EARN Maryland FAQs
February - March, 2013

–Stakeholder Q & A–

March 26 Update

1. **Our two years of audited financial statements will take up approximately 100 pages. Do we have to make a multiple copies or can we just include one set with the original copy of our Proposal and include on the flash drive?**

   DLLR requires financial statements covering the past two years for **all Lead Applicants and any convener or project manager not employed by the Lead Applicant.** (See IG Solicitation, Section 3.3.1). We are not requiring financial statements from any other Subgrantees at this time. DLLR reserves the right to request additional documentation from any Subgrantee during the evaluation period.

   Please provide **one hard copy** any required financial statement(s). The hard copy of any financial statement(s) should be separate from the five tabbed (and bound if you so choose) hard copies of your Proposal. In addition, please include **one electronic copy** of any financial statement(s) on your flash drive.

   Please mark any financial statement(s) clearly so that it is obvious that it corresponds to your Proposal, including your SIP Name, and the name of the entity for which the financial statement(s) apply (i.e. "Financials for [SIP Name] and [Lead Applicant Name]").

2. **Is our Training Provider considered a Subgrantee, and what type of information does DLLR need on the Training Provider?**

   Yes. Any organization that will receive a subgrant from the Lead Applicant in order to implement some aspect of the SIP Workforce Training Plan is considered a Subgrantee. If your proposal includes any Subgrantees, you must include a 1) Certificate of Good Standing and 2) a tax I.D. number for any Subgrantees. (See IG Solicitation, Secs. 3.3.2 & 4.1.9.)

   Training Providers that will receive EARN Maryland grant funds are Subgrantees, and must provide the information noted above as well as a resume. (See App. B, Sec. 4(C)(iv).)

If a particular Training Provider or other Subgrantee has not yet been selected, the Proposal should clearly explain why the selection has not yet taken place, the nature of the selection process, and an outline of qualifications being sought. A Proposal may be awarded funding without having selected all of its Subgrantees if a reasonable explanation is provided.

3. **Are tabs supposed to have name of sections or "1," "2," etc?**

Please use numbered tabs, "1," "2," etc., as described in Section 4.2.4 of the IG Solicitation.

4. ****<u>For Planning Grant Awardees Only</u>** -- I have our team submitting expense reports for the planning phase to compensate companies for staff time and mileage; are they able to go back to the beginning of our planning phase, which began before we submitted the application for planning grant funds? Also when do we need to provide the final Planning Grant Fiscal Report?**

The EARN Planning Grant award only funds expenses incurred during the Planning Grant Duration process, January 2, 2014 - March 31, 2014. The Final Planning Grant Fiscal Report should only include expenses for this time period.

This Final Fiscal Report is **due to DLLR by April 11, 2014.**

March 17 Update

1. **Could you please clarify what items count toward the 20-page limit described in Section 4 of the Implementation Grant Solicitation?**

   The 20 page limit includes:

   1) the **Table of Contents** (Sec. 4.1.3),
   2) the **Executive Summary** (Section 4.1.4 – maximum 1 page) and
   3) **Appendix B**, **Proposal Narrative).**

   Within the **Proposal Narrative**, Lead Applicant is directed to complete Appendices C, D, E, and F. Appendix E may be completed more than one time if the Proposal includes more than one Training Module. ***These Appendices DO NOT count toward the 20 pg maximum.***

   In addition, the Proposal Narrative directs Lead Applicant to provide supplemental documentation, such as Letters of Commitment (Sec. 1.C.iii), Data Source List (Sec. 2.B and 3.E) and Resume for Training Provider (Sec. 4.C.iv.4). ***Any supplemental documentation requested DOES NOT count toward the 20 page maximum.***

2. **Section 1.3.3 states: "Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a grant request that does not exceed a $150,000 cap. Grant requests in excess of that amount will be considered on a case-by-case basis, must be fully detailed and justified and may be reduced in the actual award." What would be an appropriate Award Request amount above $150,000?**

   DLLR is seeking to fund the fruits of a Partnership's industry-led process that identifies skills gaps and the solutions to fill them, and lead to improved employment opportunities for Marylanders. If a very strong, focused and justified case can be made for asking for more than the maximum of $150,000 with a laser focus on addressing industry's critical workforce needs and demonstrating employment benefits for participants, then the Partnership can make that case in the context of the Solicitation and its supporting Appendices. Except in extraordinary circumstances, we will not be able to fund proposals that exceed an ask of $150,000 for this year's funding cycle. However, DLLR is interested in proposals that might lay out Workforce Training Plans with modules, that in total, might exceed 150,000 in the event that EARN Maryland funding becomes available in the future.

