EARN Maryland Summer 2025 Solicitation for Implementation Grants

Pre-Proposal Conference
Wednesday, July 23, 2025 | 1:00PM-2:00PM

Mary Keller

Director, Office of Strategic Initiatives

Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning

Maryland Department of Labor

Agenda

- Housekeeping Items

- Overview of the EARN Maryland Program

- Overview of Summer 2025 Solicitation

- Characteristics of a Successful Workforce Training Plan

- Tips for a Successful Application

- Frequently Asked Questions

- Questions

Housekeeping Items

- Please include your name, organization, and email address in the chat.

- You may type questions into the chat or use the hand raise function when we are ready to take questions.

- All questions and answers received today will be posted on the EARN Maryland website by Friday, August 1st.

- Questions may be sent via email to Mary Keller through Friday, August 29th.

- An updated Q&A document will be posted on the EARN website every other Friday through August 29th.

Housekeeping Items

- If your organization decides to move forward with developing a proposal, please submit an Intent to Apply notification to Mary Keller. An email notification is fine.

- If your organization chooses **<u>not</u>** to submit an application, please consider completing the **<u>Prospective Applicant Feedback Form on Page 3 of the Solicitation,</u>** which can be emailed to Mary Keller.

- This presentation will be shared with attendees via email after the conference and posted on the [EARN Maryland website](#).

- Contact information – please email Mary Keller by COB Friday 7/25 if you do **NOT** want your contact information shared with other prospective applicants attending today's pre-proposal conference.

EARN Maryland

Established in 2014, EARN is a **state-funded** program.

EARN builds upon the Moore-Miller administration's priorities of connecting Marylanders to jobs while increasing the State's economic competitiveness.

Governor Moore's FY26 budget included an **additional $5M** for EARN Maryland, making growth of the program possible.

EARN Maryland

- Addresses workforce needs by focusing on industry sector strategies that seek long-term solutions to sustained skills gaps and personnel shortages;

- Addresses the needs of workers by creating formal career paths to good jobs and sustaining or growing middle class jobs;

- Encourages mobility for Maryland's most hard-to-serve jobseekers through targeted job readiness training; and

- Fosters better coordination between the public, private, and non-profit sectors, and the workforce, economic development, and education partners around the State.

EARN Maryland

- EARN has been recognized as a **best practice** by organizations like the Urban Institute, National Skills Coalition, Deloitte, and Harvard Business Review.

- Since inception, more than **11,000** individuals have obtained employment as a result of participating in EARN programming.

- More than **16,000** incumbent workers have participated in upskilling opportunities.

- For every $1 of state funding invested into the EARN Maryland program, an additional **$18.16** in economic impact is created.

- EARN currently funds more than **80** Strategic industry Partnerships (SIPs).

Summer 2025 Solicitation for Implementation Grant Proposals

MD Labor intends to award approximately $6.5M.

- New features this round:

  - Tiers

  - Priority points

    - SNAP E&T

    - Serving ENOUGH communities

Tiers

Applicants MUST select one tier; cannot select both

Tier	Definition	Max Request	Total Investment
Tier I	"traditional" EARN: training for unemployed, underemployed, incumbent workers	$150,000	$4M
Tier II	Leads directly to advancement or placement into roles that provide wages at or above the median wage for the target region	$250,000	$2.5M

Tier II training leads to **direct and immediate advancement**. Incumbent workers trained through Tier I opportunities may not meet median wage earnings threshold and/or advancement may not be immediate.

Example: CNA to PCT would qualify as Tier I because while advancement should be immediate, the wage does not meet median wage requirements

Tiers II Wages

Statewide: $27.91	Lower Shore: $21.52
Anne Arundel: $27.60	Montgomery County: $30.95
Baltimore City: $29.60	Prince George's: $28.61
Baltimore County: $25.02	Southern Maryland: $28.57
Carroll County: $22.58	Susquehanna: $25.00
Frederick County: $27.16	Upper Shore: 22.35
Howard County: $28.65	Western Maryland: $22.18

Tier II applicants targeting multiple counties/regions must target the highest wage among the regions selected.

