

**ODEP SOLICITATION FOR COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT
National Employer Policy, Research and Technical Assistance Center on the
Employment of People with Disabilities (SCA 14-06)**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

AGENCY: Office of Disability Employment Policy

ACTION: Notice of Availability of Funds and Solicitation for Cooperative Agreement
Applications for a National Employer Policy, Research, and Technical Assistance Center
on the Employment of People with Disabilities

Announcement Type: Solicitation for Cooperative Agreement Applications (SCA)

Funding Opportunity Number: SCA 14-06

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 17.720

Key Dates:

- Issuance Date: [Date of publication]
- Closing Date: 30 days after publication on the www.grants.gov Website
- Closing Time: 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time
- Deadline for Submission of Technical Questions: Date
- Prospective Applicant Conference Call: Date
- Anticipated Date of Award: September 30, 2014

Submission Information: Applications will be accepted via electronic submission at www.grants.gov or by hard copy (to include electronic copy/CD) hand-delivered or mailed to the Grant Officer at the following address: U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Procurement Services, Attention: Cassandra Mitchell, Grant Officer, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room S-4307, Washington, DC 20210, Reference SCA 14-06. For complete application and submission information, including online application instructions, please refer to section IV, Application and Submission Information.

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SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL or Department), Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), announces the availability of up to \$1.85 million to fund one cooperative agreement to manage a National Employer Policy, Research, and Technical Assistance Center on the Employment of People with Disabilities (Center). This solicitation is a re-competition of an existing cooperative agreement. The Center will build upon the work of ODEP's prior National Employer Technical Assistance Center (NETAC) to identify, develop, implement, and promote employer policies and practices that advance employment initiatives from NETAC, as well as develop and implement innovative new initiatives.

Funding of up to \$1.85 million will be awarded through a competitive process for the first budget year of a cooperative agreement covering a 60-month performance period. Additional budget year funding may be available based on recipient performance and the availability of funds.

This solicitation provides background information, describes the submission requirements, outlines the application process, and provides the evaluation criteria that will be used to select the awardee.

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I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Background

1. ODEP Mission, Goals, and Priorities. ODEP's mission is to develop and influence policies and practices to increase the number and quality of employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Consequently, ODEP contributes to the achievement of DOL's Strategic Goal 3: Promote fair and high-quality work-life environments and Strategic Objective 3.1: Break down barriers to fair and diverse workplaces and narrow wage and income inequality. ODEP measures its contribution to these goals through two outcome measures:

- Percent of entities that adopt ODEP-developed or validated policy strategies and effective practices; and
- Percent of entities that implement ODEP-developed or validated policy strategies and effective practices.

ODEP activities advance into four priority areas:

- Priority Area I: Improve access to training, education, transition services, and integrated and competitive employment opportunities for people with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities, youth, and ethnic, cultural, and socio-economically disadvantaged groups;
- Priority Area II: Improve accessibility and availability of employment supports, accommodations, and use of universal design and workplace flexibility approaches, including those that can be used to recruit, hire, retain,

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or return workers who become ill or injured on the job or who acquire a disability during their employment;

- Priority Area III: Foster high expectations and positive perceptions of the value of employing people with disabilities; and
- Priority Area IV: Ensure the availability and use of disability data and statistics regarding the employment characteristics of people with disabilities.

This Center's activities will fall primarily under Priority II and Priority III.

2. Need for a National Employer Policy, Research and Technical Assistance Center on the Employment of People with Disabilities. The need for the Center is based on (a) the Executive Order requiring the Federal Government to hire, retain and promote more workers with disabilities; (b) recent Federal regulations implementing Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act that strengthen the affirmative action obligations of covered Federal contractors to assist in their efforts to recruit, hire, and retain individuals with disabilities; (c) previous demand for services; (d) employer research; and (e) momentum gained by the National Governors Association's blueprint to hire and retain more people with disabilities.

a. Executive Order 13548 – On July 26, 2010, President Barack Obama issued Executive Order (EO) 13548 calling for the Federal Government to hire 100,000 people with disabilities within five years. As a result, the Executive Branch, led by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), is in the middle of a concerted effort to increase its disability hiring, including the hiring of those with certain targeted disabilities. To date the results have been promising – the Federal Government hired a greater percentage of workers with disabilities in Fiscal Year

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2012 than at any point in the past 32 years. Moreover, people with targeted disabilities were hired at a higher percentage than at any time in the past 17 years. Nevertheless, significant work must still be done, and demand from Federal agencies for technical assistance (TA) on preparing job vacancies, using hiring authorities (such as the Schedule A Hiring authority applicable to people with disabilities), and implementing effective practices and policies that create a diverse and inclusive workforce remains high. For example, [eFedlink](#), an ODEP-supported online community of practice created to provide resources to Federal managers and human resources staff, increased its membership by more than 40 percent to 818 participants in 2013. In addition, Federal agencies continue to seek formal and informal collaborations with ODEP to increase their disability hiring. The Center will play a critical role in analyzing Federal agencies' policies and practices to better understand what combination of factors leads to the desired results. The Center will use this understanding to facilitate Federal agencies' outreach, hiring, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities by providing technical assistance on how to adopt and implement effective Federal agency disability employment practices.

b. New Federal Contractor Regulations – New regulations implementing Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974 (VEVRAA) went into effect on March 24, 2014. The Section 503 regulation requires a covered Federal contractor to conduct utilization analyses and to apply, for the first time, a seven percent utilization goal to assess whether it is achieving equal employment opportunity

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for individuals with disabilities. The VEVRAA regulation requires that a covered Federal contractor establish an annual hiring benchmark for qualified protected veterans (based on the national percentage of veterans in the workforce—currently 7.2 percent-or its own benchmark based on available data). It is expected that these rules will improve the employment prospects of individuals with disabilities. During year one, if Federal contractors meet the utilization goal and VEVRAA benchmark, we estimate that contractors will provide job opportunities to an additional 594,580 individuals with disabilities and an additional 250,500 protected veterans, including 84,490 veterans with disabilities. In the aggregate, this would amount to an additional 715,590 job opportunities. To reach, sustain, and potentially surpass those levels, significant outreach and technical assistance related to recruitment, accommodations, disclosure, building an inclusive workplace, and increasing retention and return to work will be required for the approximately 251,300 Federal contractor establishments impacted by the regulations. Moreover, even prior to the implementation of these regulations, the demand for technical assistance from Federal contractors has been high. The Center will build upon past work in this area to develop and deliver targeted technical assistance to Federal contractors.

c. Previous Demand for Services – In 2013, ODEP’s Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN) responded to more than 600 requests from employers. EARN also experienced a steady increase in the complexity of the TA requests as employers focused not only on recruitment, but on the retention and advancement of workers with disabilities. Importantly, EARN logged more than 69,000 visits

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to its Web site, www.AskEARN.org, a 28 percent increase over 2012. In addition, more than 5,000 people registered for EARN's Web-based training events. On average, users spent more than 50 percent longer on the site per visit than they did in 2012. ODEP expects the demand for assistance will grow as Federal contractors work to fully implement the new Federal contractor regulations. Consequently, the Center's ability to provide cutting-edge and impactful technical assistance to increase the hiring, retention, and advancement of individuals with disabilities among Federal contractors and other groups of employers is critical.

d. Employer Research – In 2013, ODEP, in partnership with Cornell University's Employment and Disability Institute (EDI) and the Wharton Business School, learned from several employer exchanges about resources and research that could help employers advance the recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities. Cornell's EDI collaborated with the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) to ask private-sector employers about their perceptions of barriers to the employment of people with disabilities and the extent to which disability-inclusive practices and policies have been implemented in their workplaces. The top barriers identified were perceived lack of qualified applicants with requisite skills, training, and experience; and supervisors' lack of knowledge about accommodations. More than half of the employers have policies and practices that include disability in their diversity statements, require sub-contractors to adhere to disability nondiscrimination policies, or have community organization partnerships to assist in their

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recruitment efforts to hire more employees with disabilities. Cornell found that the likelihood of hiring individuals with disabilities increased when employers adopted such policies and practices. However, Cornell's research found also that few employers track and monitor disability metrics related to their recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement. Finally, research also suggests that employers, depending on their experience in implementing general diversity practices, need different messages and different types of assistance for them to adopt policies and practices that will increase the employment of people with disabilities. The Center will conduct research and perform analysis to determine the most effective messages and change interventions to deliver to various targeted groups of employers.

e. National Governors' Association Blueprint – At the culmination of its then Chair's (Delaware Governor Jack Markell) 2012–2013 initiative, the National Governor's Association (NGA) published "A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities--A Blueprint for Governors." The initiative's goal was to advance employment opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities by: educating both private-sector and public-sector employers about accommodating people with disabilities in the workplace and the benefits of doing so; supporting State governments in joining with business partners to develop blueprints to promote the hiring and retention of individuals with disabilities in integrated employment in both the public and private sectors; and establishing public-private partnerships to build out those blueprints and increase employment of individuals with disabilities. The NGA report indicates that dedicated training for

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State and local supervisors and managers on a variety of topics would aid State government efforts to increase their own disability hiring. Furthermore, ODEP's research on how States use existing programs and tools to help the business community increase their disability hiring also shows a need for more technical assistance.

ODEP believes that States' adoption and promotion of ODEP's policies would greatly advance the likelihood that these policies will be implemented, resulting in systems change and increased recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities. The Center will build upon previous research and efforts targeted to States.

3. Description of Current Project. To address the needs of any and all employers for information and assistance on how to adopt and implement policies and practices that facilitate the employment of people with disabilities, ODEP has funded the National Employer Technical Assistance Center on Employment of People with Disabilities (NETAC) since 2009. NETAC was established to be a center for excellence in supporting employers' talent acquisition and competitiveness by:

- Empowering employers to hire, retain and advance qualified individuals with disabilities through technical assistance, collaboration, and information dissemination; and
- Identifying and promoting promising employer-focused disability employment practices and policies.

NETAC disseminates information and provides technical assistance and training to employers primarily through two avenues: the Employer Assistance and Resource

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Network (EARN), serving all employers, and eFedLink, a community of practice for Federal employers. NETAC's current project activities include:

- Policy Materials Development and Dissemination – Through EARN, NETAC develops policy-related materials to help employers recruit, hire, retain, and advance workers with disabilities and maintains a Web site containing comprehensive up-to-date information on disability employment topics. Materials such as brochures, fact sheets, white papers, policy analyses, and practical summaries of research are disseminated through the EARN listserv, www.AskEARN.org, www.efedlink.org, employer partnerships, conferences, and other events.
- Technical Assistance and Training – Through EARN, NETAC provides free, customized technical assistance and training to employers on a variety of disability employment topics. This assistance includes: answering employers' questions by phone and on-line; providing one-on-one consultations; delivering on-site trainings for individual organizations; and hosting free, publicly available Webinars. NETAC also supports Federal managers and human resource personnel in hiring and advancing persons with disabilities in the Federal Government through the eFedlink Web site and the community of practice it facilitates through a variety of interactive on-line features.
- Workforce Recruitment Program – The Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP) is a free resource through which private businesses and Federal agencies nationwide can identify qualified

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individuals for internships and permanent positions in a variety of fields.

EARN acts as the liaison for this program with private employers and conducts customized searches of its student database to identify potential candidates for specific positions.