3. **There is a flat statement that web design and maintenance will not be funded by EARN. In our industry the main barrier to getting employers and employees together is the lack of a unified web site serving the industry. Are there any circumstances in which the development of a unified job/training/employer profile site could be supported by EARN?**

Website design and maintenance is not an eligible expense for EARN MD to fund. However, allocating a small amount of money in the Budget to the development of content for a Website may be an allowable expense, as long as the Partnership provides a thoughtful and focused rationale for why such a function is important in supporting the overall Workforce Training Plan.

4. **To what extent are we bound by training modules to articulate what we want to do with our EARN money? i.e. how/where do we convey the "big picture" of what we hope to accomplish?**

   The "Overview and Statement of Innovation" section (Section 4(A)) of the Proposal Narrative (Appendix B) is the appropriate place for applicants to convey the "big picture, describe what they hope to accomplish and highlight any other aspects of your Proposal that do not fit neatly, or completely, into a training module template. Where appropriate and applicable, please use the Training Module Template format.

March 10 Update

1. **Would the funding for the positions of Curriculum Developer and Industry Liaison be an eligible Implementation Grant fund expense?**
   Would EARN fund a staff person to "map" existing relevant courses and credentials in the State of Maryland?

   Grant funds may be used to support the implementation of the Strategic Industry Partnership Workforce Training Plan. This may include reasonable SIP project management expenses. Functions such as curriculum development, industry liaison, and researcher are important functions for the partnership that should be classified under project management and should only be a small percentage of the EARN budget.

2. **How will award funding flow - is it reimbursable or up-front as with the planning grant awards?**

   The answer is that it is neither. Based on the approved budget of the EARN Grantee, DLLR will request that the Grantee submit an implementation schedule that lays out the timing for implementation of the training. In addition a disbursement schedule will be requested that shows the timing of funding needs over the course of implementation.

   The Grantee will submit a Request for Funds form in order to draw down a portion of the EARN Grant at certain periods during the grant cycle. Each request must be supported by documentation showing what the funds will be used for. The initial disbursement will occur at the outset. Prior to disbursement of funds on all but the first Request for Funds, the Grantee will be asked to provide documentation showing how the prior disbursements have been used.

3. **We are working toward applying for an EARN Grant and were wondering if a portion of the EARN grant funds can be used for student tuition in an education/training program, or is that not allowed?**

   Tuition reimbursement can be an allowable expense if the need is justified and tuition reimbursement is the logical outgrowth of the Workforce Training Plan as defined by industry's critical workforce needs. DLLR would prefer to see that, if tuition reimbursement is requested in the EARN budget, it is a last resort or gap funding after Partners have provided in-kind or direct financial contributions to reduce the cost of tuition for participants.

4. **Do Implementation Grant proposals need to address all of the goals listed in 2.1.2, or can a proposal focus on one or more specific goals?**

   No. However the EARN program would like its Partnerships to strive to meet many of these goals.

5. **The planning grant instructions acknowledged that some partnerships may decide as a result of the planning process not to proceed to implementation. Page 10, section 2.6.5 says that PG grantees <u>MUST</u> apply for IG funding. This is a change to a mandate, correct?**

No, this is not a change to the mandate. We apologize that the language in the IG Solicitation is not more clearly worded. To clarify, the Solicitation language means that, in order to be considered for IG funding, a Planning Grantee group must apply, as opposed to being automatically considered for an Implementation Grant by virtue of being awarded a Planning Grant.

