

NSTC WORKFORCE PARTNER ALLIANCE PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

General Information

Question 1: *What is the relationship/difference between NSTC and Natcast, and what is the alignment with other USG efforts?*

Answer: Natcast is a new, purpose-built, non-profit entity created to operate the NSTC consortium. Natcast will coordinate efforts with other U.S. government agencies to align the activities of the NSTC with other CHIPS for America efforts.

See Section 1 Executive Summary: The National Semiconductor Technology Center (NSTC) consortium was established by the CHIPS Act of the U.S. government as a public-private consortium.

Natcast is a new, purpose-built, non-profit entity created to operate the NSTC consortium. The NSTC will convene the U.S. government, allied and partner nations, and organizations across the semiconductor ecosystem—including academia and businesses of all kinds—to address the most challenging barriers to continued technological progress in the domestic semiconductor industry, including the need for a capable workforce. The NSTC reflects a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the U.S. to drive the pace of innovation, set standards, and re-establish global leadership in semiconductor design and manufacturing. The NSTC has three strategic goals that bolster the aims of the CHIPS and Science Act:

- 1) Extend U.S. leadership in foundational technologies for future applications and industries and strengthen the U.S. semiconductor manufacturing ecosystem;

- 2) Significantly reduce the time and cost to prototype innovative ideas; and
- 3) Build and sustain a semiconductor workforce development ecosystem.

Question 2: *Is Natcast open to proposals that involve scaling pre-existing programs that will or have previously received funding from other USG agencies (such as the DoD or NSF), including existing CHIPS funding?*

Answer: Yes. Collaborative design and being able to braid funding in order to create maximum impact are highly desirable, although not required. Applicants should be scanning the federal, state and local workforce ecosystem and looking for opportunities for collaboration. Applicants should not be proposing funding which is duplicative of already secured funding for existing efforts and programs.

See Section 5.2.2 *Alignment with National Initiatives:* The applicant's performance under federal awards and the likelihood the program will align well with other national initiatives supporting the semiconductor industry.

Leveraged Funding Strategies: Applicants who demonstrate the ability to identify and utilize funding strategies, such as by identifying and securing complementary sources of funding and leveraging public resources, to support learners and programs will receive strong preference. Additionally, sustainability beyond the grant period of performance is highly valued.

Question 2.1: *In such a scenario, how would you anticipate a governance model playing out?*

Answer: When multiple sources of funding are secured for a particular effort, governance would revolve around ensuring compliance and accountability to each funding entity. In practical terms, this means that the party receiving the funds (such as an organization or project team) would need to manage and report on their activities according to the distinct requirements set forth by each funding source. This includes financial reporting, progress updates, milestones achieved, and any other stipulations specified in the grant agreements.

Question 3: Will the Workforce Center of Excellence be internally staffed by Natcast, or could this be filled by a third-party vendor?

Answer: The Workforce Center of Excellence will be internally staffed by Natcast employees. Further announcements about the WCoE will be shared in later this summer.

Question 4: Will my organization be able to apply for continued funding? Or is this a “one-and-done” or “self funding expected after this” situation?

Answer: Applicants may be eligible for future funding as Natcast grows its portfolio of workforce alliance partners and workforce solutions. However, applicants should strive to submit program designs that are scalable and sustainable after the life of the award. Natcast funding should be considered an investment to cover the initial period of performance and should not be used or considered for long-term underwriting.

See Section 5.2.1 Scale and Sustainability (From Merit Review Criteria): Assessment of the likelihood the program can move from its current conditions to grow its impact to serve more employers, more workers, more learners, and sustain beyond the life of the funding to create lasting economic and community impact. The number of people to be served by the program.

Question 5: Can you please clarify the period of performance?

Answer: See Section 9.1.3.9 Workplan: It is anticipated that awards will be announced and finalized in early fall 2024. Applicants may specify their own performance period, *provided that* the performance period expires no later than December 30, 2026.

Eligibility

Question 6: Are for-profit companies eligible?

