



AB 628 Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative

Evaluation

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Evaluation Grant Term: 1/1/2023 - 4/30/2024¹

September 2022

¹ The project end date is subject to change.

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Overview and Background

Purpose

The Labor and Workforce Development Agency and the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) recently announced \$22,760,000 in competitive [grants](#) to fund partnerships between Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Local Workforce Development Boards with expertise in serving one or more target populations that face high barriers to employment. The purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA) is to solicit applications from evaluation teams to conduct a robust, rigorous, and objective evaluation of the Breaking Barriers Initiative. The CWDB has set aside up to \$500,000 for this evaluation.

Breaking Barriers Background

In September 2021, the California Legislature approved Assembly Bill (AB) 628, Removing Barriers to Employment Act, which expands the Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative (Breaking Barriers) to be administered by the CWDB.

Breaking Barriers provides individuals with barriers to employment the services they need to enter, participate in, and complete broader workforce preparation, training, and education programs aligned with regional labor market needs. Under the initiative, services shall be delivered principally through a collaborative partnership between mission-driven community-based organizations and local workforce development boards to strengthen the America's Job Center of California (AJCC) system.

This initiative focuses on innovative approaches to, and proven practices for, addressing racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities in the labor market. Successful projects will create pipelines to quality jobs, upward mobility, and income security for workers historically excluded from quality jobs and economic prosperity.

In 2021, the California Legislature approved Senate Bill (SB) 129, which appropriated state general funds to support the Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative. The CWDB is required to submit an interim and final report to the California legislature, summarizing outcome data collected pursuant to the amended Unemployment Insurance Code (UIC) Section 14033. The Foundation for Community Colleges (Foundation) is charged with administering this grant program in partnership with and on behalf of the CWDB.

Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative Goals

Primary objectives of Breaking Barriers are:

- **Focus** on innovative approaches to, and proven practices for, addressing racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities in the labor market.
- **Provide** individuals with barriers to employment the services and support they need to be successful in entering, participating, and completing broader workforce preparation, training, and education programs within pathways aligned with regional labor market

needs. Those who complete these programs should gain the skills and competencies necessary to successfully enter the labor market, retain employment, and earn wages that lead to self-sufficiency and, eventually, economic mobility and security.

- **Deliver** services through collaborative partnerships between mission-driven community-based organizations and local workforce development boards with experience providing services and relevant relationships to target populations.

Award Information

Up to \$500,000 will be awarded to an organization that will work in partnership with the CWDB Research and Evaluation (R&E) Team to evaluate the progress and impact of the Breaking Barriers Initiative. The evaluation is expected to include the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The evaluation will focus on the Initiative's abilities to meet its primary objectives. The evaluation will also identify best and promising practices to communicate to the CWDB and to workforce service providers throughout the state.

Eligibility

Public and not-for-profit organizations, academic institutions, and private for-profit businesses that meet the minimum qualifications outlined in this RFA are eligible to apply.

Evaluation Scope of Work

The CWDB seeks a highly interactive evaluation team that will work in coordination with the CWDB's research and evaluation team. In broad terms, the evaluation will use both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the success of CBO-local board partnerships in providing individuals with barriers to employment the services and support they need to be successful in entering, participating, and completing broader workforce preparation, training, and education programs within pathways aligned with regional labor market needs. All evaluation activities are expected to be data-driven and rooted in evidence-based practice that will result in deliverables on par with peer-reviewed publications.

The Evaluator should have the following minimum qualifications:

- Evidence-based research experience.
- Experience working with the broader workforce system including local boards, community-based organizations, training providers, and workforce intermediaries; preferably with a background in social justice advocacy.
- Experience working with economic development initiatives.
- Comprehensive understanding of the workforce system, publicly funded innovation initiatives, and public policy.
- Skill set of working with both public and private stakeholders; and

- Evaluation program management.

The evaluation team will collectively work with the State Board to develop a work plan, timeline, interim deliverables, and co-produce a final report with policy recommendations based on findings. The Evaluator will also work with the Breaking Barriers Initiative grantees and technical assistance providers to evaluate the effectiveness and success of the Initiative, identify lessons learned and best practices, and recommend changes to improve coordination and collaboration between CBOs and local boards.

The Evaluator will develop methods to evaluate efforts by grantees to achieve the outcomes of the Breaking Barriers Initiative including:

- Grantees' ability to provide the services proposed in the grant to the number of individuals specified in the grant as evidenced by, among other factors, whether the grantee completed the work proposed.
- Individuals' ability to successfully complete relevant programming funded under the grant as demonstrated by relevant measures. Measures must directly relate to the purpose of the program.
- Individuals' ability to transition into the broader workforce and education system as evidenced by employment and enrollment in relevant programs.
- Individuals' ability to succeed in both the broader workforce and education system and labor market once they transition into the broader system. Success will be measured by tracking these individuals utilizing the existing performance monitoring systems and metrics governing relevant programs and outcomes once they transition into the broader system.
- Program participants' ability to provide feedback on program elements and inform the evaluation of program performance and success.
- The degree to which program activities acknowledge and address historic racial inequity and socioeconomic barriers to labor force participation for target population groups.
- The degree to which leadership at the executive and board level of the organization serving as the lead applicant reflects the demographics of the application's target populations.
- The degree to which at least 25 percent of the lead applicant organization's staff reflects the demographics of the application's target populations.

Outcomes for Evaluation

The CWDB is committed to understanding the longitudinal implications of the Breaking Barriers Initiative, including any unintended consequences related to the following categories and questions:

- Partnership
 - What does the Initiative tell us about the value of partnerships between local boards and CBOs in serving individuals who face high barriers to employment?

