STEM TALENT CHALLENGE

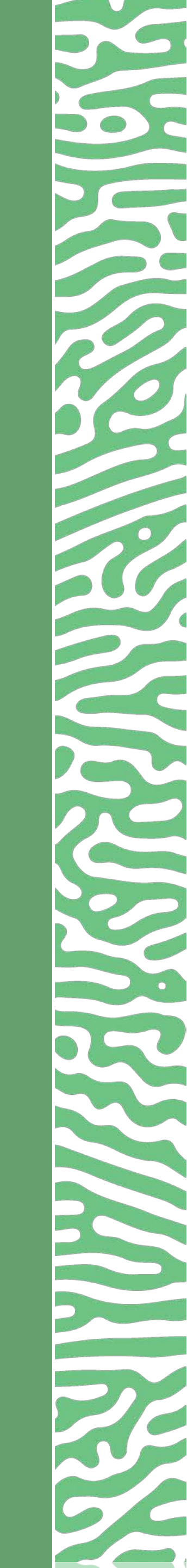## 2020 Competition Debrief Webinar

February 3, 2021

MEET THE TEAM

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Program Manager
STEM Talent Challenge

TOPICS TO BE COVERED

- Competition by the Numbers
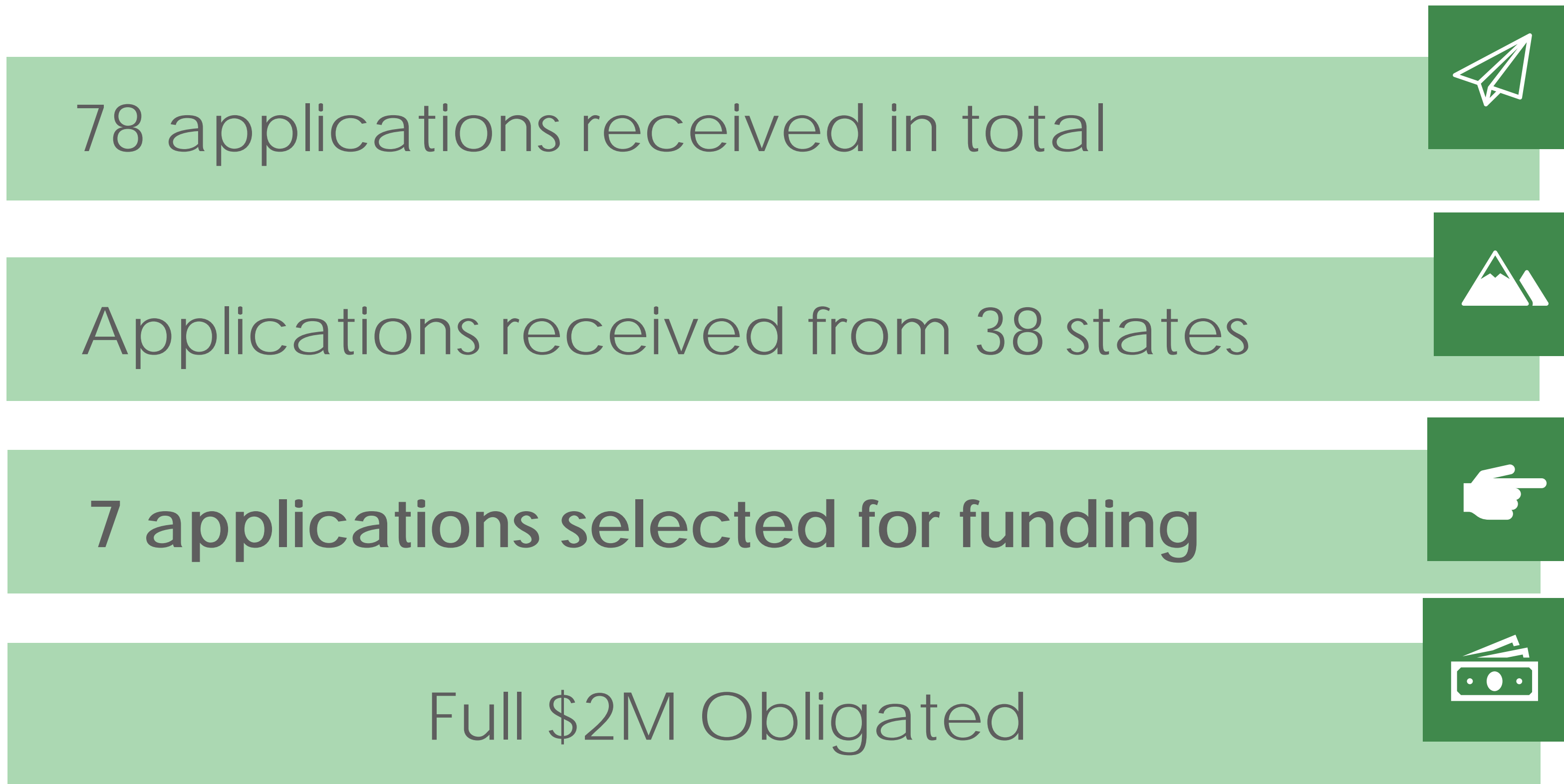- Technical Review
- Merit Review Trends
- Next Steps