Lower Shore covers Somerset, Wicomico, Worcester; **Southern Maryland** covers Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's; **Susquehanna** covers Cecil and Harford; **Upper Shore** covers Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot; **Western Maryland** covers Allegany, Garrett, Washington

Priority Points

Additional points will be provided to applicants that:

1. Commit to serving residents from ENOUGH communities; and
2. Commit to serving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients.

Supporting ENOUGH Communities

A hallmark of the Moore-Miller administration, the **Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households** (ENOUGH) initiative seeks to tackle the root causes of poverty in Maryland by addressing inequities and working with impacted communities to develop local solutions

Additional points will be provided to applicants that commit to serving residents from ENOUGH communities.

Applicants seeking priority points for this category **must** submit a Letter of Commitment from at least one Community Quarterback in the target region.

The Community Quarterback **must** commit to supporting the SIP and have a defined role in the Workforce Training Plan, detailed in the Letter of Commitment.

Serving SNAP Recipients

Applicants seeking priority points for serving SNAP recipients must submit **proof of an application to the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS)** to become a SNAP Employment and Training vendor.

Participating vendors are reimbursed up to 50 percent of allowable program costs, thus increasing the state and other non-federal funders' investment and growing the number of Marylanders that receive in-demand skills training.

Applications to become a SNAP E&T vendor are due to Maryland DHS on **July 30 by 5:00 pm**.

More information can be found here.

Strategic Industry Partnership Composition

- EARN funds are awarded to a Strategic Industry Partnership (SIP) .
- In order to be considered, a SIP **must** include at least **<u>seven</u>** organizations:
  - *At least* **<u>five</u>** employer partners from the target industry
  - *At least* **<u>two</u>** diverse entities
    - Higher Education, Non-Profit or Community Based Organization, Local Workforce Development Boards, Local Government
- Proposals *must* include a Letter of Commitment from ALL members of the SIP which details their commitment to the project.
- Letters of Commitment *must* be signed and on company letterhead.
- Proposals that do not include the required number of partners and/or a Letter of Commitment from each <u>will not be considered</u>.

Lead Applicant

- A Lead Applicant must be identified for each SIP.

- The Lead Applicant **must** be the Fiscal Agent for the grant.

- The Lead Applicant will be responsible for managing the grant and all aspects of implementing the Workforce Training Plan:
    - Grant Management and Workforce Training Plan Implementation
    - Participant Management
    - Partnership Management
- If the Lead Applicant is not based in Maryland, the proposal must justify the choice of that entity for the role.

Examples of Role of Employers

- Identify common workforce and skills needs and challenges, contribute to development of responsive curriculum

- Participate in mock interviews, job shadowing, and provide tour of facilities

- Commit to interviewing trainees or identifying current employees for training

- Participate in regular SIP meetings

- Provide regular feedback on continuing or additional workforce needs, success of participants, and value of training

Role of Diverse Entities

- Participant Management
  - Recruitment to placement framework: recruitment, screening, case management, wraparound services, job readiness, essential skills, placement, retention, advancement
- Grant Management and Implementation
  - Direct grant management (preparing invoices, maintaining financial records, outcome reporting)
  - Training plan implementation (curriculum tracking and development, trainer selection, all logistics related to training implementation)
  - This person must be an employee of Lead Applicant
- Partnership Management
  - Entity/individual lead – credibility with industry, trust of diverse set of partners
  - Coordination and accountability among partners
  - Continuous feedback loop with employers

Section 1: General Information

- Key Abbreviations and Definitions
- No set number of awards; MD Labor anticipates awarding approximately $6.5M across Tier I and Tier II:
  - Tier I requests should not exceed $150,000 over the two year grant period
  - Tier II requests should not exceed $250,000 over the two year grant period
- Grant period = January 1, 2026 - December 31, 2027; strongly recommend training begins within three months of award.
- Proposals are due by 11:59PM on September 26, 2025.
- Proposals that are not submitted by the due date or do not have all required components **will not be considered**.

Section 2: Eligibility

- Goals of EARN
    - Create industry-led partnerships;
    - Advance the skills of the State's workforce;
    - Grow the State's economy; and
    - Increase sustainable employment for working families.

- Strategic Industry Partnerships
    - Includes five employer partners from the **same** industry
    - Two diverse entities (RA sponsors, non-profits and CBOs, higher education, local workforce development boards, etc.)

