Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs);
- Partnership Agreements; or
- Other written agreements acceptable to TDLWD.

Partnership documentation must be specific to each partner and clearly describe that organization's unique role and responsibilities. Generic or form letters that differ only by organization name or signature will not satisfy this requirement.

Each partnership document should clearly identify, as applicable:

- The partner's role and responsibilities;
- The activities, services, expertise, or resources the partner will contribute;
- How the partner will support participant recruitment, training delivery, credential attainment, career navigation, supportive services, employer engagement, or employment outcomes; and
- The partner's commitment to participating throughout the grant period and supporting the long-term sustainability of the project.

TDLWD will evaluate partnership documentation based on the quality and substance of partner commitments, not the quantity of letters submitted.

Funding Availability and Timeline

Approximately \$3,000,000 is available through this Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA).

The TN Talent Initiative is designed to support Regional Talent Partnerships that deliver or expand short-term, cohort-based, or bootcamp-style training programs aligned with regional workforce needs and employer demand. TDLWD anticipates making approximately 8–12 competitive awards under this initiative.

Individual awards are expected to range from \$250,000 to \$400,000. Applicants should request funding that is reasonable and proportional to the proposed scope of work, geographic reach, number of participants to be served, anticipated cohort size, training costs, credential outcomes, employment outcomes, and demonstrated regional partnerships.

Submission of an application does not guarantee funding.

TDLWD reserves the right to:

- Award less than the amount requested;
- Negotiate project scope, budget, performance targets, and allowable costs prior to award;
- Fund all or part of an application;
- Make no awards under this FOA; or
- Increase or decrease the number of awards based on available funding and the quality of applications received.

Allowable Use of Funds

Grant funds are intended primarily to support the delivery and expansion of industry-recognized, short-term training programs delivered through cohort-based or bootcamp-style models.

Examples of allowable costs include, but are not limited to:

- Instructional personnel;
- Tuition and instructional costs;
- Industry-recognized credential, certification, licensing, and testing fees;
- Required instructional materials, supplies, equipment, uniforms, tools, and technology;

- Curriculum development, enhancement, or customization necessary to align training with employer demand;
- Employer engagement activities directly connected to training design, participant success, interviews, hiring, placement, or incumbent worker advancement; and
- Grant administration. Allowable administrative costs include salaries, fringe benefits, travel, supplies, and other operational costs necessary for successful implementation. Administrative costs may not exceed 10 percent of the total award.

Applicants should clearly justify any proposed costs that fall outside these categories.

Participant Support Services

Applicants should identify anticipated participant support needs and describe how those needs will be addressed through coordinated regional partnerships.

Whenever practicable, applicants are expected to leverage existing resources available through Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), American Job Centers (AJCs), community-based organizations, human service agencies, and other regional partners to address barriers to participation.

The allowability of grant-funded participant support services, if proposed, will be evaluated during the application review process and may be negotiated prior to award.

Grant Administration and Timeline

Awards will operate on a cost reimbursement basis, and administrative costs may not exceed 10% of the total award. Grantees will be reimbursed only for approved, allowable expenditures incurred during the grant period and supported by appropriate financial documentation.

Additional guidance regarding invoicing, reimbursement procedures, and reporting requirements will be provided during post-award orientation and contract negotiations.

Recapture and Reallotment

These funds shall be subject to state recapture if grantees fail to meet performance or obligation thresholds. Recaptured funds shall be reallocated to grantees meeting and/or exceeding (high performing) performance goals.

GRANT TIMELINE	
Funding Announcement Release Date	September 14, 2026
Q&A Information Session	September 17, 2026 10am CST (email to register below)
Applications Due by 4:30 pm CST	September 25, 2026
Application Review Period	September 28- October 2, 2026
Notification of Awards	October 7, 2026
Training Session for Grantees	TBD
Contract and Performance Period	October 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027

To register for the FOA Q&A Session on 9/17/26, please email: tn.works@tn.gov and include the following:

Subject: TN Talent Initiative Q&A

- **Organization Name**
- **Primary Contact Name**
- **Primary Contact email address**

Performance Expectations

Successful applicants will establish project-specific quarterly performance milestones during contract negotiations. Quarterly milestones should align with the approved project timeline, anticipated cohort schedule, participant recruitment plan, training duration, and expected participant flow from enrollment through completion, credential attainment, and employment or advancement.

