**MODERATOR:**

Thank you for joining us for today’s America’s Promise Job-Driven Grant Program Prospective Applicant Webcast Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA/ETA-16-12) presented by the Employment and Training Administration.

Thank you for joining us for today’s Webcast. To help you follow along, we recommend you have a hard copy of the FOA when viewing this Webcast. Additionally, when applying for ETA competitive grants, use our Web-Based Toolkit for Prospective Applicants at the link on this slide.

Our presenters today will be:

**Eric Seleznow,** Deputy Assistant Secretary, Employment and Training Administration

**Robin Fernkas –** Division Chief, the Division of Strategic Investments in Office of Workforce Investment, Employment and Training Administration

**Megan Baird –** Program Manager, Division of Strategic Investments, Office of Workforce Investment, Employment and Training Administration

**Monica A. Evans–** Workforce Analyst, Division of Strategic Investments, Office of Workforce Investment, Employment and Training Administration

and

**Ariam Ferro –** Grants Management Specialist, Office of Grants Management, Employment and Training Administration

Eric, would you like to say a few words of introduction?

**ERIC:**

Good morning or afternoon everyone. Thank you so much for joining us today. Welcome to this webinar for prospective applicants for the H-1B America’s Promise Job-driven grant program. We are glad that you are making the time to view this important presentation, and we believe it will be helpful for you preparing your response to this funding opportunity announcement.

You know, as we were thinking through this grant program, we were reflecting back over the last six-plus years in the United States, since we’ve enjoyed the longest recorded streak of private sector job growth in American history; 75 months of continued job growth; 14 and ½ million new jobs. However, many Americans still don’t feel the benefit of this growing economy and have not been able to participate and gain in this thriving economy. Too often they lack some of the skills and experiences to access to better jobs with bigger wages.

So as we were thinking this through with the America’s Promise grant we were thinking of how do we organize regional sector partnerships that create industry-led pipelines of workers to high growth jobs and employment in their communities. And that’s really what drove this grant.

So in support of these efforts, on June 6, 2015, the Department announced the availability of approximately $100 million in funds through the America’s Promise grant program. Here what we want to do is grow regional partnerships between workforce providers, education and training providers, and employers in a variety of industries whether its IT, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, financial services or educational services.

And this funding underscores the President’s commitment to redesign a modern skills infrastructure in America that engages employers as never before. And employer engagement is a real highlight of this particular grant program.

So these competitive grants will support regional workforce partnerships led by multiple employers from that industry sector, education and training providers, economic development officials, and other partners to provide a pipeline of skilled workers through a regional sector strategy approach.

The America’s Promise grant program will support tuition-free education and training that prepares participants for jobs in industries that currently utilize the H-1B visa program to meet their workforce and industry needs. So many of you are familiar with the H-1B grant program that we operate. Some of you may not be. There is information on our website. But these funds are particularly geared toward middle and high-skilled jobs in H-1B industries and occupations. This grant-funded program will use individual assessments to determine the best strategies to move participants into middle- to high-skilled jobs. And we’re interested in models that include accelerated training, longer-term intensive training and upskilling current employees to meet the demands of higher skilled jobs.

These programs will include tangible commitments from multiple employers and other partners to provide employment opportunities, to strengthen technical skills training, consider Registered Apprenticeship or on-the-job work experience and training, and other paid work experience for H-1B occupations.  In closing, let me reiterate our excitement regarding America’s Promise grant program and potential to impact the future of our skilled workforce. We believe this approach, in a regional sector approach, with all the right partners at the table in crafting a program in meeting the needs of your communities.  I wish you the best in developing your applications. Thanks for making the time to join us today.

And now I’ll turn things over to Robin Fernkas from the Department of Labor. Robin.

**ROBIN**

Thank you, Eric, and hi everyone. We appreciate you viewing this prerecorded Webinar and your interest in America’s Promise.

