



Mountain Area

Business Accelerator Grant For Incumbent Worker Training

BUSINESS GUIDELINES

Program Year

July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019

PY 18/19

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FOR INCUMBENT WORKER TRAINING

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KEY POINTS:

- The Business Accelerator Grant for incumbent worker training is a competitive training grant through which qualifying businesses can address employees' skills gaps. These skills gaps can be a result of a worker's changing responsibilities/requirements in her/his job, or for a worker whose job may potentially be eliminated and skill upgrading is needed to accept new responsibilities. The training should result in increased knowledge/skills for the employee and increase the stability and competitiveness of the employer. Training that provides a significant step towards achieving an industry-recognized certification/credential is important.
- North Carolina for-profit and not-for-profit businesses located in the four counties of Mountain Area (Buncombe, Henderson, Madison & Transylvania Counties) that have been in operation in Mountain Area for at least one year prior to submission of the application are eligible to apply. The business must have an employer-employee relationship with at least five or more employees who have been employed by the company in Mountain Area for a minimum of six months prior to the application deadline. Businesses that are current on all federal, state, and local tax obligations and are financially viable, are eligible to apply.
- **The Business Accelerator Grant is a cost reimbursement grant.** Businesses are reimbursed upon completion of the proposed training with required documentation. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis and are dependent upon the availability of funding. Mountain Area may commit up to \$100,000 for PY 18/19 (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019). The maximum grant amount is \$10,000 per grant. There are two grant application cycles per program year. The grant recipient must be reimbursed in full before another grant application can be submitted. There is no maximum lifetime limit at this time, but one may be established based upon future funding availability.
- The Business Accelerator Grant is administered by the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board (MAWDB) with the application, information and guidelines provided by MAWDB. Applications are submitted directly to the MAWDB. The Board may request additional information or establish supplemental provisions and requirements for the training grant applications.
- For each program year, July 1 – June 30, the MAWDB will have funding available for the Business Accelerator Grant program. Funding amounts may differ from program year to program year, based on federal allocations and funding is always pending availability. Businesses should contact the Business Services Coordinator to inquire of funding availability and other requirements, including current program guidelines. Each business awarded a grant will have one year, 365 calendar days, to complete training from the date that the contract is signed.
- Application Schedule

Call for Submission of Applications	Draft Applications Due	Application Deadline	Award Announcement	Deadline for Contract
May 14 2018	N/A	July 31, 2018	Sept. 4, 2018	Nov. 2, 2018
*Jan. 7, 2019	Feb. 15, 2019	Feb. 28, 2019	April 1, 2019	May 31, 2019

***Pending funding availability**

All applications will be reviewed during the month following the application deadline by the Board's Grant Review Committee. The Committee uses an assessment scoring system for each application. The Committee will make recommendations to the Board on applications for funding. After the Board approves the recommendations the Business will be notified within in 5 business day by email and/or phone. The Business Services Coordinator will have 60 days from award notification to prepare the contract. Payment for training or training that is conducted prior to the date of the dually signed contract can not be reimbursed.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

WHAT IS AN INCUMBENT WORKER?

An incumbent worker is:

- a. At least 18 years of age and a paid employee of the applicant's business;
- b. In a relationship that meets the Fair Labor Standards Act requirements for an employer-employee;
- c. An employee with an established employment history with the employer for 6 months or more prior to the application deadline date. The employee(s) must be in an employer-employee relationship (W-2). If a cohort (3 or more employees) are taking the training together as a group, a minimum of 51% of the employees must meet the 6-month rule. The other employee(s) in the cohort must have completed a probationary period of 90 days prior to the application deadline;
- d. A citizen of the United States or a non-citizen whose status permits employment in the United States; and
- e. An employee to be trained who works at a facility located in Buncombe, Henderson, Madison or Transylvania Counties, North Carolina.

WHAT IS AN EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP?

In order for the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) minimum wage and overtime provisions to apply to a worker, the worker must be an "employee" of the employer. This means that an employment relationship must exist between the worker and the employer. The FLSA defines "employ" as the work that the employer directs or allows to take place. Workers who are economically dependent on the business of the employer and will receive a W-2 for tax filing purposes have an employer-employee relationship.

