2026-10-13 University-Based ITAC Informational Webinar Q&A's

Eligibility and Who Can Apply

Q: Is this a limited submission for universities?

A: Eligible applicants are four-year institutions that provide engineering degrees, with at least one undergraduate program accredited by the Engineering Accreditation Commission or Technology Accreditation Commission of ABET. The applicant must be located within the accredited engineering department, so a school with only science BS programs would not qualify as the lead applicant.

Q: Perhaps a silly question, but must your university have engineering programs to participate? Is a school with only science BS's able to apply?

A: Yes, engineering programs are required. Eligible applicants are four-year institutions that provide engineering degrees, with at least one undergraduate program accredited by the Engineering Accreditation Commission or Technology Accreditation Commission of ABET. The applicant must be located within the accredited engineering department, so a school with only science BS programs would not qualify as the lead applicant.

Q: Do Track 2 applicants need to be in an ABET-accredited mining program?

A: Ideally, applicants would have ABET-accredited mining engineering programs; however, given the relatively limited number of universities with such programs, eligible applicants are defined as four-year institutions that provide engineering degrees, with at least one undergraduate program accredited by the Engineering Accreditation Commission or Technology Accreditation Commission of ABET.

Q: ITAC has always been a limited submission(one applicant per university and one application per PI). Is it the same this time as well?

A: No. Since it was not specified, you can submit more than one application per university.

Q: The University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown is a regional campus of the University of Pittsburgh and operates its own ABET-accredited four-year engineering programs. Can an ITAC be located at the UPJ and operated through its ME program, with the University of Pittsburgh serving as the legal applicant?

A: The applicant must be located within the engineering department that holds the ABET accreditation.

Q: Must the center director hold tenure?

A: No.

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Q: Can an individual faculty apply for this? Or it need by a university/college?
A: Eligible applicants are four-year institutions that provide engineering degrees, with at least one undergraduate program accredited by the Engineering Accreditation Commission or Technology Accreditation Commission of ABET. The applicant must be located within the accredited engineering department, so a school with only science BS programs would not qualify as the lead applicant.

Q: Can the center director to be from engineering technology ?
A: Programs accredited by ABET's Technology Accreditation Commission (TAC) are eligible, so an accredited engineering technology department can host an ITAC. The page does not set requirements for the center director's home discipline.

Q: Can a university-wide AI Institute lead an ITAC in partnership with an ABET-accredited engineering department, focusing on AI-driven industrial assessments and workforce development?
A: The applicant must be located within the engineering department that holds the ABET accreditation, so an AI Institute likely cannot be the lead applicant itself. It could participate as a partner or sub-applicant; partnerships with formal sub-applicants are strongly encouraged. AI solutions are an explicit part of both tracks' scope.

Q: Can a university-wide AI Institute lead an ITAC with an ABET-accredited engineering department, focusing on AI-driven industrial assessments and workforce development?
A: Same as above: the applicant must be located within the accredited engineering department; an AI Institute could participate as a partner or sub-applicant.

Submission Process and Required Documents

Q: Can you please post a link to the application instructions? I can find a submission portal, but not a description of the required documents
A: The application instructions are in the FAQ section of the opportunity page.

Q: Can we submit letters of commitment for sub-applicants and third-party cost share providers who are not providing cost share, even though letters of support or endorsement are not allowed?
A: Letters of commitment must be submitted from all sub-applicants and third-party cost share providers. The cost-share details (organization name, dollar amount, cash or in-kind) are needed only "if applicable."

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Q: We have relationships with local and state utilities and local trade orgs. Should we submit Letters of Collaboration for each of these even if they do not cost share?

A: If you believe it will help your application. There is no requirement that says the only letter of commitment must be related to cost share.

Q: Would letters from state economic development offices, manufacturing associations, and industry partners be considered if they commit to specific outreach, industry recruitment, workforce development, or coordination activities without requesting project funding?

A: If you believe it will help your application. There are no restrictions on the letter of commitment.

Q: "coordination, leveraging and building upon existing DOE and state programs" is encouraged. How is this coordination expressed without Letters of Support? This coordination is support not warranting a Letter of Collaboration.

A: The letter of support is the same thing letter of commitment/collaboration.

