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INNOVATION POLICY

FOR

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Effective: 1/1/2023 -12/31/2024

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Bexar County innovation Policy for Economic Development is to spur and accelerate the growth of the innovation ecosystem within Bexar County through the following programs:

- Recruitment
- Expansion
- Innovation Development Activities
- Professional / Technical Training
- Brand Building

Collaboration between the myriad Innovation Ecosystem partners and members is crucial. The County will seek to collaborate with its Innovation-Focused Ecosystem partners, as well as its economic development partners, to identify and vet prospective applications, as well as to determine an appropriate grant amount. Grant amounts will depend on the strength of the project's positive impact on the Ecosystem, available Innovation Funds, funding or other incentives provided by other partners, and is subject to Commissioners Court approval.

Wherever possible, collaborative, multi-agency applications are strongly encouraged and will be looked upon more favorably.

RECRUITMENT

To support economic development and Innovative Ecosystem growth by persuading innovation companies from outside the Bexar County market to expand into or to relocate their operations to Bexar County.

Eligibility:

A non-publicly traded company not currently with operations in Bexar County that is relocating to or expanding its operations into Bexar County

Minimum Employees: 5

Minimum Wage: 70% of all employees must earn the High Innovation Wage, with no employees earning less than the Living Wage

OR

A company that has successfully completed a formal accelerator program

Grant Awards Based On:

Full-time employee wages

Number of full-time employees

Other incentives provided by partner agencies

Letter of recommendation and/or recruitment participation by Innovation Ecosystem partners

Available funds

Permitted Expenditures:

Business-related expenses; payroll, commercial rent, water, energy, telecommunication
Industry-related professional certification training or certification exam costs
Innovation-related technology devices
Broadband access; cloud or other hosting service; SaaS, IaaS, PaaS or related business platform support costs

EXPANSION

To support the Innovative Ecosystem and encourage entrepreneurs and companies working in the digital space to grow in Bexar County. Persuade existing Innovation Companies with headquarters or primary business operations that are located in Bexar County to scale up.

Eligibility:

A non-publicly traded company whose headquarters or primary business operations **have been in Bexar County for a minimum of 36 months.**
Minimum Annual Revenue: \$1 million
Minimum Local Employees: 5
Minimum Wage: 70% of all employees must earn the High Innovation Wage, with no employees earning less than the Living Wage
Current on County property tax obligations

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Grant Types:

Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) & Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) Matching Grant

- Companies that have been awarded Federal SBIR or STTR funding may apply for a matching grant up to a maximum of \$50,000.

Security Clearance Stipend

- Companies with a demonstrated need to attain official security clearances for their existing or new employees.
 - Up to \$7,500 per person, maximum of two per company per year
 - Minimum Wage: High Tech Wage

Skills Development (For More Information, See Skills Development Program Guidelines)

- \$1,000 in training funds per each new employee
- Minimum Wage: High Innovation Wage

Maximum Annual Award: \$250,000 per company

INNOVATION DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

To build the Bexar County entrepreneurial base by affiliating with experienced Technology Ecosystem partners to host innovation technology competitions, challenges, showcases or boot camps. With goals to: identify, retain, develop and support innovative entrepreneurs and companies by vetting innovative

companies through objective competitions or other collaborative workshops.

A **competition** allowing start-ups and entrepreneurs to promoting their innovative companies through objective competitions. Winners will be objectively selected by a panel comprised of judges from the Innovation Ecosystem, and may receive a cash grant from Bexar County. All proposed competitions must be affiliated with a local innovation incubator space, university innovation programs, co-working space or other partner capable of providing mentorship and business support services, including access to successful, experienced entrepreneurs, as well as to appropriate sources of venture capital. The competitions are not managed by the County, nor are County staff directly involved in determining the competition winners. Instead, the County seeks applications from qualified Innovation Ecosystem partners, able to successfully and effectively manage innovation technology competitions.

A **workshop** allows individuals to gain new skills and mentorship in best practices in order to advance their ideas towards the marketplace.

Eligibility:

Not-for-profit organizations or an entity currently in the Innovation Ecosystem in Bexar County

Requirements for Competition Winners:

Affiliated with a Bexar County incubator

Commit to Bexar County based operations for minimum of twelve months post award and agree to reporting requirements set forth in an agreement

PROFESSIONAL/ TECHNICAL TRAINING

Public-private partnership programs between Bexar County, educational service providers, and Bexar County private sector or non-profit companies that are focused on providing residents the skills needed to attain high wage jobs at innovative companies.

