

Catalyst Pre-Development Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

We understand that reading through a NOFO can be a lot to process. Therefore, we put together an FAQ of the NOFO to make it easier to access core information.

Note: A glossary of key terms can be found in **Attachment A of the NOFO**.

1. What's the purpose of this funding?

The purpose of the funding is to support activities that advance projects to become implementation ready. We will not fund projects that are asking for implementation funding. Projects must be physically located in or significantly involve Orange County residents, significantly benefit disinvested communities, and align with industries and/or strategies outlined in Jobs First [Regional Plan Part 2](#). Project will be separated into two categories: Job Creating and Community Enhancement, with more explanation on each category below.

2. What's the timeline for the overall application and review process, including estimate of the contracting period after awards have been announced?

Once an awardee has been selected, the subcontracting process will commence. Full execution of the subcontract is contingent upon the provision of certain documentation. Upon execution of the contract, awardees may begin billing based on the effective date. Payment will be issued on a net 60-day term.



3. Who is eligible to apply for Catalyst Pre-Development funding?

All entities are eligible for funding, with the exception of applying as an individual. The individual can be involved in an application, but the applicant must be a legally recognized entity.

4. What types of activities qualify for funding?

This grant funds pre-development activities, or activities that are needed before a project is ready for implementation. These are activities such as feasibility studies, market analysis, environmental assessments, site planning, and capacity building. A more robust explanation and [list of eligible activities](#) are available in the NOFO.

5. What activities are not eligible for funding?

Activities that are fully implementation-ready, activity costs that go beyond September 30, 2026, or those expanding fossil fuel production are ineligible.

6. What are the two different funding categories within Catalyst and how are applications in both categories being evaluated?

Applicants will be able to submit proposals for a Job Creating project or Community Enhancing Project.

Job Creating:

Project advances business or workforce development in one or more of the following priority industries: tourism and outdoor recreation, medtech, high-tech hardware, semiconductors & microelectronics, advanced manufacturing, precision manufacturing, healthcare, childcare, education, aerospace and defense, hydrogen, and/or construction.

Community Enhancing:

Project advances business or workforce development that aren't listed in the Job Creating category or a topic(s) outlined in the Regional Plan Part 2.

All projects must demonstrate that disinvested communities will benefit. Projects that demonstrate a positive impact on the environment are preferred.

Both project categories have the same criteria.

- Project Impact (30 points)
- Economic Equity/Equity (30 points)
- Work Plan (20 points)
- Organizational Qualifications (10 points)
- Proposed Budget and Budget Narrative (10 points)

7. What's the relationship between a project and pre-development activities?

[Pre-development activities](#) are tasks that need to be done before a project can be implemented and have its intended impact. Therefore, an application will need to communicate what the project is and how it relates to this funding opportunity but also understand which pre-development activities will be needed to advance the project and how much they are estimated to cost.

8. What documentation is necessary to apply?

A complete application must include the following materials, which can be accessed through the application portal link provided in the NOFO:

- Job Creating Project Application or Community Enhancing Project Application
- Budget Narrative
- Budget Template

9. Are matching funds required?

Matching funds are not required but are strongly encouraged, especially for Last Mile projects, to demonstrate long-term sustainability.

10. What support is available for me to be able to submit the best application I can.

Between the release of the NOFO and the application deadline of June 20, the following support is provided to you:

Mentors are available to provide up to five hours of guidance on proposal preparation. These mentors will **not** do the grant writing for you or advise on project design but support the development of a well written and compelling application. This opportunity is at no cost to the applicant. Email jobsfirst@ocbc.org to request mentorship.

A [recorded webinar](#) that provides background on the Regional Investment Initiative to better understand what preceded the release of this NOFO.

One webinar will be held for applicants interested in the Job Creating Project category and one webinar will be held for applicants interested in the Community Enhancing project category. The webinars will provide an overview of the application process, address common questions, and help applicants determine whether their project aligns with funding priorities. Attendance is optional for these webinars, but highly recommended for those seeking clarification on eligibility and requirements. The registration links can be found on the [Jobs First webpage](#) in the Proposer's Webinar section.

Email questions to jobsfirst@ocbc.org with the subject line "NOFO Questions." Responses will be posted weekly on the [Jobs First webpage](#).