

Empire State Development
ON-RAMP Program Guidelines



State of New York
Governor Kathy Hochul

Empire State Development
President and CEO Hope Knight

As of September 2024

Contents

I. Program Background	2
II. ON-RAMP Program Goals	2
III. Funding Awards and Requirements	4
IV. Eligible Applicants	5
V. Applicant Qualifications and Requirements	6
VI. Evaluation Criteria	8
VII. Eligible Uses of Funds	9
VI. Use Restrictions	11

I. Program Background

Over the past decade, New York State has reemerged on the world stage as a leader in manufacturing, particularly in the semiconductor industry. From the continued growth of GlobalFoundries and Wolfspeed, to the planned \$100B investment from Micron in Central New York, to Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo’s recent designation as a federal Tech Hub, it’s clear that business is booming in Upstate New York. However, at a time of increasingly tight demand for talent, some communities are significantly underrepresented in these high growth industries, creating an opportunity to better serve the needs of both employers and communities.

In 2022, Governor Hochul established a new **Office of Strategic Workforce Development (OSWD)** within Empire State Development (ESD), representing a shift in workforce development policy to better meet the needs of industry and create career opportunities for New Yorkers, particularly those from historically marginalized communities. Leveraging ESD’s relationships with employers and community partners, OSWD works with workforce training providers to support industry-driven training for in-demand skills and direct job placement. The office supports economic opportunities for “priority populations” (including, but not limited to, those that are not in the labor force¹, unemployed, underemployed², and/or low-income individuals⁸), while simultaneously meeting the needs of businesses in priority industry sectors across the State. The office has a holistic approach to workforce development that engages workforce stakeholders at the state and regional level to align training pipelines directly with local jobs trends and opportunities.

Governor Hochul further affirmed her dedication to industry-driven workforce development that serves historically marginalized communities in the FY2025 Budget, through a \$200M investment in the **One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnerships (ON-RAMP)** program (“the Program”). ON-RAMP will establish four new workforce development centers, including three chosen competitively and a flagship location in Central New York, to serve the growing demand upstate for skilled workers in the advanced manufacturing sector. For the competitively selected regions, ESD funding will initially support an intensive planning process to develop an implementation plan and business model. Upon completion of the planning phase, the selected regions will be awarded implementation funding to cover a portion of the operational and capital expenses related to establishing and operating these centers in their initial years, with State funding decreasing over time as the centers establish sustainable operating models.

II. ON-RAMP Program Goals

ON-RAMP will establish four dynamic, consortium-based advanced manufacturing workforce training centers in targeted Upstate regions, including a flagship facility in Syracuse. These centers will serve as a centralized resource for both employers in high-growth advanced

¹ “Not in the labor force” is defined as people who do not meet the criteria to be classified as either employed or unemployed (<https://www.bls.gov/cps/definitions.htm#nilf>)

² Underemployed individuals as utilized in these guidelines refers to individuals in a job below their skill or educational level.

manufacturing industries, and job seekers pursuing careers in those industries. For students and trainees, these centers will provide training in high-demand career pathways, help to mitigate barriers to training and employment through the provision of supportive services, and provide direct connection to employers seeking talent. For employers, the centers will serve as a resource to recruit skilled talent, and they will work with the centers to shape the structure and content of training programs to meet their projected workforce needs.

ON-RAMP centers are expected to be established as fully sustainable entities that do not require ongoing ESD support within five years of award of implementation funding.

All ON-RAMP Centers will adhere to a set of core principles:

Commitment to Access and Equity

- Develop accessible and equitable pathways for priority populations to access training and education that lead to good jobs in advanced manufacturing.
- Establish a clearly articulated plan that demonstrates how access and equity will be addressed and continually evaluated for effectiveness in serving priority populations.

Development of Active Industry Partnerships

- Demonstrate industry engagement in such areas as curriculum development, training support, mentoring, career exploration, business tours, commitments to interview graduates for open positions, and active participation in ongoing programming.
- Ensure that training offerings are developed with industry and are reflective of industry projections for advanced manufacturing job growth within the region.
- Build ongoing mechanisms for updating training based on changing industry needs.

Creation of Effective Workforce Pipelines

- Create career pathways for entry-level and mid-skill workers to access long-term sustainable employment in advanced manufacturing.
- Develop or enhance training programs for in-demand skills featuring direct job placement with industry partners.
- Increase the capacity of workforce training providers with a track record of results-oriented workforce training and fostering opportunities for priority populations.
- Provide job seekers with a variety of options for training and education from several providers within the center and ensuring alignment between participant interest, industry demand, and training offerings.

