Microsoft

Microsoft Elevate America Community Initiative
2010 Request for Proposal

Elevate America Background

Microsoft is committed to giving people access to the workforce skills they need to compete for jobs in the ever growing 21st Century knowledge economy. To support this commitment, we created Elevate America. Part of our Unlimited Potential efforts, Elevate America incorporates a number of programs and resources that share a common focus; providing technology skills training, and resources to help people find employment:

- **Our veterans initiative** helps U.S. veterans and their spouses to transition to civilian employment.
- **Our community initiative** focuses on nonprofit organizations who provide technology access and training in their local community to help people find employment.
- **Our online resources** offer free and low cost training assets that help people develop better technology skills.
- **Our state voucher program** launched in 2009 in partnership with 32 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and American Samoa, providing nearly 900,000 training and certification vouchers through state and local workforce programs.

Elevate America Community Initiative

Microsoft recognizes the technology skills gap between those who are prepared to be successful in the workforce of the 21st century and those who are not yet prepared. By strengthening the resources available to institutions who are training people to meet the IT skills needs of today's employers, we hope to narrow and eventually close this gap. Through the Elevate America community initiative, individuals will gain the basic and intermediate level technology skills they need to be more employable, sharpen skills to retain current employment, apply for jobs they were not previously skilled for, and have confidence to continue the hard work of looking for jobs in a slowly improving economy.

Microsoft Elevate America Community Initiative Request for Proposals (RFP)

Through a competitive funding process, Microsoft will award $4 million cash, up to $6 million software, and technology skills training curriculum, over two years to eligible IRS registered 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organizations and their partner organizations which may include: workforce agencies, community colleges, labor organizations, and other nonprofit organizations. Microsoft seeks to fund partnerships where the organizations have fulltime staff with the expertise to successfully oversee and administer these programs. Grant recipients will be funded to provide individuals with the support needed to help people find employment. The services provided by successful applicants to ensure a fully supportive experience for participants will include technology skills training, job placement and strong employer connections and may also include career counseling and other support services such as childcare, transportation and housing. Microsoft's support of these components will vary, please review further specifics below.

This is a two year commitment from Microsoft.

- Year 1: Through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process, this initiative will fund grantees with demonstrated expertise and innovative approaches to providing employment services with a focus on technology skills training, job placement and related support to connect individuals to sustainable jobs and careers with a preference given to those programs that demonstrate well designed plans to scale and replicate successful programs.
- Year 2: Grants may be extended for a second year subject to a review and successful completion of year one program metrics and goals.

For this request for proposal process, we seek to partner with organizations who serve people in underserved communities - individuals with limited or less than average (compared to the relevant broader population) access to the education and training resources required to meet the needs of local labor market demands.

We have a particular, but not exclusive, interest in working with partners who are focused on the needs of women and young workers (ages 18-25) who are at an even greater risk within the broader population.

- Women are often at a disproportionate disadvantage in the workforce. For example, almost 60% of all low wage workers are female compared to 44% of higher wage workers[1]. Women's re-employment rate is ~6% lower [2]and full-time wage and salary workers have median weekly earnings that are 80 percent of men's[3].
- Young workers (represented by ages 18-25) see a disproportionate disadvantage in the workforce as compared to the broader population. In July 2010, for the first time since records began being kept by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, fewer than half of this age group was employed, and the unemployment rate is above 19 percent. [4]

More than half of today's jobs require some technology skills, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics data estimates that this figure will reach 77 percent in the next decade. In an effort to meet the growing demand for IT skills training, we will give priority to:

- Collaborative partnerships between two or more organizations in the nonprofit, workforce development, labor and education sectors.
- Organizations with strong partnerships that provide the necessary training and support services to prepare people for jobs including technology skills training and job placement services
- Entities with a track record that demonstrates effective performance in serving underserved communities, particularly women and young workers
- Programs and partnerships with a deep understanding of labor market needs and strong connections to local employers
- Programs that demonstrate well designed plans to scale, sustain and replicate successfully across multiple organizations, regions or at a national level
- Organizations and partnerships able to meet the required 50% cash match
- Organizations or partnerships that provide the other critical support services individuals may need to achieve success in their career aspirations including childcare, housing support and transportation assistance. *Note: support services such as childcare, transportation and housing, in support of broader technology/job skills training programs should comprise no more than 20% of the total request to Microsoft.*

Eligibility

All proposals must include at least one organization that is eligible to receive cash funding from Microsoft as defined by the following criteria:

1. Qualify as an IRS registered tax exempt 501 (c) (3) organization. State tax exemptions alone are not considered eligible.
2. Meet Microsoft general funding guidelines, which can be found here.
3. Successfully pass the Elevate America community initiative eligibility survey located here. Following successful completion access to the grant application tool will be provided.