Quarterly milestones should demonstrate reasonable progress toward achieving the project's approved annual performance targets. While quarterly participant outcomes may vary based on training duration, cohort timing, and program design, awardees are expected to demonstrate continuous progress throughout the period of performance.

At a minimum, reports will include progress toward:

- Participant recruitment, screening, and enrollment;
- Number of cohorts launched and completed;
- Training participation and completion;

- Industry-recognized credential attainment;
- Employment placement and incumbent worker advancement, as applicable;
- Employer engagement activities, including interviews, hiring events, work-based learning, or other employment connection activities;
- Regional partnership activities;
- Expenditures compared to budget; and
- Progress toward annual performance targets.

If quarterly performance falls significantly behind approved milestones, TDLWD may require a corrective action plan, technical assistance, budget adjustment, recapture of funds, or other actions necessary to improve project performance.

Required Annual Performance Standards

As a condition of award, all grantees will be expected to achieve, at a minimum, the following performance standards by the end of the grant period.

Performance Measure	Minimum Standard
Training Completion	80% of enrolled participants
Credential Attainment	75% of training completers
Employment Placement*	70% of job-seeking participants within six months of completion
Incumbent Worker Retention/Advancement*	70% retained, promoted, or advanced within six months
Performance Reporting	100% of required reports submitted on time

*Measures apply only to the applicable participant population.

Required Quarterly Reporting Elements

Category	Reporting Requirement
Enrollment	Actual vs. projected enrollment (quarterly & monthly)
Training Progress	Participants actively enrolled and completed (quarterly & monthly)
Credentials	Credentials earned (quarterly & monthly)
Employment	Placements and incumbent worker outcomes
Geography	Counties served and participants by county
Priority Populations	Outcomes by target population
Employer Engagement	Employers actively participating

Budget	Expenditures and remaining balance
Milestones	Progress toward approved quarterly milestones

Application Requirements

Applications must include the following components:

Cover Page

Applicants must submit the official TDLWD cover page that includes:

- Organization name;
- Lead Applicant contact information;
- Regional service area and counties to be served;
- Funding amount requested; and
- Funding category (if applicable).

Project Summary

Applicants must include a Project Summary that provides a concise overview of the proposed project. The Project Summary may not exceed one page and should include:

- The regional workforce need the project will address;
- The priority industry sector(s) and target occupation(s);
- The credential(s) or certification(s) participants will earn;
- The proposed cohort or bootcamp training model, including anticipated number of cohorts and participants served;
- The employer partner(s) and their role in supporting hiring, placement, or advancement outcomes;
- The training provider(s) and key workforce or community partners;
- The target population(s) to be served; and
- The expected outcomes, including enrollment, completion, credential attainment, and employment or advancement.

The Project Summary should be written in plain language and should allow reviewers to understand the proposed project, partners, participants, and expected outcomes before reviewing the full Project Narrative.

Project Narrative

The Project Narrative should clearly describe the proposed Regional Talent Partnership and how the project will deliver short-term, cohort-based or bootcamp-style training aligned with documented employer demand.

The Project Narrative may not exceed 10 pages, excluding the cover page, project summary one pager, budget, budget narrative, required attachments, and partnership documentation.

At a minimum, applicants must address the following:

Organizational Capacity

Describe the Lead Applicant's experience administering workforce development, education, or training programs, including demonstrated success serving employers or participants in high-demand industries.

Demonstrated Experience and Return on Investment

Applicants must demonstrate their organization's experience implementing workforce development, education, training, or talent development initiatives of similar scope or complexity.

