

ATTACHMENT A

PROTOCOL—CLUSTER MANAGEMENT STAFF

Instructions for the Site Visit Team

Prior to going on the site visit, draw on the background document review to prepopulate as much information as you can on the following topics: (a) key grant activities, (b) grantee and grantee partners, (c) overall funding for grant and funding by type of activity, and (d) monitoring indicators. Confirm this information with respondents, and focus your questions on missing information or items where the respondent account differs substantially from information gleaned from the document review.

Respondent Information

- **Respondent name:**
- **Respondent title and position:**
- **Respondent affiliation:**
- **Respondent contact information:**
- **Respondent background.** What is your professional background (for example, training, experience)?
- **Respondent involvement in cluster.** How long have you been involved in this cluster? What are your responsibilities related to the cluster? What are your responsibilities related to this grant?

Cluster Background and Goals

1. What is this cluster's history of collaboration for economic development?

Cluster history. When was this cluster established? Which organizations were involved and how was the cluster created? How has the cluster evolved? Which organizations are currently involved in the cluster? [PROBE SPECIFICALLY FOR INVOLVEMENT OF DEMAND SIDE (EMPLOYERS), SUPPLY SIDE (TRAINING OR OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS) AND KEY DECISION MAKERS (TRAINING OR OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS), AS WELL AS SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS). To what degree has the cluster or its constituent members received federal funding in the past?

Propensity for collaboration. On a scale of 0 to 5, where would you rate this region in terms of its propensity (or proclivity) for collaborative efforts for economic development purposes? (IF RESPONSE IS GREATER

THAN ZERO), Why do you say that? Can you give us some examples of such efforts?

2. What are the goals of this cluster?

Overall cluster goals. What are the primary goals of this cluster? Have these changed over time?

Cluster goals related to grant. Why did the cluster decide to apply for the JIAC/AM-JIAC grant? What did it hope to achieve? Was there a particular person or organization that was an advocate for grant participation?

Grant Funding

3. Can you confirm the amount of funding the cluster has available for grant activities and whether or not you find it sufficient?

[PREPOPULATE INFORMATION ON BUDGET BREAKDOWN BASED ON DOCUMENT REVIEW OR INFORMATION REQUESTED IN ADVANCE OF SITE VISIT FROM CLUSTER MANAGER.]

Grant funding. You received \$___ through the JIAC/AM-JIAC grant in total, \$___ for ETA activities, \$___ for EDA activities, \$___ for SBA activities, \$___ for NIST-MEP activities, and \$___ for DOE activities [CONFIRM ACCURACY]. Is the total grant amount sufficient? What about the amount for each of the various cluster activities? Have any of your service providers had an issue with the adequacy of resources? [PROBE SPECIFICALLY FOR ETA ACTIVITIES]?

Matched and leveraged funding. [SUMMARIZE BASED ON DOCUMENT REVIEW AND CONFIRM WITH RESPONDENTS.] Have entities affiliated with the cluster provided any additional matching funds? From what sources? Have your organization or partner organizations provided any additional in-kind resources (such as donated office or training space, supplies, volunteer time)? Which of these resources are for ETA activities?

Cluster Partnership and Operations

4. Which organizations and agencies are active in the cluster, and what are their roles?

Key players in cluster and their roles. How many organizations and agencies are involved in the cluster? What are their roles? [FOLLOW UP ON ANY PARTNERS MENTIONED IN THE GRANT PROPOSAL THAT ARE NOT MENTIONED BY THE RESPONDENT] Which organizations were involved in grant development and strategic planning related to grant use? What were their roles? Which organizations are involved in leading and/or supporting the implementation of grant activities? What are their roles?

5. **How have cluster participation and composition changed over time? Are there any gaps?**

Participation in cluster. How has participation in the cluster changed over time? Which partners are the most active? Are there any that have reduced or withdrawn their partnership, or have participated minimally since the cluster became a JIAC grantee? Why have these changes occurred?

