



Innovation Cluster Accelerator Launch Program Cohort 2 Application

Applications due: April 3, 2023, 5:00 PM Pacific Time

Launch Application and Program Manager:

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Milestones	Dates
Cohort 2 Application Published	2/21/2023
Q&A Period	2/21/2023 to 3/24/2023
Q&A Answers posted	3/29/2023
Applications due	4/3/2023 at 5:00 PM
Applicants notified of selection	5/1/2023
Program Participation Period	6/1/2023 – 6/30/2024

*Commerce reserves the right to revise the above schedule.

Section 1: Purpose and Background

Washington state is dedicated to building an economic future that is as inclusive, diverse and resilient as the people who live here. We are looking beyond our borders for economic models that will strengthen our legacy industries, help communities create new sectors, fuel innovation and entrepreneurship, and ensure meaningful job opportunities for generations to come. One of the most promising models is the innovation cluster.

There are approximately 7,000 innovation clusters worldwide. From Washington Maritime Blue to Canada's Digital Supercluster and the Queensland Robotics Cluster in Australia, clusters are used to grow existing industries, transform legacy industries and build industries of the future.

Innovation clusters drive collective action that benefits everyone: stakeholders, the sector, the regional and state economy and beyond. Successful innovation clusters require a level of collaboration that does not naturally occur across most industry ecosystems in the United States.

In 2021, Commerce launched the Innovation Cluster Accelerator (ICAP). The program is the first statewide innovation cluster development program in the United States, leveraging modern innovation cluster strategy to strengthen industry ecosystems and accelerate growth in key sectors.

For more information about the Innovation Cluster Accelerator and the nine clusters Commerce currently supports, please visit www.icapwashington.org. For additional information about innovation clusters, see Section 3 of this application packet.

About ICAP Launch

The Innovation Cluster Accelerator Program (ICAP), administered by Washington State Department of Commerce is soliciting applications from organizations to participate in ICAP Launch.

This pilot program is funded through an ARPA Statewide Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration to support future innovation cluster development and also explore how this model can best support regional and rural economic development.

Through a series of workshops and technical assistance, Commerce will support industry and community leaders, economic development organizations, and business networks to:

- Learn and implement strategies and techniques to convene industry ecosystem partners and drive collaboration
- Begin building an innovation cluster strategy based on global best practices
- Prepare organizations to apply for future Innovation Cluster Accelerator cohorts as well as better position their ecosystems to pursue collaborative funding opportunities

Launch will serve two groups:

- 1. Cohort 1: Underserved communities**
Funding: Includes capacity building funding
To apply: See separate [Request for Proposals](#)

Cohort 1 will support communities that may not have naturally occurring ecosystems nor current capacity for local innovation cluster leadership.

Intended applicants are organizations that will facilitate formalization of an industry ecosystem in at least one of the following:

- A rural county or counties as defined by RCW 82.14.370. See [Population density and land area criteria](#).
- A Persistent Poverty Community as designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration. <https://www.eda.gov/funding/investment-priorities>
- Historically underserved, disadvantaged or marginalized communities or groups.

See <http://www.icapwashington.org/icap-launch> for more information about Cohort 1.

Qualified organizations seeking capacity building funding through Cohort 1 will complete a separate Request for Proposal competitive procurement process and do not need to respond to this application.

2. Cohort 2: Potential and emerging innovation clusters

Funding: No capacity building funding available

To apply: Review this application overview and complete application – through Smartsheet here: [Potential & Emerging Innovation Clusters – Cohort 2 Application](#).

Cohort 2 will support potential and emerging regional clusters with incomplete ecosystems that would benefit from support to develop early stage cluster strategy to prepare for future Innovation Cluster Accelerator application rounds.

Intended applicants are organizations with the connections and ability to facilitate formalization of an industry ecosystem in key current and future sectors within Washington state. Lead applicants may be industry representatives, associations or alliances, community or economic development organizations, or comparable organizations.

Section 2: Program Overview

During Launch, your selected team will participate in a series of workshops and strategy sessions, as well as have access to world-class cluster development strategies and tools. You will work closely with Commerce to build a roadmap to guide early stage innovation cluster development.

Throughout the Launch sessions, ICAP staff will facilitate activities to support your Core Team collaborating with your Ecosystem Team to complete cluster development tools and templates. The Cluster Launch tool provided in Exhibit A is a required deliverable by the end of the pilot-program.

Over time, you can aim to develop your industry ecosystem into a full cluster in the Innovation Cluster Accelerator program

Build Your Launch Team

Your **Core Team** includes 3-5 individuals consisting of representatives from your organization and other key stakeholders who will facilitate stakeholder engagement and develop your innovation cluster strategy. The Core team will participate in all Launch activities.

