THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

Economic Development Initiative
Workforce Opportunity Grant
Request for Proposals

I.   Introduction

The mission of The Rapides Foundation is to improve the health status of Central Louisiana. The Rapides Foundation focuses its work in three strategic areas:
- Healthy People, to improve access to healthcare and to promote healthy behaviors;
- Education, to increase the level of educational attainment and achievement as the primary path to improved economic, social and health status; and
- Healthy Communities, to improve economic opportunity and family income, and enhance civic and community opportunities for more effective leaders and organizations.

The Economic Development Initiative makes the link between healthy economies and healthy people. Healthy economies with low unemployment rates and higher wage jobs provide people with the means to purchase medical insurance, make better healthcare choices and live healthier lifestyles.

The Workforce Opportunity Grant provides an award of up to $75,000 for up to a twelve-month period to support collaborations between industry and postsecondary institutions to offer training/education for high-wage occupations for which there is demonstrated unmet employer demand within The Rapides Foundation's Service Area (Allen, Avoyelles, Catahoula, Grant, LaSalle, Natchitoches, Rapides, Vernon and Winn Parishes). Only accredited, public, nonprofit, postsecondary institutions are eligible for this award. The additional skills gained by training participants should lead to a moderate increase in wages. Additionally, all funded trainings should lead to an increase in production or service capacity from industry partners.

Note: Projects that are eligible for the Louisiana Workforce Commission's Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP) are not eligible for this funding opportunity.

II. Background
Since its establishment in 1994, The Rapides Foundation has diligently pursued its mission to improve the health status of Central Louisiana. From the beginning, The Rapides Foundation leadership has viewed this mission in a very comprehensive and holistic manner, supporting investments in a host of focus areas. In 2008, the Foundation undertook a comprehensive Economic Development Initiative designed to address several major economic challenges facing Central Louisiana. The Foundation's grantmaking strategy for the Economic Development Initiative revolves around three key components: Business Startups and Expansions; Workforce Skills and Development; and Business Culture and Environment.

In 2013, the Foundation, in partnership with the Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance (CLEDA), now called Louisiana Central, funded a comprehensive study on the current and projected workforce landscape of Central Louisiana. This study titled "Beyond High School" indicated that 77% of the future job openings will require some training or certification beyond high school but will not require a four- year degree. Additionally, it prompted the Foundation to add the Workforce Skills and Development component under its Economic Development Initiative to support efforts to build a cohesive and effective workforce development system in the region that meets the demand of employers, quickly responds to change, and provides training opportunities and career pathways for employment.

III. Purpose of Request for Proposals

The purpose of the Workforce Opportunity Grant is to increase the technical and production skills of current and future employees in order to meet an unmet employer demand within the Foundation's Service Area. This opportunity provides funding for new educational training or certification support to qualified candidates for immediate high-wage local employment opportunities.

Applicants are encouraged to build strong partnerships between employers, industry groups, and the workforce system to design and deliver courses through accelerated learning strategies, redesigned curricula, distance learning, work-based training, and innovative uses of technology to enhance learning activities.

Eligible projects must:
- Increase the production capacity of business or industry partners.
- Increase skills and knowledge of potential employees or existing employees that will require higher wages.
- Address an immediate workforce demand.
- Offer trainings that do not exist in the region.

Priority will be given to proposals that demonstrate the following:
- Trainings that imbed nationally recognized industry-based credentials into their curriculum.
- Trainings for job opportunities with base wages over $18/hr.

Partners should assume the following roles/responsibilities:
Postsecondary Institution:
- Provide employer-identified training.
- Act as fiscal agent for the grant award.
- Assign a project coordinator.
- Monitor progress of project and timely complete reporting requirements.
- Ensure all identified training participants meet entry requirements for the course.
- Support employee candidate success and transition from training to employment.