COMPETITION BY THE NUMBERS

Where did we land on applications totals?

The Numbers

Applications Received

78 applications received in total

Applications received from 38 states

7 applications selected for funding

Full $2M Obligated

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The Numbers

Application Acceptance rates

<13%
Overall acceptance rate

Total amount requested
$20.6M

>10X
Appropriated amount

This year's challenge was *extremely* competitive!

Technical Review

Don't get knocked out by a technical mistake!

Technical Review
Most Common Technical Issues

- **Missing match or commitment letter**
  - Lack of government support letter
    - Proof of eligibility status

You can ask technical questions during the application period if in doubt

Applications that get knocked out in technical review do not get scored in merit review
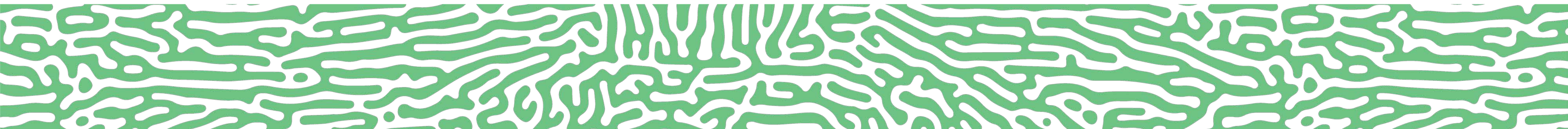
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Technical Review

Matching Funds Missing

1:1 match means that applicants must bring at least as much as they are requesting

Match amounts should be easily traceable and consistent throughout budget documents

Funding must be available at the time of application – can't be something that will be based on future earnings

Match must be completely documented by commitment letter(s).

Letter(s) must state the funds are unencumbered, unrestricted, and committed at the time of the award.

Technical Review
Government Support Missing or Incomplete

- All non-public entities (including private institutions of higher education) require a letter of government support

- Should come from a geographic area or department that will be served by the project

NOFO Language

Applicant must submit one or more resolutions or letters that demonstrate that the application is supported by one or more States, political subdivisions of States (e.g., counties, municipalities), or native organizations that encompass all or a substantial portion of the region served by this project.

