

Cyber and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Pilot Clinic Grant Initiative
Questions and Answers
Updated Nov 24, 2025

Question: How are you defining “clinic”? And is a workforce clinic targeting high school, with some reach back to middle school, considered?

Answer: A “clinic” is a real-world, service-oriented training environment where learners apply cyber and AI skills to support mission-driven organizations such as schools, hospitals, nonprofits, and small businesses. A clinic can target high school students and structured middle-school reach-back, so long as learners gain hands-on experience and the clinic provides meaningful security value to community clients.

Question: Can you provide a sense of the average grant size you anticipate?

Answer: We expect individual awards to fall around \$500k, sufficient to stand up or expand a clinic model that delivers direct services to community clients while providing robust hands-on learning.

Question: Can hiring partners and clients only be based in Maryland, or can they be from the DC, Maryland, and Virginia area?

Answer: Hiring partners may be based in Washington DC and Virginia, but learners must reside in Maryland or be enrolled in a Maryland institution of higher education. Clients must be based in the United States.

Question: Can MD Labor please confirm whether the program allows involvement from out-of-state employers if the clinic itself and its primary activities are based in Maryland?

Answer: Yes, but learners must reside in Maryland or be enrolled in a Maryland institution of higher education.

Question: Is there a minimum or maximum length of time that learners must spend in the clinic?

Answer: No, there is no requirement for the amount of time a learner should spend in the clinic. The length of time a learner spends in the clinic should be based on the design of your clinic, the consortia model and needs of your learners. The length of time learners spend in the clinic will be considered during the application review process.

Question: Does the grant cover the staff's (program manager) salary costs?

Answer: Yes, salaries for individuals that support clinic operations is an allowable cost. More information on allowable costs can be found on pages 13 and 14 of the Request for Proposals document.

Question: Is the number of learners tied to the amount of the award? Is the learner goal 100 per year, or 100 for the entire period of performance?

Answer: Applicants will be expected to train at least 200 current or prospective cybersecurity professionals during the 36-month period of performance. This is reflected in Amendment 1 of the RFP.

Question: Are there any specific locations where the clinic needs to take place?

Answer: While the clinic must have a physical location in Maryland, some of the services may be provided remotely.

Question: Are the client and hiring partner the same?

Answer: An employer may commit to serve as both a client and a hiring partner but it is not required that they participate in both capacities. Clients are organizations that will receive cybersecurity services offered by clinics and delivered by learners. Hiring partners are employers who agree to consider hiring learners who complete an experiential learning opportunity in a cyber clinic. To be considered for funding, an applicant **must** have a letter of commitment from at least one partner who will serve as a client and at least one employer who will serve as a hiring partner. Applicants with letters of commitment from multiple employers to act as clients, or multiple employers who commit to act as hiring partners, will receive preference.

Question: Do all learners have to earn the same certification or have the same clinic experience?

Answer: No. The certifications and clinic experience may differ based upon clinic design and client needs.

Question: Is there a timestamp on the deadline?

Answer: Proposals are due at 11:59 pm on December 10, 2025. Proposals received after the due date will not be considered.

Question: Will there be a set of directions on the application process?

Answer: Applicants are required to submit a narrative (Appendix A), budget (Appendix B), and letters of commitment (Appendix C). All questions in Attachment A of the RFP should be responded to within the narrative (Appendix A). The budget form can be found on the Cyber Maryland [website](#) and should be submitted in .xls format. Appendix C must contain the required letters of commitment from members of the consortium, including a minimum of at least one letter of commitment from an employer that agrees to act as a client and at least one letter of commitment from an employer that agrees to serve as a hiring partner. Applicants should also include letters of commitment from each consortium member in Appendix C. More information on the proposal format and submission instructions can be found in Section 3 of the RFP.

Question: How do you see the role of IT companies in this initiative?

Answer: IT companies can act as a client or hiring partner. Employers that are unable to commit to serve as a client or hiring partner but wish to participate in the consortium may support the project in other ways, including but not limited to curriculum review, providing

mentorship opportunities, equipment, software, etc. These commitments should be memorialized in a letter of commitment and submitted with the application.

Question: What is meant when it says clients can expect to receive "reduced costs" for services? Can clinics or their hiring partners charge for services as well?

Answer: Clinics can charge for services, but any proposed charge will be evaluated as part of the application review process.

Question: Do we have to show a matching or on-hand funding to be eligible? Will there be any matching funds criteria used in selections?

Answer: Matching funds are not required. However, the inclusion of leveraged resources in the budget will be considered in the review process, and the commitment of leveraged resources will strengthen applications.

Question: Are there plans to do any AI-only upskilling to build AI engineers?

Answer: That is not the focus on this RFP.

Question: Can funds be used to provide subsidized wages for learners once they transition to employment after they complete their clinic experience? There are many small employers in our area that don't have the resources to hire, but could benefit with assistance.