Suggested Core Team participants include:

- A key contact designated as the team lead (required)
- Relevant leadership from your organization
- Key stakeholders and partners (at least one industry representative required)

The Team Lead will take a leadership role throughout the engagement, assuming responsibility for managing the team’s activities, coordinating with the Innovation Cluster Accelerator team, and ensuring the Core Team meets its proposed goals and objectives. Team leads will participate in

regular virtual meetings with the ICAP team as well as all activities outlined in the Launch Program section.

Your **Ecosystem Team** includes key representatives from industry, entrepreneurs, government, academia, and investors, as relevant to your community's ecosystem. You will further develop this team over the course of Launch.

Participate in Launch Activities

Launch activities include a combination of Commerce-led in-person and virtual meetings, workshops, and strategy sessions, as well as work led by your Core Team:

1. Four virtual 4 hour workshops covering various topics related to innovation cluster strategy (*facilitated by the ICAP Team with Core Teams of all Cohort 2 participants*). Topics may include:
 - Intro to Innovation Clusters
 - Basic Cluster Strategy
 - Growing a Cluster
 - Cluster Strategy Framework,
 - Cluster Value Impact
 - Business Model and Funding
2. 2-4 in-person or virtual 3 hour strategy sessions with Core Team and your Ecosystem Teams scheduled at a mutually agreed upon date and time. (*facilitated by Commerce with support from Core Team*)
3. Quarterly virtual meetings to discuss progress and plan strategy sessions (*Team Lead, relevant Core Team members, Commerce*)
4. Ongoing work to engage and convene ecosystem partners, build relationships, and develop strategy outside of the formal program scheduled sessions (*Facilitated by Core Team with Ecosystem Team participation*)
5. Access to innovation cluster technical assistance through the Innovation Cluster Accelerator

Section 3: About Innovation Clusters

Innovation clusters are formalized, industry-led, member-based organizations working together to drive innovation, overcome barriers, access new market opportunities and attract talent and capital. Around the world, clusters are known as “economic engines”, with many countries and regions supporting large-scale cluster programs across multiple industries.

Innovation clusters are leveraged as an economic development strategy to:

- Grow and develop existing industries
- Transform legacy industries
- Build entirely new, future-focused industries

The information in this section is intended to provide a high-level overview of innovation clusters. During Launch, organizations will develop the early strategy and framework for a future innovation cluster. Organizations are not expected to have the organizational structure described below in place

Successful Clusters are industry-led, which means that corporations, small businesses and start-ups are actively involved in the Cluster's:

- Board of Directors (typically the Board Chair is an industry representative)

- Membership
- Innovation groups and other projects

Clusters form around a sector or industry. Cluster themes can include existing, emerging or future growth industries. A cluster's theme can be broad (i.e. agriculture) or specific (i.e. seafood processing).

Clusters begin by identifying market opportunities the cluster will pursue. Markets may include domestic, global, business-to-business, business-to-consumer and business-to-government.

Clusters recruit a broad membership base that includes corporations (large and small businesses), entrepreneurs, government, academic institutions, and investors. These organizations actively collaborate to solve industry challenges, drive innovation and pursue market opportunities.

Clusters scale over time. As a Cluster matures, you will build infrastructure, develop an operating organization and recruit a Board of Directors.

Cluster maturity levels are classified dependent on factors such as number of members, establishment of a Board of Directors, involvement by industry and pursuit of joint projects. ICAP Launch is intended for organizations in the "Potential" stage and earlier. Cluster maturity levels are broadly defined as follows.

1. Potential clusters
 - Early stage network
 - May be locally focused by design (town, county, etc.)
 - Led by a few champions
 - 0-20 members
 - Cluster Board of Directors may not yet be formed
2. Emerging clusters
 - Incomplete ecosystem
 - May be locally focused by design (town, county, etc.)
 - Has 50-100 members
 - Cluster Board of Directors in place
 - Cluster is beginning to take on innovation projects
3. Growth clusters
 - Centered around key industries in the state
 - Generating strong value creation for the industry
 - Regionally focused
 - Has 101-500 members
 - Cluster Board of Directors is actively involved in cluster activities, Board includes industry CEOs
 - Cluster is leading innovation projects
4. Super clusters
 - Compete globally
 - Drive export opportunities
 - High value creation within the industry
 - May include a global membership base
 - 500+ members
 - Magnet for market opportunities, investment, and talent

Section 4: How to Apply

Applicants must submit an electronic application through Smartsheet here: [Potential & Emerging Innovation Clusters – Cohort 2 Application](#).