All SIP members (employers + diverse entities) **must** be included throughout the application (Cover Page, Section 3 Questions 2B and 2C) **and** submit Letters of Commitment to be included with the application.

Section 2: Eligibility

- Lead Applicant must be Fiscal Agent

- If Lead Applicant is not Maryland-based, must justify choice

- If Lead Applicant represents multiple employers, such as RA Sponsor, five employers must be identified and submit Letters of Commitment

Section 2: Eligibility

Workforce Training Plans will:
- Support SIPs in a target industry - must have five employers and two diverse entities
- Be industry-driven, identify critical skills gaps and develop industry-driven strategies to meet those needs, particularly in high-demand occupations
- Provide industry-led, responsive, and innovative training aimed at improving employment opportunities at all skill levels (including strategies like job readiness training, barrier removal, career advancement)
- Develop any other human resource or management strategies that are responsive to industry partnerships' critical occupations and skills shortages

Section 2: Eligibility

Proposals should support most, if not all, of the following goals:
- Move no-skilled or low-skilled workers into better jobs utilizing a blend of relevant occupational training, job readiness, barrier removal, and/or academic remediation strategies
- Include career advancement strategies, particularly for incumbent workers
- Remain sustainable in the absence of state funding
- Maximize collaboration through direct financial or in-kind contributions
- Include braiding of other public or philanthropic funding or in-kind support

Note: Leveraged resources are required but there is no cost match or minimum requirement. Leveraged resources may be cash or in-kind.

Section 2: Eligibility

- Examples of Allowable Costs - training, supportive services, stipends, staffing costs, credential attainment
- The following are costs that shall <u>**not**</u> be covered by EARN Maryland funds:
  - Building Construction
  - Website development or maintenance
- Costs that are not allowable and/or are not included in the EARN budget but will support the SIP and implementation of Workforce Training Plan may be allocated as direct or in-kind support.
- Leveraged resources **are required** but there is **no cost match or minimum requirement**. Leveraged resources may be cash or in-kind.

Timeline

Event	Date(s)
Implementation Grant Solicitation released	July 8, 2025
Deadline to Submit Questions from Pre-proposal Conference	August 29, 2025
Deadline for Submission of Proposals in Response to this Solicitation	September 26, 2025
Review of Proposals	October - December 2025
Award of Implementation Grants	December 2025
Period of Performance	January 1, 2026 - December 31, 2027

Section 3: Scope of Work

- Proposals must target one of the following tiers:
  - **Tier I** will provide occupational training and supportive services to unemployed, underemployed, and incumbent workers
  - **Tier II** will provide occupational training and supportive services which lead directly to placement or advancement into roles that provide wages at or above the median wage for the target region.
- WTPs must be **data-driven** and **experience-driven**.
- WTPs must include clear strategies for effective **grant management**, **participant management**, and **partnership management**.
- Strongly recommended that applicants partner with relevant Local Workforce Development Boards

Section 3: Scope of Work

- Preference given to
  - Applicants that commit to serving ENOUGH communities evidenced by Letter of Commitment from ENOUGH Community Quarterback
  - Applicants that commit to serving SNAP recipients evidenced by proof of application to MD DHS to become SNAP E&T vendor

Lighthouse Sectors
  - Priority industries: life sciences, information technology, aerospace, and defense
  - Emerging sectors: computational biology, quantum technology, and position, navigation, and timing

Section 3: Scope of Work

- Successful WTPs lead to employment, credential attainment, or advancement.
- Members of the SIP are encouraged to make specific commitments to support the implementation of the WTP
  - Providing staff time, SME, facilities, on-the-job training, supplies
  - Employer commitments should include interviewing successful training participants and considering for employment opportunities
  - Diverse entities may commit to supporting with recruitment, screening, case management, etc.
- ALL SIP members **must** submit a Letter of Commitment which outlines specific contributions to the WTP

Section 3: Scope of Work

Lead Applicant must submit:
- Certificate of Good Standing
- Most recent two years' Audited, Reviewed, or Compiled Financial Statements
- Federal Tax ID Number
- If organization is tax-exempt, a copy of official notice of tax exempt status from IRS

Subrecipient = organization that will receive EARN funding that is NOT lead applicant; must be member of SIP

Subrecipient required documentation:
- Certificate of Good Standing
- Federal Tax ID Number

If the Lead Applicant or subrecipient are government entities or otherwise are not subject to obtaining a COGS, please note that in the proposal.