Wraparound Supports for Program Participants

- Utilize innovative approaches, services and programs that increase success in skills training by reducing barriers to participation and achievement, such as lack of access to transportation or childcare.
- Partner with local nonprofit and community-based organizations that assist individuals from priority populations for case management services and recruitment, with the goal of bringing new people into the labor force.
- Provide stipends to participants while they undergo short-term, non-degree bearing training in an “earn while you learn” model.

Data-Driven Performance Management

- Collect, track, and regularly report specific outcome data to evaluate achievement of program goals.
- Use data-driven decision-making to improve the overall program and approach, with multiple check-in points to assess and solve challenges and implement process improvement.

III. Funding Awards and Requirements

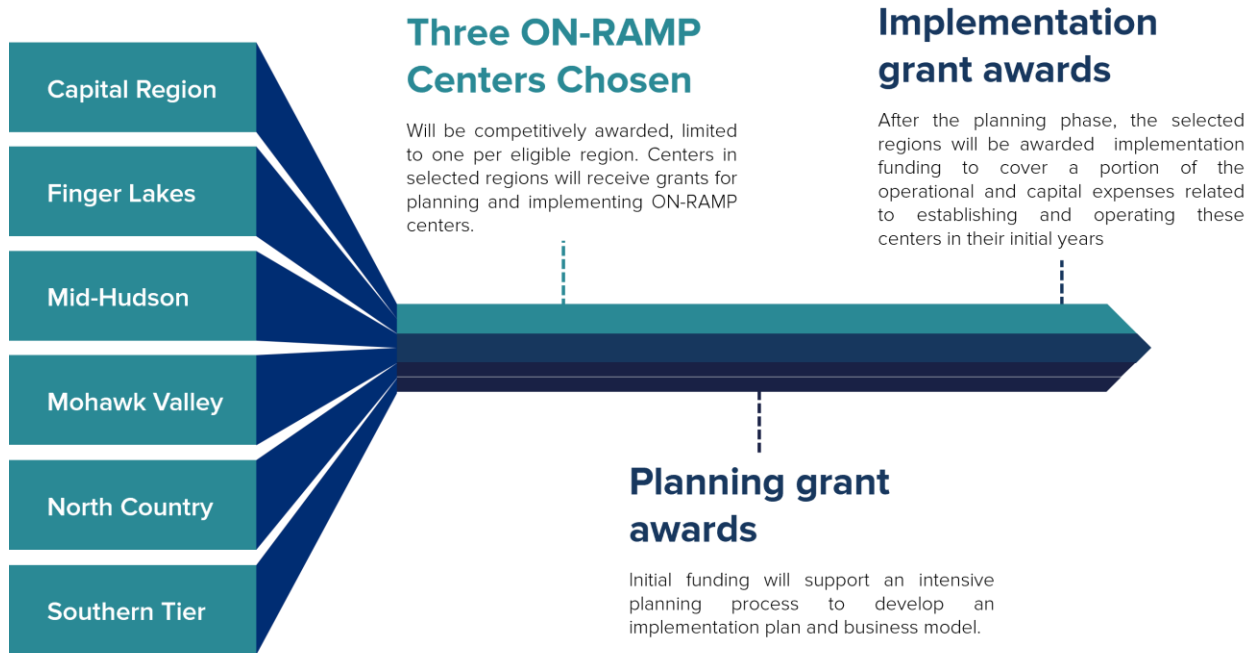
ESD seeks applications from qualified organizations with the capacity to develop and lead a consortium-based approach to building and operating an ON-RAMP center in their region. Three (3) centers will be competitively awarded from the following eligible regions, with a maximum of one (1) center per region, with regional borders aligning to ESD’s definition:

- Capital Region
- Finger Lakes
- Mid-Hudson
- Mohawk Valley
- North Country
- Southern Tier

No more than one application per eligible ESD economic development region will be selected.

Eligible applicants that meet the qualifications and requirements outlined within these program guidelines may submit an application through New York State’s Consolidated Funding Application portal to be considered for funding. The three (3) competitively awarded ON-RAMP centers will initially be eligible for up to \$300,000 in planning funds to develop a full detailed roadmap for implementation of the center in their region. For the planning grant, the minimum award is \$100,000 and applicants must provide a 10% match, which may include in-kind contributions.

