

# BUILD BACK BETTER REGIONAL CHALLENGE



## Secure your region up to \$75M for economic development

The U.S. EDA's [Build Back Better Regional Challenge](#) will invest \$1 billion to accelerate regional economic growth and create high-quality jobs in industries that will shape the future economy. EDA will award up to 30 regions nationwide up to \$75 million each to invest in projects that transform new or existing industry clusters and lay the groundwork for equitable growth.

### QUICK FACTS

- \$1B competition to occur in **2 phases**:
  - 50-60 regions will receive a \$500K grant to hone second phase applications
  - 20-30 regions will receive \$25M to \$75M in funding for 3-8 projects
  - \$100M will be set aside for Coal Communities
- First phase is **due 10/19**
- Focus is on **regional economies**, incl. urban/rural and multi-city partnerships
- Projects can be construction or non-construction but must **fit together** to grow regional industry cluster(s)
- Applications require **one regional lead** that can be a public or nonprofit entity
- \$2B in [additional](#) EDA funding is available for workforce, tourism & other priorities

### APPLICATION TIMELINE

|                   |                             |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>10/19/2021</b> | Phase 1 applications due    |
| <b>12/8/2021</b>  | Phase 1 finalists announced |
| <b>3/15/2022</b>  | Phase 2 applications due    |
| <b>09/2022</b>    | Phase 2 awards announced    |

### Regions that are best positioned for Build Back Better...

- 1 Have a shared **regional vision** to grow high-wage jobs in resilient industries such as life sciences, cleantech, advanced manufacturing, and others.
- 2 Are experiencing **economic distress** due to the pandemic or broader economic shifts.
- 3 Are **committed to equity**, including expanding access to quality jobs and wealth building opportunities among historically excluded groups.
- 4 Have **strong partnerships** across City/County lines and across sectors, including government, industry, higher ed, and community organizations.
- 5 Can identify and execute **3-8 projects** that leverage at least \$25M of federal funding.

*See the next page for guidance on how to shape your BBB Regional Challenge strategy.*

**HR&A Advisors** is a national leader in economic development planning with four decades of experience helping communities foster economic growth and create jobs. We have a record of success helping our clients make the best case for federal funding. HR&A is partnering with the national nonprofit **America Achieves** to provide resources to regions interested in applying for Build Back Better. America Achieves is also supporting the Good Jobs Challenge. For expert advice on applying, contact [buildback@hraadvisors.com](mailto:buildback@hraadvisors.com).



# CRAFTING YOUR PROPOSAL



Applications to Build Back Better should speak to regional assets and partnerships, commitments to equity, and sustainability. This HR&A worksheet is designed to help potential applicants focus their submissions.

- 1 **VISION** What industry sector(s) represent your region's strongest opportunity to grow high-wage jobs and create a regional economy more resilient to economic shocks?
- 2 **COALITION** Which regional entity is best positioned to lead this effort? What partners (government, industry, academia, community) are critical to executing expected projects, and how can you demonstrate consensus and a true coalition? What support do you have from the businesses driving job creation?
- 3 **EXISTING ASSETS** What assets currently support your region's competitiveness for your targeted sector(s)? What are recent signs (e.g. job growth, investment) that these assets have given your region a unique competitive advantage?
  - Traditional infrastructure (e.g. ports, roads, energy network)
  - Digital infrastructure (e.g. access to broadband)
  - Labor force/human capital
  - Livability / affordability
  - Natural environment
  - R&D infrastructure (e.g. universities, research centers)
  - Sociocultural assets (e.g. diversity, growing population)
  - Other
- 4 **FUTURE ASSETS** What new assets are needed to grow high-wage jobs? How could those assets drive competitiveness for target sector(s) in your region?
- 5 **EQUITY** What does your region need to ensure that future economic growth is equitable, lifting incomes and wealth building opportunities for historically excluded communities? How has your region demonstrated a commitment to equity in the past?
- 6 **PROJECTS** What specific projects could be implemented within 5 years, create high-quality, accessible jobs, and lay the groundwork for your regional growth vision?
  - Planning studies
  - Traditional infrastructure
  - Digital infrastructure
  - Quality of life
  - Workforce development
  - R&D and entrepreneurship
  - Revolving loan fund
  - Technical assistance
- 7 **FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY** How can you ensure that your priority projects and regional growth can be sustained once federal funds have been spent? What partnerships are in place or could be created to provide leadership long-term?