Professional or technical training provided by a qualified and/or certified training provider or individual designed to successfully impart the required skill set(s) necessary by the local innovation sector through partnerships between the County, companies, other Innovation Ecosystem agencies and/ or training providers.

Service Provider Eligibility:

Must be located in Bexar County

Any Innovation Company, non-publicly traded

Local universities or other governmental subdivisions and entities qualified to provide training for skills needed in the Innovation Ecosystem

For programs designed to cover certification exam costs, any local training provider, agency, or institution that provides the training necessary for an individual to be eligible to take the certification exam may propose a partnership with Bexar County to fund the cost of the certification exam

Training or Certification Candidate Eligibility:

Must possess the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) to be a qualified candidate capable of successfully completing the training program, boot camp or pursuing the certification

- The program partner is responsible for determining KSA competency for each potential candidate

Must have successfully completed the training and other prerequisites required to take the professional certification exam

Requirements:

Training providers must: administer a curriculum as developed and/or approved by private companies, and provide the actual training courses, including subsequent professional certifications as applicable

Training-related programs must have a local sponsor company or cohort of companies or agencies who have the means and ability to hire or promote those qualified candidates who successfully complete the program

Boot camp programs must have an established program with the means and resources necessary to effectively deliver and produce the desired boot camp training outcomes

Provide private-sector funds to leverage against Bexar County grant or other public funding

Must result in attaining the skill set necessary to obtain a high innovation job currently needed in the community.

Utilize or partner with qualified training providers that are also a part of the local Innovation Ecosystem

Only current Bexar County residents are eligible to receive training

- For programs that work with active duty military or recently-separated veterans, documentation that the individual is or will be based in Bexar County will be required

Grant Awards Based On:

Other funds or incentives provided by partners or other agencies

Anticipated total cost of the program

Expected outcome of the program

Available funds

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BRAND BUILDING

Established to enhance economic development outcomes through well-defined, creative, collaboratively developed, and innovative initiatives that project an accurate, positive and compelling image of the innovation ecosystem to innovative individuals and companies in other innovative ecosystems with measurable results. Increase the awareness of Bexar County's innovative sector both locally and in other innovative ecosystems.

These programs are not managed by Bexar County, nor are County staff directly involved in developing the brand. Instead, Bexar County will solicit or receive applications from Innovation Ecosystem partners that are experienced in successfully managing brand-building or related image marketing projects, programs or initiatives.

Requirements:

In order to create a more unified and cohesive message applications should be submitted by one lead agency or company, but must include two or more other entities from the Innovation Ecosystem as partners

Seek to project a consistent positive message deployed through innovative ecosystem-appropriate media channels and platforms with data analytics and other effectiveness determinants and metrics, as appropriate

Matching private sector funding

In-kind contributions from the partners are also desirable, but are not a substitute for private sector matching funds

Grant Awards Based On:

Other funds or incentives provided by partners or other agencies

Anticipated total cost of the program

Available funds

DEFINITIONS

High Innovation Wage: a wage that is equal to or above the Bureau of Labor Statistics' National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates Median Hourly Wage for All Occupations, which is indexed annually and subject to change without notice. (Currently \$32.58 per hour excluding benefits.)

Innovation Company: a Bexar County company with business activities that create or support the innovation ecosystem of high-wage, high-value economic activity in areas such as: bioscience, cybersecurity, data analytics, cloud technologies, software and application development or enhancement; and, related information technology and innovative technologies-focused economic activity.

Living Wage: minimum hourly wage for all full-time employees, not including benefits. 100% of a company's new and existing employees at the project location must earn no less than the Living Wage throughout the **full** term of an agreement. This wage is based on the poverty level for a family of four, as determined annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This wage is indexed annually and subject to change without notice. (Currently \$15.43 per hour excluding benefits).

Innovative Ecosystem: certain Bexar County businesses or entities with activities focused on the emerging economy for innovation in technologies. The specific target is those business activities that create or support the innovation ecosystem of high-wage, high-value-added economic activity in areas such as, but not limited to, bioscience, cybersecurity, data analytics, cloud technologies, software and application development or enhancement, and related information technology or other innovative focused economic activity.