- Equity
 - Does the Initiative serve individuals with high barriers to employment better than the traditional workforce system?
- Training
 - Do Initiative participants who receive workforce training fare better than those who did not?
- Supportive Services
 - In what ways are opportunities for earn and learn training strategies, including apprenticeship, on-the-job training, paid internships, and/or work experience helping to advance the overall Initiative goals?
 - What types of supportive services are most helpful for participants and why?
- Placement Outcomes: Employment and Wages
 - What do the grantees' job placement activities tell us about the overall effectiveness of Initiative strategies?

CWDB Expectations for Evaluation

The CWDB is committed to supporting all efforts to understand the impact of Breaking Barriers and the implications of the partnerships for workers and the overall workforce system. To this end, the evaluator is expected to:

- Work closely with CWDB research and evaluation staff to develop and revise Initiative evaluation questions for Initiative-related programming and policies.
- Collaborate with CWDB research and evaluation staff to establish an evaluation plan.
- Coordinate data gathering with CWDB staff and Initiative stakeholders.
- Analyze the quantitative and qualitative data collected between the Cal E-Grants data collection, CWDB quarterly narrative reports, and original data gathered by the evaluator.
- Work closely with the technical assistance providers and grant management team at the Foundation.
- Meet regularly with the CWDB Research and Evaluation team to assess progress and troubleshoot solutions to observed challenges.
- Produce an interim and final evaluation report.

Evaluation Proposal Application

The following provides an overview of what the CWDB is asking evaluation applicants to submit for their application. The CWDB is looking for evaluation **project narratives** (up to 12 pages) that cover the following elements:

Evaluation Objectives: This section should detail specific aims, objectives, and evaluation milestones.

Research and Evaluation Design: This section should include an overview of the research and evaluation framework proposed for the Breaking Barriers Initiative. Please include potential

research questions, methods, and analytical approach. This section should guide the reviewer through the sequential steps of the evaluation and intended outcomes.

Experience/Qualifications: This section should include details on the evaluation team’s experience and expertise to demonstrate their ability to complete a robust and rigorous evaluation.

In addition to your 12 page narrative, please also fill out all tabs and submit the Excel sheet “**Breaking Barriers Evaluation Application Attachments**” that can be found on our website.

With the exception of the signed (digital or wet) cover page, please submit application documents **in their original file format** (e.g. Word, Excel, etc.) using the following naming convention:

BB_EVAL_ApplicantName_ProjectNarrative

Applications must be submitted electronically to solicitations@cwdb.ca.gov.

Funding

Funding under this RFA will be provided through the California General Funds Breaking Barriers allocation. All awards are subject to the availability of appropriated funds and to any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law. The CWDB reserves the right to adjust the total number, duration, and amount of each grant award.

Funding amount requests should be clearly justified and outlined within the application, including breakdowns of all costs within a line item and thorough descriptions captured in a budget narrative. If this level of detail is not provided, the application may be disqualified due to inability to review scope of work, activities, outcomes, and deliverables due to unclear budget and use of grant funds. If additional information is needed to justify funding requests, the CWDB reserves the right to request additional information.

The applicant, also referred to as the Fiscal Agent, is responsible for releasing and distributing funds to any partnering organizations once awarded. Each partnering contractor receiving money must be identified, with services provided and funds allocated clearly outlined.

No obligation or commitment of funds will be allowed prior to or beyond the grant term end date. Any grant funds not expended during the grant period will be returned to the State.

Invoicing

Under no circumstances can the State pay for services provided prior to the start date or the final contract approval of the State, whichever is later. Final approval occurs when all parties have signed the Standard Agreement, with the latest signature date being the date of final approval.

For services satisfactorily rendered and upon receipt and approval of the invoices, the CWDB agrees to compensate the Contractor in accordance with the approved Budget Summary. The total invoiced amount shall not exceed the award amount. Grantee shall maintain thorough accounting ledgers to support all charges and year-to-date expenditures of grant funds.

This grant operates on a reimbursement structure, and Fiscal Agents are required to invoice monthly to receive payment. Invoices are due by the 20th of the month each month. If the 20th falls on a weekend or holiday, the report will be due the following business day. Under the [California Prompt Payment Act](#), payment should be received within 45 calendar days from the date the invoice is received from the Fiscal Agent.

Significant Dates

Application & Award Timeline

Event	Date*
RFA Release Date	September 21, 2022
Applications Due	October 14, 2022
Award Announcement*	November 2022
Estimated Grant Term*	January 1, 2023 – April 30, 2024

*Note – All dates after the final proposal submission deadline are approximate and may be adjusted as conditions dictate, without addendum to this RFA.

To adhere to the legality and transparency requirements of the solicitation process, individual CWDB staff cannot respond directly to inquiries or engage with potential applicants during the solicitation period.

All questions regarding this RFA shall be sent via email to solicitations@cwdb.ca.gov.

Application Deadline

The deadline for applications is October 14th, 2022 at 3:00PM Pacific Time. Late applications will not be accepted.

Submitting an Application

Applications must be submitted electronically to solicitations@cwdb.ca.gov.

Applicants are encouraged to apply early to allow adequate time to make any corrections to errors found in the application during the submission process by the due date.

No late applications will be accepted.

Executive Order N-6-22 – Russia Sanctions

On March 4, 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order N-6-22 (the EO) regarding Economic Sanctions against Russia and Russian entities and individuals. “Economic Sanctions” refers to sanctions imposed by the U.S. government in response to Russia’s actions in Ukraine, as well as any sanctions imposed under state law. By submitting a bid or proposal, Contractor represents that it is not a target of Economic Sanctions. Should the State determine Contractor is a target of Economic Sanctions or is conducting prohibited transactions with sanctioned individuals or entities, that shall be grounds for rejection of the Contractor’s bid/proposal any time prior to contract execution, or, if determined after contract execution, shall be grounds for termination by the State.