An individual who does not meet the employer-employee relationship are:

- Those who will receive a 1099 for tax filing purposes or
- Those who are placed at the applicant's business through a temporary agency and are paid by the temporary agency.

WHEN WOULD AN EMPLOYER UTILIZE THE BUSINESS ACCELERATOR GRANT?

An employer can utilize this competitive training grant when an employee has identified skills gaps that need to be addressed through training, thus enhancing the employee's continued employability and improving the business' stability.

WHICH EMPLOYEES WOULD BENEFIT FROM THE BUSINESS ACCELERATOR GRANT?

The Business Accelerator Grant is beneficial to employees who have identified skills gaps, where eligible training addresses these gaps, improves employee retention, helps stabilize the business, and will increase the competitiveness of the employee and employer. These employees either:

- Need to upgrade skills and knowledge to retain their current job;

OR

- Need to gain new skills and knowledge so they qualify for a different job with their employer.

Additionally, training that provides a significant step towards achieving an industry recognized certification or credential that increases the workers' overall employability is encouraged but not required. An ideal incumbent worker opportunity is one where a participant acquires new skills allowing him or her to move into a higher skilled and higher paid job within the company, thus allowing the company to hire a job seeker to backfill the incumbent worker's position.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

A business that is eligible to apply:

- ❖ Is a North Carolina for-profit or not-for-profit business;
- ❖ Has an employer-employee relationship with all the trainees;
- ❖ Has at least five or more employees with which there is an employer-employee relationship;
- ❖ Has been in operation in North Carolina for a minimum of one year prior to the application submission deadline date;
- ❖ Is current on all federal, state and local tax obligations;
- ❖ Is financially viable;
- ❖ The business must be located in the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board Area (Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania Counties).

WHAT IS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT BUSINESS?

A not-for-profit entity is a legally constituted organization whose primary objective is to support or to actively engage in activities of public or private interest without any commercial or monetary profit purposes. For the purpose of this grant, it is further defined as having the following characteristics: 1) has paid employees (volunteers are not eligible for training under this program); 2) pays required wage taxes; and 3) generates income through the production of products or the provision of services.

WHO IS NOT ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

The following businesses are not eligible to apply for funds under this program:

- A business currently receiving training funds, either directly or indirectly, from North Carolina state government unless those training funds do not duplicate the training efforts outlined in the grant application;
- A business that has received funds either directly or indirectly from North Carolina state government under any previous training initiative, and the terms of the agreement for training have not been met;
- A training provider, unless it is to address the skills gaps of the training provider's incumbent workers;
- The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board or its administrative entity;
- A labor union;
- A government entity;
- Entities whose primary business is education.
- A business that has received an Incumbent Worker Training Grant/Business Accelerator Grant and has not completed the training, and/or submitted all required documentation and/or received reimbursement in full.
- A business that is on the federal debarment list.

CAN A BUSINESS APPLY FOR THE BUSINESS ACCELERATOR GRANT IF IT IS ELIGIBLE FOR OTHER TYPES OF TRAINING RESOURCES, SUCH AS CUSTOMIZED TRAINING?

In addition to the Business Accelerator Grant, the North Carolina Community College System provides funds through the Customized Training Program. To maximize resources, the business must demonstrate that it is not eligible for, or has exhausted efforts to secure funding through this or other existing programs (examples: agreement on an acceptable training schedule timeline; availability of funds to meet training timeframe).

WHAT KINDS OF TRAINING CAN BE FUNDED BY THE BUSINESS ACCELERATOR GRANT?

The following types of training can be funded:

- Occupational skills training designed to meet the special requirements of a business or a group of businesses.
- Educational training defined as short courses that address the identified skills gaps and could lead to a credential or to an industry-recognized certification. The training may include a continuing education course, a curriculum course, but cannot be part of a trainee's pursuit of an educational degree.

Grant funds will be expended on training activities that take place only in North Carolina **unless** the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board approves training outside the state. If consent is given, all other rules and regulations of the Business Accelerator Grant still apply.

WHAT IS THE DESIGNATED AMOUNT PER PROGRAM YEAR FOR WHICH BUSINESSES CAN APPLY?

The Incumbent Worker Training Grant is an allowable local workforce development board service component authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The MAWDB will utilize up to 20% of formula funding to determine the availability of funds for each fiscal year. For the **2018-2019 Program Year**, the local area may commit up to \$100,000. Businesses can apply for up to \$10,000 per grant application. There are two grant application rounds per program year.