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[1] Dept. of Health and Human Services ASPE Research Brief, Feb. 2009
[2] Bureau of Labor Statistics Worker Displacement News Release August 2010
[3] U.S. Dept. of Labor Women's Bureau, 2009
[4] Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment and Unemployment Among Youth Summary, August 2010

Support available through the Microsoft Elevate America community initiative includes cash, software and Information Technology (IT) training curriculum.

- Cash funding can be requested for support of programs, including staff expenses. Funding cannot be used for operational expenses such as rent and utilities or the purchase of hardware, scholarships, stipends or furniture.
- Requests for funding must include a cash project budget with diverse sources of revenue for program activities in addition to Microsoft. At least 50% of the total program cash budget must be provided by sources other than the Microsoft funding request. In an effort to maximize resources and foster sustainability, this initiative will only support those programs that have additional sources of revenue.

Request for proposal submission
RFP responses are due to Microsoft by no later than 5 p.m. Pacific time, October 8, 2010 and should be submitted using the process outlined below.

Organizations may request between $100,000 and $250,000 cash, not to exceed 50 percent of the program's total cash budget. Additionally, software and curriculum can be requested as part of this process. The grant request should be commensurate with the proposed program design and scale.

Microsoft recognizes that organizations serving individuals, including women and young workers from underserved communities have been engaged in various forms of IT skills training over time. This RFP presents an opportunity to build on existing models and innovative directions as well as incorporate opportunities to scale and replicate programs.

Responses must be submitted via Microsoft's online submission tool after first successfully passing a brief eligibility survey. This is a mandatory requirement for response to this RFP.

Elevate America community initiative RFP timeline
- September 1, 2010 – RFP available
- October 8, 2010 – RFP responses due to Microsoft by 5 p.m. Pacific Time
- January 2011 – Elevate America community initiative funding decisions announced

Additional Instructions
Microsoft encourages eligible organizations to apply for funding through this initiative before the deadline of October 8, 2010, at 5 P.M. Pacific Time, following the instructions below. Successful applicants will be notified of their awards in January 2011.

Step 1: Review RFP questions and requirements
Organizations are required to review this request for proposals (RFP) which includes the specific questions and application requirements prior to proceeding to the next step in the process.

Step 2: Complete eligibility survey to receive an invitation to apply for funding
In order to verify your organization's eligibility, please complete the eligibility survey at the link below. If successfully passed, you will receive additional information including a link inviting you to apply for funding through the Elevate America community initiative. If the eligibility quiz is not passed, it indicates that your organization is not eligible to apply for or receive funding from Microsoft for this initiative. Microsoft's general funding eligibility information can be found here.

Click here to complete the eligibility quiz

Step 3: Complete online application form
Once an organization has successfully completed the eligibility survey they will receive an invitation to the webinar as well as an online link to apply for funding. All applicants must complete and submit the full application before October 8, 2010 at 5 P.M. Pacific Time.

Informational Webinar
Microsoft will host a webinar for interested organizations who have successfully passed the eligibility survey to learn more and ask questions specific to this RFP. To receive the webinar information, you must first successfully complete the Elevate America community initiative eligibility survey, located at http://microsoft.cybergrants.com/elevate/eligibilitysurvey. For those organizations that are not able to participate in the webinar, it will be posted on our website for viewing.

Microsoft Elevate America Community Training Program
Request for Proposal Requirements

Please note: the information contained below is the full content of the RFP application for your review and preparation. In order to respond to the RFP, you must follow the steps indicated above to successfully pass the eligibility survey and receive the required information to formally apply for this RFP. Applications are only accepted through our online process. A comprehensive FAQ about this initiative and RFP process can be found at www.microsoft.com/elevateamerica.

Please be prepared with the following information and materials which will be required for your application
- o Participating organization(s) name, address, website, Executive Director and main proposal contact (if other than Executive Director)
- o Tax exempt ID number
- o Annual financial statements
- o Federal IRS tax-exemption letter of organization applying for funding
- o Board members and affiliations of organization applying for funding

Background

Organizational overview, programmatic capacity and demographics
Briefly describe the role of your organization and all partners in service delivery and program implementation as well as the demographics of the target population:
- A brief overview of each participating organizations mission, goals and programs
- Description of the previous and current programs that provide technology and/or job skills training and job placement as well as experience working with the target populations
- Data related to the size, demographics and specific needs of the target population in your community