Answer: Yes, domestic for-profit organizations are eligible applicants.

See section 3.1 Eligible Applicants: Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to, domestic for-profit organizations; training providers; non-

profit organizations; accredited institutions of higher education including community and technical colleges; labor unions; Manufacturing USA Institutes; Manufacturing Extension Partnerships centers; Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs); and state, local, territorial, and Indian tribal governments.

Question 7 Do the businesses applying and approved for WFPA program have to go through any kind of security clearance and what would that be specifically?

Answer: There will be security review requirements for organizations awarded funding. Organizations receiving awards will be required to become members of NSTC, and membership will have a security review protocol (more information on NSTC membership will be released later this summer).

See Section 3.1 Eligible Applicants: While entities are not required to be NSTC members at the time of application, Natcast will work with each awardee so they can become an NSTC member at the time of Award.

- Only entities with a U.S. presence may be NSTC members. Members may not be foreign entities of concern or foreign countries of concern, as those terms are defined in 15 C.F.R. 231.104 and 231.102, respectively.
- Performers (those selected for awards) who are not NSTC members at the time of application will undergo vetting per the NSTC membership process and enter into a membership agreement with NSTC at the time of award.

Question 8: Can a minority applicant can apply for these training grants through a top US liberal arts college? Can an applicant propose collaborations with foreign research institutions?

Answer: Minority-owned businesses that meet eligibility requirements are encouraged to apply.

See question 12 for more details regarding foreign organizations

See Section 3.1 for full eligibility considerations and requirements.

Question 9: I am writing to inquire about the Natcast semiconductor grant on behalf of a large multi-site statewide university system, to see if the

expectation is only one application per organization or if one organization can submit multiple applications?

Answer: Only one application per entity is allowed for this CFP. For the purposes of this CFP, Natcast defines an entity by its Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number. However, it should be noted that in the Selection Criteria phase, detailed in section 5.2.2, the final award portfolio will be selected for diversity of regions, type of workforce solution provided and institutional provider, amongst other factors.

The underlying principle of the single application rule is to foster a unified effort among the various departments, programs, and sites within the system to present the most compelling proposal. Although it is technically possible for multiple entities with separate UEI numbers from the same system to submit individual applications, such a practice is discouraged.

See Section 4.1: Only one application per lead applicant will be accepted.

Question 10: Is NSTC membership required to apply? How do I become a NSTC Member? What is the Cost of NSTC Membership? How can I expedite joining the NSTC as a member?

Answer: The Membership program is under development. We will be sharing this information as soon as it is available through our website, newsletter, and direct emailing to the community. Our goal is to have our first members in the fall of this year.

While applicants are not required to be Natcast members at the time of application, final recipients will be required to become Natcast members as a condition of the award.

See Section 3.1 *Eligible Applicants:* While entities are not required to be NSTC members at the time of application, they must be an NSTC member at the time of Award.

Question 11: My organization would like to undertake a collaborative program with another nonprofit organization, is that eligible?

Answer: Award requires a lead applicant to serve as the administrative and fiscal agent. Applicants with partner organizations (sub-performers)

are encouraged to list proposed sub-performers in their award applications and budget applications (as appropriate). They may also submit letters of commitment, MOUs, or other documentation showing conditional agreements contingent on the award.

See Section 3.1 *Eligible Applicants*: This award requires a lead applicant to serve as the administrative and fiscal agent. Applicants with partner organizations (sub-performers) are encouraged to list proposed sub-performers in their award applications, budget applications (as appropriate), and may submit letters of commitment, MOUs, or other documentation showing conditional agreements contingent on the award. Sub-performers must also be an NSTC member at the time of award.

Question 12: Can foreign organizations and universities participate in funding opportunities?

Answer: The primary focus of the project is to ensure the majority of the work is conducted within the United States, with the overarching aim of training American workers. While foreign organizations are welcome to contribute as part of the project team, whether as sub-performers or contractors, their participation is contingent upon receiving approval from Natcast.