- The Circle – The Circle is composed of U.S. businesses and organizations previously recognized by the Department of Labor for their innovative and proactive efforts to recruit, hire, and promote people with disabilities.

NETAC acts as a liaison for the Circle and provides opportunities for these companies to share their effective practices with the broader business community.

NETAC works with a consortium of partners to leverage their resources and reach a broad spectrum of employers. The consortium members and initiatives evolve as policies are developed and improved through continual employer feedback.

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B. Description and Purpose

1. Purpose of the Center. The goal of the Center is to increase the commitment and capacity of employers to recruit, hire, retain, and advance people with disabilities by (1) analyzing employer research, policies, and practices related to disability employment; (2) conducting research on effective employer engagement strategies; and (3) developing and providing outreach and technical assistance to targeted employers, e.g., Federal agencies, Federal contractors (including small businesses), and State governments. Technical assistance materials will be developed and delivered based on research-based evidence, including, but not limited to, findings from Wharton's Business Engagement Strategy research as well as other relevant disability-employment research funded by ODEP, other Federal agencies, or other organizations. The Center will inform its approach by analyzing and examining existing employer policies and practices to determine which ones are most effective in facilitating the recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities. The Center will then promote the adoption and implementation of policies and practices identified as most promising and evaluate the success of the strategies, tactics, and materials used to encourage and convince employers to adopt and implement such policies and practices.

The Center will also serve as a resource to ODEP staff in their employer policy development activities by interpreting and analyzing Federal legislation and regulations for their potential impact on employers, including Federal contractors; conducting ad hoc analyses on policy topics and issues; drafting policy briefs; developing draft legislative policy recommendations; and coordinating and organizing Congressional briefings as requested by ODEP and approved by the Department of Labor.

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Although ODEP seeks an applicant to provide some services similar to those previously delivered by NETAC, the Center funded through this solicitation must develop innovative approaches that reflect and build upon new findings about effective business engagement strategies. Also, rather than providing training and technical assistance in response to requests from any and all employers, the new Center will conduct strategic outreach and deliver more targeted and customized technical assistance by selecting and segmenting employer markets to maximize impact.

2. Required Activities

a. Focus Area Components – The Center will focus its effort on the areas described below:

i. Analysis of Research, Policies, and Practices – The Center will identify and review existing research about employer policies and practices to understand what works and what is needed by employers to facilitate the recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities. As needed to develop innovative evidence-based approaches and to inform the delivery of required services, the Center will examine and analyze existing data, research, and findings such as, but not limited to:

- Research and evaluation findings from relevant ODEP initiatives (e.g., the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI), Return-to-Work project, Add Us In grants, Business Strategies that Work, Employment First, Federal Partners in Transition efforts, and sector summit reports).
- Relevant data from NETAC and other past and current ODEP Technical Assistance centers such as the National Center on Leadership for the

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Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities (LEAD Center), the National Technical Assistance and Research Leadership Center, the Job Accommodation Network, the Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology, and the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth.

- Other Federally funded research such as the U.S. Department of Education's National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research's (NIDRR) Rehabilitation Research and Training Center's (RRTCs) work on Employer Practices and Employment Outcomes Among Individuals with Disabilities including Individual-Level Characteristics Related to Employment Among Individuals with Disabilities, Evidence-Based Practice in Vocational Rehabilitation, Employment Policy and Measurement; and NIDRR's Center on Knowledge Translation for Employment Research; and any other relevant NIDRR-funded employment-related projects.
- Effective employment policies and practices (from the Federal, private, and other public sectors) that enhance inclusive workplaces.
- Existing research on policies and practices of Federal agencies implementing strategies to meet the EO 13548 goals.
- Policies and practices of Federal contractors implementing the new Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regulations, including those of small businesses.

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- Recommendations from membership and policy organizations, including those from the National Governors Association report, “A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities.”

To the extent possible, analyses should examine and assess what factors (e.g., characteristics of employers such as size, sector, diversity policy, and/or economic or labor market environment) affect employer decision making and the adoption and implementation of effective disability employment policies and practices. These analyses, combined with additional research findings, will inform the development of technical assistance materials and innovative engagement and delivery strategies that can be evaluated.

ii. Research on Employer Engagement Strategies – The Center will build upon research begun in 2013 when ODEP engaged the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania to examine a behavior-based employer engagement strategy. This ODEP-funded research study provided insight into how employers make hiring decisions. The Wharton School recommended an [employer engagement strategy](#) based on common business marketing principles using techniques to counter stereotypes of people with disabilities by highlighting capabilities while minimizing differences. This recommendation recognized that employers are at different stages in their diversity and inclusionary policies and practices, and have different needs and interests based on those stages. Thus, strategies and messaging that are designed to impact and reach a particular employer segment based on experience with diversity practices will likely prove more effective than

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efforts that try to reach all segments at once. Also, to be effective, an employer engagement strategy must reflect the reality, based on behavioral economics, that humans do not always make decisions, including hiring decisions, for fully rational reasons such as calculating a return on investment (ROI). A successful engagement strategy uses marketing strategies and principles of behavior modeling to reshape how employers view, interact with, and ultimately hire and employ people with disabilities. The research recommended market segmentation based on where employers fall along the continuum of inclusion of people with disabilities in their workforce.

The Center's research will further the understanding of what specific employer messaging, technical assistance, and outreach strategies should be deployed to increase the number of employers who adopt and implement policies and practices that improve recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities. The Center shall identify, develop, and measure the effectiveness of promising employer-focused messages, technical assistance, and outreach strategies aimed at expanding employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The Center will use the research findings to develop innovative vehicles to disseminate information, recruit employer participants, and measure performance. The Center will develop strategies and materials that are designed to influence decision making behaviors of the various targeted employer segments. The Center will evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies and materials to determine the effect on carefully selected subsets of each target audience.

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iii. Outreach and Customized Technical Assistance to Targeted

Employers – The Center will provide expert, customized technical assistance on all aspects of disability employment (i.e., outreach and recruitment, hiring, and retention strategies, such as return-to-work and, stay-at-work policies and practices) to employers in specific industries, geographical locations, and of various sizes.

The Center will utilize employer engagement strategies as identified through research and conduct outreach to promote the availability of technical assistance. Outreach and technical assistance will target employers in each of the following groups:

(a) Federal Agencies - The Federal Government is mandated to be a “model employer” of people with disabilities under section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Executive Order 13548 has charged Federal agencies with employing 100,000 employees with disabilities by 2015. To implement this mandate, the Department of Labor works in collaboration with agencies such as the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to advance opportunities for people with disabilities in the Federal Government. In partnership with EEOC and OPM, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, ODEP published “Federal Agency Employment Strategies: A Framework for Disability Inclusion” (Framework) which outlines seven key operational areas and provides a foundation for continued work in this area.

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The Center must take a strategic approach to develop and deliver customized technical assistance designed to have the greatest impact. For instance, the Center may choose to deliver more intensive customized technical assistance to a subset of agencies selected based on interest, need, or other articulated criteria. It may also choose to focus on a limited number of policy or practice areas deemed to be the most needed and/or promising or take a broader approach by addressing multiple operational areas such as those already identified in the Framework. The Center will evaluate the impact of its approach and activities. To develop and deliver technical assistance to Federal agencies, at a minimum, the Center will:

- In collaboration with EEOC and OPM, analyze existing research, policies, and practices such as: Federal appointing authorities including Schedule A and its use to hire people with disabilities, Schedule D and its use to hire interns through the Pathways Program; and disability employment programs such as the selective placement programs, special emphasis programs, diversity initiatives, and other related programs.
- Identify key employment policy and/or practice areas that have demonstrated effectiveness in increasing employment of people with disabilities within the Federal Government. These may include, but are not limited to: workplace flexibilities (e.g., telework, job-sharing, and part-time or customized/negotiated tasks); employee resource/affinity groups, mentoring and career

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development programs; connecting employers to organizations that serve people with disabilities, wounded or injured military service members or veterans, including colleges and universities; recruiting individuals with disabilities, especially those who qualify for Federal hiring under the Excepted Schedule A Hiring Authority; and supporting Federal agencies in using the WRP.

- Develop policy proposals that can be recommended to Federal agencies for adoption and implementation.
- Develop outreach and technical assistance materials to address Federal agencies' needs and concerns.
- Utilize eFedLink to continue to engage Federal agency personnel in interactive dialogue and exchange and use eFedLink to inform the development and delivery of technical assistance.
- Identify key organizations and associations working to improve the Federal workforce that can be engaged in disseminating information and technical assistance. These could include, but are not limited to, the Partnership for Public Service, the Federal Managers' Association, the Senior Executive Association, and the Federal Executive Board. With ODEP approval, develop partnerships, either formal or informal to leverage resources.
- Disseminate information to the Federal agency community about the resources and technical assistance available through the Center. Strategically utilize innovative communications' channels (e.g.,

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Web sites, newsletter articles, social media) including, but not limited, to eFedLink and those of ODEP.

- Document the impact of intensive targeted technical assistance towards adoption of effective policies and practices and organizational change.

(b) Federal Contractors – Federal contractors must have the resources they need to comply with and to meet the requirements of the new Section 503 and VEVRAA regulations that OFCCP enforces. The Center will work closely with ODEP and OFCCP to develop and provide technical assistance to Federal contractors on how to recruit, hire, retain, and advance people with disabilities. Although the rules are new, the aims are fully consistent with the mission of ODEP to increase the employment of people with disabilities and the past efforts of its employer technical assistance center (NETAC) to help employers create diverse and inclusive workforces. For example, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 ODEP published “Business Strategies that Work,” a policy framework describing exemplary strategies for creating inclusive workplaces and cultures that are conducive to attracting and retaining qualified individuals with disabilities as well as self-disclosure of disability status—crucial steps to measure progress and meet the goals set forth in the rule. The Center will build upon these past efforts and products, and work in close collaboration with OFCCP to develop its approach to providing technical assistance to Federal contractors. To assist Federal contractors meet the requirements of

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the respective rules and to achieve the intent of these rules to create disability-inclusive workplaces, the Center will, at a minimum:

- Select industries to target based on clearly articulated criteria that could reflect such factors as which industries are most likely to adopt and implement disability employment practices, high-growth industries, or those with the greatest need of assistance.
- Develop technical assistance materials including, but not limited to, training curriculum and Webinars.
- Provide expertise to evaluate the effectiveness of disability employment policies and practices, and recommend evidence-based strategies to enhance and improve them.
- Support the adoption and implementation of successful practices, tools, and policies by Federal contractors using a variety of strategies such as: ongoing outreach to organizations and individuals through communications, partnership development, outreach and promotion, technical assistance and education, or training the targeted audiences.
- Engage Federal contractors in interactive dialogues and information exchanges that will allow them to learn from one another about effective practices for achieving the requirements of the new rules and creating disability inclusive workplaces. The Center should create an on-line community of practice for Federal contractors and ODEP will assist the Center to explore the feasibility of utilizing existing ODEP on-line tools such as eFedlink or ePolicyWorks for such purposes.