Section 3: Scope of Work

If awarded funds, the SIP should be prepared to track and report the following to MD Labor

- Demographic data on individuals participating in training
  - Sex, Race, Income, National Origin, County of Residence, Zip Code, Educational Attainment, Pre-Training Employment Status
- Outcome data post-training
  - Credential attainment, supportive services provided, employment status and hourly wage post-completion

It is critical SIPs have clear, detailed strategies to collect all required demographic data and collect data post-completion.

Section 4: Proposal Format

Proposals _must_ contain the following documents. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

- A Letter of Application

- Application (**Appendix A**)

  - Cover Page

  - Executive Summary – should not exceed 400 words

  - Narrative

  - Assurances

  - Appendix A should not exceed 35 pages in length.

- Strategic Industry Partnership Submission Requirements (**Appendix B**)

  - Letter of Commitment, signed and on letterhead from **EVERY** member of the SIP

  - Letter of Commitment from Community Quarterback (if seeking priority points for serving ENOUGH communities)

  - Proof of application to Maryland DHS to become a SNAP E&T vendor (if seeking priority points for serving SNAP E&T recipients)

  - Signed W9 Form for Lead Applicant

  - If Lead Applicant is tax exempt, a copy of official notice

  - Certificate of Good Standing - required for Lead Applicant **AND** any Subrecipient (screenshot is acceptable)

Section 4: Proposal Format

- The most recent two years' Audited, Reviewed, or Compiled Financial Statements for the Lead Applicant (**Appendix C**)
  - Community College or State Agency may submit a web link in lieu of a hard copy
- Budget (**Appendix D**)

- **Complete applications should be submitted to Mary Keller at <u>mary.keller@maryland.gov</u> by <u>11:59 PM on September 26, 2025,</u> and include all required documents in a <u>single email</u>.**
  - Submissions should be combined into one PDF in the order listed in <u>**Section 4.1**</u> of the Solicitation.
  - In addition to being included in the PDF, Appendix D should also be included as a standalone Excel Sheet (.xlsx). <u>Each submission should have two attachments.</u>
  - Applications received after the due date, not submitted in the required format, or that do not contain all required documents <u>will not be considered</u>.

Section 5: Grant Evaluation and Selection

- All proposals will undergo an initial screening to ensure that submission requirements are met. Proposals that are not submitted in the required format or do not contain all required documents **will not be considered**.

- Proposals that meet initial screening requirements will be reviewed by a Review Committee.

- Final approval will be determined by the MD Labor Secretary based on recommendations of the Review Committees and taking into account other factors such as geographic distribution and industry diversity

- MD Labor will provide feedback on proposals that do not receive funding

Section 5: Grant Evaluation and Selection

Preference will be given to plans that demonstrate:

- Maximum collaboration through direct financial or in-kind contributions by members of the target industry

- Braiding of other public or philanthropic funding streams or in-kind support

- Provide clear and direct pathways to good jobs, particularly for Maryland's most hard-to-serve jobseekers

- A detailed plan to serve ENOUGH communities

- A commitment to serve SNAP recipients by becoming a SNAP E&T vendor with Maryland DHS

Successful WTPs

Successful WTPs will:

- Demonstrate direct pathways to good jobs, credential or certification attainment, or advancement opportunities, with an emphasis on barrier removal and supportive services, particularly for Maryland's most hard-to-serve jobseekers.

- For incumbent workers, the WTP will provide evidence of immediate or future career advancement in the form of a title promotion, wage increases, or similar evidence.

- Demonstrate explicit commitments from all members of the SIP, evidenced in Letters of Commitment

- Be both data and experience-driven.

- Seek to infuse and advance equity.

- Braid other public or philanthropic funding streams or in-kind support.

Tips for Appendix A

- Be as thorough and detailed as possible.

- Do not leave questions blank. If not applicable, please input N/A.

- Be sure each member of SIP is included in Questions 23 and 24 on Cover Page; All employers in SIP are listed in Question 2B, All diverse entities are listed in Question 2C.