Several official resources are also available to all prospective applicants: (1) EDA's [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) is the authoritative source for all program requirements, eligibility criteria, and application guidance. (2) EDA's program overview and FAQ are available on the agency's [website](#). (3) To discuss a potential application, EDA recommends that you contact your EDA regional [office](#).

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What is the timeline?

**Phase 1:** 50-60 regional coalitions will be awarded ~\$500,000 in technical assistance funds to develop 3-8 projects to grow a regional growth cluster.

**Due: October 19, 2021 / Finalists Announced: December 2021**

**Phase 2:** 20-30 regional coalitions will be awarded \$25 million to \$100 million to implement the projects.

**Due: March 15, 2022**

## Who is eligible?

Eligible applicants must form **regional coalitions** to apply for funding. **Applicants should identify one key coordinating lead institution** per coalition, which will receive the Phase 1 technical assistance grant, while fostering collaboration so investments have the greatest economic impact. Coalition members may be a(n):

- EDA-designated Economic Development District or District Organization;
- Indian Tribe or a consortium of Indian Tribes;
- State, county, city, or other political subdivision of a State, including a special purpose unit of a State or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions;
- Institution of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education; and
- Public or private non-profit organization or association acting in cooperation with officials of a political subdivision of a State.

While for-profit entities are not eligible to receive EDA funds, competitive proposals will need to demonstrate substantial industry engagement and support among employer partners.

Ten percent of awards – \$100 million – will be set aside for “coal communities,” defined as communities relying on coal mining, power plants, or supply chains, and with an economic contraction event in the last 15 years.

## Can more than one applicant apply from a single region?

EDA strongly encourages eligible entities to submit only one single application per region. The Challenge is designed to support regional coalitions with a group of complementary and aligned projects working together to benefit their respective geography around a holistic approach to building and scaling a strategic industry. This makes multiple applications from the same regional growth cluster unlikely to be competitive.

## What are eligible activities?

Applications should propose **3-8 distinct but related projects** aligned around a holistic vision to build and scale a strategic industry cluster. Activities are expected to begin quickly, leverage existing plans and resources, and engage broadly with regional industry, community, and civic partners. Examples of eligible activities include:

- Construction activities such as water and sewer improvements, industrial parks, shipping and logistics facilities, business incubators or accelerators, brownfield redevelopment, technology facilities, food aggregation, processing or distribution centers, wet labs, multi-tenant manufacturing facilities, science and research parks, transportation enhancements, and broadband infrastructure.
- Non-construction activities such as design and engineering, technical assistance, economic recovery strategy development, entrepreneurial support, demand-driven workforce training, new academic curricula, market feasibility studies, and the capitalization of revolving loan funds.

TA grants to Phase 1 awardees may fund personnel costs to coordinate resources, convene regional partners, and conduct outreach activities to engage historically excluded populations, and/or to develop environmental and engineering information to support project design and implementation.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (continued)

## When do funds need to be spent?

All BBB Regional Challenge funds must be expended by **September 30, 2027**. Phase 1 funds (for TA support) must be used within 24 months.

## What will I need to submit for Phase 1?

The 5-page application for Phase 1 should describe the following:

- The **coalition's vision** for the regional growth cluster;
- The **economic opportunity** presented by the regional growth cluster;
- **Coalition members** that comprise the regional cluster, their roles and commitment to growth;
- **3-8 potential projects** EDA could fund, including **metrics of success** and **matching funds**;
- Any **barriers to implementation** and strategies to mitigate; and
- A general **timeline for implementation**.

In an Appendix, the application should also include:

- A list of **regional assets**;
- **Industry leadership**, including evidence of engagement and letters of support;
- A **sustainability plan** for the years after funding;
- An **equity plan** including a plan to provide meaningful pathways to participation, including substantive workforce onramps, and conduct outreach across historically excluded populations, with letters of support;
- Additional **letters of support**, including one from a unit of state or local government;
- A **budget narrative**
- Required forms and certifications

## What Phase 2 requirements should I know about now?

Each project funded under the BBB Regional Challenge must be consistent with a current [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#) (CEDS) for the region or regions. A CEDS is a plan for regional economic development, typically prepared by an EDA-designated Economic Development District organization (a list of CEDS can be found [here](#)). Regions without a CEDS can still apply and must identify an [equivalent EDA-accepted regional economic development strategy](#).

During Phase 2, EDA expects to fund 80% of eligible project costs. EDA will evaluate the collection of projects within each regional growth cluster and, if a region is selected in Phase 2, EDA may at its discretion fund all or only some of the proposed component projects.

## How can I learn more?

Several official resources are also available to all prospective applicants:

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