

Catalyst 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 goals of funding Sector Activation Plan tasks are to invest in industries that will advance good paying job opportunities in high opportunity industries and/or significantly improve job quality in specific industries. The goals are also to advance projects that ensure disinvested communities are significant beneficiaries. Additionally, they aim to advance projects that can assist the state in meeting its climate goals and generally improve environmental sustainability. Finally, the goals are to advance projects physically located in or that have significant participation from Orange County residents.

2. What is an Activation Plan?

An Activation Plan is a project management tool designed to effectively execute strategies. It prioritizes tactics from Regional Plan Part II, converting them into specific tasks with timelines, assigned responsibilities, and identified budgets. These plans ensure partner accountability and support distributed implementation by extending beyond project lists to include organizational capacity, daily activities, and program focus. The plans also guide state support by targeting assistance, fostering inter-regional connections around common sectors, and informing policy and budget decisions.

3. How much funding is provided and where do I apply?

The Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Regional Investment Initiative Regional Sector Activation plans provides up to \$1 million in funding available to advance the tasks mentioned in either of the five activation plans ([Healthcare](#), [Medical Technology](#), [Childcare](#), [Tourism and Outdoor Activities](#), and [Semiconductors](#)). Applications are due by 5:00 pm PST on October 17, 2025. All activities must be fully expensed by September 30, 2026.

Applications must be submitted through the designated grant web portal. Applicants must create an account in the portal to begin their application. Please follow all instructions provided in the portal. The link to the portal can be found [here](#).

4. How much funding is provided to each of the sectors?

The intent of the scoring committee will be to allocate up to \$200,000 in funding to each of the five eligible sectors (Tourism & Outdoor Activities, Med-Tech, Semiconductor, Childcare, and Healthcare) so long as competitive proposals justify the allocation.

5. 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.

6. Who is eligible?

Eligible entities are only those that are listed as a "Responsible Party" within the Tactical Workplan or parties that can reasonably classify themselves as associated with the classification/definition of a responsible party. Please see the "Identify regional partners for implementation tactics" section of each activation plan to determine which group you could define yourself under. If you are an eligible party, your proposal must be in accordance with the task that the "responsible party" is listed under. As you develop your proposal, and you are unsure whether you are an eligible applicant, please contact jobsfirst@ocbc.org with the Activation Plan(s) and Task(s) that you are interested in proposing.

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.

7. What are ineligible projects?

Those currently serving as Sector Investment Coordinators under Catalyst are ineligible to apply for this funding. Tasks not explicitly listed in any of the activation plans are ineligible for funding.

8. What documentation is necessary to apply?

A complete application must include the following materials, which can also be accessed through the application portal link provided in the [NOFO](#):

- [Sector Activation Plan Proposal Application](#)
- [Budget Narrative](#)
- [Budget Template](#)

9. Are matching funds required?

Matching funds are not required but are strongly encouraged 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 October 17, 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.

A proposer's webinar will be held on October 3rd. The purpose of this webinar is to review the NOFO, application process, and field questions. 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](#).

11. How are applications scored?

Please take a look at page 8 in the NOFO to learn more about the scoring criteria.

Project Impact: *20 points*

Economic Equity: *20 points*

Work Plan: *25 points*

Organizational Qualifications: *20 points*

Proposed Budget and Budget Narrative: *15 points*

12. Do I need to provide a reference?

Yes, applicants need to provide three letters of reference from someone who is not employed by or is directly associated with your organization and does not stand to benefit financially from the project. The intent of the reference is to verify your organization's qualifications.