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- Include a focus on small businesses – Given that small business is the engine of U.S. economic growth, generating 60 to 80 percent of net new jobs annually over the last decade,¹ representing 99.7 percent of all employer firms² and employing half of all private sector employees,³ the Center must include a specific focus on small business Federal contractors. Furthermore, since firms that are minority-owned and operated contribute significantly to the long-term health of the U.S. economy having grown at approximately double the rate of all firms in the U.S. economy⁴ over the past 10 years, the Center should also focus on assisting minority-owned firms to comply with the requirements of Section 503 and VEVRAA. The Center will build upon the outcomes of ODEP’s Add Us In initiative to:
 - Continue to identify and develop replicable models, strategies, and policies specifically designed to increase the capacity of small business contractors, including those in underrepresented and

¹*Small Business Fact Sheet*, House Committee on Small Business, May 21, 2013, http://smallbusiness.house.gov/uploadedfiles/05.21._2013_small_biz_fact_sheet.pdf

² “An Analysis of Small Businesses and Job Creation.” Bryan Headd. pp. 4 and 10, [http://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/an%20analysis%20of%20small%20business%20and%20jobs\(1\).pdf](http://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/an%20analysis%20of%20small%20business%20and%20jobs(1).pdf).

³*Id.*

⁴ “2007 Survey of Business Owners,” July 5, 2011, <http://www.census.gov/econ/sbo/>.

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historically excluded communities,⁵ to employ youth and adults with disabilities.⁶

- Translate ODEP's findings regarding effective small business-sector engagement and related practices to promote the recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities by small businesses (including those practices, policies, strategies, and models arising from the Add Us In initiative), into practice.
- Directly support the adoption and implementation of successful practices, tools, and policies by relevant stakeholders rather than simply disseminating or transferring information using a variety of strategies such as: ongoing outreach to organizations and individuals through communications and social marketing, partnership development, technical assistance and educating or training the targeted audiences.
- Facilitate continuing dialogues, interactions, and partnerships with small business organizations such as business associations, chambers of commerce, and industry associations.

⁵ For the purpose of this initiative, the inclusion of underrepresented and historically excluded communities, may vary in different regions, and can include ethnic and racial minorities including African American, Asian American (including Asian Americans of West Asian descent, e.g., India, and Asian Americans of East Asian descent, e.g., Japan and Korea); Latino or Hispanic American; Federally recognized Tribes and Native American communities [including American Indians; Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Native Pacific Islanders (including American Samoan Natives)]; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) individuals; women; veterans; and other similar groups. Historically excluded communities are areas or groups that face some or all of the following economic challenges: blight; underinvestment; low per capita income; high poverty; high unemployment; discrimination in housing, credit or the labor market; environmental or natural resource degradation, and/or mass layoffs.

⁶ Disability is defined as set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAA) of 2008.

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The selected industries among small businesses may be the same or different from those among other Federal contractors, but must be chosen based on clearly articulated criteria, as approved by ODEP, with consideration to evaluating the results.

(c) State Governments – ODEP is charged with developing Federal policy related to advancing the employment of people with disabilities, including employment in State agencies. The translation and promotion of inclusionary policies for use by States would advance the likelihood of their implementation and impact on employment opportunities for people with disabilities. By establishing cooperative working relationships with key State legislative and administrative bodies, the Center will explore new avenues to encourage the adoption of ODEP’s disability employment policy by States. In 2013, ODEP built a knowledge base on State disability employment policy. The project identified practices, policies, and programs used by State governments to increase the recruitment, hiring, and retention of individuals with disabilities. The reports provided an overview of State disability employment policies and practices, and identified areas where additional research would be useful to policymakers and stakeholders (“Advancing Economic Opportunities for Business Owners and Job Seekers with Disabilities: A Review of State and Municipal Government Contracting, Procurement and Tax Incentive Programs for Disability-Owned

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Businesses and States as Model Employers of People with Disabilities:

A Comprehensive Review of Policies, Practices, and Strategies”).

With these reports serving as a starting point, the Center will work with key State-level representative entities to carry out a targeted policy translation and implementation strategy that fosters collaboration between ODEP and State policymakers. The Center’s work in this area should include:

- Drafting model legislative policy language for use by States in at least two (2) distinct policy areas related to the employment of people with disabilities, such as, but not limited to, the following:
 - State Hiring and Employment Practices: Innovative ways to assist States in their respective efforts to expand the hiring, retention, and promotion of individuals with disabilities as both State employees and contractors. Model legislation can also be developed which addresses State incentives for private employers to hire individuals with disabilities.
 - Technology: Policies that advance the development and adoption of accessible, interoperable, and usable information and communication technologies in the workplace.
 - Return-to-Work: Strategies for addressing policy, organizational, and resource obstacles that prevent or restrict successful State-level return-to-work efforts.

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- Developing outreach materials and in-depth technical assistance resources for use by interested State policymakers and administrators. Examples of such resources include the following:
 - Model policy language, testimony, relevant State stakeholder contacts, lessons learned from other States, and other specially requested information.
 - Electronic newsletters that address one or more of the chosen policy areas and specifically target those State policymakers with leadership and/or responsibility for those issue areas.
 - Articles for publication in State policymaker newsletters and other print and/or electronic communications materials.
 - Integration of outreach materials into State social media outlets.
- Conducting targeted outreach to State policymakers around the selected policy issues.
- Facilitating the participation of the Center in relevant State policy invitational meetings (e.g., the National Conference of State Legislatures' Legislative Conference and the National Governors' Association Annual Meeting) to discuss and promote ODEP policy issues.
- Designing and conducting disability employment policy Webinars targeting State policymakers.

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- Utilizing current and future communication and social media tools and strategies to inform and engage the target audience.
- Producing in-depth State profiles/case studies for a minimum of three (3) States in each of the selected policy issue areas. The States chosen, based on demonstrated interest in implementing new policies or initiatives to facilitate the employment of people with disabilities, will receive customized technical assistance responsive to their requests and needs. The profiles/case studies will be used to conduct further outreach and technical assistance to additional States in future years. The profiles/case studies should include an environmental scan of the policy development process in that particular State (e.g., the legislative entity or individual who has responsibility for policy development on the issue, recent activities that relate to and/or will have an impact on that policy area, and additional partners that should be engaged).
- Facilitating communication and collaboration by actively leading and participating in ePolicyWorks' collaborative workspaces for each of the selected policy areas. The purpose of these workspaces is to bring together relevant ODEP staff, national experts, and State representatives to exchange information and discuss experiences related to implementing ODEP policies. The workspaces will provide a feedback loop and an opportunity to further develop and advance policies to increase the employment of people with

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disabilities. Facilitating participation in the workspaces will include the following activities:

- Updating information (on an ongoing basis) for each of the chosen policy issue areas.
- Developing effective ways to communicate with participants about new and relevant postings, including discussion threads on a particular policy issue, trending policy issues and topics, new comments on policy ideas, and the availability of new information or reports.
- Creating new discussions and posing specific questions to guide policy discussions.
- Assisting participants in the development of national online dialogues and subsequent policy analysis resulting from those dialogues.
- Evaluating participant feedback about the workspaces and features.

The costs of creating and maintaining the ePolicy workspaces and dialogues, including training for participants, will be borne by ODEP.

The Center must track State legislation and other State-level policy initiatives resulting from ODEP's collaboration with these State policymakers to allow further analysis and evaluation of these efforts.

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iv. Performance Monitoring and Evaluation of Employer Engagement

and Technical Assistance (TA) Strategies – The Center will develop and measure performance outcomes related to its activities. Although ODEP/DOL may choose to fund an independent third-party evaluation in which the awardee must participate, the awardee must continuously assess the effectiveness of its engagement and technical assistance activities. The awardee will:

- Develop a plan to track, report, and continuously assess the effectiveness of its activities and outcomes and establish performance measures, including measures for tracking which policies and effective practices employers adopt and implement; and
- Evaluate the outcomes of TA strategies and measure the results of adoption and implementation using metrics it proposes for approval by ODEP.

b. Other Required Activities or Services – In addition to conducting the Required Activities under each of the Focus Areas previously described (analysis, research, outreach, and technical assistance activities) the Center will perform a number of activities that more broadly contribute to achieving the goals of the Center and supporting ODEP in its employer policy-development activities. Specifically, the Center will:

- Build upon existing relationships (those of ODEP, as well as of the successful bidder) to establish and maintain partnerships needed to engage and deliver services to each of the targeted employer groups. These partnerships may be

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formal or informal, but must be cultivated to leverage existing expertise, coordinate activities and avoid duplication, and receive input and real-time feedback from employers and other stakeholder groups.

- Actively participate in national conferences, trade or industry events or meetings when doing so provides significant opportunities to reach targeted audiences or gather information that will help inform the activities of the Center and further the goals of ODEP. Examples of active participation include serving as a presenter, moderator, facilitator, or subject-matter expert, but would not typically include simply attending unless this type of participation is the only or best way to gain needed information or expertise on a key topic area.
- Maintain an online resource repository of technical assistance information and an interactive Web presence. Within 30 days of award, migrate relevant content of askearn.org onto the Center's Web site and ensure that it is user friendly, meets high accessibility standards, and provides employers with organized, comprehensive, and easy-to-navigate information and resources they need to advance employment for people with disabilities.
- Use accessible technology tools and social media to conduct outreach to employers, seek input, and provide technical assistance.
- Conduct online dialogues for the purpose of developing policies and practices with ODEP participation and support.

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- Provide private employers with access to candidates in the WRP database and work with them to expand existing internship programs to include students with disabilities.
- Provide rapid-response technical assistance, research, and limited logistics management to ODEP on current trends and issues for which ODEP must develop a policy position or official response.
- Serve as liaison with the Circle, convening periodic meetings or otherwise facilitating the exchange of information among participants and with ODEP.
- Provide logistical support to ODEP events, as identified by ODEP.
- Conduct literature reviews of topics relevant to the delivery of technical assistance to the employers in the targeted groups. Keep current on research and developments in these areas.

3. Other Requirements

a. Accessible Deliverables – All deliverables produced by the recipient of the cooperative agreement must be accessible. See definition in Section I.C of the SCA and the Eligibility Information in SCA Section III.E. Universal Access and Design.

b. Staffing – The Center will be managed by a project manager who will oversee all the administrative requirements of the cooperative agreement, review all deliverables, and work with team members and partners to meet the goals of the cooperative agreement. Ensure sufficient time has been allocated to the project manager’s activities to meet all required responsibilities. In

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addition, the project manager will ensure that other resources are leveraged to meet the goals of the cooperative agreement.

Given that the Center shall include required partners from a minimum of five (5) entities (see Eligible Applicants under Section III. A), it is expected that these required partners should round out the experience of the project manager and should demonstrate experience working with small, medium, and large employers and/or offer public policy and research experience. The successful applicant will be able to reach employers of all sizes and sectors, many of which may have no experience in the recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement of employees with disabilities. The partners will be an integral part of the work performed by the cooperative agreement.

The lead entity of record must obtain a professional editor. All documents produced by the Center must be reviewed by the editor prior to submission to ODEP. The Center must also hire a training professional with demonstrated experience in training employers, and who will not serve in the capacity as a principal.

