

Catalyst Pre-Development NOFO
Round 3
Question and Answer (Q&A)

Last Updated: October 9, 2025

Q: In the NOFO it states that eligible proposals and activities will be to address any “tasks” under the Tactical Workplan within each activation plan. It also states, “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.” My question is: what is considered a reasonable classification?

Answer: CJF or OCBC staff will make the ultimate decision of whether the responsible party is eligible under the classifications listed in the tactical workplan. An example of a reasonable classification would be a community college in Orange County applying for funds based on a task under the Healthcare Activation plan that has Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers as “Responsible Parties”. Community Colleges are clearly listed under the “Regional Partners and Their Roles” section.

What would not be reasonable would be for that community college to claim they should be classified as a Labor Union under that same plan to propose on tasks where Labor Unions are listed under “Responsible Parties” but Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers are not.

If you have any doubts on how to classify your organization, please reach out to jobsfirst@ocbc.org.

Q. I intend to submit an application for California Jobs First funding and have the following questions:

- **Is there a match required? If so, what percentage of the grant amount?**
- **If there is a match, is it an in-kind or cash match requirement?**

Answer: No match is required, but matches of any kind would strengthen an application.

Q. Is it possible to get feedback on our application from the previous cycle?

Answer: Unfortunately, there was a 30-day window to make that request, and that window has now closed.

Q. Are there any changes to the NOFO - compared to the NOFO for the previous cycle? Or could we resubmit the same materials as round 1 if nothing has changed.

Answer: Yes, there are changes. In rounds one and two, the funding was to support essential pre-development activities for impactful ideas. That funding was only meant for projects that were not yet implementation ready and aligned with the Regional Plan Part 2.

In this third round, the Regional Investment Initiative Regional Sector Activation plans provide 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](#)).

Q. Are there details about the previous awards that are available to the public?

Answer: Yes, the 14 Catalyst awardees from round one and 18 awardees from round 2 are published on our [Jobs First webpage](#) below the Regional Investment Initiative Catalyst Funding Awardees section.

Q. Can the letter of reference be from a current client?

Answer: Yes, so long as they aren't going to be a direct beneficiary of the project you're applying for.

Q. What type of reporting are you all going to be seeking at the end?

Answer: On the program side, it will be quarterly. On the financial side, the reporting will be monthly.

Q. Regarding the Catalyst Grant, for the question regarding Co-applicants/Partner Information, if I have a sub award would I put documentation here?

Answer: You would list your co-applicant. For example, if I was a city submitting a joint application with another city and I was the lead applicant I would add the other city as co-applicant.

Q. During the webinar, it was mentioned that all funds must be spent by September 2026. However, in the Sector Activation Plan, I noticed some earlier completion dates listed under the Timeline column. For example, under Tactic #1: Task #1 – Conduct a comprehensive MedTech workforce needs assessment..., the completion date is June 2025. Are those timeline dates meant to be targets, or is all funding and project activity eligible through September 30, 2026?

Answer: All funding is eligible through September 2026. Those dates were aspirational targets.

Q. Can you confirm if subcontracting is permitted with these funds?

Answer: Yes, subcontracting is permitted.

Q. Can funding be used towards building a childcare center at a non profit organization that would create a space to hire people in the childcare field?

Answer: Only if you see that as a task within the childcare activation plan.

Q. Would a non-profit Workforce org be eligible under the Healthcare Sector, assuming they are focusing on healthcare employment?

Answer: They can propose on any task(s) where education and workforce entities are listed as a responsible party with that task.

Q. Is a for profit eligible to apply?

Answer: Yes, they are.

Q. Are you weighting business creation vs. expansion vs. recruitment differently, or are they considered equal pathways to impact?

Answer: Mostly, yes. We will compare proposals that attempt to do similar things. For example, we will compare proposals that are responding to the same tasks and select the strongest. From there, we will take the strongest and compare it with other strong proposals responding

to other tasks. I say mostly, because we recognize that it's easier to train more people with a workforce development proposal than business creation.

Q. I am UCI professor working on semiconductor research and development. Am I eligible to apply?

Answer: As a UCI professor, you are eligible. You will just need to confirm that research and development are in the semiconductor activation plan.

Q. How do you view partnerships? Do letters of reference carry more weight if they come from sector employers, community organizations, or local government?

Answer: It will depend on the task and who the other partners are most likely to be for that task. For example, if the task is intended to support businesses, then partnerships and letters of reference from businesses would be preferred. If the task requests community outreach, letters from community organizations would be preferred.

Q. How many awards will be given per sector?

Answer: There is no set number of awards per sector.

Q. In rounds 1 and 2, the funding was \$50,000, \$250,000, and \$750,000; is that the same for this round?

Answer: No, this is a different kind of NOFO.

Q. What is the cap for funding request?

Answer: There is no cap but note that there is only \$1 million max and the intent is that each sector receives \$200,000.

Q. May I apply for funding if I was awarded in rounds 1 or 2?

Answer: Yes, you can apply whether or not you were funded before, as long as you meet eligibility requirements.

Q. If we submit multiple proposals, do we need to provide unique letters of reference for each one, or can the same letters be used across proposals as long as they speak to our organization's capacity to deliver on the specific tasks?

Answer: The same letters can be used across proposals. For example, if you are submitting 3 applications because you are applying for 3 separate tasks, you can use the same three letters across the three applications so long as it's relevant to what you are proposing on.

Q. Is the maximum funding \$200,000 per task?

Answer: No, it's \$200,000 per activation plan, not per task. For example, if the Semiconductor plan has \$200,000 available, that total may be split among multiple strong proposals. Applying for the full \$200K under one task likely won't be competitive.

Q. Is there a recommended funding amount?

Answer: There's no fixed number, it depends on the task and what's reasonable to complete it. Keep in mind that only about \$200,000 is available for each activation plan.

Q. Will this funding continue after Catalyst ends?

Answer: The state will manage Implementation Phase funding after Catalyst. These activation plans align with the state's long-term cluster development goals, but details beyond September 2026 are still being finalized.

Q. What's the main difference between Round 3 and Rounds 1 & 2?

Answer: Rounds 1 & 2 focused on Community-Enhancing and Job-Creating projects. Round 3 focuses on tasks outlined in five Activation Plans. Applicants now choose one or more sectors (e.g., Child Care, Healthcare, Tourism, etc.), which is new.

Q. Will we be reimbursed for preparing proposals?

Answer: No. Proposal preparation is not reimbursable. Only awarded projects will receive funding through formal agreements.

Q. If we request a higher funding amount, will that hurt our chances?

Answer: No, proposals won't be rejected for requesting more money, as long as the budget is justified. Scoring focuses on alignment and feasibility. Partial funding is possible if reviewers believe only part of your proposal should be funded.

Q. Can you clarify the difference between an activation plan, sector and task?

Answer: To clarify key terms:

- Activation Plan: A project management tool that turns Regional Plan Part II strategies into specific tactics and tasks, with clear timelines, responsibilities, and budgets.
- Sector: The industry focus area (e.g., Child Care, Tourism, Semiconductors, etc.).
- Task: The specific action you are proposing to carry out.

Remember, proposals are per task, not per tactic.