See Section 3.1 *Eligible Applicants*: Foreign organizations may participate as members of a project team, as subrecipients or contractors, subject to Natcast approval. The applicant must provide Natcast with a written justification demonstrating that the foreign entity's involvement is essential to advancing project objectives, such as by offering access to unique facilities, IP, or expertise that is otherwise not readily available in the United States. Natcast will only approve work outside of the United States if it is in the best interest of CHIPS R&D and the United States, including the domestic economy generally, U.S. national security, U.S. industry, and U.S. manufacturing competitiveness. Natcast's determination regarding the performance of project tasks outside the United States will be based on information provided by the applicant and by other Federal agencies.

Question 13: Is participation in multiple proposals encouraged or should prioritization be focused?

Answer: While lead applicants are limited to submitting only one application per entity, there is flexibility for an entity to participate in multiple applications in different roles. Specifically, an entity can act as a sub-performer or vendor for several lead applicants. This means that even though an entity can only lead one application, it can still contribute its expertise and resources to other projects as a supporting partner.

However, it is crucial for lead applicants to ensure that they have the necessary capacity and resources to meet the expectations and requirements of the project. This includes being able to deliver on the project's objectives, adhering to the specified timeline, and maintaining the quality of work throughout the period of performance. Lead applicants must carefully assess their capabilities and plan accordingly to avoid overcommitting and to ensure successful project execution.

Program Details

Question 14: *Natcast received multiple questions asking if particular program sounded like it would be a good fit for this proposal.*

Answer: Natcast cannot offer specific guidance on individual programs or approaches because of limited information about the programs and the associated timeframe with the application period. We strongly encourage the submission of programs with diverse designs and at various stages of development. Please carefully review the full Call for Proposals (CFP) to understand the eligibility requirements and the necessary elements for proposals.

Question 15: *Are programs and grants which focus on K-12 STEM readiness and High School programs which focus on pre-apprenticeship, internship, certification, etc. allowable?*

Answer: The grant opportunity is available to a wide array of proposals, populations and approaches to fulfilling the demand for semiconductor workers. This could include but is not limited to K-12 initiatives.

Question 16: Can NSTC better define “semiconductor industry employer” as listed in the Outcomes section in the RFP (section 2.4)? Is it more strictly Wafer manufacturers or does it represent the entire SC supply chain, e.g. testing/packaging, and PCB assembly as examples?

Answer: For the purposes of this CFP, Natcast defines a semiconductor industry employer broadly as employers involved in the entire semiconductor ecosystem or value chain, including design, manufacturing, testing, assembly and distribution of semiconductor devices and components and does not limit the definition to wafer manufacturing employers. These employers range from multinational corporations to specialized firms and start-ups, including but not limited to: fabless companies, semiconductor foundries, integrated device manufacturers, material suppliers, equipment suppliers, start-ups and innovators, and research institutions.

Question 17: Natcast received multiple questions asking about the importance of and any existing requirement for employer and or stakeholder letters of commitment or support.

Answer: While letters of commitment or support from employers or stakeholders are optional, letters of commitment or support are strongly encouraged as they demonstrate stakeholder support for the programs proposed and confirm alignment between the proposal and the broader needs of the workforce ecosystem.

Employers and/or stakeholders may submit multiple letters of support for more than one proposal, but only one letter per proposal.

See Section 2.3 Goals & Objectives: Because of the diversity of workforce needs within the semiconductor industry, Natcast is seeking applications that are aligned with the demonstrated needs of one or more employers, who provide a commitment to support the program.

Question 18: We expect to do lobbying and advocacy work as part of our project. Do you fund that?

Answer: Lobbying and advocacy efforts are **not** allowable costs for this grant.

See Section 3.2 *Eligible Uses of Funds*: Construction, lobbying, and advocacy expenses cannot be charged to this program. For clarity, funds shall not be expended for the development and training of the construction workforce required for the building of semiconductor facilities. This exclusion encompasses all forms of financial outlay related to the preparation, education, or skill enhancement aimed at constructing semiconductor facilities. Furthermore, recipients of funds from this program are prohibited from adding any profit margin or additional fees to the costs. Proposals focused on product development or commercialization are outside the scope of this CFP.