The project manager must demonstrate at least five (5) years of experience in areas relevant to the requirements of this solicitation and at least five (5) years of experience in project management.

c. Performance Measurement and Evaluation – The recipient of the cooperative agreement must participate in data collection, analysis, and reporting related to ODEP’s Operating Plan, Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) measurements, and other similar requirements. It must

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also respond to specific data collection and analysis requests as they arise to support ODEP priorities and initiatives. ODEP's performance metrics uses a Web-based software system, Efforts to Outcomes (ETO), for which the Center will be required to provide data. Since ODEP assesses its performance by measuring the numbers of outputs shown to lead to its desired outcome goals of adoption and implementation of policies and practices, the recipient of the cooperative agreement must, when requested, report on the numbers of the following performance metrics:

- Policy Outputs – ODEP policy is either an output recommending/putting in place a significant policy change or an interpretation of existing policy related to disability employment. Examples of Policy Outputs are: legislation, regulations, policy guidance, executive orders, or executive memoranda. All examples represent work done with ODEP playing the primary role in development.
- Formal Agreements – These measures are formally documented partnerships between ODEP and/or the recipient of the cooperative agreement with other Federal, State, or local entities that directly lead to ODEP policy or practice outcomes in support of employment for people with disabilities. Such agreements must be established through one or more of the following mechanisms: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), approved inter/intra-agency agreements, public/private partnership agreements, alliance agreements, and contracted study/test sites that sign agreements.

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- Effective Practices – ODEP developed strategies, models, or theories that lead directly to an identified ODEP outcome and have a documented record of success or validated effectiveness by an organization with relevant capacity and experience in validation of evidenced-based practices such as: recognized national or State award winner such as Baldrige, PEPNet, or a similar recognition process; Federally supported peer review panel (e.g., OMB peer review, inter/intra agency panels/work groups, Interagency Committee for Disability Research [ICDR], National Clearinghouses or Technical Assistance Centers, Research Centers); formal third-party/independent evaluation; and publication in peer-reviewed journals. Examples of products that may be considered demonstration of an effective practice, provided they are validated per above include: curricula, tool kits, program models, publications (including journal articles, books, and reports), other TA materials, products published by other Federal agencies, or project reports.
- Technical Assistance (TA) – The provision of specific advice, assistance, or training that increases recipient entity capacity to adopt or implement ODEP’s approved policy strategies and/or effective practices. TA is specific and is not the dissemination of generic information regarding disability employment policy (information dissemination is the wide dispersal of information to inform or educate). TA can be provided through teleconferences, Webinars, or direct in-person meetings. Examples of TA include: developing management plans and sharing

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techniques to facilitate or improve the implementation of policy strategies or best practices. ODEP's TA centers also provide TA and support ODEP staff in the development of policy strategies and effective practices. TA is a central component of ODEP's approach to policy and effective-practice change. ODEP's TA goals are primarily established through recipient work plans.

- Technical Assistance Event – An instance through which TA is provided to one or more individuals.
- Outreach Event – An instance through which information is disseminated. Outreach events can either be virtual or in-person, or a combination of the two. Outreach is general information about ODEP, its initiatives, or disability employment policy which is disseminated to raise awareness about issues and resources and/or to engage entities in the adoption and implementation of policies and practices. Like TA, ODEP's outreach goals are primarily established through recipient work plans.
- Outreach Event Attendees – An individual attendee at an ODEP-sponsored Outreach Event.
- Outreach Hours – The length of time in hours of an ODEP outreach event.
- Entities Receiving TA – An entity that participates in a technical assistance event.
- Collaborative Relationships – Are documented partnerships not supported by: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), approved inter/intra-agency agreement, public/private partnership agreement, alliance agreements, or

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contracted study/test sites that sign agreements. The focus of these partnerships is to support the identification, dissemination, adoption, and/or implementation of ODEP-approved policy strategies and effective practices.

- Policy Adoption – The commitment by an entity to implement an ODEP policy strategy or effective practice.
- Policy Implementation – The effectuation of an ODEP policy strategy or effective practice by an entity or organization.

In addition, on a monthly basis, the Center will collect, analyze, and report data on the types, number, and percentages where appropriate of the following:

- Contacts by type of communication received and by type of entity making the contact;
- Web site activity (Web page requests and unique visitors);
- Social media activity;
- Publications and products created; and
- Publications and products distributed and to whom.

Furthermore, information or results from any ongoing evaluation activities and/or customer satisfaction surveys conducted should also be reported. The recipient of the cooperative agreement must also cooperate with any independent evaluation that may be conducted by ODEP. This evaluation may include the collection of data elements beyond the performance metrics described above.

II. Award Information

A. Award Amount

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ODEP has up to \$1.85 million available under this competition and expects to fund the first year of one cooperative agreement. Any cooperative agreement application with a proposed value greater than \$1.85 million will be deemed non-responsive and will not be considered.

B. Period of Performance

This award will be for a 60-month period of performance and will fund the first 12-month budget period. Applicants should plan to fully expend funds during the budget period while ensuring full transparency and accountability for all expenditures.

C. Continuation Awards

ODEP, in its discretion, may make available continuation awards for additional 12-month budget periods through the end of the period of performance. Prior to awarding continuation awards, ODEP will review: (1) recipient progress to determine if approved application targets and projected outcomes are being met, (2) recipient spending to determine if funds have been expended in a manner consistent with the approved application and budget, and (3) recipient compliance with application assurances and award provisions.

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D. Type of Award

To achieve the goals of this effort, the Department intends to award a cooperative agreement to the successful applicant. Under a cooperative agreement, close cooperation and coordination between ODEP and the recipient is required. At least monthly phone check-ins with ODEP and quarterly conference calls with ODEP will be a required component of the cooperative agreement. ODEP will have substantial involvement in the administration of the agreement and many aspects of the management of the Center including the review and approval of materials and many significant actions. See Section VI A. for further discussion of the nature of DOL's involvement and a description of the instances in which DOL review and approval is required.

In addition to the items specified in Section VI A, ODEP's input and approval will be obtained prior to:

- Establishing partnerships with organizations outside the recipient of the cooperative agreement's required partners, such as invitation lists to dialogues, trainings, Webinar presenters, and other types of engagements;
- Making the Web portal "live" under the auspices of the new recipient of the cooperative agreement and making changes to design and graphics of the Web site and published materials;
- Publishing the content of materials on the Web site, in publications, in training materials including Webcasts, and in other media; and
- Creating and utilizing communications' vehicles and tools for outreach.

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III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

To be considered eligible for this cooperative agreement, an applicant must be one of the following four (4) types of entities: a) a business membership association; b) an institution of higher education; c) an employment service provider; or d) a national disability-serving organization. The applicant should have commitments by third parties for partnerships to start upon the award date. Applicants are required to have a partnership with entities from each of the other eligible applicant categories, as well as with a top-tiered business school and a State policy association.

Applications that do not include each of the five (5) required partners will be considered non-responsive. The eligible applicant can fulfill no more than two (2) of the required partnership roles. For example, an institution of higher education also may be a top-tiered business school.

Additional partners can be proposed that significantly contribute to the goals of this solicitation.

Applicants must possess at least five (5) years' experience in their respective area of expertise and specifically in delivering outreach and technical assistance to employers directly or through other organizations that serve employers (e.g., business membership associations and/or employment service providers).

Descriptions of each type of eligible applicant are provided below:

- Business membership association – An organization of businesses that promotes the interests of its members, these associations may perform

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activities that would be unduly costly or time-consuming for an individual company to perform by itself, but are beneficial and achievable in the aggregate, including information gathering, research, education, peer support, and setting industry standards. Examples include trade or industry associations such as the Chamber of Commerce or local Chambers of Commerce, small business federations, and labor-management organizations.

- Institutions of higher education – Public, for-profit, or nonprofit educational institutions including two-year and four-year colleges and universities. Eligible institutions must be accredited by an accrediting agency or association that has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. The database of accredited institutions that can be found at <http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/> will be used to determine accreditation and ensure eligibility. Eligible applicants or required partners from this group must also possess at least five (5) years' experience conducting research and evaluation of disability employment policies.
- Employment service providers (ESP) – These are organizations with the expressed purpose of addressing workforce issues by serving the needs of businesses or consortia of businesses and/or job seekers. ESPs assist job seekers to find jobs and/or employers to find workers and may provide training, education and employment support services. Workforce intermediaries are ESPs that address workforce issues using a dual customer approach—considering the needs of both employees and employers. Examples of ESPs include State and local Workforce Investment Boards, veterans'

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service organizations, private or nonprofit employment service providers, and State vocational rehabilitation agencies. Faith-based and community organizations, employer organizations, community colleges, temporary staffing agencies, and labor organizations may also perform these functions and often serve as workforce intermediaries. Eligible applicants or required partners from this group must also possess subject matter expertise with at least five (5) years of experience in working with both job seekers with disabilities and employers and employment service providers to recruit and hire people with disabilities.

- National disability-serving organizations (Eligible Applicant and/or Required Partner) – These are entities that serve and support the interests of individuals with disabilities and may be led by people with disabilities.

ODEP requires the applicant to have partnerships in place with one entity from each category of organizations listed as eligible applicants (other than the applicant's category) and the following entities:

- Top-tiered business school – Must be a nationally recognized business school ranked highly on a national register, such as the *U.S. News & World Report's* 2013 listing (<http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-business-schools/mba-rankings>). The required partner from a top-tiered business school is an essential component of this SCA to continue ODEP's business engagement research. This partner must demonstrate leadership in change management and behavioral insights.

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- State policy-related associations – May include such State associations as the National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the Council of State Governments, or another State policy-related organization. Partners in this category should possess at least five years' experience disseminating effective employment policies and practices.

The applicant shall be designated as the primary fiscal agent and is required to submit quarterly programmatic, financial and performance measure reports and a final report at the end of the performance period.

The applicant will serve as the Center's fiscal and reporting agent and must be the organization specified in Section 8 of the SF-424 Application Form (OMB Control Number 4040-0004 expiration date 8/31/16). This organizations will be (1) the point of contact with the Department to receive and respond to all inquiries or communications under this SCA and any subsequent cooperative agreement award; (2) the entity with authority to withdraw or draw down funds through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Payment Management System (HHS-PMS); (3) the entity responsible for submitting to the Department all deliverables under the cooperative agreement, including all technical and financial reports related to the project, regardless of which partnership member performed the work; (4) the entity that may request or agree to a revision or amendment of the cooperative agreement or statement of work; (5) the entity with overall responsibility for carrying out the programmatic functions of the cooperative agreement, as well as for the stewardship of all expenditures under the cooperative agreement; (6) the entity responsible for coordinating with any future national evaluator

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should ODEP choose to fund a separate evaluation entity; and (7) the entity responsible for working with DOL to close out the cooperative agreement.

The applicant will leverage its partnerships and relationships with national affiliates, association members, or business organizations to achieve the objectives of the SCA. The applicant is expected to use resources available through ODEP Technical Assistance centers and reciprocate through an exchange of expertise to these centers with regard to disability employment.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing or matching funds are not required as a condition for application.

C. Other Eligibility Criteria

None.

D. Eligible Participants: Veterans Priority for Participants

The Jobs for Veterans Act (Public Law 107-288) requires recipients to provide priority of service for veterans and spouses of certain veterans for the receipt of employment, training, and placement services in any job training program directly funded, in whole or in part, by DOL. The regulations implementing this priority of service can be found at 20 CFR Part 1010. In circumstances where a cooperative agreement recipient must choose between two qualified candidates for a service, one of whom is a veteran or eligible spouse, the veterans priority of service provisions require that the cooperative agreement recipient give the veteran or eligible spouse priority of service by first providing him or her that service. To obtain priority of service, a veteran or spouse must meet the program's eligibility requirements. Recipients must comply

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with DOL guidance on veterans' priority. DOL's Employment and Training Administration's Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) No. 10-09 (issued November 10, 2009) provides guidance on implementing priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses in all qualified job training programs funded in whole or in part by DOL. TEGL No. 10-09 is available at http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=2816.