Employer(s):
- Identify an unmet workforce training need and a postsecondary partner to implement that training.
- Provide a 10% cash funding match for total cost of training.
- Identify qualifications, skills, certifications and credentials for trainings.
- Identify the total number of available job openings that require the new training and the base wage associated with those jobs.
- Identify a cohort of at least eight participants to receive training.
- Pre-qualify all training participants for employment (drug screenings, skills tests, aptitude tests, etc.) prior to training.
- Commit to hiring participants who successfully complete training.
- Commit to moderately increasing wages for current employees who successfully complete training.
- Commit to allowing training candidates the necessary time to complete the required course work.
- Provide the postsecondary institution with an employment update on training participants two months after the completion of the project.

Employee Candidates:
- Potential or existing employees must commit to attend training, completing all assignments and accepting offered employment from participating employer(s) in The Rapides Foundation service area.

IV. Eligibility Requirements

Eligible grant recipients include accredited, nonprofit, postsecondary institutions. Trainings must benefit businesses and employees located within The Rapides Foundation's nine-parish service area (Allen, Avoyelles, Catahoula, Grant, LaSalle, Natchitoches, Rapides, Vernon and Winn Parishes.)

Applicants should thoroughly review the Request for Proposals and other key documents included in the Key Materials section (located in the right column) to see full details of the grant opportunity, application process and proposal requirements.

V. Funding Guidelines and Grant Terms
- Length of training programs should be one year or less.
- A 10% cash funding match will be required by the employer(s) for the total cost of the training. (Note: while in-kind matches are welcomed, a 10% cash match will be required from participating employers.)
- Funding may be requested for the following items: tuition, faculty/trainers, supplies, student stipends and equipment that can be explicitly linked to enhanced programmatic implementation.
- No more than 15% indirect costs.

- Projects must create or expand the capacity of value-added goods and services providers within The Rapides Foundation's service area.
- Proposed projects must serve participants in the nine-parish service area of The Rapides Foundation. (Allen, Avoyelles, Catahoula, Grant, LaSalle, Natchitoches, Rapides, Vernon and Winn.)

Grant funds may <u>not</u> be used for:
- Existing workforce training programs.
- Leadership development programs.
- Lobbying or political programs or events.
- Activities, projects, or programs exclusively benefitting members of sectarian or religious organizations.
- Biomedical, clinical or educational research.
- Direct support to individuals or endowments.
- Funding supplanting existing sources of support.
- Individuals, including patient assistance funds.
- Social events or similar fundraising efforts or telethons.
- Projects outside of the Foundation's service area.
- Operating expenses not used for significantly expanding the services of ongoing organizations.
- Vans or other vehicles.
- Building purchase or renovation.

These funding opportunities are limited and offered on a competitive basis; therefore, it is possible not all applicants will receive funding. We reserve the right to award less than the amount requested.

VI. Timeline for Submission

Proposals will be accepted on an ongoing basis. Any applications that are submitted after each proposal due date will be considered during the next application cycle. Proposals are only accepted using the Foundation's online application process. The application is located on the Foundation's website at www.rapidesfoundation.org under the "Grants" tab. Online deadline submission is no later than 4:00 p.m. Central Time, on the dates listed below. Please note, the grant proposal must be fully submitted by the deadline, therefore, you must begin uploading documents prior to 4:00 p.m. on the day of the deadline. We suggest you allow a minimum of three hours for the upload process.

Proposals due:	August 5, 2024	October 14, 2024
Notification of Selection:	October 14, 2024	December 16, 2024
Grant Start Date:	November 1, 2024	January 10, 2025

Pre-submission Consultation

Prospective applicants are encouraged to schedule a call or a meeting with the Economic Development Initiative Program Officer to discuss alignment and feasibility of their proposal before submitting a proposal. Contact Programs Assistant, Courtney Keys to schedule a meeting with the Program Department; courtney@rapidesfoundation.org or 318-443-3394.

Proposal Deadline

This Request for Proposals will be available for multiple funding cycles. Applicants should become familiar with the dates associated with the cycle for which they are seeking funding. Applicants whose proposals are not funded may submit a revised application for consideration in a subsequent cycle. In such cases, repeat applications are advised to seek a consultation with program staff prior to submitting another proposal.

VII. Proposal Requirements

ALL applicants must submit the following information in 11-point Calibri font with 1.5-line spacing and using templates provided (when referenced).