If a Planning Grantee determines during the planning phase that there is insufficient labor market need, they may choose not to proceed with a SIP Workforce Training Plan. In this event, the Lead Applicant must still provide a final report documenting the planning process, data and experience collection and how the decision was arrived at not to pursue Implementation Grant funding. In these instances, DLLR reserves the right to require the Lead Applicant to return that portion of the Planning Grant award that was not expended during the planning process, with expenditure documentation.

6. **No instruction for binding is indicated in Section 4.2 Grant Submission Format. Given the request for tabs and substantial appendices, may applicants use binders? Please specify allowable methods for binding.**

Yes. Applicants may use binders, or may bind their Proposals in whichever manner they choose, so long as they comply with the submission format described in Sec. 4.2.

7. **The Solicitation requires that each Lead Applicant submit an electronic copy of the IG Proposal on a USB flashdrive. Is there any specific format the electronic copy should be in?**

Please provide the complete Proposal in a scanned PDF format on the USB flashdrive. Please make sure that the <u>entire</u> Proposal, including all signed forms and appendices are included. If the Proposal is too large for one PDF file, it can be divided into several parts. If this is required, please number each PDF file in the order that it appears in the hard copy submission.

Although not required, DLLR welcomes electronic versions of the Proposal's component parts as stand-alone files (in addition to the above) for ease of review and reference.

8. **Could I get the solicitation in a Word file? It would make manipulating the Appendices easier.**

The appendices are available as word and excel files, as applicable, at:
http://www.dllr.maryland.gov/earn/earnimpgrantapps.shtml. Please consult the "Guide to Solicitation Appendices" document prior to completing your appendices.

9. For the Implementation Grant, is it mandatory for there to be a college partner who offers 2 or 4 year training programs?

No. It is mandatory that there be five industry partners and two other diverse partners. A list of possible diverse partners can be found in Section 1.2(r).

10. We are in the process of collecting commitment letters from our partners. Many have agreed to provide internship/externships experiences for the learning participants. Do they need to quantify this commitment with an in-kind value or would the statement of support/service be sufficient?

Commitment Letter should outline the training experiences, services, programs and/or support that each Partner will provide either in-kind or through direct financial contribution. You will need to quantify in-kind contributions such as internships in the "Budget Summary Form" at Appendix F.

11. Can GED programs connected with career training programs be included in the cost?

In some instances, this would be possible.

12. Will you share federal resources with grantees who may also use those to support an EARN project?

Yes. As reflected in the Solicitation for Implementation Grant Proposals, DLLR encourages Partnerships to leverage other funding streams, in addition to EARN grant funding, in order to maximize the investments of both the Partnership and of the State.

To that end, we have provided links to several federal programs that may be good fits for EARN-funded Partnerships, at http://www.dllr.maryland.gov/earn/earnimplemtools.shtml. DLLR will continue to monitor potential sources of federal funding for training partnerships, and will update these links with any new programs if and when we become aware of them.

February 27 Update

1. **Section 3.2.5 of the Solicitation states that providers of job readiness training must be members of the SIP. We are a training provider, and have designed with our employer partners a formal classroom-based job readiness training, which will then be delivered by an outside vendor. In addition, we incorporate informal job readiness instruction throughout the length of the workforce training courses we administer. Would this outside vendor also be required to be a member of the SIP, or is our membership as a training provider sufficient?**

   In general, funds for any training provider who is a subgrantee of the lead applicant will not be disbursed until DLLR has vetted and approved the provider.

   For job readiness trainers, the primary job readiness provider must be a member of the SIP. If that entity sub-grants *any portion of the* training to another entity, DLLR must approve that training entity prior to disbursement of funds. However, that entity is not required to be a member of the SIP.

2. **Is there any flexibility for Administration or IDC costs associated with the Plan?**

   EARN Maryland Grant funds cannot be used to pay for any indirect costs, or those costs calculated on a percentage basis. However, such costs can be included the Workforce Training Plan Budget ("budget"), as long as they are paid for out of other leveraged funds or in-kind contributions.