Answer: It is not the intent of this solicitation to subsidize wages for learners after they participate in the clinic.

Question: Is this grant a reimbursable grant?

Answer: Yes. Funds are reimbursed after a grantee provides a proper fiscal invoice for completed work.

Question: Are the learners meant to be college level applicants and above? Can high school students participate?

Answer: Yes, high school students may participate as learners in the cyber clinics. That being said, applicants are encouraged to keep in mind the metrics for the grant, including securing full-time, unsubsidized employment following participation in the cyber clinic.

Question: Is there the ability to have some learners be virtual as long as the clinic is physically located in Maryland?

Answer: Yes, but learners must reside in Maryland or be enrolled in a Maryland institution of higher education.

Question: Are there any requirements on training or curricula to be open source or openly available beyond the clinic itself to the State of Maryland? Will the curricula we develop or use become property of the State of Maryland?

Answer: You should develop aligned curricula or use the best curricula available in your training. To the extent practicable and consistent with the law, any intellectual property

developed as a result of a grant award shall remain in the public domain. The requirements with respect to intellectual property will be reflected in the grant agreements.

Question: How many awards will be made?

Answer: The Department anticipates making \$1,000,000 in funding available. With an award ceiling of \$500,000, it is expected that approximately two awards will be made. However, depending upon the strength of applications received, the Department may increase the investment to make additional awards.

Question: With this being a reimbursable grant, is there an invoicing schedule?

Answer: All reporting, including invoices, are due quarterly, 15 days after the end of each quarter.

Question: Is the award up to \$500,000 per year or \$500,000 across all 3 years?

Answer: The award ceiling is \$500,000 for the three-year period of performance.

Question: Can a Cyber Range be used for the Cyber Clinic? What is the difference between them?

Answer: A cyber range is a simulated, controlled environment that replicates a real network to train cybersecurity professionals, test security products, and conduct exercises. It allows individuals and teams to practice hands-on skills like identifying and mitigating cyberattacks in a safe, legal, and risk-free setting without impacting live systems. Cyber clinics provide real-world experience to learners as they provide cybersecurity services to clients who need support.

Question: If a learner opts out of finishing training in order to accept an industry relevant job opportunity, can they be considered a graduate?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Will this RFP be issued yearly? Will the funding ceiling be raised? Will there be similar follow-up grants?

Answer: The Department is exploring a variety of strategies to support the mission of the Cyber Maryland Program.

Question: Are indirect costs/overhead limited? Or can institutions charge our full federally negotiated rate if we have one?

Answer: Indirect costs may not exceed 15% of the total budget, or, if applicable, the rate the applicant has negotiated and received for indirect costs under a direct federal award or from a non-federal entity based on the cost principles in 2 C.F.R. 200.

Question: Can this grant be in tandem with the Maryland Department of Commerce's Build Our Future Grant Pilot Program? This grant also has a cybersecurity focus. Can an applicant receive both?

Answer: Yes.

Question: The solicitation indicates that there are some specific skill expectations for learners to be eligible. Is there any room for any pre-training to get learners to the right level for the clinic?

Answer: Cyber Clinics must ensure learners have the appropriate foundational cyber and AI skills prior to joining the clinic. Applicants are encouraged to utilize leveraged resources to ensure learners acquire those skills. The clinic experience should ensure learners have the appropriate essential and specialized cybersecurity skills to provide, at a minimum, the following services to clients using the most up-to-date AI tools: cyber awareness training, cybersecurity assessments, recommendations for necessary remediations, and additional cyber tasks like cyber engineering, auditing, and threat hunting. Applicants should develop a recruitment plan that targets learners with foundational cyber and AI skills and plan for learners to develop essential and specialized cybersecurity skills. More information can be found on pages 11 and 12 of the Solicitation.

Question: Is there a requirement on the percentage of training or clinic experience that will be conducted in-person vs remote?

Answer: There are no requirements on what percentage of training or clinic experience should be in-person or remote, but applicants are encouraged to develop a training schedule and curriculum that takes into account the clinic design.

Question: Do certifications have to be industry-recognized?

Answer: The intent of this opportunity is not to create new certifications. The certifications that learners receive need to make sense within the context of the design of the clinic. There may be some areas of cybersecurity in which certifications may not make sense anymore, especially with the emergence of AI. If the certifications are not industry-recognized, applicants need to articulate why they are including specific certifications in the proposal.

Question: Learners at Maryland two or four year schools may not be Maryland residents but are enrolled at the school. Will they qualify as eligible learners?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Is there any wage requirement for learners during the clinics, such as a stipend or similar compensation?

Answer: Learner stipends are an allowable cost but there is no minimum or maximum limit on what can be provided.

Question: Can the learners be in a program with other learners from other states or the learners need to only take the program with all Maryland learners?

