

**Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education Foundation**  
**Workforce Innovation #Prepared4PA**  
**Request for Proposal**

Proposal Launch: July 10, 2023  
Proposal Due Date: September 1, 2023  
Award Date: October 2, 2023  
Pilot Program Period: October – February 2024

## SECTION 1: Introduction

[#Prepared4PA](#)

Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education’s public mission – to provide an affordable, quality, career-relevant postsecondary education – is at the center of what it does every day as it strives for accountability, transparency, and to cultivate diverse, equitable, and inclusive educational environments. Its mission is to ensure academic program excellence and relevance so students can obtain the skills and credentials they need for their professional and personal success. Our State System universities are central to the Commonwealth’s future in that they are the cultural and economic lifeblood of the communities and regions in which they are located. With over 400,000 students seeking degrees or enrolled in certificate and other career-development programs, affordable, career-relevant post-secondary education is an engine of social mobility and economic development, which is essential to the future of this Commonwealth.

The State System seeks to refresh its version and vision of public higher education and remains focused on fundamentally transforming its education and business models so that it can sustainably drive economic development and social mobility into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Now is the time to leverage the opportunity to be part of the Commonwealth’s solution in building a vibrant economy and helping to foster a brighter future for our students.

To meet its workforce needs, Pennsylvania must significantly increase the number of adults with some postsecondary education. Right now, PA higher education is shrinking in the number of newly credentialed people it produces annually. As a result, the [#Prepared4PA](#) campaign and its regional workforce assemblies have aligned competencies and skills needed for successful transitions in the workforce across six identified in-demand industries. This RFP will support the development of pilot programs across industries in an effort to continue fostering collaboratives that have a direct impact on our students, universities, local businesses, and economy.

## SECTION 2: Scope of Work

### Pilot Purpose

The Pennsylvania State System for Higher Education’s Foundation is issuing this Request for Proposal (RFP) to elicit new collaborative educational models that further the career aspirations of life-long learners and the economic growth of businesses in the region. Pilot Programs must have the potential to scale promising practices across the State with a view towards improving access, supporting returning and first-time adult students; and delivering capability with reskilling and upskilling in OSHA aligned credential programs. The [#Prepared4PA](#) Pilot Programs should be designed to foster creative partnerships where entities in different sectors collaborate, bringing their distinctive competencies to bear in partnerships to deliver real advantage to learners and meeting them where they are.

Pilots will be selected across the four regions of the Commonwealth that cover at least one of the following six industry clusters:

| In Demand Industry Cluster Competency Maps  |   |
|---|---|
| <a href="#">Agribusiness</a> (supply chain) | <a href="#">Advanced Manufacturing</a>  |
| <a href="#">Energy</a>                      | <a href="#">Healthcare</a>              |
| <a href="#">Information Technology</a>      | <a href="#">Finance &amp; Insurance</a> |

### Outcomes and Approach

#### Desired Outcomes

- Credentials and training designed for equity that will drive continuous improvement, ensure job quality for all, increase competitiveness, and drive inclusionary growth.
- Create sustaining affordable, high-quality, employer approved and validated credentialing pathways (education & training); tracking directly into high demand industry clusters demonstrably improving graduates’ position in the market place.
- Essential Employability Qualities (soft skills) are intentionally incorporated into curriculum to ensure a learner’s preparedness for educational attainment, greater economic mobility, and prosperity – regardless of industry or discipline
- Generate a financially self-sustaining ecosystem of partners capable of responding to the changing nature of the workforce.
- Address duplication, adhering to strategies that focus on sharing, transferability, quality, and value.
- Develop strategies to build/strengthen programs that intentionally target a diverse population of students and in-demand careers, positioning these programs as value-added talent resources for local and regional businesses.
- Pilots highlight regional profiles and strengths that can serve as blueprints for ongoing strategic investment (private and public) ensuring sustainability.
- A stronger alignment of the workforce, education, and economic development systems. Federal, state and local dollars, based on high priority occupations, could result in potential long-term funding streams. Such as, but not limited to, WIOA & Trade Act funding mechanism that provide the flexibility to collaborate across systems in an effort to better address the

employment and skills needs of current employees, jobseekers, and employers.