Changes in cluster composition. Are there any partners that have been added since the cluster became a JIAC grantee? Why were they added?

Gaps in cluster participation. Are there any types of organizations or specific organizations that would have liked to be involved in the cluster (but aren't) or that you would have liked to become a partner (but didn't)? Why would their participation be beneficial? Why did they not participate? Are you satisfied with the representation from groups/organizations that are typically underrepresented? If not, what attempts, if any, have you made to gain their collaboration?

6. **How and how well are decisions made in the cluster?**

Organizational structure. What is the organizational structure of the cluster and how are responsibilities divided? Has cluster organization changed since receipt of the JIAC grant? What prompted this change?

Decision making. Who makes key decisions? How and where are decisions made (for example, unilaterally, in team meetings)?

Use of data in activity planning and execution. To what degree are data (for example, labor market data) used to make decisions (for example, to select activities and conduct activity planning)?

Cluster Communication and Engagement

7. **How well do cluster partners communicate with one another?**

Types of communication. What methods do cluster partners use to communicate (in-person meetings, telephone conferences, email)? How often do they communicate? For what reasons?

Assessment of communication. Have the cluster's communications strategies been effective? Do all parties have access to relevant information in a timely fashion? Are any changes needed to how communication is organized in the cluster? If so, why? What factors have facilitated and/or impeded effective communication?

8. What is the quality of partner engagement?

Degree and determinants of support. Do cluster partners share consensus on and support the cluster's (a) purpose, (b) strategy, and (c) activities? Why or why not? What changes, if any, have you observed, in the last three years in support for cluster activities among cluster partners? What caused these changes?

Grant Activities

9. What kinds of activities is the cluster conducting using the JIAC grant?

Content, scope, duration, and targeting of activities. [SUMMARIZE BASED ON DOCUMENT REVIEW AND CONFIRM ACCURACY.] Are there any other key activities that are being conducted under the JIAC grant? What are the purpose and objective of those activities? What are their scope and duration? Whom do they target? Who is conducting these activities? [PROBE IN PARTICULAR FOR ETA ACTIVITIES, ESPECIALLY TRAINING AND IN PARTICULAR, TYPE OF TRAINING - CLASSROOM, ONLINE, SOFT SKILLS, JOB SEARCH, INCUMBENT WORKER, ON-THE-JOB TRAININGS, OTHER.]

10. How do grant activities align with grant goals related to building synergies across grant activities and serving underserved populations?

Synergies between JIAC grant activities. Are activities conducted with ETA funds closely linked to and supported by other grant activities funded by JIAC? In what ways? [PROBE SEPARATELY FOR EACH FUNDING STREAM—EDA AND SBA FOR JIAC; EDA, SBA, NIST-MEP, AND DOE FOR AM-JIAC.]

Alignment of activities with original plans. Are the activities that are being conducted the same types as those that were proposed in the grant proposal? Are they being implemented at the same scale as proposed? If not, why and how did they evolve?

Inclusion. What activities are conducted under the grant to promote inclusion of historically underrepresented and excluded groups? From your perspective, how successful are these efforts?

Grant Monitoring

11. What metrics are used to monitor grant progress toward ETA goals?

Metrics used. Does the cluster use any metrics other than those included in the quarterly progress reports to measure progress for ETA activities?

Inclusion/omission of metrics. [ASK ONLY IF RELEVANT] The cluster appears to be tracking the following metrics for ETA activities in the quarterly progress reports that were not included in the grant proposal [PROVIDE LIST]. Why were these metrics added? The grant proposal included the following metrics for ETA activities that do not appear to be tracked in the quarterly reports [PROVIDE LIST]. Why were these metrics no longer used?

12. How easy is it to track and report on monitoring data for the various grant activities? How does the cluster use these data? [PROBE FOR ETA ACTIVITIES IF NOT MENTIONED.]

Ease of reporting on grant metrics. Do you or any of the cluster partners face difficulties in tracking and reporting on grant metrics for any of the grant activities? If yes, please describe the challenges faced. What is being done to resolve them?

