

## 2026 Local Economy Lab

# Which RFP is Right for Me?

*A short guide to help applicants navigate the three funding opportunities.*

## Overview

When coal plants and mines close, communities lose critical tax base, infrastructure investment, and economic momentum all at once. Coal community recovery takes more than replacing jobs, and requires investment on multiple fronts.

That's why we opened the Local Economy Lab, our central hub for helping coal communities seed, grow, and scale transformative economic projects.

Guided by our Framework for Economic Transition, the Lab supports bold, community-driven solutions across three connected areas: workforce development, entrepreneurship and small business support, and place-based infrastructure. Together, these strategies create economic opportunity in place and strengthen local economics from the ground up.

The Lab supports projects at every stage of development, from early planning and piloting to full implementation and growth.

## FAQ

### **My project fits more than one RFP – what should I do?**

Apply to the RFP that best reflects your project's primary goal and theory of change. We recognize that many strong projects combine workforce development with entrepreneurship, or pair business development with place-based infrastructure investment. That is a strength, not a problem – just lead with what your project is fundamentally trying to accomplish. If you are genuinely unsure, contact us before submitting.

### **My organization has more than one project that we would like to submit for funding consideration. Can we submit more than one application?**

Applications are limited to one per organization and one per coalition. If your organization is part of a coalition, you may take part in a joint application and still submit your own individual application.

### **Helping communities access federal funding remains a key service we'll provide.**

We've folded the Federal Access Center into our Local Economy Lab. Funding to support federal applications will be available for our current grantees. You can visit [justtransitionfund.org/federal-access-center](https://justtransitionfund.org/federal-access-center) to review the impact made by our FAC.

## Questions?

Visit [justtransitionfund.org/local-economy-lab](https://justtransitionfund.org/local-economy-lab) to learn more about the Lab and review eligibility, criteria, and open RFPs.

Contact Marissa Berkley at [mberkley@justtransitionfund.org](mailto:mberkley@justtransitionfund.org) with additional questions.

## RFP Details

The 2026 Local Economy Lab offers three separate RFPs, one for each of the investment areas outlined below. Most applicants will fit clearly into one, but if your project spans multiple areas, apply to the RFP that best reflects your primary goal. Criteria and grant amounts are the same in each RFP.

### **RFP 1: Workforce Development**

**Deadline:  
June 12, 2026**

**Employer-driven training | Removing barriers | Youth career pathways**

Apply here if your project primarily:

- Trains workers for jobs in a specific industry or sector
- Removes barriers that keep people out of the workforce – childcare, transportation, wraparound services
- Creates career pathways and credentials for young people in coal communities
- Builds registered apprenticeship programs or work-based learning models

### **RFP 2: Entrepreneurship & Business Support**

**Deadline:  
June 12, 2026**

**Direct business support | Industry clusters & supply chains**

Apply here if your project primarily:

- Helps entrepreneurs launch or grow businesses through incubation, acceleration, technical assistance, or capital access
- Builds an industry cluster or supply chain – connecting producers, manufacturers, and service providers in a sector such as food and agriculture, outdoor recreation, advanced manufacturing, or clean energy
- Combines direct business support with sector-building strategies

### **RFP 3: Place-Based Infrastructure**

**Deadline:  
TBD**

**Broadband | Community revitalization | Tourism Infrastructure | Site-specific use**

Apply here if your project primarily:

- Expands broadband and digital connectivity to underserved communities
- Revitalizes community spaces, historic buildings, or downtown corridors to support economic activity
- Creates outdoor recreation and tourism infrastructure
- Restores, reclaims, or repurposes existing coal sites