You will receive an automated response once your application is received. Commerce does not assume responsibility for any e-mail delivery problems. Late applications will not be accepted and will be automatically disqualified from further consideration.

Failure to respond to any portion of the application document or answer the narrative questions may result in rejection of the application as non-responsive. All applications and any accompanying documentation become the property of Commerce and will not be returned.

Proprietary Information and Public Disclosure

Applications shall become the property of Commerce. All Applications received shall remain confidential until Launch participants are announced; thereafter, the applications shall be deemed public records as defined in Chapter 42.56 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW).

Any information in the application that the Applicant desires to claim as proprietary and exempt from disclosure under the provisions of Chapter 42.56 RCW, or other state or federal law that provides for the nondisclosure of your document, must be clearly designated. The information must be clearly identified and the particular exemption from disclosure upon which the Applicant is making the claim must be cited. Each page containing the information claimed to be exempt from disclosure must be clearly identified by the words "Proprietary Information" printed on the lower right hand corner of the page. Marking the entire application exempt from disclosure or as Proprietary Information will not be honored.

If a public records request is made for the information that the Applicant has marked as "Proprietary Information," Commerce will notify the Applicant of the request and of the date that the records will be released to the requester unless the Applicant obtains a court order enjoining that disclosure. If the Applicant fails to obtain the court order enjoining disclosure, Commerce will release the requested information on the date specified. If an Applicant obtains a court order from a court of competent jurisdiction enjoining disclosure pursuant to Chapter 42.56 RCW, or other state or federal law that provides for nondisclosure, Commerce shall maintain the confidentiality of the Applicant's information per the court order.

A charge will be made for copying and shipping, as outlined in RCW 42.56. No fee shall be charged for inspection of contract files, but twenty-four (24) hours' notice to the RFA Coordinator is required. All requests for information should be directed to the RFA Coordinator.

Section 5: Application Evaluation and Selection

Applications will be reviewed and ranked based upon response to the questionnaire portion of the application. The following weighting will be assigned to the application for evaluation purposes:

Evaluation breakdown	Scoring
1. Impact on community, region, and state (if applicable)	10 points
2. Impact on industry	10 points
3. Identification of the necessary core team members, with at least one industry member.	10 points

4. Identification of proposed initial ecosystem team and future stakeholders to engage	5 points
5. Prioritization of diversity, equity, and inclusion within ecosystem	3 points
6. Located in and/or primarily serving a rural county or a historically underserved, disadvantaged, or marginalized group.	2 points
Total possible points	40 points

Commerce reserves the right to select Applicants whose participation in Launch is deemed to be in the best interest of Commerce and the state of Washington.

Section 6: Pre Application Workshops

Commerce will conduct a combination of virtual and in person workshops for those interested in participating in Cohort 1 or Cohort 2.

The agenda for these sessions will include:

- Overview of innovation clusters
- Information about the Launch program, including explanation of the cohort options
- Walk through Cohort 1 RFP and/or Cohort 2 application.
- Question and answer session

Workshop Schedule:

Virtual (above agenda and walk-through of Cohort 2 application)

- 3/7/23 at 10:00 a.m. Registration is required at this link: [Meeting Registration – Zoom](#)
- 3/21/23 at 10:00 a.m. Registration is required at this link: [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

Virtual (Focused on Cohort 1 RFP):

- 2/27/23 at 2:00 p.m. Registration is required at this link: [Meeting Registration - Zoom.](#)
- 3/21/23 at 2:00 p.m. Registration is required at this link: [Meeting Registration - Zoom.](#)

If you are unable to access registration links on this document, they will also be posted on the program website (www.icapwashington.org/icap-launch).

In person (Cohort 1 RFP and Cohort 2 application reviewed):

- 3/1/23 at 12:00 p.m. in Yakima, WA at the Yakima County Development Association. Registration is required at this link: [Meeting Registration - Yakima](#)
- 3/2/23 at 9:30 a.m. in Omak, WA. The exact location will be updated in an amendment and also post to icapwashington.org/icap-launch. Registration is required at this link: [Meeting Registration-Okanogan County](#)

An additional in person workshop is being finalized. Commerce will post details to icapwashington.org/icap-launch

All prospective Applicants are encouraged to attend a workshop; however, attendance is not mandatory. Applicants are welcome to attend more than one workshop. The first virtual workshop will be recorded and posted on the program website (www.icapwashington.org/icap-launch).

CLUSTER LAUNCH TEMPLATE (Do not complete)