Success Indicators

Results to be monitored for the #Prepared4PA initiative include both successful completion of the program as well as employment placements. Specific indicators of success for this RFP will be measured as follows:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Employee Success<br>(at least two)                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credential attainment</li> <li>• Gainful employment</li> <li>• Increase in pay</li> <li>• Promotion</li> <li>• Transition across occupations</li> </ul>   |
| Employer Success<br>(at least two)                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fill job vacancies within 4-6 months</li> <li>• Upskill current employees</li> <li>• Establish comprehensive industry training partnerships</li> <li>• Increased employee retention</li> </ul>  |
| General Metrics<br>(all)                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program participation</li> <li>• Program completion</li> <li>• Intentional and pronounced focus on DEI               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased recruitment of historically underserved populations</li> <li>• Designed with equity in mind to drive inclusionary growth</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cross-industry and/or multi-discipline collaboration</li> </ul> |
| Essential Skills<br>(at least 1 skill from each of the 8 EEQs) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporation of <a href="#">Essential Employability Qualities</a> (soft skills training) to ensure learner preparedness</li> </ul>   |

SECTION 3: RFP Process & Instructions

Eligibility and Requirements

- A State System University partnership is required.
- Consortia with education providers, employers and/or workforce practitioners spanning regions and industry clusters are encouraged to apply.
- Recommended industry clusters for initial pilot program are based on [competency maps](#)
- Financial Resource Development plans have been considered (investment partners exist or have been identified like employers, WIOA, Trade Act, philanthropy etc.) with an eye towards scale and long-term sustainability.
- Proposals should include components around DEI cultural competencies that improve broader socio-economic outcomes (equity, social mobility and/or affordability).  
Example: recruiting populations that don't normally work in that industry sector in order to expand employment opportunities for those that don't usually consider that career path
- Proposals should exemplify an employer centric and portfolio approach, illustrating opportunities for student growth, learning trajectories and contributions towards regional workforce development.

## Consortia / Partnership Applications

Must identify one agency that will act as the lead partner. The lead agency shall submit a single proposal on behalf of the participating entities outlining the program and explaining the roles and responsibilities of each member agency (collaborative agreement).

The lead agency serves as the applicant agency of record, the legally recognized fiscal agent for the pilot, and the single point of contact for the PASSHE Foundation. The lead agency is responsible for overseeing the implementation of all aspects of the grant, including pilot plan, pilot monitoring and data reporting, as well as fiscal management. All consortium members are subject to the terms and conditions of the grant award and policies.

The following are examples of partner combinations that may respond to this RFP so long as it includes at least one institution from the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

- College/University + Professional Assn./Licensing Entity
- College/University + College/University
- College/University + Nonprofit Organization
- College/University + 3rd Party Training Provider
- College/University + Other entity

## RFP Timeline

| TASK  | TIMELINE          |
|---|-------------------|
| RFP Issued  | July 10, 2023     |
| Proposals Due                                       | September 1, 2023 |
| Proposal Evaluation – external review team          | September 2023    |
| Award Announcement                                  | October 2, 2023   |
| Selected Applicant Deliverables (Post Notification) | October 2023      |
| Pilot Programs Begin                                | Fall 2023         |
| Pilot Programs Completed (no later than)            | February 2024     |
| Pilot Program Evaluation                            | Spring 2024       |

## Proposal Submission Guidelines

One PDF copy of the proposal with the following elements should be submitted electronically along with a scanned copy of pages with signatures to:

Hope Lineman

Strategic Advisor to the Chancellor on Workforce Innovation, PASSHE

Email: [hlineman@commonwealthu.edu](mailto:hlineman@commonwealthu.edu)

323E Ulmer Hall | Lock Haven | PA | 17745

(P): 570-484-3130

- Cover sheet identifying entity name, address, contact information for person responsible for proposal, and signature, title and date indicating certification that to the best of its knowledge and belief, the data supplied in this application/proposal is true and accurate. The organization agrees to comply with all local, state and federal regulations if a contract is awarded.
- Proposal narrative (**not to exceed 10 pages**) should be clearly labeled and incorporate the below:
  - Purpose statement incorporating an explanation of how this aligns with strategic priorities of all consortia members.
  - Design principles & approach incorporating Integrated Employability Framework
  - Contribution to PASSHE's DEI Guiding Principles and Values
  - Desired outcomes
  - Indicators of success (based on above measures)
  - Marketing and recruitment plan
  - Sustainability strategies addressing continued momentum and sustained impact
  - Project implementation timeline
- **Brief** statement of expertise, including:
  - Key personnel descriptions
  - Examples of previous work
- Pilot budget & narrative addressing cost per/student towards achieving credentials as well as program sustainability.