E. Other Cooperative Agreement Specifications

1. Transparency. DOL is committed to conducting a transparent cooperative agreement award process and publicizing information about program outcomes. Posting cooperative agreement applications on public Web sites is a means of promoting and sharing innovative ideas. For this competition, we will publish on the Department's public Web site, or similar publicly accessible location, the Abstracts required by Part III of Section IV.B and SF-424 for all applications received. Additionally, we will publish a version of the Project Narrative required by Part III of Section IV.B, for any application that is awarded, on the Department's Web site or a similar location. Except for the Abstract, none of the attachments to the Project Narrative will be published. The Project Narratives and Abstracts will not be published until after the cooperative agreement is awarded. In addition, information about cooperative agreement progress and results may also be made publicly available.

DOL recognizes that cooperative agreement applications sometimes contain information that an applicant may consider proprietary or business confidential information, or may contain personally identifiable information. Proprietary or business confidential information is information that is not usually disclosed outside your

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organization and disclosing this information is likely to cause you substantial competitive harm.

Personally identifiable information is any information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, such as name, social security number, date and place of birth, mother's maiden name, or biometric records; and any other information that is linked or linkable to an individual, such as medical, educational, financial, and employment information.

Abstracts will be published in the form originally submitted, without any redactions. Applicants should not include any proprietary or confidential business information or personally identifiable information in this summary. In the event that an applicant submits proprietary or confidential business information or personally identifiable information, DOL is not liable for the posting of this information contained in the abstract. The submission of the cooperative agreement application constitutes a waiver of the applicant's objection to the posting of any proprietary or confidential business information contained in the abstract. Additionally, the applicant is responsible for obtaining all authorizations from relevant parties for publishing all personally identifiable information contained within the abstract. In the event the abstract contains proprietary or confidential business or personally identifiable information, the applicant is presumed to have obtained all necessary authorizations to provide this information and may be liable for any improper release of this information.

By submission of this cooperative agreement application, the applicant agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the United States, the U.S. Department of Labor, its officers, employees, and agents against any liability or for any loss or damages arising

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from this application. By such submission of this cooperative agreement application, the applicant further acknowledges having the authority to execute this release of liability.

In order to ensure that proprietary or confidential business information or personally identifiable information is properly protected from disclosure when DOL posts the winning Project Narratives, applicants whose Project Narratives will be posted will be asked to submit a second redacted version of their Project Narrative, with any proprietary or confidential business information and personally identifiable information redacted. All non-public information about the applicant's and partner members' staff (if applicable) should be removed as well.

The Department will contact the applicants whose Project Narratives will be published by letter or e-mail, and provide further directions about how and when to submit the redacted version of the Project Narrative.

Submission of a redacted version of the Project Narrative will constitute permission by the applicant for DOL to make the redacted version publicly available. We will also assume that by submitting the redacted version of the Project Narrative, the applicant has obtained the agreement to the applicant's decision about what material to redact of all persons and entities whose proprietary, confidential business information or personally identifiable information is contained in the Project Narrative. If an applicant fails to provide a redacted version of the Project Narrative within two weeks from the date of receipt of directions regarding submission of a redacted version of the Project Narrative, DOL will publish the original Project Narrative in full, after redacting only personally identifiable information. (Note that the original, unredacted version of the Project Narrative will remain part of the complete application package, including an

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applicant's proprietary and confidential business information and any personally identifiable information.)

Applicants are encouraged to maximize the cooperative agreement application information that will be publicly disclosed, and to exercise restraint and redact only information that clearly is proprietary, confidential commercial/business information, or capable of identifying a person. The redaction of entire pages or sections of the Project Narrative is not appropriate, and will not be allowed, unless the entire portion merits such protection. Should a dispute arise about whether redactions are appropriate, DOL will follow the procedures outlined in the Department's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) regulations (29 CFR Part 70).

Redacted information in cooperative agreement applications will be protected by DOL from public disclosure in accordance with Federal law, including the Trade Secrets Act (18 U.S.C. § 1905), FOIA, and the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. § 552a). If DOL receives a FOIA request for your application, the procedures in DOL's FOIA regulations for responding to requests for commercial/business information submitted to the Government will be followed, as well as all FOIA exemptions and procedures. 29 CFR § 70.26. Consequently, it is possible that application of FOIA rules may result in release of information in response to a FOIA request that an applicant redacted in its "redacted copy."

2. Universal Access and Design. Universal Design refers to the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. The recipient must demonstrate a solid knowledge of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. §794d), as

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amended, and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG 2.0) Level AA. The recipient is responsible for ensuring that all information computer technologies (ICT) deliverables meet or exceed accessibility and universal design requirements under Section 508 and WCAG 2.0 Level AA. The recipient must have the ability and experience in determining 508 compliance of ICT including design specification, testing and verification, and remediation as required.

The recipient will be responsible for acquiring the necessary tools to perform 508 and accessibility testing in multiple computing environments with a comprehensive selection of assistive technologies and must be able to present these findings to ODEP Federal managers. The recipient of the cooperative agreement shall be prepared to present for each ICT deliverable upon request to support the accessibility level of the various ICT deliverables. These findings must be presented in an accessible electronic format.

All ICT deliverables produced by the recipient of the cooperative agreement must be accessible and meet the criteria outlined in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG 2.0) Level AA. ICT deliverables include, but are not limited to: collaborative workspaces and tools, documents and materials, PDFs, forms, online tools, Web sites and mobile applications, Webcasts, Webinars, multimedia, social media, any training and related training materials, PowerPoint and other presentations, presentation materials, Word and electronic document formats, reports, etc. Print materials must be made available in an alternate accessible format when requested.

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3. Security. The recipient of the cooperative agreement shall implement the necessary security controls and configuration management for data collection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII). This support shall be in accordance with Department-wide guidelines, policies, procedures and templates that will be in compliance with National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) guidance and will satisfy the requirements of the E-Government Act of 2002 including Title III, Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA), the Clinger-Cohen Act, Office of Management Budget (OMB) guidance, Homeland Security Presidential Directives (HSPD) 7, 8, and 12, and the DOL Cyber Security Program Plan (CSPP). The recipient of the cooperative agreement will respond to security data calls requested by ODEP's Information Security Officer (ISO).

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. How to Apply

This SCA contains all of the information and links to forms needed to apply for cooperative agreement funding. Additional application packages and amendments to this SCA may be obtained from the ODEP Web site address at www.dol.gov/odep, and the Federal Grant Opportunities Web site address at <http://www.grants.gov>.

Applicants must register with the System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting an application. Instructions for registering with SAM can be found at <https://sam.gov>. An awardee must maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application under consideration. To remain registered in the SAM database after the initial registration, the applicant is required to review and update the registration at least every

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12 months from the date of initial registration or subsequently updates its information in the SAM database to ensure it is current, accurate and complete. For purposes of this paragraph, the applicant is the entity that meets the eligibility criteria and has the legal authority to apply and to receive the award.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Proposals submitted in response to this SCA must consist of three separate and distinct parts:

- Part 1, The Cost Proposal;
- Part 2, The Project Narrative; and
- Part 3, Attachments to the Project Narrative.

Applications that do not contain all of the three parts or that fail to adhere to the instructions in this section will be deemed non-responsive and will not be reviewed. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the funding amount requested is consistent across all parts and sub-parts of the application. Reasons for which an application will be deemed non-responsive, and thus not considered, include:

- Submission of a budget in excess of the maximum amount indicated in section II.A.
- Failure to register with SAM before application submission and include a Dun and Bradstreet, D-U-N-S number.
- Failure to provide an SF-424 including D-U-N-S Number, SF-424A, and a budget narrative.
- Failure to include all sections of the proposal and all required attachments.

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- Exceeding the specified page limit.
- Submission of inaccessible materials.
- Late submissions, as outlined below.

1. Part One. The Cost Proposal – The Cost Proposal must include the following items:

- SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance (OMB Control Number 4040-0004 expiration date 8/31/16) (available at <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15>). The SF-424 must clearly identify the applicant and must be signed by an individual with authority to enter into a cooperative agreement. Upon confirmation of an award, the individual signing the SF-424 on behalf of the applicant shall be considered the authorized representative of the applicant. The signature of the authorized representative on the SF-424 certifies that the organization is in compliance with the Assurances and Certifications form SF-424B (available at <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15>). All applicants for Federal cooperative agreements and funding opportunities are required to have a Data Universal Numbering System (D-U-N-S) number, and must supply their D-U-N-S Number on the SF-424. The D-U-N-S Number is a nine-digit identification number that uniquely identifies business entities. If you do not have a D-U-N-S Number, you can get one for free through the D&B Web site: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/displayHomePage.do>.
- The SF-424A Budget Information Form (OMB Control Number 4040-0006 expiration date 6/30/14) (available at

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<http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15>). In preparing the Budget Information Form, the applicant must provide a concise narrative explanation to support the budget request, explained in detail below.

- **Budget Narrative:** The budget narrative must provide a description of costs associated with each line item on the SF-424A and any assumptions that are made. It should also include a description of leveraged resources provided (as applicable) to support cooperative agreement activities.

Note that the entire Federal cooperative agreement amount requested (not just one year) must be included on the SF-424 and SF-424A and budget narrative. No leveraged resources should be shown on the SF-424 and SF-424A. The amount listed on the SF-424, SF-424A and budget narrative must be the same. Please note, the funding amount included on the SF-424 will be considered the official funding amount requested if any inconsistencies are found. Applications that fail to provide an SF-424 including D-U-N-S Number, SF-424A, and a budget narrative will be considered non-responsive and not reviewed.

2. Part Two. Project Narrative – The Project Narrative must demonstrate the applicant’s capability to implement the cooperative agreement in accordance with the provisions of this Solicitation. The successful applicant will describe a comprehensive plan for providing the services and accomplishing the goals discussed in sections I.A. (Background) and I.B. (Description and Purpose) of the SCA. Additional guidance on what should be addressed in the Project Narrative is contained in Section V of the SCA. The Project Narrative is limited to 60 double-spaced single-sided 8.5 x 11 inch pages with 12 point text font and 1 inch margins. Any materials beyond the specified page

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limit will not be read. Applicants should number the Project Narrative beginning with page number 1. Applications that do not include Part II, the Project Narrative, will be considered non-responsive and not reviewed.

a. Required Activities (should align with Required Activities in I.B.2) – The Project Narrative must describe in detail how the proposed Center will approach the required activities related to each focus area as described in section I.B.2.a: (i) analysis of research, policies, and practices; (ii) research on employer engagement strategies; (iii) outreach and customized technical assistance to targeted employers, i.e. Federal agencies, Federal contractors (which includes small businesses), and State governments; and (iv) performance monitoring and evaluation of employer engagement and technical assistance strategies. The applicant must also describe its approach to the “Other Required Activities or Services” described in section I.B.2.b that more broadly contribute to achieving the goals of the Center and supporting ODEP in its employer policy development activities.

The Project Narrative should cover the entire 60-month performance period. For the first year the narrative should include considerable specificity and detailed milestones. The narrative for the remaining years should describe how the applicant will continue to meet the goals of the SCA and include the timing of major milestones and outcomes. The applicant will be able to modify the proposed work plan for years two through five prior to the funding of those years. The applications received will be reviewed in the context of a 60 month performance period.