Question 19: Could a WFPA application submission be focused on A) End-to-End Project Management for the WFPA Program and B) Coaching and Mentorship for the WFPA Awardees?

Answer: Please refer to the full CFP for complete information on grant activities and expectations. This is not a solicitation for contractor services for Natcast.

Question 20: Are there any preferred evaluation methodologies or specific metrics that NSTC would like to see incorporated into a program assessment?

Answer: While evaluation methodologies and metrics are considered best practices, the Call for Proposals (CFP) does not specify any mandatory requirements for them. This means that while it is highly recommended to include robust evaluation methods and clear metrics to measure success, applicants have the flexibility to choose how they want to present this information. The absence of strict requirements allows for a variety of approaches and encourages innovation in how proposals are structured and evaluated.

Question 21: In section 3.2 Eligible Use of Funds, the CFP says that construction activities are not allowable costs, does this include a prohibition of using funds to train construction workers to build semiconductor facilities?

Answer: Construction costs and activities, including training of a construction workforce are *not* allowable costs under this grant. Please see revised CFP at <https://natcast.org/workforce/wfpa>

See Section 3.2 *Eligible Uses of Funds*: Construction, lobbying, and advocacy expenses cannot be charged to this program. For clarity, funds shall not be expended for the development and training of the construction workforce required for the building of semiconductor facilities. This exclusion encompasses all forms of financial outlay related to the preparation, education, or skill enhancement aimed at constructing semiconductor facilities. Furthermore, recipients of funds from this program are prohibited from adding any profit margin or additional fees to the costs. Proposals focused on product development or commercialization are outside the scope of this CFP.

Application Process

Question 22: *I am having technical difficulties with the application. What should I do?*

Answer: Please contact the program's email at wfpa2024@Natcast.org.

Question 23: *What are the key dates for the application process?*

Answer: See Section 1 Executive Summary:
Application Period Opens: July 1, 2024
Application Period Closes: July 26, 2024
Anticipated Announcement of Awards: Early Fall 2024

Question 24: *What is the review process for applications?*

Answer: The review process is as follows:

- Administrative Screening: Check for eligibility, completeness, and responsiveness.

- **Merit Review:** Independent review based on specified criteria by selection of third-party experts with relevant experience and expertise.
- **Selection:** Consideration of merit review scores, diversity of portfolio, and alignment with program objectives.
- **Final Award and Announcement:** Collaboration with performers to establish final agreements.

See Section 5.1 *Proposal Process and Review Criteria*: Following submission, each application will be reviewed through the following process:

1. **Administrative Screening:** Applications received by July 26, 2024, 11:59 PM Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) will be reviewed to determine eligibility, completeness, and responsiveness to this solicitation. Applications will be assessed to confirm initial content is responsive to the requested scope of work. Applications determined to be ineligible, incomplete, and/or nonresponsive will be eliminated from further review. At its sole discretion, Natcast may opt to continue the review process for an application that is missing non-substantive information, the absence of which may easily be rectified during the review process.
2. **Merit Review:** Applications deemed eligible, complete, and responsive will be advanced to a merit review committee of at least three (3) independent, objective reviewers. In the event over 20 applications are received, Natcast reserves the right to limit each application to be reviewed by only a subset of the merit review committee members. All reviewers will have appropriate professional and technical expertise relating to the topics covered in this solicitation. Merit reviewers will evaluate each responsive application based on the evaluation criteria noted in this solicitation, with appropriate recusals in place for any identified conflict of interests. Documentation including adjectival scoring from the Merit Review will be provided for selection consideration.
3. **Selection:** Complete applications with final merit review scores will be considered for selection recommendation. Natcast will select applications conditional on key Natcast priorities such as diversity in awarded institution type (i.e., small businesses, large businesses, higher education, nonprofits), diversity in regions, availability of funding, and

similarity of scope within the portfolio (for a full list of factors to be considered, please see the “Review Considerations” section). Natcast employees, Federal partners or Merit Review committee members may be consulted as part of this process. Natcast reserves the right to make its selection based on its expertise and assessment of the environmental conditions and the objectives and resources of this award fund. During this phase, Natcast may also contact applicants to discuss possible scope, budget, outcome measures, or other similar adjustments in an effort to better align awards with the proposed objectives of this fund.