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Technical Review

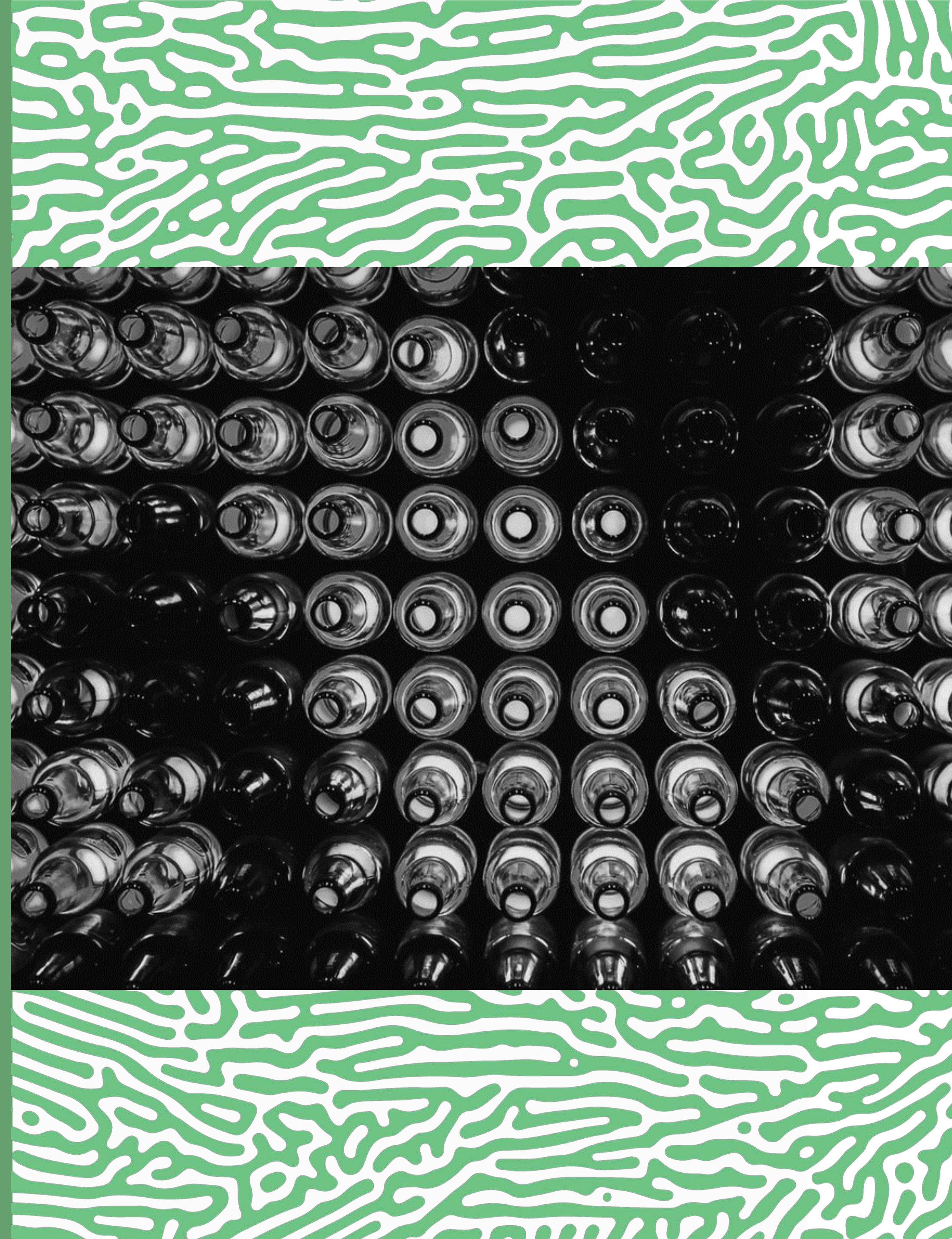## Proof of Eligibility Status

- Organizational documents are required for non-profit organizations to prove their eligibility to receive funding:

  ❖ A certificate of good standing from the State of its incorporation that is less than twelve months old;

  ❖ A copy of the organization's Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws; and

  ❖ For non-profit organizations, a copy of the most recent (not older than 18 months) IRS Form 990 (Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax) (without attachments or schedules).

- Public Private Partnerships must provide agreements for items such as the purpose and objectives of the partnership, the binding/contractual nature of the relationship, the duties and responsibilities of each party, and the duration of the agreement.

- Eligibility documents must be current and not expired

Program Alignment

Are you aligned with the mission of the STEM Talent Challenge

Program Alignment

Mission of the STEM Talent Challenge

- This program seeks to drive regional innovation by building STEM-capable talent

- Projects must complement region's innovation economy and should be tied to transformative sectors/industries of the future

Dual Importance

A strong application highlights a training program that is closely aligned with the region's innovation economy

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Merit Review Trends

A look at the scoring criteria and common trends we saw related to each one
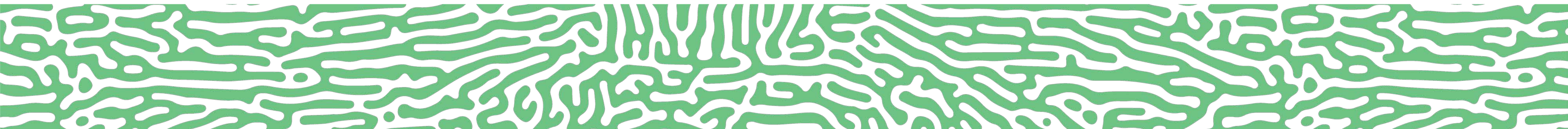
Merit Review Trends