Upon completion of a full detailed business plan during the planning phase, ESD will award the three centers implementation funding of up to \$40 million (\$2M-\$20M for capital and \$2M-\$20M for operating expenses) over no more than three (3) years for capital/construction and no more than five (5) years for operating support. For the application for implementation funding, lead organizations will be required to demonstrate a 20% match for both capital and operating funding requests. Determinations on implementation funding will be based on the final business plan completed through the planning process and will be made at the discretion of ESD.



During the planning process, applicants must develop a five-year operating plan and budget for the center that transitions it to a stand-alone entity that does not require ESD support to continue operations after five years or when ESD funds are depleted, whichever comes first. Full implementation budgets are expected to reflect funding from other federal, state, local, or private sources.

IV. Eligible Applicants

Applications should represent a consortium of training providers, support service providers, and industry partners who will be involved in the development and operation of the ON-RAMP center, represented by a single primary applicant organization who will lead the development and execution of the project. Entities eligible to apply as the primary lead include:

- not-for-profit organizations;
- workforce development boards;

- chambers of commerce and trade associations;
- Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES);
- municipalities;
- public two-year community colleges; and
- other career and technical education providers.

At a minimum, the lead organization must demonstrate that the consortium they represent comprises member organizations that can deliver the following core functions of the ON-RAMP model:

- Provide a range of advanced manufacturing and adjacent industry workforce training, particularly those leading to industry relevant credentials and certifications.
- Support participants with the wraparound services necessary to help eliminate barriers to successful participation, including but not limited to: transportation, childcare, case management and other services designed to maximize the economic impact of workforce development training for participants.
- Connect workforce training directly to industry needs within the region and use relationships with regional employers to inform curriculum development based on those needs.
- Establish a physical location(s) for central delivery of services, prioritizing proximity to and reasonable access for historically disadvantaged communities that will be a focus of the training, with the goal of contributing to a neighborhood setting together with other community uses and services.

Applicants will be required to complete the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) to apply for the ON-RAMP Program via New York State’s Consolidated Funding Application portal (<https://apps.cio.ny.gov/apps/cfa/index.cfm>).

During the review process, ESD may request interviews and/or site visits with applicants.

Not-for-profit applicants, prior to ESD Directors’ approval and execution of a contract with ESD, must be registered and up to date on filings with the New York State Office of the Attorney General’s Charities Bureau, the New York State Office of the State Comptroller’s VendRepSystem, and must be prequalified in the New York State Statewide Financial System (SFS) Grants Management System.

V. Applicant Qualifications and Requirements

ESD seeks applications from qualified organizations with the capacity to develop and lead a consortium-based approach to building and operating an ON-RAMP center in their region.

- Applicants should demonstrate an **established track record of coalition building related to workforce development programming and trusted relationships within priority populations**. This may include previous community development initiatives, outreach to and participation by members of priority populations, and provision of educational support services that contribute to participant success. Training providers should demonstrate a track record of successful completion and placement of trainees and consistent and/or growing enrollment.
- Applicants must demonstrate the **organizational and financial management experience** and expertise to successfully implement the project. Including organizational chart and resumes of key personnel from lead applicant organization. Lead applicant will be required to provide three (3) years of most recent audited financial statements, or other financial documentation which evidences the financial wherewithal of the primary applicant organization.
- Applicants will be required to produce a **draft budget for the planning process** and demonstrate their ability to meet the 10% match requirement.
- Applicants will need to articulate how **state funds are being maximized** with their proposal. Applicants should include information on what existing assets or prior investments are being leveraged for the proposed center.
- Applicants will be required to submit a high-level overview of **proposed training and services** anticipated to be offered at the ON-RAMP center. This should be completed to the best of the applicant's ability, with the understanding that it will be subject to further revisions during the planning process.
- Projects must focus on training that **address workforce development in the advanced manufacturing and adjacent industries**. Applicants are strongly encouraged to demonstrate existing and projected demand for advanced manufacturing and adjacent industry careers within the region. Training programs must focus on skills that are in-demand by advanced manufacturing employers in the region. Applicants must demonstrate that funds will be used to administer programs training New York State residents to be placed in or secure full-time employment within the state of New York.
- **Letters of support from expected industry partner companies** are required as part of the application. Letters should outline the company's anticipated role(s) in the project such as financial commitment, involvement in curriculum development, instructional partner, apprenticeship/internship/job placement partner, recruitment of program trainees, projected hiring needs, and the like.
- Applications must articulate **proactive approaches to addressing barriers to success in training and educational programs**, such as utilizing case managers to identify and help meet trainees' needs for transportation, childcare, substance abuse counseling, financial services and counseling, supplies and uniforms. Such services may be provided by identified partners specializing in those areas, but the applicant must demonstrate how services will be fully integrated with the proposed workforce training

model. Program trainees and students must be able to access assistance on-site for obtaining these services.