Answer: Funding for this opportunity is meant to support learners that reside in Maryland and the operation of cyber and AI clinics in Maryland.

Question: If we have a deadline of 9/30/26 to launch the clinic, it may not be possible to achieve 100x3 graduates since year 1 will not be a full year for learners. Is the overall goal 300?

Answer: The RFP has been modified to state that applicants must train 200 learners over the three-year period of performance.

Question: Is there a minimum salary expectation that the learners must earn once they complete the program?

Answer: No.

Question: Is there an upper limit on the amount of cyber training and/or experience learners can have?

Answer: No.

Question: With a \$1M budget and \$500K ceiling, is there an intent for multiple awards and is there a focus for IT and OT training as separate awards?

Answer: The Department anticipates making at least two awards and does not intend to consider operational technology versus information technology when considering proposals for award. The Department will award funds to the strongest proposals.

Question: Do we have to assign a job placement outcome?

Answer: Yes. Page 18 of the RFP lists the outcomes that grantees will be expected to report on. This includes the number of learners who secure full-time, unsubsidized employment in cybersecurity or related technology fields following participation in the clinic.

Question: In terms of timing for job placement, it may be the case that the learners will not graduate during the period of performance.

Answer: Applicants are encouraged to develop a project timeline that would allow learners to complete clinic experience during the period of performance. Grantees will be required to submit a final report six months following the end of the grant to highlight final outcomes.

Question: Demographics wise, learners have to be Maryland residents and eligible to work in the state of Maryland. Any other considerations?

Answer: Applicants are asked to describe a recruitment plan that will reach individuals from underrepresented groups in cybersecurity, including women, people of color, persons with differing abilities, and individuals that reside in [ENOUGH](#) communities.

Question: What are the ENOUGH communities?

Answer: In 2024, the Moore-Miller Administration spearheaded the passage of the Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households (ENOUGH) Act, a law intended to tackle the root causes of poverty in Maryland by addressing inequities and working with impacted communities to develop local solutions. More information about the ENOUGH initiative can be found [here](#).

Question: May we continue to submit questions in writing ? If yes, is there a cut off?

Answer: Questions may be submitted in writing to Seeyew Mo at seeyew.mo@maryland.gov. Questions will be accepted through Friday, November 21, 2025.

Question: Are you at liberty to list some of the other clinics you referenced as examples?

Answer: Information about cyber clinics that are currently operational can be found [here](#).

Question: Is an online-only university that is headquartered in Maryland eligible for this grant?

Answer: To be eligible for this grant, a grantee must have a physical location in Maryland where learners and clients can visit to access services. In addition, learners must reside in Maryland or be enrolled in a Maryland institution of higher education. However, some of the grantee's services may be provided virtually so long as these criteria are met.

Question: Due to the number of requirements included within Attachment A - Competitive Grant Proposal, would MD Labor consider increasing the Attachment A page limit from 10 pages to 15 pages?

Answer: No.

Question: Are applicants permitted to utilize size 10-point font for tables and graphics included within the response?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Are the cover page and table of contents exempt from the 10-page limit of Attachment A - Competitive Grant Proposal?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Can you please confirm whether a for-profit organization with a strong presence in Maryland, applying in partnership with a consortium of representatives from these categories, would be considered an "other organization at MD Labor's discretion"?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Would MD Labor please consider providing an extension beyond the original deadline of December 10, 2025?

Answer: No.

Question: Can MD Labor please confirm that Attachment A - Competitive Grant Proposal Narrative, Attachment B - Budget Narrative, and Attachment C - Letters of Commitment should be three distinct submission files?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Can MD Labor please clarify if the Attachment B - Budget Narrative (10. Budget - a. and b. questions) are exempt from any page limits?

Answer: No.

Question: Does MD Labor intend to have entities like the MD Defense Force/MD National Guard participate as learners?

Answer: Applicants are encouraged to partner with groups with national security missions including, but not limited to, the Maryland Defense Force, Maryland National Guard, and Cyber Resilient Corps Project Franklin. If an applicant wishes to partner with one of these groups, they should collaborate to identify an arrangement that is acceptable to the group.

Question: Is there flexibility in how an applicant defines pathways in Cyber and AI?

Answer: Yes. The solicitation allows for flexibility for applicants to define the specific cybersecurity and AI pathways that make sense for their model and community. The core expectation is that pathways prepare learners for real-world roles, such as mid-skill and technician-level roles that require hands-on experience with both cyber operations and AI-enabled tools.

Question: Are dual-credit or dual-enrollment approaches acceptable components of a clinic model?

Answer: Dual-credit and dual-enrollment components are acceptable as long as they support the clinic's central purpose: delivering hands-on, client-serving experience that builds career-relevant skills. Programs are encouraged to integrate credit-bearing elements if they help learners progress more efficiently into postsecondary pathways, apprenticeships, or employment.