



**INNOVATION POLICY
FOR
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Bexar County Innovation Policy for Economic Development is to spur and accelerate the growth of the innovation-focused digital information technology sector within Bexar County through the following programs:

- Recruitment
- Expansion
- Talent Development Competition
- Professional / Technical Training
- Brand Building

Collaboration between the myriad Technology Ecosystem partners and members is crucial. The County will seek to collaborate with its Technology 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 Technology 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 Technology 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 company not currently with operations in Bexar County that is relocating to or expanding its operations into Bexar County
- Minimum Employees: 15
- Minimum Wage: 70% of all employees must earn the High Tech Wage, with no employees earning less than the Living Wage

OR

- A company that has successfully completed a Techstars 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 Technology Ecosystem partners
- Available funds

Permitted Expenditures:

- Business-related expenses; commercial rent, water, energy, telecommunication
- Technology-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 Technology 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 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: 15
- Minimum Wage: 70% of all employees must earn the High Tech Wage, with no employees earning less than the Living Wage
- Current on County property tax obligations

Grant Types:

- Small Business Innovation Research Matching Grant
Companies that have been awarded Federal SBIR 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
 - \$500 in training funds per each new employee
 - Minimum Wage: High Tech Wage
 - Maximum Annual Award: \$50,000 per company (100 employees)

TALENT DEVELOPMENT COMPETITION

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

A competition allowing start-ups and entrepreneurs to test their innovative companies through objective competitions. Winners will be objectively selected by a panel comprised of judges from the Technology 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 Technology Ecosystem partners experienced in successfully and effectively managing innovation technology competitions.

Eligibility:

- Not-for-profit organizations or an entity currently in the Technology Ecosystem

Requirements for Competition Winners:

- Must be a Bexar County company
- Affiliated with a Bexar County incubator
- Commit to Bexar County based operations for minimum of six 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 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 technology sector through partnerships between the County, companies, other Technology Ecosystem agencies and/ or training providers.

Service Provider Eligibility:

- Must be located in Bexar County
- Any Innovation Company
- Local universities or other governmental subdivisions and entities qualified to provide training for skills needed in the Technology 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 tech job currently needed in the community.
- Utilize or partner with qualified training providers that are also a part of the local Technology 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

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 Technology Ecosystem to innovative individuals and companies in other technology ecosystems with measurable results. Increase the awareness of Bexar County’s innovative technology sector both locally and in other innovative Technology 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 Technology 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 Technology Ecosystem as partners

- Seek to project a consistent positive message deployed through technology 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 Tech 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. Verify current wage with Bexar County staff at time of application submission.

Innovation Company: a Bexar County company with business activities that create or support the technology ecosystem of high-wage, high-value economic activity in areas such as: cybersecurity, data analytics, cloud technologies, software and application development or enhancement; and, related information technology and innovative digital 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. Refer to the County’s *Tax Abatement Guidelines* for full details.

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