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Applicants must clearly indicate how proposed activities coordinate with or build on, but do not duplicate, existing publically funded or private technical assistance activities targeted to employers (i.e., ADA TA Centers, NIDRR RRTCs, and other NIDRR-funded employment related projects).

Applicant's project narrative must describe evidence that the applicant possesses the requisite expert knowledge and experience to carry out the required activities. Specifically, the applicant must demonstrate that it has the knowledge, experience and capacity to:

- Analyze existing disability employment research, policies, and practices especially as it pertains to employers within Federal agencies, Federal contractors (including those that are small businesses), and State governments.
- Analyze and interpret Federal legislation and regulations to assess their potential impact on employers, including Federal contractors.
- Conduct ad hoc analyses on relevant policy topics and issues, draft policy briefs, develop legislative policy recommendations, and coordinate and organize Congressional briefings.
- Assist employers with implementation of effective recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement policies and practices.
- Develop and deliver effective technical assistance products and services.
- Use technology and online tools to deliver accessible technical assistance.
- Conduct analysis of labor market information data to project high-growth jobs and industries in selected demographic areas.

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- Use evaluation methodologies to analyze the outreach and technical assistance (materials, media, delivery, and outcomes) the Center develops and provides to employers (Federal agencies, Federal contractors, and State governments) and to track and evaluate employers' adoption and implementation of successful policies and practices related to increasing disability recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement.

In discussing the applicant's approach to the required activities, the Project Narrative should demonstrate the applicant's expert knowledge of current workforce issues facing employers. It should also demonstrate the applicant's knowledge of and relationships with other technical assistance resources that serve employers related to disability employment. Applicant must also specifically discuss how the Center will use the ODEP alliances in analyzing policy/practices, in conducting outreach and providing technical assistance to employers.

b. Project Management and Evaluation Plans – Project Narrative must include:

- A detailed 12-month management plan for project goals, objectives, activities, and expected outcomes [A Logic Model (see SCA Attachment) must be included to illustrate the connection between cooperative agreement activities, outputs, and outcomes.];
- A detailed 12-month timeline for project activities;
- A discussion of the applicant's approach to achieving the goals of this SCA over the 60 month performance including major milestones and outcomes;

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- A detailed outline for an evaluation of the program that references the connection between cooperative agreement activities, and ODEP’s outputs and outcomes including the applicant’s commitment to working with ODEP on all evaluation activities; and
- A description of procedures and approaches that will be used to provide ongoing communication, collaboration with, and input from ODEP’s Project Officer on all cooperative agreement-related activities

c. Staffing - All applicants will develop a written plan for becoming a model employer of people with disabilities, which includes specific strategies for recruiting, hiring, accommodating, retaining, and promoting jobseekers and workers with disabilities who will be part of the staff employed by the Center. A report detailing the efforts provided under this plan shall be provided to ODEP, semiannually. ODEP will provide comments regarding the report, including a corrective action plan, if necessary.

3. Part Three. Attachments to Project Narrative – In addition to the project narrative the applicant must include the following:

- a.** An abstract, of no more than three single-spaced, single-sided pages on 8 1/2” x 11” paper with standard margins throughout that identifies the following:
 - The entity that is applying for the cooperative agreement, the required partner organizations, and any optional partners; and
 - An overview of how the applicant will carry out the tasks, strategies, and policies described in this solicitation.

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- b.** Memoranda of understanding (MOU) and/or letters of intent with required and any optional partners describing level of involvement of the partner and expertise.
- c.** Samples of technical assistance and training materials in accessible formats.
- d.** Logic model that aligns with ODEP's logic model and illustrates the connection between the Center's goals, inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes and ODEP's outputs and outcomes.
- e.** Organizational chart for staff that will operate the proposed project.
- f.** An outline for an evaluation of the cooperative agreement that references the connection between cooperative agreement activities and ODEP's outputs and outcomes including the applicant's commitment to working with ODEP and its potential third-party evaluator on all evaluation activities.
- g.** Resumes of key personnel, including consultants and subcontractors, who will play a substantial role in the project.
- h.** Documentation of staff's other commitments.
- i.** Most recent financial audit of entity put forth as fiscal agent (overview/summary report only).
- j.** A description of the types of employer contacts, alliances, networks and other contact with the business community that the applicant has in its history and may be able to utilize in the future for the purposes of the cooperative agreement.

Attachments are not included in the page limit for the Project Narrative.

Applications that do not include the required attachments (see items b-j above) will be

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considered non-responsive and will not be reviewed. The required attachments must be affixed as separate, clearly identified appendices to the application.

Applicants should be judicious in the submission of non-required appendices. DOL will not accept general letters of support submitted by organizations or individuals that are not required partners in the proposed project and that do not directly identify the specific commitment or roles of the project partners. Support letters of this nature will not be considered in the evaluation review process.

Applicants should not send documents separately to DOL, because documents received separately will be tracked through a different system and will not be attached to the application for review.

C. Submission Date, Times, Process, and Address

The closing date for receipt of applications under this announcement is 30 days after publication in www.grants.gov. Applications may be submitted electronically on <http://www.grants.gov> or in hard copy by mail or hand delivery (including overnight delivery). Hard copy applications must be received at the address below no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Applications submitted on www.grants.gov must also be successfully submitted (as described below) no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Applications sent by e-mail, telegram, or facsimile (fax) will not be accepted.

Applicants submitting proposals in hard copy must submit an original signed application (including the SF-424) and one (1) “copy-ready” version free of bindings, staples or protruding tabs to ease in the reproduction of the proposal by DOL. Applicants submitting proposals in hard copy are also required to provide an identical electronic copy of the proposal on compact disc (CD). If discrepancies between the hard copy

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submission and CD copy are identified, the application on the CD will be considered the official applicant submission for evaluation purposes. Failure to provide identical applications in hardcopy and CD format may have an impact on the overall evaluation.

If an application is physically submitted by both hard copy and through <http://www.grants.gov>, a letter must accompany the hard-copy application stating which application to review. If no letter accompanies the hard copy, we will review the copy submitted through <http://www.grants.gov>.

Applications that do not meet the conditions set forth in this notice will be considered non-responsive. No exceptions to the mailing and delivery requirements set forth in this notice will be granted. Further, documents submitted separately from the application, before or after the deadline, will not be accepted as part of the application.

Mailed applications must be addressed to the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Procurement Services, Attn: Cassandra Mitchell, Grant Officer, Reference SCA14-06, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room S-4307, Washington, DC 20210. Applicants are advised that mail delivery in the Washington DC area may be delayed due to mail decontamination procedures. Hand-delivered proposals will be received at the above address. All overnight mail will be considered to be hand-delivered and must be received at the designated place by the specified closing date and time.

Applications that are submitted through www.grants.gov must be successfully submitted at <http://www.grants.gov> no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on the closing date and then subsequently validated by www.grants.gov. The submission and validation process is described in more detail below. The process can be complicated and time-consuming. Applicants are strongly advised to initiate the process as soon as possible

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and to plan for time to resolve technical problems if necessary.

The Department strongly recommends that before the applicant begins to write the proposal, applicants should immediately initiate and complete the “Get Registered” registration steps at http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp. Applicants should read through the registration process carefully before registering. These steps may take as much as four weeks to complete, and this time should be factored into plans for electronic submission in order to avoid unexpected delays that could result in the rejection of an application. The site also contains registration checklists to help you walk through the process. The Department strongly recommends that applicants download the “Organization Registration Checklist” at http://www.grants.gov/assets/Organization_Steps_Complete_Registration.pdf and prepare the information requested before beginning the registration process. Reviewing and assembling required information before beginning the registration process will alleviate last minute searches for required information and save time.

As described above, applicants must have a D–U–N–S Number and must register with the Federal Central Contractor Registry (CCR).

An application submitted through www.grants.gov constitutes a submission as an electronically signed application. The registration and account creation with www.grants.gov, with E-Biz POC approval, establishes an Authorized Organizational (AOR). When you submit the application through www.grants.gov, the name of your AOR on file will be inserted into the signature line of the application. *Applicants must register the individual who is able to make legally binding commitments for the applicant organization as the AOR; this step is often missed and it is crucial for valid submissions.*

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When a registered applicant submits an application with www.grants.gov, an electronic time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by www.grants.gov. Within two business days of application submission, www.grants.gov will send the applicant two e-mail messages to provide the status of the application's progress through the system. The first e-mail, sent almost immediately, will contain a tracking number and will confirm receipt of the application by www.grants.gov. The second e-mail will indicate the application has either been successfully validated or has been rejected due to errors. Only applications that have been successfully submitted by the deadline and subsequently successfully validated will be considered. It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to ensure a timely submission. While it is not required that an application be successfully validated before the deadline for submission, it is prudent to reserve time before the deadline in case it is necessary to resubmit an application that has not been successfully validated. Therefore, sufficient time should be allotted for submission (two business days) and, if applicable, additional time to address errors and receive validation upon resubmission (an additional two business days for each ensuing submission). It is important to note that if sufficient time is not allotted and a rejection notice is received after the due date and time, the application will not be considered.

The components of the application must be saved in an accessible (508 compliant) format as either .doc, .xls or .pdf files. Documents received in a format other than .doc, .xls or .pdf will not be read. If submitted in any other format or are inaccessible (not 508 compliant), applicants assume the risk that compatibility or other issues will prevent our ability to consider the application. ODEP will attempt to open the

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document, but will not take any additional measures in the event of problems with opening. In such cases, the non-conforming application will not be considered for funding.

We strongly advise applicants to use the various tools and documents, including FAQs, which are available on the “Applicant Resources” page at www.grants.gov/applicants/resources.jsp.

To receive updated information about critical issues, new tips for users and other time sensitive updates as information is available, applicants may subscribe to “Grants.gov Updates” at http://www.grants.gov/applicants/e-mail_subscription_signup.jsp.

If applicants encounter a problem with www.grants.gov and do not find an answer in any of the other resources, call 1-800-518-4726 to speak to a Customer Support Representative or e-mail “support@grants.gov”. The Contact Center is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is closed on Federal holidays.

Late Applications: For applications submitted on www.grants.gov, only applications that have been successfully submitted no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on the closing date and then successfully validated will be considered. Applicants take a significant risk by waiting to the last day to submit by www.grants.gov.

Any hard copy application received after the exact date and time specified for receipt at the office designated in this notice will not be considered, unless it is received before awards are made, it was properly addressed, and it was: (a) sent by U.S. Postal Service mail, postmarked no later than the fifth calendar day before the date specified for receipt of applications (e.g., an application required to be received by the 20th of the

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month must be postmarked by the 15th of that month); or (b) sent by professional overnight delivery service to the addressee not later than one working day before the date specified for receipt of applications. "Postmarked" means a printed, stamped or otherwise placed impression (exclusive of a postage meter machine impression) that is readily identifiable, without further action, as having been supplied or affixed on the date of mailing by an employee of the U.S. Postal Service. Therefore, applicants should request the postal clerk to place a legible hand cancellation "bull's eye" postmark on both the receipt and the package. Failure to adhere to these instructions will be a basis for a determination that the application was not filed timely and will not be considered. Evidence of timely submission by a professional overnight delivery service must be demonstrated by equally reliable evidence created by the delivery service provider indicating the time and place of receipt.

