

[Home](#) / NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development Seeks Partners For Good Jobs Challenge Grant Application

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TRENTON – The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) today announced it will apply for a federal Good Jobs Challenge grant, and it is seeking interest and input from training and education organizations, community-based organizations focused on helping people return to work, and businesses with training and hiring needs, who want to partner in this effort.

The purpose of the grant is to strengthen regional workforce training systems through public-private partnerships. The \$500 million initiative is funded through the Biden Administration's American Rescue Plan Act, and is designed to build a post-pandemic economy that is stronger, with a better-skilled workforce, to meet the needs of businesses and thereby ensure economic health.

"This grant, and the partnerships that would drive it, are part of the Murphy Administration's comprehensive strategy to provide businesses the trained talent they need, and to create opportunities for workers to increase their earning potential," said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo. "We believe the workforce investments and business relationships we're making today will pay dividends for decades to come by boosting the state's economy and enhancing business competitiveness."

As the agency spearheading the application, NJDOL wants to hear from businesses in any sector who have input on the skills and training needed to build the workforce of the future and who will also make a commitment to hire these skilled employees. This competitive grant will be awarded to workforce agencies that can demonstrate strong partnerships whose training and hiring needs are driven by demand.

"Getting New Jersey residents back to work and making sure businesses are able to hire the top-notch talent New Jersey is known for are crucial to Governor Murphy's plans for a stronger, fairer recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic," said NJEDA Chief Executive Officer Tim Sullivan. "Applying for the Good Jobs Challenge is an important step forward that will build on the innovative Return and Earn program to bring additional resources into New Jersey to help workers and businesses get back on their feet and prepare for long-term success."

The U.S. Economic Development Administration announced the Good Jobs Challenge grant program in July to encourage state and local public agencies, colleges, employers, and community- and faith-based organizations to strengthen regional workforce training systems by creating new sectoral partnerships.

NJDOL seeks the support of businesses with immediate hiring and training needs. Proposal specifics, including prioritization of industries, will be determined based on business community input. The Department is working on the application in collaboration with the Department of Education, New Jersey Economic Development Authority, Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, State Employment and Training Commission, New Jersey Council of County Colleges, New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, and other stakeholders committed to building economic progress and sustainable growth.

"The New Jersey Department of Education, through the Office of Career Readiness, is committed to providing guidance and supports to schools in developing the career ready practices that are critical to ensuring students have a wide exposure to career awareness, exploration, exposure, and career and technical education aligned to workforce needs and career pathways," said Department of Education Acting Commissioner Angelica Allen-



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McMillan. "Our collaboration in the Good Jobs Challenge Grant provides an opportunity to partner with our state workforce development systems, institutions of higher education, business and industry, and other state agencies to continue to align the concepts and skills necessary for New Jersey's K-12 students to thrive in an ever-changing world. This includes empowering students with the employability skills necessary to collaborate with others, to manage resources effectively, and to establish and maintain stability and independence."

Other collaborators also expressed their support:

"This grant could be instrumental in establishing innovative partnerships with in-demand growth industries and expand experiential and career-relevant learning opportunities as we work to strengthen New Jersey's workforce and enhance students' postsecondary pathways," said Secretary of Higher Education Dr. Brian K. Bridges. "Collaborations between employers, local communities, and the higher education sector are essential to ensure that the postsecondary-to-employment ecosystem is well-positioned for the future."

New Jersey Council of County Colleges President Dr. Aaron Fichtner said: "Investing in our workforce is essential . . . especially post-pandemic to help regain a strong economy. Community colleges provide state-of-the-art education across New Jersey to upskill workers. We are proud to be part of the solution to meet the needs of businesses with the trained talent they require to be competitive, and we look forward to additional partnerships to increase our reach."

State Employment and Training Commission Acting Executive Director Gary Altman added: "What we like about the Good Jobs Challenge is that it looks to develop programming based upon the needs of New Jersey's employers and develop career pathways consistent with those opportunities. The result is the construct of a talent development system where skills are tied to demand and whose graduates may become self-sustaining members of the middle class."

To learn more about partnering with the New Jersey Department of Labor through the Good Jobs Challenge, visit: <https://www.nj.gov/labor/employer-services/industry-partnerships/good-jobs-challenge.shtml>. You may also send an inquiry email to NJGoodJobs@dol.nj.gov.

Interested partners must complete the Good Jobs Challenge form (found on the website listed above) by Nov. 8.

[← Go back to all press releases](#)

Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Home

COVID-19 Resources

FAQs for Workers

COVID-19 Scenarios and Benefits

Federal and State Extended Unemployment Benefits

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance

Health and Safety During COVID-19

FAQs for Businesses

Information for Working Parents and Caregivers

Additional Resources and Support

File or Access Your Claim

Temporary Disability Insurance
Family Leave Insurance
Maternity Leave
Unemployment Insurance
Social Security Disability

Worker Protections

Your Rights at Work
Workers' Compensation
Safety and Health
Wage & Hour Compliance
Paid Sick Leave

Career Support

Career Services

Employer Services

Employer Accounts
Layoffs and Closings
Wage & Hour Compliance
Business Support
Apprenticeship
Industry Partnerships
Employer Handbook
Employer Poster Packet
Equal Pay Act Reporting

Research & Information

Labor Market Information
Grant Opportunities
Workforce Innovation &
Opportunity Act (WIOA)
Legal Notices
Press Releases

About Us

Statewide

Governor Phil Murphy
Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver
NJ Home
Services A to Z
Departments/Agencies
FAQs
Contact Us
Privacy Notice
Legal Statement & Disclaimers
Accessibility Statement