WHAT IS THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT FOR WHICH A BUSINESS CAN APPLY?

Grant funds are limited and based upon funding availability, and are awarded on a competitive basis. Eligible applicants can apply for a maximum of \$10,000/grant application. There are two grant application rounds per year. For a company to be able to apply for two grants per year, the first grant must be completed, with all required documents submitted and the total reimbursement made to the business prior to the application deadline. The MAWDB has not set a Lifetime Maximum per business at this time.

CAN A BUSINESS APPLY FOR A GRANT THAT WILL SERVE DIFFERENT, MULTIPLE BUSINESSES WITH COMMON TRAINING NEEDS?

Yes, unique businesses can partner and apply for a collaborative training grant. The businesses pursuing this approach must consult with the Business Services Coordinator, who will help coordinate this type of application. The MAWDB is encouraged to work with unique businesses in high demand sectors within the local region to complete collaborative applications. All businesses included in the application must meet all rules, regulations, and guidelines of the Business Accelerator Grant. The proposal for the common request must:

- Train employees of at least two different businesses, with one of those businesses designated as the Lead Applicant. The Lead Applicant completes the application;
- Include employees of the Lead Applicant in the training;
- Include information on each business that will be part of the training. The application has a specific section for this information;
- Include training descriptions and outcomes that address the employees from all businesses impacted by the proposed common training; and
- Be for a collective group of businesses of which *none* have ever received a collaborative training grant for the proposed training.
- If two or more different businesses apply, the grant amount is up to \$12,500/application.

IS THE BUSINESS REQUIRED TO CONTRIBUTE?

The employer or group of employers must pay for a portion of the cost of providing the training to incumbent workers. This portion is defined as the non-federal share. The non-federal share is based on the following limits:

- Not less than 10% of the training cost, for employers with less than 50 employees;
- Not less than 25% of the training cost, for employers with 50-99 employees; and
- Not less than 50% of the training cost, for employers with 100 or more employees.

The number of employees is based on all locations within Mountain Area's four counties. The business will be required to calculate the actual non-federal share in the budget part of the application.

WHAT IS THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE?

The non-federal share provided by an employer participating in the program may include the amount of the wages paid by the employer to a worker while the worker is attending a training program. The employer may provide the share in cash or in kind, fairly evaluated. Examples of the non-federal share are trainees' wages, on-site facility usage, trainees' travel, food, and lodging. Travel, food, and lodging must be based upon the limits defined at www.gsa.gov for the city where the training will take place.

WHAT COSTS CAN BE REIMBURSED BY THE TRAINING GRANT?

See Attachment A for a list of allowable and non-allowable costs.

WHAT OUTCOMES ARE EXPECTED FROM THE TRAINING GRANT?

When businesses experience a skills gap in their workforce, the company's stability can be compromised. The Business Accelerator Grant funded by WIOA addresses such needs by increasing workers' skills, wages, advancement opportunities, knowledge, and certifications/credentials. Outcomes will be expressed in the Final Report completed by the business. The Final Report is due within 30 days of the end of training.

HOW IS THE GRANT ADMINISTERED?

The Business Accelerator Grant is administered through the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board.

HOW DOES A BUSINESS SUBMIT AN APPLICATION?

First, the business must contact the Business Services Coordinator for the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board that administers the grant in its workforce area. This contact allows the business and the Board staff the opportunity to review the guidelines and eligibility requirements, highlight criteria, discuss training priorities, and understand the application time schedule, and other procedures and expectations. Applications and Business Guidelines for the grant are available by contacting the Business Services Coordinator. These documents are also available on the Land of Sky website at: www.landofsky.org under Workforce Development or at www.mountainareaworks.org.

IS IT REQUIRED THAT THE APPLICANT USE THE APPLICATION FORM PROVIDED?

Yes. The application is provided as a PDF fillable document. *All* information is to be provided *within* the form. The space will expand to accommodate the information. Please do **not** attach/include trainer's resumes or other excess information. Also, the trainer's qualifications, course descriptions and objectives should be summarized within the form.

IS AN AUTHORIZED ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE ACCEPTABLE?

Yes. All sections requiring a signature must have an authorized signature. An electronic or original signature of an authorized individual is acceptable.