- 4. Final Award and Announcement:** Natcast will collaborate with performers to establish a final award agreement and announcement. Award announcement may occur concurrently with award negotiations, subject to the permission of the performer. Applicants agree to not publish or disclose any information prior to receiving explicit permission from Natcast. Natcast anticipates making award announcements in the Fall of 2024.

Budget

Question 25: Is cost sharing or matching funds required for the Natcast program? Is there is a specific cost share percentage that is being requested, or that the USG would like to receive?

Answer: No, cost sharing or matching funds are not required. However, you are strongly encouraged to find additional funding from other sources like employers, community organizations, and government programs. This can enhance your project but is not mandatory.

Question 25.1: How important is cost-sharing and is “In-Kind Cost Share” a strong consideration?

Answer: Although cost sharing is not required and there is no specific target, proposals that effectively utilize additional resources and avoid duplicating efforts may be viewed more favorably and considered more impactful by the merit review committee.

Question 26: Can I use funding to purchase equipment? Are there limitations on equipment purchasing, such as lab equipment?

Answer: Yes, relevant equipment necessary to expand accessibility or quality of participant training is allowable. Applicants should clearly articulate proposed equipment purchases in their budget and budget justification and how the equipment purchases are relevant to the proposed workforce solution.

See Section 9.1.5 *Budget Narrative and Justification*: The budget justification should list each piece of equipment, the cost, and a description of how it will be used and why it is necessary for the successful completion of the proposed project.

Question 27: Pg 8 of 24, # 4.1.7 states applicants may be contacted for preliminary negotiations to adjust grant awards. However (pg. 14 of 24) in section 6.2, Awards are made under an OTA agreement, please clarify that this award is an OTA and not a Grant?

Answer: The funds Natcast awards to Performers under this CFP originate from the Department of Commerce and are provided to Natcast pursuant to an “other transaction agreement” (OTA) between Natcast and the Department. To clarify, the agreement between Natcast and an individual Performer will be an Award. The agreement between Natcast and the Department that makes the Award possible is the OTA.

Question 28: Pg 22 of 24, # 9.1.5 states NSTC intends to issue fixed amount awards, with milestone payments, this is consistent with Fixed price awards, again please clarify award type.

Answer: The Awards will be fixed amount awards with milestone payments.

The Award amount granted is based on a review for cost reasonableness of anticipated projected costs. The amount awarded may be less than the amount requested.

Milestone payments are not just a method of financing the effort, they are also a key management tool. Payments are based on achieving project milestones defined in the agreement. All milestone payments

add up to the fixed award amount. A portion of the award may include advancing a percentage after the agreement is signed and withholding a final percentage until final reports are submitted and accepted.

Application Process

Question 29: I don't know what a UEI is, and it's a required field on the form. Where do I get more information about this?

Answer: A **Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)** number is a unique nine-digit identifier for businesses, issued by the **System for Award Management (SAM)**. Think of it as your business's social security number, but you need to request one rather than it being automatically assigned. This number helps identify businesses eligible for federal grants, awards, and contracts. You can find more information at <https://sam.gov>.

Question 30: My organization is just getting established, and we do not yet have an EIN/TIN. We are US-based; what should I enter for the EIN/TIN field?

Answer: If you do not have a UEI, you may enter your DUNS number on a temporary basis while your organization completes the process of obtaining a UEI number, if you have neither please enter 44-44444 into the online application portal when requested for UEI number.

Question 31: Under "Application Information, Legal Name" Should I put my organization's legal name or my legal name?

