

Recompete Pilot Program

Supplemental Guide: Menu of Community Commitments

CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

As part of Phase 2 of the Recompete Pilot Program, applicants will need to demonstrate that regional and community organizations are committed to providing the support necessary to ensure the program's success. This document is meant to help applicants build successful "Community Commitments" throughout the competition to ensure that Recompete proposals are best positioned to create, and connect people to, quality jobs.

"Community Commitments" are actions taken by individuals and organizations in the region to meaningfully improve the outcomes of the Recompete Plan in addition to the funding provided by the Department of Commerce's (DOC) Economic Development Administration (EDA). Commitments can come in a variety of forms and should fit the needs and assets of a region. Strong commitments do not necessarily need to be financial commitments; they can include policy or programmatic actions and/or new, specific partnerships.

As stated in the Phase 1 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), "Partnerships and potential commitments" will be assessed as a criterion for **Recompete Plan approval** and should be evidenced both through the application's written Project Narrative and Letters of Support. Specifically, Phase 1 applicants should indicate which local partners, if any, have committed or the applicant will ask to commit to supporting the Recompete effort. Note that a list of fully developed commitments is not expected in Phase 1 applications, and EDA anticipates that the quantity and quality of commitments will improve in Phase 2:

"EDA anticipates all successful Phase 2 awardees will have credible, specific, and timely commitments to making such changes in their communities. While firm hiring commitments are critically important to reducing the Prime Age Employment Gap (PAEG) in a region, there are many other things firms, state and local governments, foundations, institutions of higher education, and others can do to improve local communities. Some of the most important ways a community can unlock economic opportunity is for the local public and private sector to operate differently and cooperatively. **Phase 1 applicants should begin thinking about commitments, though fully developed and agreed upon commitments are not expected until Phase 2.**" (NOFO page 15)

To support regions in securing commitments over the course of the competition, this document includes:

1. Best practices in identifying and developing commitments across regional stakeholders; and
2. A sample list of potential commitments that applicants may consider requesting as they develop their approaches to closing the prime age employment gap.

Note that while the list presented below is meant to be a sample of potential commitments, it is in no way comprehensive, and applicants are encouraged to include the interventions that are most appropriate and applicable to their regional conditions and needs.

1. BEST PRACTICES IN IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING COMMITMENTS

EDA encourages applicants to partner with the public, private, and philanthropic organizations in their regions that can best complement funded projects. When considering which organizations are best suited to support their proposals, applicants should consider the following elements that contribute to a good commitment:

- a. **New:** A commitment should relate to activities that are new and would not have necessarily happened if not for the partnerships or initiatives established in the competition. Any organization willing to commit to supporting a project, policy change, or investment should articulate how its contribution differs from what would have happened under the status quo.
- b. **Timely:** Commitments should be time bound with a clear starting date and appropriate milestones. A strong commitment will have a well-defined and realistic timeframe for planned activities.
- c. **Targeted:** Commitments should be specific and have clear, well-defined objectives. Ambiguous commitments lack accountability, and reasonable commitment details allow for greater believability.
- d. **Complementary:** Commitments should complement the vision of the Recompete Plan and benefit the principles that underpin it, including equity. For example, commitments to hire should aim to expand the pool from which participants are hired, and where applicable support placement into good jobs in line with DOC's [Good Jobs Principles](#).
- e. **Measurable:** Commitments should have clear outcome metrics that can be measured with available information. Metrics of success should be collected early and on a regular basis to signal accountability.

EDA will work with Phase 1 winners to support them in securing, honing, and improving their commitments to ensure maximum community impact. Again, in Phase 1 of the competition, applications should signal the organizations, if any, that are likely to be making commitments and the problems those commitments would aim to solve.

2. WAYS TO BEGIN THINKING ABOUT SAMPLE COMMITMENTS

When considering what types of commitments would be most impactful in a given region or community, applicants should consider the conditions behind their geographies' PAEG. The sample starting points below are organized based on common challenges that regions may face. **Commitments may come from a range of stakeholders, including but not limited to local government, philanthropies, major employers, workforce development providers, school systems, non-profits, labor unions, workforce development boards, and others.** The commitments may be made by the applicant themselves and/or by partners through letters of support. Note that stakeholders do not have to be applicants or members of a coalition to be able to make meaningful commitments to a Recompete effort.

As applicants begin to solicit commitments from community partners, they are encouraged to keep in mind the best practices in the section above. Note that the below are written as thought starters – EDA does not expect (or want) communities to directly replicate these examples, so these are purposefully written as programmatic and policy starting positions, not fully baked commitments aligned with the best practices above (new, timely, targeted, complementary, and measurable).

Common Challenge #1: Prospective hires are seeking employment in the region but do not possess the skills employers require based on regional and industrial composition.