WHAT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE TO ASSIST THE BUSINESS?

Businesses and vendors should contact the Business Services Coordinator for technical assistance throughout the process.

WHEN CAN A BUSINESS APPLY FOR A BUSINESS ACCELERATOR TRAINING GRANT?

Businesses and vendors should contact the Business Services Coordinator of MAWDB before beginning the application process to express interest in applying and review the type of training desired. The schedule for the Business Accelerator Grant will be determined by the availability of funding and the program year schedule. The schedule will be posted in the Call for Submissions document.

REQUIREMENT FOR DRAFT APPLICATION

A draft application, marked draft on the first page, must be submitted a minimum of 10 business days prior to the application deadline. This allows for the review of the application and corrections by the business. The draft application deadline will be in the Timeline Chart included in the Business Guidelines document.

HOW WILL FUNDING DECISIONS BE MADE?

The MAWDB Staff and Business Accelerator Grant Committee will review the application for viability and make funding recommendations to the Board based on the training grant criteria. The number of awards approved per application cycle and program year is based on funding availability and the number of eligible applications as determined by MAWDB. If applications exceed the allocated amount for the program year, the approved applications will be prioritized and awarded in part depending upon funding. The Business will be notified after the Board has approved the Grant Committee's recommendations.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY BUSINESS' APPLICATION IS APPROVED?

The MAWDB's Business Services Coordinator will notify the business of a decision on its application after the grant review committee has made a recommendation to the board for approval of applications. After board approval, the MAWDB business services department will begin the process of developing a contract. The contract is between MAWDB and the business, to be executed within 60 days of the date of the award notification from the MAWDB.

The contract will set forth all processes and expectations for administering, implementing, and completing the training. If the contract is not executed within the aforementioned 60-day time frame, the grant award may become null and void and the business may need to re-apply in a future round. Each project will be monitored and evaluated by the MAWDB Staff with outcomes reported to the MAWDB Board by a Final Report. Training should not be scheduled within the 60 day period following award notification unless prior approval has been given by the Business Services Coordinator. No training should be paid for or take place prior to the dually signed contract date.

HOW LONG DOES A BUSINESS HAVE TO CONDUCT THE TRAINING?

Training must be completed within the one year or 365 days of the signed contract date. A contract signed on April 15, 2019 will expire on April 15, 2020.

CAN THE CONTRACT BE EXTENDED?

A business is expected to carefully assess its training needs so that it will apply only for the funds needed for training that addresses its employees' skills gaps, and can be completed within the calendar contract year. Under **extenuating circumstances**, a request can be made by the business in writing to the MAWDB Staff to extend the date of a contract. The request will be presented to the MAWDB Grant Committee and the final decision will reside with the Board. In any event, no extension will exceed 30 days past the end date of the original contract.

ONCE THE BUSINESS HAS BEEN AWARDED A GRANT, CAN IT CHANGE THE TYPE(S) OF TRAINING OR USE OF FUNDS APPROVED IN THE GRANT?

The Training Grant is a competitive training grant and each application is evaluated against eligibility criteria. If there is an extenuating circumstance that leads to a need to request a change to the approved training, the business must contact the Business Services Coordinator to discuss the best alternatives as soon as possible. Training changes cannot create a new application and must continue to address the trainees' originally identified skills gaps, be completed within the original calendar year timeframe, and meet the Grant criteria. The Business Services Coordinator will evaluate each request on a case-by-case basis, and consult with the Board and Director for a final decision.

WHAT INFORMATION IS A BUSINESS REQUIRED TO SUPPLY TO THE MAWDB ON THE EMPLOYEES TO BE TRAINED?

The Business Services Coordinator will discuss with the business the employee information required on the trainees. Federal requirements mandate funded businesses provide, at a minimum, the following data for each training participant. The Contract will include ATTACHMENT D-1 for each trainee to complete.

- A copy of trainee's Social Security Card (signed) and driver's license or state issued ID
- Complete Name and Contact Information
- Gender
- Date of Birth
- Citizenship (Right-to-Work Status)
- Selective Service Compliance
- Person with Disability
- Ethnicity and Race
- Date of employment with business

It is possible that more information may be needed. The business must also ensure that each trainee has an employer-employee (W-2) relationship and an employment history of 6 months or more with the employer. In the case of a cohort of trainees (3 or more), a minimum of 51% of the trainees must have been employed at least 6 months with the employer and the remaining trainees must have met a 90 probationary period at the time of application deadline. The employer will be required to complete Form D-2 that signifies that the employer retains a completed I-9 on each of the trainees. Each business and trainee will be required to register on www.NCWorks.gov.