Q: Are non-cost share letters reviewed? (i.e. letters of support that include non-monetary support to the proposed centers)

A: Yes. There is not a limited number of letters of support, but each must be only 1 page long.

Q: The budget spreadsheet doesn't have cells for cost share. Is there a required upload like the DOE budget justification (such as OMB Control Number: 1910-5162) in this stage of the application? If not does that follow selection, with the details of where 20% is coming from later?

A: The budget template has been revised to include cost share on the Opportunity Page.

Q: Do references count toward the 10/15 pages limit or are they excluded as the cover page?

A: No, they do not count towards the page limit; however, reviewers cannot consider any referenced documents, web pages, or other external sources as part of the application.

Q: Does the AOR need to approve the submission through your system (or do the submitting) or is the PI expected to submit without any AOR involvement?

A: Individual PIs may submit applications, however, applications that do not include formal documentation of support from their respective institutions would likely be downgraded under Criterion 4: Project Resources, specifically with respect to the "level of commitment from the proposing college or university and the host department that a Center will have strong administrative support."

Q: Can individual PIs submit, or do submissions have to go through respective sponsored programs at this stage?

A: Individual PIs may submit applications, however, applications that do not include formal documentation of support from their respective institutions would likely be downgraded under Criterion 4: Project Resources, specifically with respect to the "level of commitment from the proposing college or university and the host department that a Center will have strong administrative support."

Applying to Both Tracks

Q: Can IHEs apply for both tracks and be awarded $375,000/annually per track? Additionally, are we required to submit an application per track?

A:Applicants can apply to either or both tracks, and DOE anticipates a maximum allocation of $375,000 per track per year. Each track has its own application link; if applying to both, the project narrative limit increases from 10 to 15 pages.

Q: If a university proposes activities under both Track 1 and Track 2, is the $375,000 annual funding limit applied to the institution's combined activities, or could the university receive separate awards of up to $375,000 annually under each track, for a combined $750,000 per year?

A: Separate: $375K per selected application. If selected for both Track 1 and Track 2, the maximum award would be $750K/year.

Q: Do we submit one application per track or a combined application for both tracks? Each track has its own application link, but the FAQ states, "If an applicant elects to submit a proposal for multiple Tracks, the overall page limit for the project narrative is increased by 5 pages."

A: Submit the same 10–15 page application to both the Track 1 and Track 2 applications, with a single budget.

Q: If a submission is submitted for two tracks, is the decision made to fund both together or none at all or could an entity be funded for one of the tracks they submit alone and not the other (even though they submitted both)

A: Yes. If you get awarded for one, it does not mean that you will automatically get awarded for the other Track application. However, you could also be awarded for both Tracks. Each application is reviewed separately and not as a group.

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Q: If a single lead university applies to and is selected for both Track 1 and Track 2, will each track be considered a separate ITAC for purposes of the $375,000-per-center annual funding limit, allowing a combined maximum federal allocation of $750,000 per year?

A: $375K per selected application. If selected for both Track 1 and Track 2, the maximum award would be $750K/year.

Q: It appears that if an entity wants to submit for two tracks that there is only one set of documents that should be compiled, however it appears that there are two different portals for submitting (one per track). If an entity wants to submit for both tracks should they be submitting twice or once?

A: If an entity is submitting for both Tracks, you will submit the same 10-15 page application for both Track 1 and Track 2 applications.

Q: If an institution applies for both Tracks, is it possible for them to be awarded either Track 1 or Track 2 but not both? Or will will one decision be made regarding their entire application?

A: Yes. If you get awarded for one, it does not mean that you will automatically get awarded for the other Track application. However, you could also be awarded for both Tracks. Each application is reviewed separately and not as a group.

Q: If an educational institution is interested in both Track 1 and 2, does the combined package with the extended length require a single budget or two budgets? If it is a single budget, is the maximum funded amount 2x$375,000 or $750,000 per year?

A: Yes, please provide a single budget if submitting for both Tracks. If selected for both Track 1 and 2, the maximum award amount would be $750k/year.

Q: Can an educational institution apply for both tracks with the intention of hosting both tracks at equal half-time workloads, meaning receiving half the funding for each track?

A: No

Q: If there is a single object for joint application, does it mean that there needs to be a single PI for both?