When thinking about commitments that could help with this challenge, consider which entities could:

- Provide input in the [design of educational and workforce training programs](#) and commit to hiring a set number of graduates within a defined timeframe.
- Work with other regional stakeholders (e.g., hospitals, universities, and local government entities) to identify areas of shared job demand, skills, and hiring pathways for those without a four-year degree.
- Increase the use of [skills-based competencies](#) in the recruitment and hiring process to expand opportunities for traditionally underrepresented populations.
- Eliminate or reduce two- or four-year degree requirements for certain occupations.
- Host/co-invest in [programs to reskill or upskill talent](#) to meet current or projected regional skills needs, with a focus on distressed communities or underrepresented populations.
- Increase opportunities for students and job seekers to receive [career coaching and advising](#).
- Partner with training providers, educational systems, unions, and other labor organizations to create accessible on and off ramps to training and employment.
- Establish [peer or career navigator](#) models that prioritize no cost or low-cost access for participants.

- Provide company personnel to serve as instructors and/or mentors for workforce training program participants, with an emphasis on historically excluded or underrepresented populations and/or geographies.
- Repurpose underutilized infrastructure investments as experiential learning facilities to increase shared access to job-related equipment training programs, and/or provide equipment to training providers.
- Partner with unions and other labor organizations to connect prospective talent with regional job training and support programs.
- Ease barriers to entry for certain types of jobs that are often held by self-employed people, such as [simplifying occupational licensing requirements](#).
- Improve [training curricula](#) by partnering with employers to align curriculum and KSAs (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities) for career pathways within specific industries.

Common Challenge #2: Workers face personal, social, regulatory, or physical barriers to accessing or retaining employment.

When thinking about commitments that could help with this challenge, consider which entities could:

- Invest in regional wraparound and supportive services, networks, and providers through financial or in-kind investments, such as:
 - Provide [family-supportive services](#) such as licensed child/long-term care and onsite health services.
 - Offer flexible work schedules where appropriate for employees with caretaking responsibilities.
 - Increase or improve [access to public transportation](#) through policies such as reduced or no-cost fares or expanded hours of operation.
 - Increase [affordable housing options](#) through policies such as inclusive zoning, public housing, and subsidized rent.
 - Partner with local and state benefits administrators to identify prospective training participants and their families that qualify for, but do not receive, benefits and increase participation (e.g., Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, Medicaid, Section 8 Housing Choice Program).
 - Provide [counseling and/or other services](#) for individuals with mental health or substance abuse issues.
- Increase job quality for entry level workers (e.g., via the [DOC Job Quality Toolkit](#)).
- Increase outreach (and clearly articulate success) to traditionally underemployed populations, such as at-risk youth, formerly incarcerated people, and veterans.

- Create state or local incentives for employers to encourage more inclusive and equitable hiring.
- Commit to hiring individuals from a particular distressed neighborhood or geography into quality jobs.
- Host/co-invest in mentorship and networking programs that connect participants from distressed communities or targeted populations with business leaders and hiring opportunities, increasing participant professional networks, common skills, and advocates.
- Host/co-invest in paid earn-and-learn experiences, including Registered Apprenticeships, for individuals from a particular distressed neighborhood or geography or provide financial support in other ways.
- Waive or supplement the cost of [tuition, fees, training, and/or similar participant support services](#) (e.g., software, textbooks, tools, or job-related equipment) to ensure participant success in classroom or on-the-job training.

Common Challenge #3: Local entrepreneurs and small businesses have difficulties in accessing capital, expanding their markets, finding inputs, or winning government contract bids.

When thinking about commitments that could help with this challenge, consider which entities could:

- Establish procurement policies to better support distressed communities and businesses owned by underrepresented populations.
- Host/co-invest in entrepreneurship skills training or resources to grow availability of talent from distressed communities.
- Partner with financial institutions to assist with banking access for individuals in distressed communities.
- Partner with local business support centers (e.g., [Minority Business Development Agency's Business Centers](#)) to provide outreach and technical assistance in new ways.
- Provide no cost or low-cost legal assistance and technical assistance for individuals in distressed regions or communities.

Common Challenge #4: There is a lack of local or regional capacity for economic development.

When thinking about commitments that could help with this challenge, consider which entities could:

- Create and hire new leadership roles within public, private, and educational institutions focused on economic opportunity within distressed communities.

- Recognize or establish regional intermediaries, such as economic development districts, workforce development boards, chambers of commerce, or regional industry associations, that are accountable for strategic guidance and regional success.
- Encourage employer intermediaries (e.g., economic development districts, workforce development boards, unions, chambers of commerce) to facilitate the process of securing employer commitments to hire into quality jobs.