Grantee use of monitoring data. In what ways do you use the monitoring data that you collect for the various grant activities?

Experiences with integrated work plan (IWP). Have you faced difficulties in developing or reporting on the IWP? If yes, please describe the challenges faced. What was done to resolve them? What is your experience in managing the reporting requirements of the various funding partners?

Grantee use of IWP. How useful do you find the IWP? In what ways do you use the IWP to manage ongoing cluster operations?

Contributing factors. What factors have facilitated outcome monitoring? What factors have impeded outcome monitoring?

13. How do you validate monitoring data and ensure high quality data collection?

Data validation. How do you confirm the accuracy of outcome data? For example, do you require your partners to submit documentation to support the numbers they report? Do you conduct random audits or reviews of participant case files?

Quality of outcome data. What is your overall assessment of the outcome data your participants submit for grant activities? How accurate are they? How timely are they?

What is the rate of outcome achievement?

Cluster progress. To what degree has the cluster made progress toward key target outputs and outcomes?

Determinants of progress. What has helped or impeded achievement of targeted outputs and outcomes?

Support from Federal Agencies for Grant Activities

14. What support have you received from any federal agencies, and what is the quality of this support?

Federal agency role. What kinds of technical assistance have you received from federal agencies? Who are these partners and what kinds of assistance do they provide? [PROBE FOR NON-FUNDING PARTNERS.] Typically, who initiates this technical assistance (that is, do you request assistance or does the federal partner reach out to offer it)?

Quality of federal assistance. What is the quality of assistance provided by federal staff? Is it useful? Is it adequate? Is it timely? Do federal staff have the capacity and resources to assist you? [PROBE FEDERAL STAFF'S WILLINGNESS TO BE FLEXIBLE IN THEIR MONITORING VS. REQUIRING STRICT COMPLIANCE]

Gaps in federal support. What other federal agency supports would have been helpful for grant implementation? Why did you not receive this assistance (for example, is it that you did not request it or that you requested it but did not receive it)?

Dependence on external technical assistance. To what degree does the cluster depend on external technical assistance for conducting grant activities [PROBE: COFFEY ASSOCIATES]? Will the cluster be able to continue to build on grant activities after the grant ends?

15. What is the quality of federal multiagency collaboration in supporting this grant?

Grantee experiences with multiagency collaboration. What are your experiences working with multiple federal agencies on this grant?

Grantee perceptions of pooled funding. What are the benefits of receiving this pool of money as a bundled grant rather than three separate grants? What are the challenges?

Program Management and Sustainability

16. How agile is the cluster in implementing grant activities?

Ability to make midstream adjustments. To what degree has the cluster been able to make adjustments to respond to changing circumstances or unforeseen challenges in implementing the grant? (For example, were there any instances where a cluster partner withdrew from the partnership, or where a planned activity was no longer feasible? What did the cluster do in such circumstances?)

Determinants of adaptability. What factors have helped the cluster in adapting to changing circumstances? What factors have impeded adaptation?

17. What plans has the cluster created to promote sustainability?

Formal plans for sustainability. Has the cluster created any formal plans to promote sustainability? If yes, for which cluster activities has this sustainability planning been conducted [PROBE SPECIFICALLY FOR ETA ACTIVITIES IF NOT MENTIONED]? How were these plans created? Who led the effort? What do these include? How far along is this planning (initial stages, advanced stages)?

Factors facilitating/impeding planning for sustainability. What factors facilitated planning? If no planning has been conducted, why not? What factors are impeding such planning?

Program Replicability and Lessons Learned

18. How replicable are grant activities, and what are the lessons learned?

Replicability. Can the activities conducted under the grant be replicated? If not, why not?

Facilitating factors. What factors facilitated grant implementation? What are the greatest strengths of the cluster? What do you believe are your three greatest successes?

Impeding factors. What factors impeded grant implementation? What are the limitations of the cluster? What have been your greatest challenges?

Lessons learned. What three things would you change about how the cluster implemented grant activities?