Answer: Please enter the legal name of the organization.

Question 32: Is the "Name and contact information of person to be contact on matters involving this application" the same person as the "Authorized Representative"? Who in my organization is the appropriate point of contact and/or authorized representative?

Answer: This can vary by the type and size of organization, but in general the Authorized Representative is an individual designated by the

applicant organization to act on the organization's behalf. The "Name and contact information of the person..." would refer to the person which will ultimately be the signatory on the award/grant agreement.

Question 33: What is the list of materials that need to be included in the Project Narrative?

Answer: See [Section 4.2 Proposal Form and Content](#):

A mandatory project narrative, which must include descriptions of the following as a part of a single unified .doc, .docx or .pdf file:

- Statement of Need (800 words or fewer)
- Project Goals and Objectives (800 words or fewer)
- Program Design (1600 words or fewer)
- Scaling Model (800 words or fewer)
- Inclusion and Accessibility (800 words or fewer)
- Projected Outcomes (800 words or fewer)
- Staffing Plan (800 words or fewer, excluding resumes for key personnel required to be under 500 words each)
- Sustainability Plan (800 words or fewer)
- Workplan (800 words or fewer)

Documents related to the Project Narrative and resumes for key project personnel, should be merged into a single (.doc, .docx, .pdf) file and uploaded into the "SF-424 Project Narrative Attachment Form" tab of the online application portal.

Question 34: What is the list of materials that need to be included in Optional Project Narrative files?

Answer: See [section 4.2 Proposal Form and Content](#):

The optional project narrative, which may include the following as a part of a single unified .doc, .docx or .pdf file:

- Letters of Commitment (500 words or fewer each)
- Description of Creation of Shared Resources (500 words or fewer)

Question 35: What are the absolutely-required fields in the Budget Narrative, as my organization will be submitting our own budget file?

Answer: Please refer to [Section 9.1.5 Budget Narrative Attachment](#): found in the complete Call for Proposals Document on the Natcast website.

Question 36: I noticed a mistake in my completed application. Who should I contact about this?

Answer: Please submit a request via email to wfpa2024@natcast.org with full details.

Question 37: The instructions for proposal formatting clearly have a document created with Microsoft Word in mind. We prefer to use LaTeX, and none of the proposed fonts are easily available in standard LaTeX. LaTeX uses the Computer Modern font, which is very similar to Times New Roman, so my question is whether it would be acceptable to submit a LaTeX-generated PDF with the same layout specifications but Computer Modern rather than Times New Roman?

Answer: Yes, LaTeX generated pdf is acceptable. Fonts, spacing, etc should be clear and easily accessible to individuals completing merit review.

See Section 9.1 [Proposal Formatting requirements:](#)

Question 38: Can the document contain hyperlinks?

Answer: Documents can contain hyperlinks, but merit reviewers will **not** be required to consider that information in their review and evaluation of the proposal.

Question 39: Are charts, tables, or graphics allowed within the narrative sections? If so, do they count towards the word limits?

Answer: Charts, tables and graphics are allowed within the project narrative however, merit reviewers will view this as supplemental and **not** be required to consider it in their evaluation of the proposal.

Question 40: How do you want referenced material to be cited? Do hyperlinks suffice?

Answer: References to materials where possible can and should be cited and may include hyperlinks. However, merit reviewers will **not** be required to consider hyperlinked information in their review and evaluation of the proposal.

Question 41: Where does NSTC see the greatest need within the semiconductor industry, i.e. manufacturing, distribution, foundry, software solutions, supply chain?

Answer: Applicants should conduct a comprehensive survey of the current landscape and ecosystem within their chosen geographic area. Applicants are expected to collaborate with semiconductor employers to pinpoint needs that are specific, actionable, and attainable.

Contact Information

For further inquiries or specific questions not covered in this FAQ, please contact the program's email at wfpa2024@Natcast.org. Although the official question period has ended, the Natcast staff remains committed to addressing as many inquiries as possible and regularly updating the FAQs