Applicants should describe up to three (3) comparable projects completed within the past five years and include, at a minimum:

- The funding source or customer (e.g., federal, state, local, private, employer-sponsored, philanthropic);
- Project period and total funding amount;
- Target population served;
- Number of participants enrolled;
- Number of participants completing training;
- Number of industry-recognized credentials earned;
- Employment placement and/or incumbent worker advancement outcomes, as applicable;
- Performance outcomes achieved compared to proposed goals;
- Leveraged partnerships; and

- Any measurable return on investment (ROI) or other documented outcomes demonstrating project effectiveness.

Applicants should also describe any lessons learned from previous projects and how those experiences have informed the proposed project design.

TDLWD reserves the right to verify prior performance and outcomes through grant records, monitoring reports, public information, or by contacting funding agencies, employer partners, or other references identified in the application.

Regional Workforce Need

Describe the regional workforce need the project will address, including:

- Geographic service area and counties to be served;
- Labor market information supporting the proposed credential pathway(s);
- Target occupations and industries; and
- Employer demand within the region.

Regional Talent Partnership

Describe each project partner and explain how the partnership will support project implementation, participant success, and long-term sustainability.

Applicants should clearly identify the role of employers, education and training providers, Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) or American Job Centers (AJCs), community-based organizations, and other partners.

Program Design

Describe the proposed training model, including:

- Credential(s) or certification(s) offered;
- Training provider(s);
- Number of cohorts to be delivered;
- Anticipated cohort size(s);
- Training length and schedule;
- Participant eligibility criteria, if applicable;
- Cost per participant;
- Training and milestone/outcomes timeline;

- Career pathways supported by the proposed program; and
- How participants will transition from training completion to employment, or career advancement.

Participant Recruitment and Success

Describe strategies for:

- Recruiting participants;
- Serving priority populations (i.e. veterans, justice involved youth and adults, rural communities, individuals with disabilities, etc.);
- Coordinating supportive services through regional partners; and
- Connecting participants to employment opportunities.

Applicants should identify the counties they intend to serve and explain how recruitment strategies will support regional workforce priorities.

Employer Engagement

Describe how employers will participate in the proposed project, including their role in identifying workforce needs, validating training content, supporting recruitment, participating in interviews or hiring events, offering work-based learning where appropriate, hiring successful completers, or supporting incumbent worker advancement.

Sustainability

Describe how the Regional Talent Partnership, credential pathway(s), and employer relationships will continue beyond the grant period.

Expected Outcomes

Applicants should propose measurable outcomes for participant enrollment, credential attainment, employment, employer engagement, and other anticipated project results. Final performance targets will be negotiated with TDLWD prior to contract execution.

Partnership Documentation

Applications must include partner-specific Letters of Commitment, Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), or partnership agreements consistent with the requirements outlined in the Eligible Applicants and Partnership Requirements section.

Budget and Budget Narrative

Applicants must submit the required budget workbook and budget narrative. (template attached)

The budget narrative should clearly explain how requested funds support the proposed project and align with the objectives of the TN Talent Initiative.

Lead applicants selected for funding should be prepared to register as a vendor with the State of Tennessee and in Smart Simple for reporting. See attached documents for instructions.

Application Format

Applications must:

- Include all required attachments (summary, partnership documentation, budget, budget narrative)
- Be submitted in narrative format;
- Use a 12-point Times New Roman or Open Sans font;
- Be double-spaced;
- Include page numbers and the applicant's name in the header;
- Include clearly labeled section headings; and
- Be submitted as a Microsoft Word document or PDF.
- Not exceed 10 pages (excluding project summary, attachments, and budget)

Failure to submit all required application components may result in the application being deemed non-responsive or receiving a reduced score during the competitive review process.

Applications are due by 4:30pm CST on September 25, 2026.

Submit application via email to the following:

Attention: tn.works@tn.gov

CC: stephanie.mcculloch@tn.gov

Subject: TN Talent Initiative Funding Opportunity Number: FOA-TN-MCTI-27-01