Funding Request and Specific Program Information

Description of program for which funds are being requested
- Request summary: In 200 words or less, please provide an overview of the proposed program including: target population, training plans, employer connections goals and outcomes.
- Total cash amount requested from Microsoft, not to exceed 50 percent of total program cash budget (See Budget section for more specific requirements)
- Description of all full and part-time paid and volunteer staff resources that will be dedicated to program oversight and administration.
- Total number of computers and/or servers currently in use or estimated for purchase within one year of this project in order to estimate potential software needs. Additional information and guidance will be provided in the full online application.
- Microsoft Digital Literacy curriculum requests by quantity and language (See www.microsoft.com/digitallteracy for the full list of available resources)
- Program timeline
- Overview of the local or regional occupational needs for specific training and skills development (employment and vacancy data by region, employer surveys, etc)

Please describe how your proposed program intends to align with the goals of Elevate America.
An important goal of this initiative is to support the integration of technology and other 21st century skills into training programs and demonstrate their long-term value in helping people be prepared for today's workforce.

In this section, detail your initial recruitment, marketing, training and enrollment plan, client case management and follow up to ensure individuals are continuously supported to advance their careers including:

- Including outreach strategy to recruit participants from the target audience
- Conducting personal and skill assessments and offer career counseling to evaluate ways to address gaps and to help individuals achieve career aspirations
- Highlighting pathways to and options for job placement and additional schooling/training and where appropriate, the provision of coaching
- Offering online and classroom instruction for specific 21st century technology skills at a basic and intermediate level as required by more than 50 percent of today's jobs
- Participating in IT skills training programs currently offered; gaps; role of partners; expected outcomes
- Indicating facilities available for training including capacity, availability, etc.
- Describing wrap-around services (childcare, housing, transportation) as required

Employer Connections

A key component of the Elevate America community initiative is providing individuals with connections to long term, family-wage employment.

- How are you determining the employer skill needs in your local community and mapping your programs to meet those needs?
- What are your plans to focus your resources on training for the family-wage jobs that are in demand in your community/region?
- How does your program or partnership proactively connect program participants with employment opportunities and employers?
- How will your program or partnership work to help individuals obtain and retain long term, family-wage jobs?
- Where appropriate, please include demonstrations of employer support in the form of letters or other means.

Metrics, Outcomes and Sustainability

Since 2003, Microsoft has been committed to providing IT skills training to individuals across the country. In partnership with thousands of nonprofit organizations, we've reached more than 27 million people. Our goal is to continue to expand and deepen our IT skills training investments in the U.S. Please provide detail on how your program will work with Microsoft to reach the vast number of people who still do not have the level of technology skills to be competitive in the 21st century workplace.

- What is the percentage of the overall target population in your local community that your program intends to reach?
- What are the intended outcomes for participants (If there are both immediate and longer term outcomes, describe both)?
- How many participants will be trained in the first year of this grant? In the second year?
- How many participants do you anticipate will be placed in employment in the first year of this grant?

Each grantee will be expected to provide demographic data on participants, including progress toward outcome goals, through quarterly reports. Please describe your approach to measurement of the below metrics and outcomes answering the following questions:

- What overall goals do you propose for your grant, which partner will measure them and how will they be measured?
- How will you measure the intended outcomes for participants (If there are both immediate and longer term outcomes, describe both)?

- How will you track the number of participants will be trained in the first year of this grant? In the second year?
- How will you track the number of participants do you anticipate will be placed in employment in the first year of this grant?
- How will you track, measure and report on program milestones and outcomes?
- If you plan to work with community partners, or if you are providing training through multiple locations, how will you track outcome measures across organizations and/or locations?

Scalability and Sustainability

An important component of this program is the ability to scale and sustain programs that have proven success either on a regional or national level. Describe your organization's plans to scale this program over time to reach and impact more individuals. Please describe your organization's overall program sustainability plan beyond Microsoft's two years of funding.
- If the organization did not receive funding from Microsoft, would this program continue and how?
- Describe how your organization would use a second year of funding from Microsoft to serve more individuals and scale the program in other ways.
- If the program is successful, how would it be scaled to serve more individuals and/or be replicated in other organizations or locations?

Budget

Describe in a detailed narrative format how Microsoft funds will be used.
- Support services such as childcare, transportation and housing, which fall outside of technology/job skills training, should comprise no more than 20% of the total request to Microsoft.
- Microsoft funding request should not exceed 50% of total cash budget. In-kind contributions will not count towards the minimum 50% to be provided by other funding sources.

Additionally, please be prepared to submit a copy of the following documents with your application:
- Organizational budget
- Program budget and allocation of requested funds with other identified funding sources and amounts.
- Audited annual financial statements

For questions about this RFP process and the Microsoft Elevate America community initiative, please email us at elevate@microsoft.com.