3. **Section 2.4.3 says that indirect costs are a prohibited expense under the grant. Would we be able to include expenses such as rent and utilities, if a percentage of them are allocated directly to the training activities**? **Similarly, would the cost to rent and maintain a training facility be considered an allowable expense, if the cost was directly allocated and proportionate to the training being proposed?**

   The EARN Maryland Grant may cover direct rent or utility costs that are directly related to the implementation of the SIP's Workforce Training Plan. Assumptions behind the calculation of these costs must be made clear in the Budget Narrative. % allocation of costs for rent and utilities cannot be paid for out of the EARN Maryland Grant. However, such costs could be included in the Budget and paid for out of other leveraged funds or in-kind contributions.

4. **Some training requires purchasing equipment...this program does not?**

   Equipment or materials with a useful life of the same or similar length to the implementation schedule of the Workforce Training Plan may be a budget consideration. Equipment or materials with a useful life in excess of the WTP implementation schedule may not be paid

for with EARN Maryland grant funds, but may be included in the budget and paid for out of other leveraged funds or in-kind contributions.

5. **Can employers receive wage reimbursements for part of training given during 2000 hrs of a registered apprenticeship program?**

Yes. However, EARN Maryland encourages some amount of in-kind and or direct financial contributions by employers and other SIP partners.

6. **We conduct a construction training program and equipment (materials) to do hands on projects for class. We also provide tools to graduates of the program. Does this fall into the equipment that is not paid for by EARN Funding?**

EARN Funding may be used to pay for materials, tools or supplies purchased for trainees, as long as the SIP Partnership can demonstrate that these materials, tools or supplies are of critical importance to support trainees in job placement after training.

7. **Our Partnership, led by a manufacturing company is looking into becoming a non-profit. As the lead applicant (the manufacturing company) we prefer not to channel grant monies through the company's accounting system. If we establish our partnership as a non-profit, can we deposit the grant money (the check is payable to the lead applicant currently) into the company and have the company issue a check made payable to the partnership (which would at that point have a tax ID #)?**

Yes. However the Lead Applicant remains legally accountable for the use of the EARN Maryland Grant funds.

8. **Does the industry-led organization have to be incorporated with a Fed # and non-profit tax status?**

All lead applicants, including those that are an industry/employer, must have a Federal Tax ID number. Lead Applicants do not need nonprofit tax status.

9. **If this initiative is actually industry-led, will you consider listing higher grants to fewer grantees if that is what the industry plan demands?**

Given the strong interest in the Planning Grant phase of this program, we expect a substantial number of robust industry-led proposals in this round of grant funding. DLLR strongly encourages any Strategic Industry Partnerships to submit a grant request that does not exceed the $150,000 cap. However, grant requests in excess of that amount will be considered on a

case-by-case basis. They must be fully detailed and justified and may be reduced in the actual award. DLLR will be looking to the Partnerships to help support the proposed Workforce Training Plan budgets by bringing leveraged resources to the table.

10. Do the employer partnerships receive a tax break or incentive?

The EARN Maryland program was not designed to provide tax breaks or incentives. However, for-profit entities should consult with a certified public account specializing in taxes or a tax attorney to determine if any applicable tax breaks or incentives are available to employer partnerships.

11. Must grant funding be used specifically for training? For instance, could some of the money be used to hire a project manager for the SIP?

Yes, reasonable project management expenses may be included to support implementation of the SIP Workforce Training Plan.

12. Our SIP was awarded with a planning grant and we want to shift our region of focus from what we originally proposed in our planning grant application. In talking with local employers and assessing the resources available to our partnership, we believe this shift to be more feasible for making an impact. Is it okay to shift our region of focus?

If the planning grant partnership has a sound and reasonable rationale for shifting the region of focus that is employer and data driven, then yes this is allowable. Planning grantees should discuss the need for any proposed changes with their EARN Maryland grant monitor.

13. The Implementation Grant Solicitation states that funding is for up to $150,000 for up to a two year period. Does this mean there will be more funding available for programs in the second year of the program?

The grant period lasts for *up to* two years, from June 15, 2014 through June 30, 2016. If a SIP is awarded FY 14 funding, it will enter into an agreement with DLLR which will include a disbursement schedule to utilize the funds within the two year period.

14. Is there any preference given for MBE's?

We encourage MBE participation but there is not a "preference" per se.

15. Can the lead applicant be a state agency?

The lead applicant can be a state agency, but we would need an explanation as to why a state agency is the most suitable entity to serve in that capacity.