I’m going to start by providing an overview of the funding opportunity description for America’s Promise Job-driven Grant Program Funding Opportunity Announcement, and we are going to refer to that throughout as a FOA. This is only a summary of Section I of the FOA– the FOA contains more detailed information and we strongly encourage you to read the entire FOA.

As a part of the Administration’s commitment to redesigning a modern skills infrastructure in America that engages employers as never before, the U.S. Department of Labor (or USDOL) will make approximately $100 million in grant funds available for America's Promise job-driven Grant program, also known as “America's Promise”.

This grant program is designed to create or expand regional partnerships between employers, economic development, workforce development, community colleges, training programs, K-12 education systems, and community-based organizations that make a commitment – or a “promise” – to provide a pipeline of workers to fill existing job openings, meet existing employer needs for expansion, fuel the talent needs of entrepreneurs, and attract more jobs from overseas.

These partnerships will be focused on four key priorities:

First, to increase opportunities for all Americans by developing strategies that increase tuition-free opportunities into middle and high-skilled occupations and industries; second to expand employer engagement in sector strategies and program design and delivery; third to use evidence-based design to increase employability, employment earnings, outcomes of job seekers through sector strategies; and finally to leverage additional resources to meet the service and training needs of all participants served and to align with other Federal, private, public and foundation resources in an economic region.

These grants will fund projects that support well-paying, middle- and high-skilled, and high-growth jobs across the entire range of H-1B industries, including Information Technology (IT), healthcare, advanced manufacturing, financial services, and educational services among others.

Review Appendix B of the FOA for a list of industries that are using H–1B visas to hire foreign workers.

These grants are committed to providing a pipeline of skilled workers in industry sectors through sector strategies and sector-based career pathways. As part of program design, applicants must design workforce development strategies that comprise the following types of activities:

* Tuition-free education and training in a high-quality program that enables individuals to advance along a career pathway that supports the growth of a regional workforce within a specific H-1B industry or occupation, including providing participant support services necessary to successfully move individuals into middle- to high-skilled employment;
* The development and expansion of regional workforce partnerships through: enhanced regional leadership; alignment of regional workforce development strategies, including those required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and economic development plans; and, alignment with existing federal resources in the region;
* Employer engagement in sector strategies by ensuring active employer involvement in the regional workforce partnership, design of the program, training, and hiring of successful participants; as well as a plan to develop a more seamless, real time and possibly tech-enabled way to collect feedback from employers about the quality of participants from the training programs; and finally
* Strong commitment to customer-centered design and excellence in customer service, so that the program responds to the needs of industry, employers, and participants, through human-centered design methodology and other methods of design thinking.

In addition to the four key activities I just mentioned, the program design must incorporate sector strategies, ensuring industry alignment with the regional workforce system and training. Sector strategies directly engage employers within a specified industry sector to better align with and respond to employer hiring needs and career advancement opportunities, and are the backbone of a regional workforce partnership, aligning industry workforce systems, training programs, and employers.

Under this FOA, projects must identify sector-based activities that will:

* lead to and support regional economic growth and respond to the current and future needs of workers;
* develop or strengthen systems and structures that will be sustainable and responsive to changes in the local economy; remove silos and minimize duplication within a region; and develop or strengthen workforce strategies to enhance and sustain the region’s education and training along sector-based career pathways, providing workers with the skills needed for employment in middle- to high-skilled employment in H-1B industries and occupations.

And now I’ll turn things over to Megan to talk more about program design.

**MEGAN**

Thanks Robin. The program design must also comprise sector-based career pathways. Integrating sector-based career pathways into the sector strategies ensures that the overall career pathways approach incorporates the needs of employers through skills training and attainment of portable credentials, supporting an individual’s advancement to middle- to high-skilled employment within an industry sector.

Under this FOA, projects must include viable ways for each participant to pursue a career pathway that may include a variety of work-based and training strategies that are appropriately matched to the participant’s individual needs and skills requirements.

Career pathways must be sector-focused and incorporate the needs and hiring opportunities of employers within a specific industry sector, and provide planned and sequenced coursework, training, or other work experience that leads to attainment of industry-recognized skills and credentials.