Project Support and Connectivity

Lacked a demonstrated connection to the project's industry or to STEM specifically

Applications did not clearly show how partners would be involved and what their roles would be

All or majority of work outsourced; partners were primarily from within or adjacent to the applying institution
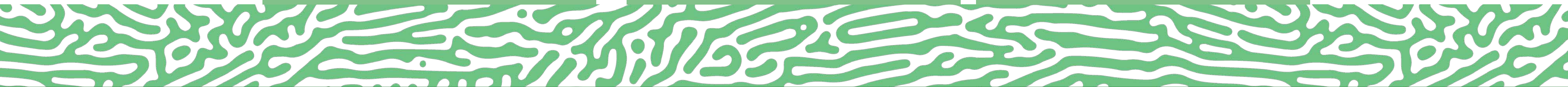
Merit Review Trends
Economic and Innovation Impacts

Projects were not tied to the regional economy; or were not connected to high-tech, high-growth industries and industries of the future

Lacked measurable goals or outcomes or outcomes were focused on training successes rather than the impact of job placement and creation

Project emphasis on growing STEM awareness, not a STEM-capable workforce

While important to the development of a future workforce, general education programs such as those found in K-12 curriculums are not encouraged, *unless part of a broader strategy in a STEM readiness program.*

Merit Review Trends
Engagement and Diversity

- Outreach plans did not include mention of how underrepresented or underserved populations would be engaged

- Projects planned to leverage existing relationships with partners who sought to include underrepresented populations but did not seek to build new ones

Applications that scored well on this criterion had a clearly defined plan for how they would engage diverse populations and increase equity in STEM fields

This criterion was sometimes not addressed; or was mentioned but with no clear plan for how to achieve it.

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Merit Review Trends

Assets and Infrastructure

- Assets and infrastructure were identified but not tied to or relevant to the project itself
- Applications may have mentioned the regions overall assets/infrastructure, but connections with key infrastructure components such as innovation pipelines, technology infrastructure, etc. are missing
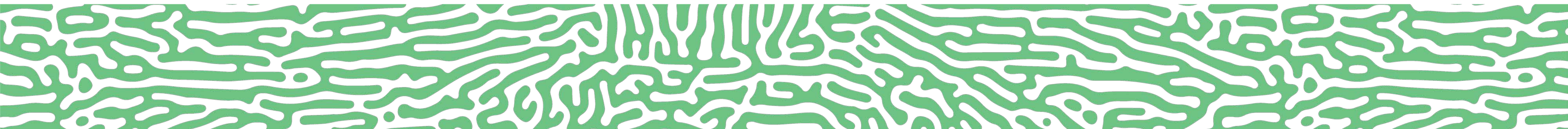
Merit Review Trends

Sustainability & Adaptability

Plans were generic and didn't identify specific funding sources; didn't have clearly defined objectives for outlining funding sources

Sustainability was addressed but not adaptability; did not include plans for how – or with what funding – projects would be adapted

Proposal stated that the project would become self-sustaining, but did not detail how

Merit Review Trends

Project Feasibility

- Projects did not seem to have the staff capacity to support the level of commitment that this would require

- Budget did not seem to line up with the activities of the project narrative

Applications that scored well had budgets that were closely tied to their project narratives

Successful proposals were well-balanced and clearly aligned with all 6 of the review criteria

Because each criterion was worth 10 points, a balanced proposal was key to success

Future Funding Opportunities

Future Funding activities at OIE

Build to Scale

OIE's Flagship program; The Build to Scale Program builds regional economies through scalable startups.

Application period will be open in the coming month(s)

STEM TALENT CHALLENGE

$2M has been appropriated for the FY 2021 iteration of this challenge

Subscribe to the EDA newsletter for updates to the application window

To subscribe, sign up at: https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEDA/subscriber/new

Continuing the Conversation?

How to request one-on-one feedback on your application

Scheduling a 1:1 Call

Steps to complete before requesting a call

- Watch this webinar
- Re-read your STEM Talent Challenge application in its entirety, including budget documents
- Identify areas of strength and weakness to identify on the call
- Make sure to include members of leadership on the call

To schedule a 1:1 call or to ask any other questions, send us an email!

oie@eda.gov