1. **Cover page – completed online, a separate sheet is not required**
   a. Applicant organization information (name, address, phone number, email, etc.).
   b. Name, title, phone number and email address of the proposed project coordinator, or key contact person from the applicant organization.
   c. Project title.
   d. Name of the funding opportunity.
   e. Requested funding amount.
   f. Proposed project period starting no sooner than the dates listed above.

2. **Project Abstract** that includes the following**:**
   a. Describe your organization's mission and history.
   b. Describe the problem or need to be addressed by your proposed project.
   c. Describe the project through a summary of the timeline, activities, partners, and other factors necessary to consider in assessing the potential for effectively impacting the problem or issue described above.
   d. Describe the proposed results of your project in measurable terms. Tell us how you will collect and measure the information.

3. **Project Development and Support**
   a. Describe when and how the project was developed and the parties involved in its development.
   b. Describe demand for the project by the industry, including the target population if appropriate. Include current local, state or national statistics to support your request.
   c. Have you previously applied for funding through the Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP) for this project? If so, why was funding not awarded?

4. **Project Description**
   a. Fully describe your proposed project.

b. Describe evidence or research that indicates the proposed approach has been effective in comparable settings.

c. How will the addition of this training benefit participating businesses? What new product or services will this training allow them to produce?

d. How does this project promote The Rapides Foundation's effort to raise the median household income?

e. Provide a copy of the training curriculum that will be used to train candidates.

5. **Work Plan/Timeline (Please use charts, spreadsheets or other depictions)**

   a. Describe the activities and/or tasks to be performed, from implementation to project completion.

   b. List the resources required to implement each task of the work plan (facilities, staff, materials, financial, etc.)

6. **Resource Adequacy**

   a. List required resources, including funding, which are currently committed to the project and the source of those commitments.

   b. List other funders who have or will be approached to fund this project, the amounts and status of the requests.

   c. Describe your organization's plan to sustain the project upon grant completion.

7. **Applicant Qualifications**

   a. Explain how the project is consistent with the mission of your organization and that of any project partners.

   b. Describe the institutional commitment of the applicant organization and any project partners.

   c. Describe the skills, expertise and experience your organization and each project partner will contribute.

   d. List the project director and key persons responsible for implementing and supporting the project.

8. **Evaluation Plan**

   a. Describe the evaluation methods that will be used to indicate project is on track.

   b. Describe the evaluation methods to be used to measure long-term impact.

   c. Name the evaluation resources and persons responsible for implementation.

9. **Budget Spreadsheet and Narrative (up to 2 pages)**

   a. A line item budget (up to $82,500 for up to 1 year) using the downloadable Project Budget Worksheet template.

   b. A budget narrative describing how you propose to use the funds in each line item.

   c. A list of in-kind resources and/or support (if any) to be contributed by the applicant and/or partner organizations.

10. Required Attachments

 a. Training provider's audited financial statements. If audited financial statements are not available, a prior year financial statement certified by a governing board officer should be provided.

 b. Letters of understanding/commitment between your organization and all partners, consultants or resource providers.

 c. A list of applicant organization's board members. Include member name and address, professional/community affiliations and board tenure. This information should be included for each applicant organization, fiscal agent or project partner.

 d. Resumes and job descriptions of human resources listed in 5(b), 7(d) and8(c).

 e. Application Signature Page authorizing submission of the grant request.

 f. Documents confirming training organization's accreditation and nonprofit status.

VIII. Additional Considerations

The Foundation reserves the right to:

- Request additional information from any or all applicants.

- Meet with applicants to ensure full understanding of, and responsiveness to, the application requirements.

- Request modifications to a respondent's application prior to final award to ensure alignment of project elements with the core values, mission, and operating standards of the Foundation.

- Reject any or all applications submitted.

Funded organizations are required to submit a grant agreement (contract) and a board resolution affirming commitment to the grant funded project by the board of directors.

Contacts:

For questions related to this funding opportunity or submitting the online proposal:

Courtney Keys, Programs Assistant

The Rapides Foundation

courtney@rapidesfoundation.org

Direct: 318-767-3013

Main lines: 318-443-3394 or toll-free 800-994-3394