D. Intergovernmental Review

This funding opportunity is not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

E. Funding Restrictions

All proposal costs must be necessary and reasonable, and in accordance with Federal guidelines. Determinations of allowable costs will be made in accordance with the applicable Federal cost principles. Disallowed costs are those charges to a cooperative agreement that the funding agency or its representative determines not to be allowed in accordance with the applicable Federal cost principles or other conditions contained in the cooperative agreement. Applicants, whether successful or not, will not be entitled to reimbursement of pre-award costs.

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1. Indirect Costs – As specified in OMB’s Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements, indirect costs are those that have been incurred for common or joint objectives and cannot be readily identified with a particular final cost objective. An indirect cost rate (ICR) is required when an organization operates under more than one cooperative agreement, grant or other activity, whether Federally-assisted or not. Organizations must use the ICR supplied by the Federal Cognizant Agency. If an organization requires a new ICR or has a pending ICR, the Grant Officer will award a temporary billing rate for 90 days until a provisional rate can be issued. This rate is based on the fact that an organization has not established an ICR agreement. Within this 90 day period, the organization must submit an acceptable indirect cost proposal to their Federal Cognizant Agency.

2. Administrative Costs – Under this SCA, an entity that receives a cooperative agreement to carry out a project or program may not use more than 10 percent of the amount of the cooperative agreement to pay administrative costs associated with the program or project. Administrative costs could be direct or indirect costs, and are defined at 20 CFR 667.220. Administrative costs do not need to be identified separately from program costs on the SF-424A Budget Information Form. However, they must be tracked through the recipient of the cooperative agreement’s accounting system. To claim any administrative costs that are also indirect costs, the applicant must obtain an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement from its Federal Cognizant agency, as specified above.

3. Intellectual Property Rights – The Federal government reserves a paid-up, nonexclusive and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use, and to authorize others to use for Federal purposes: (a) the copyright in all products developed

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under the cooperative agreement, including a sub-agreement or contract under the cooperative agreement; and (b) any rights of copyright to which the recipient of the cooperative agreement, sub-agreement, or a contractor purchases ownership under an award (including but not limited to curricula, training models, technical assistance products, and any related materials). Such uses include, but are not limited to, the right to modify and distribute such products worldwide by any means, electronically or otherwise. The recipient of the cooperative agreement may not use Federal funds to pay any royalty or license fee for use of a copyrighted work, or the cost of acquiring by purchase a copyright in a work, where the Department has a license or rights of free use in such work. If revenues are generated through selling products developed with cooperative agreement funds, including intellectual property, these revenues are program income. Program income is added to the cooperative agreement and must be expended for allowable cooperative agreement activities.

If applicable, the following needs to be on all products developed in whole or in part with cooperative agreement funds:

“This workforce product was funded by a cooperative agreement awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy. This product does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Office of Disability Employment Policy or the U.S. Department of Labor, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. The Department of Labor makes no guarantees, warranties, or assurances of any kind, express or implied, with respect to such information, including any information on linked sites and including, but

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not limited to, accuracy of the information or its completeness, timeliness, usefulness, adequacy, continued availability, or ownership. This product is copyrighted by the institution that created it. Internal use by an organization and/or personal use by an individual for non-commercial purposes are permissible. All other uses require the prior authorization of the copyright owner.”

4. Travel – The recipient of the award will travel as needed to achieve the goals of the cooperative agreement. Any travel undertaken in performance of this cooperative agreement shall be subject to and in strict accordance with Federal travel regulations. To defray some travel costs, the award recipient may accept travel reimbursement by an inviting entity for specific purposes upon approval by ODEP.

5. Acknowledgement of DOL Funding – In all circumstances, the following shall be displayed on printed materials prepared by the recipient of the cooperative agreement: “Preparation of this item was funded by the United States Department of Labor under Cooperative Agreement No. SCA 14-06.”

All printed materials must also include the following notice: “This document does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.”

Public reference to cooperative agreement: When issuing statements, press releases, requests for proposals, bid solicitations, and other documents describing projects or programs funded in whole or in part with federal money, all awardees receiving Federal funds must clearly state:

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- a. The percentage of the total costs of the program or project, which will be financed with Federal money;
- b. The dollar amount of Federal financial assistance for the project or program; and
- c. The percentage and dollar amount of the total costs of the project or program that will be financed by non-governmental sources.

6. Use of DOL and ODEP Logo – In consultation with DOL/ODEP, the recipient of the cooperative agreement must acknowledge DOL's role as described. The DOL and/or ODEP logo may be applied to DOL-funded material prepared for world-wide distribution, including posters, videos, pamphlets, research documents, national survey results, impact evaluations, best practice reports, and other publications of global interest. The recipient must consult with DOL on whether the logo may be used on any such items prior to final draft or final preparation for distribution. In no event shall the DOL and/or ODEP logo be placed on any item until DOL has given the recipient written permission to use the logo on the item.

7. Use of Cooperative Agreement Funds for Participant Wages – Organizations that receive cooperative agreements through this SCA may not use cooperative agreement funds to pay for the wages of participants. Further, the provision of stipends to training enrollees for the purposes of wage replacement is not an allowable cost under this SCA.

8. Other Submission Requirements – Withdrawal of Applications: Applications may be withdrawn by written notice to the Grant Officer at any time before an award is made.

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V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

The applicant must show a demonstrated capacity to successfully operate Federal or other cooperative agreements (or grants) of this size and scope. Eligible applicants of record must show through a combination of strategic partners with subject-matter expertise in the Center’s required activities that it has sufficient capacity to reach employers and industry associations.

This section identifies and describes the criteria that will be used by a technical panel to review the cooperative agreement applications.

Criterion	Points
1. Viability of Project Proposal	20
2. Project Significance and Value	40
3. Organizational Capacity and Quality of Key Personnel	20
4. Budget and Resource Capacity	10
5. Quality of the Management and Evaluation Plan	10
TOTAL	100

1. Viability of the Proposed Project (20 points). In determining the viability of the proposed project, the Department will consider the extent to which the proposed Center will:

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- Build upon prior work completed and currently supported by ODEP and its partners around public and private employers and the replication and dissemination of effective policies and practices recommended in ODEP reports and projects, such as, but not limited to, the Business Strategies that Works, the Employer Engagement Strategy White Paper, eFedLink, State policies and legislation, the Employment First Community of Practice, the Disability Employment Initiative, the Add Us In Initiative, Federal Partners in Transition, youth-related employment projects, Return-to-Work and Workplace Flexibility areas, and other related policies and practices created and maintained across the continuum of ODEP teams;
- Sustain and enhance existing collaborative relationships, and develop new employer networks and partnerships and with disability organizations focused on employment;
- Implement the projects and use appropriate strategies and methodological tools to ensure successful achievement and measurement of project objectives;
- Involve partners as demonstrated by documentation (e.g., through letters of intent and/or Memoranda of Agreement) that adequately describes the expertise, level of involvement, and commitment of each entity or individual proposed as a partner (as described in the Eligible Applicants section) to contribute substantively to the project's implementation;
- Integrate performance feedback and continuous improvement; and
- Ensure deliverables and outcomes that are consistent with ODEP's annual and quarterly performance measures.

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2. Project Significance and Value (40 points). In evaluating the significance and value of the proposed project, the Department will consider the extent to which the proposal demonstrates the ability to deliver the project components described under Section B.2 Required Services: a. Focus Area Components and b. Other Required Services. Specifically, the Department will consider the extent to which the proposal articulates that the applicant's plan demonstrates the capacity to:

- Analyze employer research, policies, and practices related to disability employment;
- Develop and provide outreach, technical assistance, and training to targeted employers (i.e., Federal agencies; Federal contractors, including small businesses; and State governments) to increase their capacity to recruit, hire, retain, and advance people with disabilities;
- Develop innovative policies, practices, and products that advance the employment of people with disabilities in a competitive workplace as described in this SCA;
- Disseminate effective practices, policy recommendations, technical assistance, and other resources, as appropriate, targeted to Federal agencies, Federal contractors (including those that are small businesses), and State governments;
- Conduct research that reflects and builds upon new findings from research with employers about effective employer engagement strategies;
- Develop and deliver marketing strategies resulting from the employer engagement research; and

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- Assist employers with adoption and implementation of effective policies and practices, including the adoption and implementation by the three (3) types of employers described in the Wharton School of Business research.

The Department will also consider the applicant's proposed mix of partners and whether the necessary capacities are represented, whether these are new or existing relationships, how the applicant with its required and any optional partners will achieve the SCA goals as described in the Purpose and Project Narrative, what evaluation criteria will be used to evaluate the outcomes of these partnerships that relate to ODEP's ETO metrics, and how the applicant and its partners will sustain their relationships over the five years of the cooperative agreement.

3. Organizational Capacity and Quality of Key Technical Experts and Personnel (20 points). Applications will be evaluated based on the extent the applicant demonstrates:

- Experience and capacity to successfully operate Federal or other grants or cooperative agreements of this size and scope;
- Organizational experience and capacity to support an accessible communication strategy including: social media, crowd sourcing, Web site portal, electronic e-mail, chat, online communities of practice, as appropriate, mail contacts, and those described in the Background section of this SCA;
- Experience of all key personnel including those key personnel from the selected required partners. Qualifications and experience of the applicant's key subject-matter experts must demonstrate at least five (5) years of experience in their area of expertise as it relates to their role in implementing

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the projects. The proposed project will be evaluated on the qualifications and experience of the project co-project directors and their experience in managing grants of this scope and nature; and

- Experience, capacity, and commitment of the subcontractors, technical experts, other key staff, and selected organizations to build and maintain an appropriate functional structure to sustain the project (i.e., how the organizational structure, staffing, and subject-matter experts of the Center align with the project's requirements, vision, and goals and are designed to build and maintain an ongoing organizational Center that assures ODEP of responsible general management of the project).

4. Budget and Resource Capacity (10 points). In evaluating the capacity of the applicant to carry out the proposed project, ODEP will consider the extent to which:

- The budget and resource capacity is adequate to support and maintain the proposed project; the required partners; and an accessible communications' strategy;
- The anticipated costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project; and
- The anticipated budget and staffing are reasonable in relation to sustaining the project organizational structure, staffing, consultants, and experts.

5. Quality of the Management and Evaluation Plan (10 points). In evaluating the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, ODEP will consider the extent to which:

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- The management plan for project implementation will achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, and includes clearly defined partner and staff responsibilities, time allocation to project activities, time lines, project deliverables and information on adequacy of other resources necessary for project implementation;
- The mechanisms for ensuring high-quality products and services relating to the scope of work for the proposed project are adequate;
- The time commitment of the project manager and other key project experts and personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project;
- The design of the evaluation includes the use of objective performance measures and methods that will clearly document the project's intended outputs and outcomes, and will produce measurable quantitative and qualitative data;
- The methods of evaluation provide measures that will align with and inform ODEP's annual performance goals and measures, and the development of its technical assistance, formal agreements, and policy development;
- Metrics are designed and implemented to analyze and adjust goals, objectives, products, and deliverables on a continual basis measure to ensure they are consistent with contemporary ODEP products, policy, and available research;
and

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- The staffing plan includes details of strategies to promote the recruitment, hiring, accommodation, retention, and career advancement of employees with disabilities throughout the life of the cooperative agreement.