All projects must develop career plans for participants that will help each participant navigate and assess their various career pathway options within a specific sector strategy, including identifying skills and competencies needed for those occupations, and describing how the education and training provided will assist individuals in moving along a career pathway within a targeted industry sector.

Based on individual assessments, projects should provide strategies for placing individuals into training interventions that align with one or more of the following three strategies that also include participant supportive services. These career pathway strategies include:

* Short-term or Accelerated Training
* Longer-term Intensive Training, and
* Upskilling Incumbent Workers

And next, I will discuss award information.

The Department will fund grants ranging from $1 million to $6 million. The grants will be awarded to the lead applicant of a public-private partnership Applicants should request funding that is commensurate with the scope and scale of the proposed project .

Rural and smaller regional communities may propose to serve their economic region or to collaborate through regional partnerships with other regions to support smaller-scale projects, as appropriate. Awards made under this Announcement are subject to the availability of Federal funds.

To help ensure a successful project, applicants are expected to secure leveraged resources equal to at least 25 percent of the total requested funds to support grant activities and accomplish the project’s overall goal.

And now, I’ll turn things over to Monica Evans to present eligibility information.

**MONICA**

Thanks, Megan.

Eligible lead applicants must be public or nonprofit organizations that: meet the definition of one of the following three types of eligible entities: the workforce investment system; education and training providers, including community and technical colleges and systems; and business-related nonprofit organizations, an organization functioning as a workforce intermediary for the expressed purpose of serving the needs of an industry, or a regional or industry association. Applications that do not include a lead applicant that meets the eligibility requirements of one of the three types of entities will be considered non-responsive and will not be reviewed.

The lead applicant must include at least one representative of each of the following four types of required regional workforce partnership entities, which collectively form the “regional workforce partnership,” and demonstrate strong engagement of the regional leaders necessary to advance a sector strategy. Additionally, applicants should consider including additional optional partners that support the goals of the regional workforce partnership.

Employers and industry representatives that align with the partnership’s regional sector strategies;

The Workforce Investment System, as defined in Section III.A.1.a, representing the regional service area; Economic development agencies representing the regional service area; Education and training providers, as defined in Section III.A.1.b, representing the regional service area, including community and technical colleges or systems; joint labor-management training partnerships; and nonprofit and community-based organizations that offer job training.

To ensure that projects have strong employer engagement, applicants are required to partner with at least five employers or a regional industry association with at least five employer members representing each industry sector and service area targeted through the sector strategy. To satisfy this requirement, applicants must partner with five or more independent employers, a consortium of at least five employers, or a regional industry association with at least five employers.

Consortia of at least five employers and regional industry associations that serve as a lead applicant can also serve as the required employers or regional industry association, if appropriate. We encourage applicants to form additional partnerships with employers, consortia of employers, and regional industry associations.

To demonstrate the active involvement of employers, applicants should provide signed documentation of employer, employer consortium or regional industry association commitments – such as signed letters of commitment, memoranda of understanding, a partnership agreement, or other types of signed agreements – which demonstrate the commitment of each employer or regional industry association. Applicants will be scored based on the inclusion of this documentation, as well as the level and quality of employer involvement in the project in Section IV.B.3, Project Narrative.

The intent of this FOA is to fund projects that provide tuition-free education and job training to unemployed, underemployed, and incumbent workers – including disadvantaged populations such as low-income, underrepresented in the targeted industry, dislocated workers, and other populations with training and employment barriers – to help them pursue or advance in middle- to high-skilled employment in H-1B industries and occupations that align with the targeted industry sectors during the grant period of performance.

All training participants must be older than 16 years of age and not currently enrolled in school within a local educational agency.

For applicants proposing to serve incumbent workers, no more than 25 percent of the total participants served may be incumbent workers that meet the eligibility criteria.