- **Letters of support from the partnering organizations** involved in the training (multiple training partners are encouraged), recruitment and/or job placement process, or external providers of wraparound services are required.
- Applicants are required to provide a **letter of support from the respective Regional Economic Development Council (REDC)** to ensure regional collaboration and coordination efforts are being adequately addressed in the proposal. Applicants should coordinate with the REDC corresponding to the region their project proposes to serve and receive a letter of support.

VI. Evaluation Criteria

Applications for initial planning grants will be evaluated on the extent to which they fulfill the goals of the program and meet the following criteria:

Project Concept and Readiness

- Applicants clearly demonstrate a projected growth in advanced manufacturing jobs in the region in the coming years driving need for an ON-RAMP center.
- Training programs prioritize individuals not in the labor force³, un/underemployed⁴, and/or low-income individuals⁵.
- Applicants must demonstrate they are prepared to move into the planning process expeditiously upon award.
- The submitted draft budget for the planning process outlines an effective and efficient plan for utilizing ESD funding to develop the ON-RAMP business plan.

Project Partnerships and Innovation

- The proposed consortium can deliver the core functions of the ON-RAMP model and fulfill the goals of the program.
- The project has been developed in partnership with multiple businesses in the advanced manufacturing and adjacent sectors to ensure it trains for in-demand skills and to maximize job placement of successful trainees.
- The project consortium demonstrates a strong and effective governance model allowing the lead organization to leverage the capabilities of constituent partners.

³ “Not in the labor force” is defined as people who do not meet the criteria to be classified as either employed or unemployed (<https://www.bls.gov/cps/definitions.htm#nilf>)

⁴ Underemployed individuals as utilized in these guidelines refers to individuals in a job below their skill or educational level.

⁵ Low-income individuals as defined under WIOA, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-113publ128/pdf/PLAW-113publ128.pdf> (page 11).

- The project shows strong commitment to effective and innovative outreach and recruitment methods for priority populations.

Program Impact

- The anticipated location for the center is in an area that provides broad access to a large number of trainees in priority populations, serves the local concentration of advanced manufacturing and adjacent employers, and is accessible by public transit.
- The applicant presents evidence that there is a demonstrated need for workers by local or incoming advanced manufacturing and adjacent industry employers.
- The applicant demonstrates industry buy-in through letters of support submitted by partner businesses that explain each organization's involvement in programming.
- The applicant articulates an effective way to measure the impact of the program and meet data reporting requirements.

Support Services

- The project includes meaningful trainee supports, or activities that will be made available to program participants to reduce barriers to training access or effectiveness and job retention. These could include, but are not limited to: childcare assistance, public transit passes or other transportation supports, professional skills training, free or reduced programming, financial counseling, legal services, appropriate work attire or materials, etc.

Applicant Experience, Qualifications, and Capacity

- The applicant and affiliated partners demonstrate they have the capacity to complete the project.
- The applicant and partners demonstrate experience in working with, and an ongoing focus on serving, priority populations.
- The project partners have previously successfully completed projects that meet both the needs of jobseekers and employers.

Applications will be reviewed for alignment with priorities established for the ON-RAMP program. Empire State Development reserves the right to issue an addendum on these Guidelines, if required and make project awards in different amounts and under terms other than requested or than included in these Guidelines.

VII. Eligible Uses of Funds

Planning Grant

ESD will initially award grants of up to \$300,000 for the development of a detailed implementation plan and business model that will result in a self-sustaining ON-RAMP center after five (5) years of ESD support. Eligible uses of planning grant funds may include:

- Preparation and development of strategic development plans for an ON-RAMP center, including staff and consultant costs;
- Studies, surveys or reports, focused on sites or facilities under consideration for establishment of the ON-RAMP center;
- Other costs as mutually agreed upon by ESD and the grantee.

Full Implementation Awards

Implementation funding for the ON-RAMP program will be awarded at ESD’s discretion based on the plan and business model developed during the initial phase. Implementation funding can be used for programmatic expenses related to delivering the ON-RAMP model, and for capital expenses to support development of the necessary facilities and equipment.