16. **If the job preparation components are available under other public programs, must the implementation grant also include a specific component to provide these services?**

No.

17. **Does the 20-page limit include "charts and graphs" that may be used to illustrate processes and procedures or can such illustrations be included in the appendix?**

If the charts and graphs support the proposal narrative, then they are included in the 20 page limit. If they are supplemental to the training module templates, then they are not included.

18. **Could a program that is working to train new entrepreneurs, such as food businesses in commercial kitchens, be considered an industry partner?**

We would need additional information about the entity.

19. **Within the implementation grant we strive to address not only immediate health and wellness jobs, but more importantly the industry jobs of the future - in particular job changes due to the Affordable Care Act. Due to the newness of these opportunities, training programs have not been established that meet the new requirements. Rather than providing a specific training program/modules, could the implementation grant proposal indicate the development of strong certification programs (as indicated by our SIPs) with implementation timelines to address the jobs of the future?**

Yes.

20. **Section 3.2.4 states that "all SIP Partners" must submit Letters of Commitment. Is the Lead Applicant also considered a "SIP Partner"?**

Yes.

February 10 Update

1. **Can you give us some details on reporting?**

    In the SIP Workforce training modules that are a part of the IG Solicitation, we have asked for some specific projected outcomes. Applicants will be responsible for reporting these outcomes. These outcomes are located in the second tab of the Training Module. (Appendix E, available at http://www.dllr.maryland.gov/earn/earnimpgrantapps.shtml.)

    These outcomes measures are required under EARN Maryland enabling legislation, and include:

    *   Projected enrollment
    *   Projected completion
    *   Projected job placement (if applicable)
    *   Projected wage gains
    *   Projected title promotions (for incumbent workers)

    The statute also asks for specific demographic information about the individuals that are placed in training. Though applicants cannot specifically plan for or report enrollment demographics by March 31st, EARN is flagging this reporting requirement for interested applicants so groups can plan for future data collection. Sample reporting templates will be available on the EARN Maryland website by March 1st. Awarded partnerships will be responsible for designing processes for collecting their own program specific data.

2. **Will the outcomes be reported quarterly?**

    In general, we expect projected outcomes to be reported on a quarterly basis. But EARN recognizes that each partnership plan is unique and there may be a need to customize reporting timeframes that are specific to each workforce training plan. EARN will *at least* need to check in quarterly with partnerships, but we recognize that some outcomes may take longer to meet. We will work with any partnership that is awarded Implementation Grant funding to agree on attainable reporting benchmarks as part of the final contract.

3. **How can a group be part of an Implementation Grant proposal if they weren't part of the Planning Grant process?**

    Planning Grant partnerships have been working for many months in structuring their partnerships and laying the groundwork for their workforce training plans. This Implementation Grant (IG) Solicitation is a roadmap for everyone applying for the next round of funding. While interested parties who have recently become a part of the process may not have as much time as those involved in the Planning Grant process, everything that an applicant needs to apply for IG funding is contained in the Solicitation that was released on January 30, 2014 available at www.earn.maryland.gov.

4. **Is the five employer minimum a requirement?**

Yes. These grants are intended to be industry driven within an industry sector. One employer is not enough. We expect to see 5 or more. Many states with similar grant initiatives required 10 or more.

5. Can the grant cover curriculum development?

Yes, the grant can cover curriculum development for industry-identified skills needs in changing fields. Industry partners must be part of the curriculum development process.

6. How do hospitals figure into this?

Like other organizations, hospitals are welcome and encouraged to join or form a partnership to apply for an EARN Maryland grant. The Solicitation for Proposals and a great deal of other information are available at www.earn.maryland.gov. There are also several healthcare partnerships awarded Planning Grant funding, and all partnerships awarded Planning Grants are available on the website at http://www.dllr.maryland.gov/earn/earnplangrantawards.shtml.

7. Is there going to be another opportunity to apply for a Planning Grant?

There will not be another opportunity to apply for a Planning Grant with FY14 funding.

8. Are there federal resources available to applicants of this program?

Applicants are encouraged to seek out and pursue federal funding streams that would complement their applications.