- All members of SIP listed in proposal MUST provide a Letter of Commitment at time of application included with submission

- Amount of EARN Funding Requested (Cover Page Question 6) should match Grant Amount Requested in Appendix D

- Total Leveraged Resources (Cover Page Question 7) should match Leveraged Resource Total in Appendix D

- Total number trained (Cover Page Question 9) should match figure in Section 10A (Number of individuals trained (unemployed/underemployed + incumbent workers)

Tips for Letters of Commitment

- A Letter of Commitment must be submitted for EVERY member of the SIP (*at least* **five** employers and **two** diverse entities)
- **Must** be signed and on company letterhead
- Must be specific and detail commitment to the project
  - A strong letter of commitment outlines specific, measurable resources and activities a partner organization will contribute to the project
    - Curriculum development, hiring, tours of facility, mock interviews, etc.
  - May detail how partner was involved in development of proposal
  - Include concrete figures, including how many workers the company anticipates hiring for the target occupation over grant period and average hourly wage for target occupation

Tips for Appendix D

- The following are costs that shall **<u>not</u>** be covered by EARN Maryland funds:
  - Building construction
  - Website development or maintenance
- Leveraged Resources (cash or in-kind) are **required** but there is no match requirement.
- Line items in Appendix D (Budget) are meant to be examples.
- Please **do not remove** formulas in Appendix D.
- Be sure the total request in Section 1, Question 6 is aligned with the total budget in Appendix D.
- Tier I proposals are capped at $150k over two years; Tier II proposals are capped at $250k over two years

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Will the slides be made available?**

   Yes. Slides will be emailed to all Pre-Proposal Conference attendees and posted on EARN website.

2. **Can the grant award be spent in one year vs. two years?**

   Yes. The grant period is for two years but applicants may write a budget to reflect a shorter time period if desired.

3. **Is there a match requirement for grant funding?**

   Leveraged resources (cash or in-kind) are required but there is no match requirement.

   4. What is a sub-recipient?

   A subrecipient is any person or organization that will receive EARN funding through the Lead Applicant. Subrecipients must be a member of the SIP and provide a COGS and Federal Tax ID number.

5. Is there a minimum number of participants that have to be served through the grant?

   No.

Frequently Asked Questions

6. **How can I connect with other organizations attending today that are interested in applying?**

A list of attendees will be sent to participants of today's pre-proposal conference. If you do not wish for your information to be shared, please let Mary Keller know by Friday 7/25.

7. **Is there a cost per participant requirement?**

There is no cost per participant requirement for EARN. The cost per participant is dependent upon many different factors, including target population, training and services rendered, and industry.

8. **Can funding be used to cover supportive services like transportation, housing, and childcare costs?**

Yes, applicants are strongly encouraged to consider including costs for supportive services in the budget.

9. **Can a Workforce Development Board be a part of multiple applications?**

Yes.

10. **Can a Lead Applicant provide a Letter of Commitment for another SIP?**

Yes.

Frequently Asked Questions

11. **Are MOUs required?**

MOUs are strongly encouraged but not required. Letters of Commitment are required.

12. **Does the grant allow for a planning period?**

Applicants are strongly encouraged to develop a grant timeline that includes training beginning within three months of award.

13. **Are staffing costs allowable?**

Yes.

14. **When is a Certificate of Good Standing necessary?**

A COGS should be submitted for the Lead Applicant and any subgrantee that is not a government entity or an organization that is otherwise not subject to obtaining a COGS.

15. **What constitutes as success for an EARN SIP?**

Strong industry engagement is key. The placement rate for unemployed/underemployed individuals is approximately 80%.

Key Contact Information

Questions about **EARN Maryland**?
Mary Keller - mary.keller@maryland.gov

Questions about **SNAP E&T**?
Candice Roberts- candice.roberts@maryland.gov

Questions about **ENOUGH**?
Leopold Spohngellert - leopold.spohngellert@maryland.gov

Questions/Next Steps

All questions and answers received during this conference will be posted on the EARN Maryland's website by **August 1, 2025**

Questions about the Solicitation will be accepted via email through **August 29, 2025.**

Please remember to let Mary Keller know if you <u>do not</u> want your contact information shared with the attendees of the pre-proposal conference by **July 25, 2025.**

If you intend to apply for funding, please email Mary Keller.

Thank You!