Proposals that are in response to this RFP are **due no later than 5:00P.M. on September, 2023.**

Late submissions will not be considered.

## Selection Criteria

A Review Team composed of university, economic development, business, workforce, and DEI experts from across the state will read and score each application. Readers will note the thoroughness of the proposed plan and each section of the application will be evaluated and scored on the basis of completeness, clarity, and merit. Although the applicant may have provided the same or similar information in a previous section, the information should be included in each section where applicable to fully explain, answer, or clarify. Each application will be evaluated on the criteria identified in the application using this [rubric](#).

|                              |   |        |
|------------------------------|---|--------|
| <i>Credentialing Pathway</i> | Proposal illustrates the connection of progressive levels of credentials and training for specific occupations (including essential skills) in a way that optimizes the progress and success of individuals while engaging employers to meet workforce demands. | 40 pts |
| <i>Alignment</i>             | Credentials developed are in alignment with competencies to meet career objectives (intentional use of competency maps)   | 30 pts |
| <i>Sustainability</i>        | Proposal can sustain capacity and identify funding support beyond pilot   | 10 pts |
| <i>Strategic</i>             | Proposal demonstrates planning and data analysis in a collaborative manner to ensure clear paths for jobs in high-demand industries   | 10 pts |
| <i>Innovation</i>            | The proposal highlights new partnerships and includes significant creation, development, and implementation of new certifications, with the aim of improving efficiency, effectiveness or competitive advantage   | 10 pts |

All lead applicants of this grant will be notified in writing whether their application has been approved. Applicants that do not meet the qualifications may reapply for future grants.

## Awarded Applicants

### Deliverables Post Selection (October 2023)

- External audience marketing “[pitch](#)” document (one pager or 2 slides max)
- Finalized curriculum and pilot implementation plans to include benchmarks. (Dissemination of curriculum and training implementation within the industry cluster completed by October 2023).
- Signed MOU or agreements **between pilot partners** as [models](#) for future pilots.
- Signed MOU between **Pilot (Lead Contact) and PASSHE Foundation**

### Deliverables Post Pilot

- All selected pilot programs will participate in an evaluation addressing the graduate competency preparation and employer engagement per the #Prepared4PA Adapted Integrated Employability Framework. Training providers will be required to provide documentation of evidence to inform the program evaluation.
- All selected pilot programs will be asked to contribute to and/or share “playbooks” and best practices that will effectively support talent development, help re-imagine and further sustain higher education into the 21st century.
- In addition to an interim progress report, all selected pilot programs will be required to submit a final report highlighting lessons learned to include but are not limited to:
  - Consortia experience
  - Plans for continuous improvement
  - Scaling and sustainability efforts
  - Innovative Developments
  - Analysis of student, employer, and academic institution surveys
  - Diversity, Equity & Inclusion measures

## Additional Notes

The applicant understands that the information provided herein is intended solely to assist in proposal preparation. Interested parties bear the sole responsibility of obtaining the necessary information to submit a qualifying proposal. Resources are available below and on the [#Prepared4PA](#) website. It is highly recommended that applicants become familiar with key components prior to completing the application, including but not limited to:

- Guiding Principles (affordable, accessible, high-quality, workforce aligned, productive and a driver of social mobility)
- [Diversity, Equity & Inclusion](#)
- [The QA Commons](#) (Employability Framework & EEQs)
- [Collective Impact](#)
- [Rubric](#)

## RFP Information

If you have questions or need technical assistance, please feel free to contact us at:

**[hlineman@commonwealthu.edu](mailto:hlineman@commonwealthu.edu)**

**[sscherer@thepafoundation.org](mailto:sscherer@thepafoundation.org)**