9. Would training and skills enhancement in traditional industries like retail or food service be appropriate if a region is underserved or does not house accessible resources?

Yes. EARN Maryland funded three Planning Grants in the hospitality/service industry sector.

10. Can universities involved in research serve as industry partners?

This may be possible, but the EARN Maryland review team would need a detailed justification for the universities' "industry characteristics" as a part of the proposal.

11. As a Planning Grant Awardee, is it acceptable to change our project dramatically based on what we learn during the planning period? How much do we need to stick to the original plan?

This is not ideal, but yes, changes are acceptable. Planning Grant awardees should communicate with their grant monitors about significant shifts in their plan and the awardee must be clear about why the changes are necessary.

12. Modifications to an existing training program is acceptable as long as it addresses industry gaps, is that correct?

Yes. But the applicant must be clear about why the changes are necessary. The need for this clarity is promoted in the Implementation Solicitation.

13. If I'm interested in the Implementation Grant, should I sign up for EARN MD CONNECT?

Any organization interested in applying for Implementation Grant funding should create a profile on the EARN MD CONNECT website at https://www.dllr.state.md.us/earn/earnconnect.shtml.

Any organization that is participating in, or interested in the EARN Maryland Program has a space on EARN MD CONNECT to find and be found by, and communicate with other users, within and across partnerships. EARN MD CONNECT is designed to reflect industry affiliation and regional location and to foster the communication among employers, workforce training entities, non-profits and other diverse organizations that have a stake in workforce development.

If you're already part of a partnership, your organization can join that partnership virtually through the EARN MD CONNECT site. If you don't yet have a profile in EARN MD CONNECT, please visit the website at https://www.dllr.state.md.us/earn/earnconnect.shtml, and click on the "ABOUT EARN MD CONNECT" button to get started.

14. How will funding flow? Will it happen up front or in a reimbursable way?

EARN Maryland will work with awarded partnerships to create a customized disbursement schedule.

15. Can the match include funds from another state agency?

Yes. EARN looks forward to complementing other programs and policy goals of the O'Malley / Brown administration.

16. Can churches as potential employers be included?

Yes.

17. Does grant funding have to be used specifically for training? For instance, can some of the funding be used to hire a project manager for the SIP?

Yes. This is an allowable cost, but the majority of the budget request should not be for a project manager. Though the EARN Maryland Program intends most of the funding to go

to training, we recognize that managing a partnership, implementation of the workforce training program and tracking outcomes will be a significant investment of staff time. EARN encourages, however, that some of the in-kind or other financial contributions support the role of a project manager.

18. Are paid internships an allowable component of training?

Yes.

19. Is there an approved training provider list for EARN Maryland? If not, how does a training provider apply for funding?

There is not an approved training provider list for EARN Maryland. Training providers cannot independently apply for EARN Maryland funding. Training providers must be connected to a Strategic Industry Partnership. See Section 2 of the IG Solicitation.

20. Will the appendices be uploaded to the website as Word documents?

Yes. The IG Solicitation Appendices are available as Word and Excel documents, respectively, at http://www.dllr.maryland.gov/earn/earnimpgrantapps.shtml. Please review the Guide to Solicitation Appendices before completing the Appendices.

21. Is EARN Maryland a new offering?

Yes. EARN Maryland is a new, state-funded workforce and economic development grant program in Maryland.

22. Do you plan to have a new EARN competition in FY 15?

We do not know at this time.

23. Can partners participate in multiple grant applications?

Yes. An entity may be part of more than one Strategic Industry Partnership.

24. Must plans be implemented within the 2 year grant period?

Yes.

25. You suggested convening 5 employers in a focus group to learn training and skills needs. Is that a requirement of the IG? Are the 5 required employers a new requirement? If yes, is it an absolute requirement for eligibility?

Implementation Grant proposals must be submitted by a Strategic Industry Partnership that includes at least five employers. That is a requirement. Convening a focus group is not a requirement.

26. A proposal can have multiple objectives, correct?

Yes.

27. If we were awarded planning grant funding, who should we contact to find out about the status?

Planning Grantees should contact their Grant Monitor about the status of their award.