Eligible operating expenses may include:

- Curricula development;
- Instruction and instructional materials;
- Technology specifically required for training⁶;
- Credentialing exam fees;
- Marketing expenses or outreach activities;
- Services to foster job placement and retention;
- Participant stipends, wraparound services, and educational supports, or activities that will be made available to program participants to reduce barriers to training (e.g., childcare, online programming, public transit passes or other transportation supports, and professional skills or success skills training, etc.);
- Data collection and reporting as required for this program; and
- Other expenses as mutually agreed upon by ESD and the grantee

Eligible capital expenses may include:

- Purchase and/or installation of machinery and/or equipment used in workforce training;
- Purchase and/or installation of furniture and fixtures;
- Fit out and/or renovation of an existing building related to the ON-RAMP training program and services;
- New construction or expansion of a building on property already owned or controlled by the applicant or application partner with an MOU that outlines the partnership agreement;
- Soft costs of up to 15% of total project cost such as architectural and engineering costs necessary to complete a capital project; and

⁶ Excluding machinery and equipment that would be considered a capital expense. Please contact workforce@esd.ny.gov with any questions regarding eligibility of technology and equipment aligned with the various grant programs.

- Other expenses as mutually agreed upon by ESD and the grantee.

VI. Use Restrictions

The following items are not eligible for ON-RAMP funding and cannot be counted toward the matching funds presented in the budget:

- Any expenses incurred prior to the applicant countersigning the ESD incentive proposal;
- Any expenses that are specifically covered by existing revenue streams, such as salaries for instructors that are covered by student tuition costs;
- General operating expenses or general staff expenses, except those directly related to delivering ON-RAMP training or trainee support services;
- P-12 education programs that do not directly place graduates into the workforce;
- Degree-granting undergraduate or graduate programs;
- Public sector training programs;
- Any costs incurred training non-New York State residents;
- Recapitalization/refinancing;
- Research projects;
- Endowments;
- Fundraising;
- Political or lobbying activities; and
- Other costs as determined by ESD

IX. Programmatic Notes

Applicants are permitted to serve as an “operator” of a center they do not own as long as the facility is owned by a partnering organization. Operators or facility owners must have MOUs and/or lease agreements with partners for space that could include in-kind facility donation or rent. “Operators” of the centers are defined as the organization that coordinates all of the training and support services, serves as the entry-point for job seekers, provides case management, ensures all training is industry-driven, and engages with industry partners to ensure the evolving hiring needs of industry are being met. Operators may be, but are not required to be, the lead applicant for the planning phase.

Please note that there is a \$250 application fee for applications that are awarded funding and capital projects require a 1% commitment fee paid to ESD.

Applicants will be required to demonstrate that they are financially stable by submitting to ESD three years of audited financial statements from the lead applicant who will be running the center. If an applicant is unable to meet this requirement, they may submit alternate documentation,

including, but need not be limited to, at least three years of the applicant's completed Internal Revenue Service Form 990 (Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax) and/or internally prepared financial statements. The applicant bears the full responsibility to demonstrate its financial stability/wherewithal and it is within ESD's purview to determine if such alternate documentation is sufficient to meet these objectives. For entities that have not been in existence for three years, the applicant will have to demonstrate financial viability to ESD's satisfaction.

ESD will identify opportunities for maximum feasible participation of certified Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise ("MWBE") in the performance of grant awards. Grant recipients will be required to use "Good Faith Efforts" to achieve the determined MWBE participation goal established by ESD's Office of Contractor & Supplier Diversity.

Reporting Requirements

Awardees will be required to report outcome data to demonstrate the impact of the award. OSWD will define standards for outcomes and impact reporting, including both individual-level trainee data and progress towards mutually identified project milestones. This data may be collected via a variety of methods and platforms, including the New York State One-Stop Operating System (OSOS), Credential Engine and other platforms. The cadence and scope of reporting will be established with grantees during the contracting process.

Reporting metrics may include, but need not be limited to:

- Total enrollment and rate of completion;
- Credentials earned;
- Job placement and distribution of placement by employer and occupation;
- Participant earnings pre- and post-placement;
- Participant demographics (to the extent that demographic information is voluntarily reported);
- Engagement with employer, industry and support partners; and
- Job retention at three, six, and 12-month periods

OSWD may also incorporate reporting requirements based on program-specific features of awarded projects and will work with awardees to define any additional metrics and milestones.