Applicants can propose to serve a regional area located within or across state lines, as long as the service area comprises a single economic region. Economic regions are defined primarily by the movement of goods, capital, labor, consumption, and other economic forces within a geographic area. Defining an economic region involves identifying the surrounding areas, communities, counties, and municipalities that have similar industry and employment characteristics, looking beyond traditional political boundaries; and identifying the workforce needs of the identified areas.

Rural and smaller regional communities may propose to serve their economic region or to collaborate through regional partnerships with other regions to support smaller-scale projects, as appropriate.

Communities identified as High Need Communities – defined as a community with a poverty rate of 20 percent or higher – or areas that propose to serve participants that reside within these communities are encouraged to apply.

And now I’ll turn things over to Ariam Ferro to discuss the application and submission process.

**ARIAM**

Thanks, Monica.

Section 4C of the FOA discusses the application submission requirements.

Proposals must be received by 4 PM eastern time **on August 25, 2016.**

You can submit proposals by several methods: Online at grants.gov, regular mail, overnight mail, or hand delivery.

If you are sending by mail, the mailing address can be found in the FOA. We ask that you please reference FOA/ETA PY 16-12 on your application submission.

Please note that regular mail sent to federal buildings may be subject to decontamination, which delays the delivery of mail. Therefore, if mailing, our preference is that you use overnight mail. See the FOA for more details about how to submit your proposal.

Most applications are received via grants.gov. Here are some quick tips and reminders. And for more information please read the FOA for application requirements. We strongly recommend that before you begin to write the application, you should immediately initiate and complete the “Get Registered” registration steps. Create a username and password with Grants.gov to become an Authorized Organizational Representative. All applicants for Federal grant and funding opportunities are required to have a DUNS number. Applicants must register with the System for Award Management before submitting an application. Instructions for registering with SAM can be found at the sam.gov website.

As you can see in Table 2, In Section V.A. Evaluation Criteria, the proposals will be evaluated based on the six section headers included on this slide:

1. Statement of Need:
2. Expected Outcomes and Outputs:
3. Project Design:
4. Organizational, Administrative, and Fiscal Capacity :
5. Past Performance- Programmatic Capability:
6. Budget and Budget Justification:

Each of these “section headers” of the Project Narrative include one or more “criteria,” which has specific point values assigned as described in Table 2. Each “criterion” includes several “rating factors,” which provide detailed specifications for the content and quality of the response to that “criterion.”

The review and selection process is conducted after the closing date for the FOA. A technical review panel will carefully evaluate applications against the selection criteria. These criteria are based on the policy goals, priorities, and emphases set forth in this FOA. Up to 100 points may be awarded to an applicant, depending on the quality of the responses to the required information described in the FOA.

The final scores (which may include the mathematical normalization of review panels) will serve as the primary basis for selection of applications for funding. The panel results are advisory in nature and not binding on the Grant Officer. The Grant Officer reserves the right to make selections based solely on the final scores or to take into consideration other relevant factors when applicable. Such factors may include the geographic balance, distribution among H-1B industries and occupations, and/or other relevant factors. The Grant Officer may consider any information that comes to his or her attention.

To review: the FOA opened on June 6, 2016 and will close on August 25, 2016 at 4 p.m. Eastern.

As is the case with any competitive grant process, we recognize that you will have questions as your develop your application. The link on the slide here will take you to the doleta.gov grants web site, where you will soon be able to find an FAQ document that answers some of the more common questions we are asked. There are additional resources for applicants to competitive ETA grants at the link listed here. We particularly encourage you to view the two Grant Application 101 training modules, as well as the Annotated FOA that can help you understand FOA requirements. We would ask that you to check the site regularly for any updates or amendments to the FOA. In addition, you may submit other questions directly to me at the email address listed on the slide.

We hope that access to these resources will help you get the answers you need to develop a winning application.

I’ll now turn things back over to Megan to close us out.

**MEGAN**

Thanks, Ariam.

On behalf of the America's Promise team at the Department of Labor, we’d like to conclude today’s session by thanking you for your time and interest in this grant opportunity. Thanks Everyone!