ARE ANY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS EXPECTED OF THE BUSINESS?

Yes. The MAWDB Staff will advise and discuss the reporting requirements for the grant award, to include content, timeframe and other matters. A Final Report on the training is due no later than thirty (30) days from the *end of the training*. The Final Report will be forwarded to the Board Director by the Business Services Coordinator.

HOW IS THE TRAINING EVALUATED?

The business will submit a monthly report during the term of the contract. In addition, a Final Report is due 30 days after completion of training. Monthly and Final Report Forms are provided as part of the Contract Package.

WHEN IS THE BUSINESS REIMBURSED?

The business will be reimbursed upon completion of training, with a copy of a paid receipt, and completion of Forms E & F. If the training has more than one Training Component, each component may be reimbursed upon completion with required documentation.

TO WHOM DO I ADDRESS QUESTIONS

Please address questions to Barbara Darby at barbarad@landofsky.org; 828.231.6611.

ARE THE GRANT AWARDS PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE?

“All records relating to the Business Accelerator Grants for Incumbent Worker Training are subject to public review under the NC Public Records Law.”

ATTACHMENT A -Reimbursable and Non-Reimbursable Costs

The following is a listing of reimbursable and non-reimbursable training costs for the MAWDB Business Accelerator Grant:

Allowable Training Costs:

1. Training/Course registration/tuition fees.
2. Training that results in participants obtaining an industry-recognized certification or credential to include training preparation for certification exams. Funding must be requested for both the training and the certification exam and completed within the one year contract.
3. Web-based online training.
4. Employee skills assessment that results in primary training funded through the grant.
5. Textbooks/manuals used 100% for the training activities.
6. Materials and supplies directly related to the training. Does not include purchase of software.
7. Travel for trainers-if the requested training is not available within reasonable proximity to the business. Travel may include mileage reimbursement, meals, and lodging based upon rates at www.gsa.gov.
8. Travel for trainees-up to \$2,000 maximum, not to exceed 25% of total grant request. Non-federal share for size of company must be met before travel is an allowable cost. Travel (food, lodging, transportation) must be based on federal guidelines at www.gsa.gov. Incidentals are not included in travel. Mileage will be based on distance to and from training site only. Google maps will be used for mileage calculations. Travel records and paid receipts must be provided for all reimbursed travel.

Non-Allowable Training Costs:

1. Employee related costs such as wages, fringe benefits, travel.
2. Training-related costs incurred prior to the beginning date of the contract with the MAWDB or after the contract ends.
3. Training that the company or an entity on the company's behalf already provides to its employees.
4. Training that a company is mandated to provide on a regular basis to its employees by federal, state, or local laws.
5. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and other training that is specifically required for an employee or entity to maintain licensure, certification or accreditation.
6. Courses that are part of a trainee's pursuit of an educational degree.
7. Employment or training in sectarian activities.
8. Curriculum design and/or training program development.
9. Trainers employed by any business whose employees are being trained to include parent company employees.
10. Purchase of employee assessment systems or systems usage licenses (example: site licenses).
11. Company website design and development, website hosting, and maintenance, software or hardware upgrades, advice on computer selection for purchase and upgrade.
12. Third party compensation or fees not directly related to the provision of the requested training.
13. Any costs that would normally be considered allowable, but for which there is no request/cost for training related to the item(s) within the application.
14. Capital improvements, purchase of real estate, to include the construction or renovation of facilities or buildings, and capital equipment or other durable (long lasting and/or reusable) training materials.
15. Business relocation or other similar/related expenses.
16. Travel outside of contiguous United States or costs associated with bringing a trainer into the country.
17. General office supplies and non-personnel services costs (example: postage and photocopying).

18. Membership fees/dues.
19. Food, beverage, entertainment, and/or celebration related expenses.
20. Job/position profiling.
21. Publicity/public relations costs.
22. Costs associated with conferences/meetings.
23. Costs associated with consulting services.