28. Will the reports of the planning grantees be made public?

The reports from the Planning Grantees will be their Implementation Grant proposals. All of those proposals will considered for implementation funding along with those that did not receive planning grant funds.

29. I sent the link to EARN MD CONNECT to my partners. Can they easily create a profile and join our partnership? I couldn't tell because I created the partnership. Have a lot of partners joined up?

Yes. Organizations interested in the EARN Maryland program, and especially those entities already in a Partnership, can easily create a profile in EARN MD CONNECT by visiting https://www.dllr.state.md.us/earn/earnconnect.shtml and signing up. Those interested should first click the "About EARN MD CONNECT" button to get started.

Users who create a Partnership Profile within EARN MD CONNECT will be the "Administrator" of that profile, so Partnerships should identify the appropriate person or organization to serve that role before creating a Partnership Profile. Once a Partnership Profile is created, the Administrator can invite other users to join that profile, and other users can also request to join the partnership within the system.

Administrators will be notified of requests and messages within the system, and via email (be sure to verify your email address so you get email notifications!). An administrator can see how many partners have joined their Partnership Profile by logging into the site and going to their Partnership Profile. Partners can also share documents and communicate on a message board within Partnership Profiles (these functions are only visible to members of the Partnership Profile).

30. Some employers prefer to outsource work to a small business supplier, but it can be difficult to find qualified suppliers. In such circumstances, would the grant cover training on how to start and operate a business? For example, unemployed workers may have job skills to provide a service in their own business but do not know how to operate a business, so would need business training.

If the proposed training is documented as an industry-generated idea, to fill a gap, it would be eligible for EARN Maryland funding.

31. Could a program be designed around businesses and employers defined by size, e.g., businesses with less than 50 employees, that identifies a need for first line supervisory skills training, strategic planning training, or organizational development?

Yes, particularly if they were in the same general industry sector (i.e. small businesses in the service sector).

32. Can high school vocational-tech centers submit implementation grant proposals?

High school vocational programs may be part of an IG proposal and even be a subgrantee. However, K-12 programs cannot be lead applicants.

33. Can you provide us a listing of Planning Grant recipients and contacts?

The list of planning grant recipients is available at
http://www.dllr.maryland.gov/earn/earnplangrantawards.shtml.
Summaries of each Planning Grantee SIP is available at
http://www.dllr.maryland.gov/earn/earnsipsummaries.pdf.

34. Do we need to provide a control group to measure outcomes?

No. The expected outcome measures (Appendix D) do not require a control group for outcome tracking. As a condition of grant funding, all SIP members must be willing to participate in any third-party evaluation that may be commissioned by DLLR.

Participation may include providing data and/or participating in surveys and interviews, but will not require the convening or organizing of control group study.

35. Can inmates re-entering society be considered a targeted group?

Yes. The EARN statute specifies that the hardest-to-serve populations are a target for recruitment under the EARN Maryland Program. We encouraged and received some Planning Grant applications that targeted the ex-offender population as a possible recruitment pipeline and encourage Implementation Grant Proposals to target ex-offender and other hard-to-serve populations.

36. Could you please clarify what the expectations are for us to integrate "state employees"?

There are not expectations that plans will necessarily include state employees. However, some employer partners may have state employees as part of their workforce, and we welcome plans that include training proposals for those workers.

37. Would assembling five hotel properties, with the same international corporate parent, but that hire independently, meet the five employer minimum?

Yes.

38. Do the Training Plans, if offered by a college, have to be MHEC approved going into the funding period?

Yes. As Section 2.5 of the Implementation Grant Solicitation provides:

> If a Strategic Industry Partnership Workforce Training Plan submitted by March 31, 2014 includes proposed training that clearly requires approval or certification from any state or national entity, such as training that will result in a national certificate or college credit, proof of approval will be required by the proposal submission deadline of March 31, 2014.

We been working with our counterparts at MHEC to identify potential approval needs at an early stage, and look forward to working with them to address any needs that may arise under the training plans envisioned by partnership applicants. If you believe that a training plan your partnership envisions may require approval, please contact us at earn.jobs@maryland.gov, and we will work with you to identify the specific issues presented and how best to address them.