B. Review and Selection Process

Applications for cooperative agreements under this Solicitation will be accepted after the publication of this announcement and until the closing date. A technical review panel will carefully evaluate applications against the selection criteria. These criteria are based on the policy goals, priorities, and emphases set forth in this SCA. Up to 100 points may be awarded to an application, depending on the quality of the responses to the required information described in section V. A. The ranked scores will serve as the primary basis for selection of applications for funding, in conjunction with other factors [such as urban, rural, and geographic balance; the availability of funds; and which proposals are most advantageous to the Government – these may be changed with the permission of the Grant Officer]. The panel results are advisory in nature and not binding on the Grant Officer. The Grant Officer may consider any information that comes to his/her attention. The Government may elect to award the cooperative agreement with or without discussions with the applicant.

Selection of an organization as a cooperative agreement does not constitute approval of the cooperative agreement application as submitted. Before the actual cooperative agreement is awarded, DOL may enter into negotiations about such items as project components, staffing, and funding levels, and administrative systems in place to support cooperative agreement implementation. If the negotiations do not result in a mutually acceptable submission, the Grant Officer reserves the right to terminate the

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negotiation and decline to fund the application.

Should a cooperative agreement be awarded without discussions, the award will be based on the applicant's signature on the SF-424, including electronic signature via E-Authentication on <http://www.grants.gov>, which constitutes a binding offer by the applicant.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Cooperative Agreements

This award is a Cooperative Agreement. As such, ODEP will have substantial involvement in the administration of the agreement pursuant to the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments (also known as OMB Circular A-102), codified at 29 CFR part 97, or "Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations" (also known as the "Common Rule" or OMB Circular A-110), codified at 2 CFR part 215 and 29 CFR part 95. Such ODEP involvement will consist of:

1. Approving all key personnel decisions, and sub-contractors or sub-recipients;
2. Participation in site visits to project areas;
3. Providing advice and consultation to the recipient on specific program criteria;
4. Providing the recipient with technical and programmatic support, including training in ODEP monitoring and evaluation systems, and standard procedures regarding USDOL/ODEP management of cooperative agreements;
5. Reviewing, at reasonable times, all documents pertaining to the project, including status and technical progress reports, and financial reports;

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6. Discussing administrative, programmatic, and technical issues pertaining to the project;
7. Oversight and approval of all requests for training sessions (including in-person, web-based, and teleconference events) from outside sources, presentations, and exhibits at conferences, and other similar events;
8. Oversight and approval of all materials, including but not limited to fact sheets, training materials, technical assistance tools, policy documents, press releases, and publicity materials regarding the project (Note that all materials submitted for approval must be in an accessible, i.e., 508 compliant electronic format.);
9. Approving all content and graphics for online resources developed through project activities, (Note that all materials submitted for approval must be in an accessible (508 compliant) electronic format);
10. Oversight and approval of all requests from outside sources for interviews, written articles, and similar requests; and
11. Drafting terms of reference for, and participating in, project evaluations.

B. Award Notices

All award notifications will be posted on the ODEP Homepage (<http://www.dol.gov/odep>). Applicants selected for award will be contacted directly before the cooperative agreement's execution. Non-selected applicants will be notified by mail or e-mail and may request a written debriefing on the significant weaknesses of their proposal.

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Selection of an organization as a cooperative agreement recipient does not constitute approval of the cooperative agreement application as submitted. Before the actual cooperative agreement is awarded, ODEP may enter into negotiations about such items as program components, staffing and funding levels, and administrative systems in place to support cooperative agreement implementation. If the negotiations do not result in a mutually acceptable submission, the Grant Officer reserves the right to terminate the negotiations and decline to fund the application. DOL reserves the right to not fund any application related to this SCA.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Administrative Program Requirements. All recipients of cooperative agreements will be subject to all applicable Federal laws, regulations, and the applicable OMB Circulars. The cooperative agreement awarded under this SCA will be subject to the following administrative standards and provisions:

- a. Non-Profit Organizations – OMB Circular A–122 (Cost Principles), relocated to 2 CFR Part 230, and 29 CFR Part 95 (Administrative Requirements).
- b. Educational Institutions – OMB Circular A–21 (Cost Principles), relocated to 2 CFR Part 220, and 29 CFR Part 95 (Administrative Requirements).
- c. State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments – OMB Circular A–87 (Cost Principles), relocated to 2 CFR Part 225, and 29 CFR Part 97 (Administrative Requirements).
- d. Profit Making Commercial Firms – Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) – 48 CFR Part 31 (Cost Principles), and 29 CFR Part 95 (Administrative Requirements).

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- e. All entities must comply with 29 CFR Part 93 (New Restrictions on Lobbying), 29 CFR Part 94 (Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace, Financial Assistance), 29 CFR §95.13 and Part 98 (Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension, and drug-free workplace requirements), and, where applicable, 29 CFR Part 96 (Audit Requirements for Grants, Contracts, and Other Agreements) and 29 CFR Part 99 (Audits of States, Local Governments and Non-Profit Organizations).
- f. 29 CFR Part 2, Subpart D—Equal Treatment in Department of Labor Programs for Religious Organizations, Protection of Religious Liberty of Department of Labor Social Service Providers and Beneficiaries.
- g. 29 CFR Part 31—Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs of the Department of Labor—Effectuation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- h. 29 CFR Part 32—Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap in Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance.
- i. 29 CFR Part 33—Enforcement of Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap in Programs or Activities Conducted by the Department of Labor.
- j. 29 CFR Part 35— Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Age in Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance from the Department of Labor.
- k. 29 CFR Part 36—Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance.
- l. 29 CFR Parts 29 and 30—Labor Standards for the Registration of

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Apprenticeship Programs, and Equal Employment Opportunity in

Apprenticeship and Training, as applicable.

2. Other Legal Requirements

a. Religious Activities - The Department notes that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), 42 U.S.C. Section 2000bb, applies to all Federal law and its implementation. If your organization is a faith-based organization that makes hiring decisions on the basis of religious belief, it may be entitled to receive Federal financial assistance under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act and maintain that hiring practice even though Section 188 of the Workforce Investment Act contains a general ban on religious discrimination in employment. If you are awarded a cooperative agreement, you will be provided with information on how to request such an exemption.

b. Lobbying or Fundraising the U.S. Government with Federal Funds -

In accordance with Section 18 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 (Public Law 104-65) (2 U.S.C. 1611), non-profit entities incorporated under Internal Revenue Service Code Section 501(c) (4) that engage in lobbying activities are not eligible to receive Federal funds and cooperative agreements. No activity, including awareness-raising and advocacy activities, may include fundraising for, or lobbying of, U.S. Federal, State or Local Governments (see OMB Circular A-122).

c. Transparency Act Requirements - Applicants must ensure that it has the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the reporting requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of

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2006 (Pub. Law 109-282, as amended by section 6202 of Pub. Law 110-252)

(Transparency Act), as follows:

- All applicants, except for those excepted from the Transparency Act under sub-paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 below, must ensure that they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the sub-award and executive total compensation reporting requirements of the Transparency Act, should they receive funding.
- Upon award, applicants will receive detailed information on the reporting requirements of the Transparency Act, as described in 2 CFR Part 170, Appendix A, which can be found at the following Website:
<http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-22705.pdf>.

The following types of awards are not subject to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act:

- Federal awards to individuals who apply for or receive Federal awards as natural persons (i.e., unrelated to any business or non-profit organization he or she may own or operate in his or her name);
- Federal awards to entities that had a gross income, from all sources, of less than \$300,000 in the entities' previous tax year; and
- Federal awards, if the required reporting would disclose classified information.

3. Other Administrative Standards and Provisions. Except as specifically provided in this SCA, DOL/ODEP's acceptance of a proposal and an award of Federal funds to sponsor any programs(s) does not provide a waiver of any cooperative

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agreement requirements and/or procedures. For example, the OMB Circulars require that an entity's procurement procedures must ensure that all procurement transactions are conducted, as much as practical, to provide open and free competition. If a proposal identifies a specific entity to provide services, the DOL's award does not provide the justification or basis to sole source the procurement, i.e., avoid competition, unless the activity is regarded as the primary work of an official partner to the application.

4. Special Program Requirements for Evaluation. DOL may require that the program or project participate in an evaluation of overall performance of ODEP cooperative agreements and require the support of the recipient as a condition of award.

All recipients must agree to cooperate with an independent evaluation to be conducted by ODEP. ODEP will arrange for and conduct this independent evaluation of the outcomes, impacts, and accomplishments of each funded project. Recipients must agree to make available records on all parts of project activity, including participant employment and wage data, available data on specific models being evaluated, and to provide access to personnel, as specified by the evaluator(s), under the direction of ODEP. This evaluation is separate from the process evaluation required of the cooperative agreement for project implementation.

D. Reporting

Cooperative agreement recipients must agree to meet DOL reporting requirements. Quarterly financial reports and quarterly progress reports, in addition to a final project report must be submitted by the recipient electronically. The recipient is required to provide the reports and documents listed below:

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1. Quarterly Financial Reports. A Standard Form 425; Federal Financial Form (FFR) (OMB Control Number 4040-0014 expiration date 2/28/15) is required until such time as all funds have been expended or the cooperative agreement period has expired. Quarterly reports are due 30 days after the end of each calendar year quarter. Recipients of cooperative agreements must use DOL's Online Electronic Reporting System. Information and instructions will be provided to recipients.

2. Quarterly Performance Reports. The recipient must submit a quarterly progress report within 30 days after the end of each calendar year quarter. The report must include quarterly information regarding cooperative agreement activities. Quarterly progress reports are estimated to take ten hours to complete.

3. Closeout Project Report. The recipient will be required to prepare a closeout report for the grant at the end of the performance period. A draft of this report will be due 60 days after the end of the performance period and a final report will be due 90 days after the end of the performance period. Recipients should anticipate that the closeout report will include, but not be limited to, an assessment of project performance, barriers encountered and resolved, outcomes achieved, and recommendations for future actions. An outline for this report will be provided to the recipient no later than two quarters before the end of the performance period. The closeout report is estimated to take 20 hours to complete.

4. Record Retention. Applicants must be prepared to follow Federal guidelines on record retention, which require recipients of cooperative agreements to maintain all records pertaining to cooperative agreement activities for a period of not less than three years from the time of final cooperative agreement closeout.

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VII. Agency Contacts

For further information about this SCA, please contact Cassandra Mitchell, Grants Officer, at (202) 693-4570. Applicants should e-mail all technical questions to mitchell.cassandra@dol.gov and must specifically reference SCA 14-06, and along with question(s), include a contact name, fax and phone number. This announcement is being made available on the ODEP Web site at <http://www.dol.gov/odep> and at <http://www.grants.gov>.

VIII. OMB Information Collection

OMB Information Collection No 1225-0086, Expires January 31, 2016. Except as otherwise noted and in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 20 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments about the burden estimated or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Labor, to the attention of the Departmental Clearance Officer, 200 Constitution Avenue NW, Room N1301, Washington, DC 20210. Comments may also be e-mailed to DOL_PRA_PUBLIC@dol.gov. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN THE COMPLETED APPLICATION TO THIS ADDRESS. SEND IT TO THE SPONSORING AGENCY AS SPECIFIED IN THIS SOLICITATION.

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This information is being collected for the purpose of awarding a cooperative agreement. The information collected through this “Solicitation for Cooperative Agreement Applications” will be used by the Department of Labor to ensure that cooperative agreements are awarded to the applicant best suited to perform the functions of the cooperative agreement. Submission of this information is required in order for the applicant to be considered for award of this cooperative agreement.

SIGNED **XXXXXX**, in Washington, D.C. by:

Cassandra R. Mitchell

Grant Officer