A: A single PI for both tracks is neither required nor expected.

Q: Can PIs and co-PIs of each track be different if an ITAC is applying for both?

A: Yes

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Q: If applying to both tracks - can we have a director/PI for track 1 and a director/PI for track 2? Especially if different programs in same College are leading each track.
A: Yes

Q: If two organizations plan to partner on both Tracks 1 and 2, is it possible for a combined proposal submission to be submitted where one organization is the lead of Track 1 and the other organization is the lead of Track 2? Or would this require two separate proposal submissions?
A: A single proposal may include different leads (i.e., PIs) for Track 1 and Track 2.

Partnerships, Subawards and Satellite Centers

Q: Can a community college participate in the project as a subawardee under a four-year university serving as the lead institution?
A: Yes

Q: Is there any limitations on the number of co-PIs from the lead organization?
A: There are no formal limits.

Q: Can a university partnering with an existing ITAC receive federal funding for its faculty, students, and assessments? How are funding and cost-sharing responsibilities divided?
A: Partnerships are strongly encouraged, including formal sub-applicants, and sub-applicants must meet the general eligibility requirements.

Q: Can a university with strong manufacturing expertise but limited energy-assessment experience partner with external energy specialists to meet Track 1 requirements?
A: Partnerships with other stakeholders, including formal sub-applicants and implementation partners, are strongly encouraged. Reviewers will score team qualifications and experience with SMEs (Criterion 2, 25%).

Q: Is there a limit on the number of satellite centers an ITAC can establish, and are there restrictions on allocating federal funding to those centers?
A: No and no

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Budget, Cost Share and Overhead

Q: Does DOE require 20% of Total Project costs or 20% of Total Direct Costs?

A: 20% cost share will be based off the total project costs [non-federal / (federal + non-federal)].

Q: What is the basis of the 20% cost share? Is that 20% of the proposed federal outlays, or 20% of the total award amount (federal + cost share)?

A: 20% cost share will be based off the total project costs [non-federal / (federal + non-federal)].

Q: Can the university support the 20% cost share in terms of faculty time and materials?

A: Yes. In-kind costs have been used previously for cost share.

Q: is the $375k/year/track a strict requirement per year or just an average of $375k/year across the 5 years?

A: $375K/year is the number we use from budgeting standpoints in regards to how much money we have, expect to spend overall, and our congressional appropriation. This could vary slightly, but the overall target is #375k/year.

Q: Does the $375K/year have to be spent each year or is rollover allowed?

A: This is a firm fixed price award and milestone based. You get paid to complete milestones. We are not concerned if there is rollover. If there is additional funding, it should be used for the program.

Q: How will funding be disbursed under the B2B agreement? Will payments be tied to specific milestones/deliverables? If so, will payment amounts for specific deliverables be standardized across Track 1 centers or negotiated individually?

A: These will be realistically standardized. There may be a few circumstances where there may be slight variation, but the intent is to standardize across all Track 1 centers.

Q: The total annual max award ($375k) and target assessments (20) are the same as 5 years ago. Costs are higher. Is it the intent of DOE that centers will be expended to be significantly more cost efficient or being more cost share to complete the assessments than in the past?

A: There is no implication on cost share to complete the assessment, and the budget is higher than 5 years prior. 20 is negotiable.

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Q: Overhead and cost share math: can we charge the University's 56% overhead rate on the federal funds (we know it can count in cost share)? Is the 20% cost share figured on the federal request or the total project?

A: This is a firm fixed price award and milestone based. You get paid to complete milestones. 20% cost share will be based off the total project costs [non-federal / (federal + non-federal)].

Q: Are there any restrictions on the funding allocation in terms of salaries, equipment, etc?

A: The award is firm fixed price and milestone based; payments are tied to completed milestones.

Q: For new centers, should new equipment like data loggers be part of the proposed budget? Or will there be a separate initial fund available to new centers?

A: New equipment costs should be included as part of the proposed budget. There is no separate initial fund for new centers.

Q: Whether the funding comes from DoE or EnergyWerx can affect the F&A rate we have to apply to our direct costs, (i.e., a higher rate means you get less for the same amount of funding) so it matters whether it is considered federal pass-through or whether we are contracting with a private business.

A: DEFENSEWERX (DWX) dba EnergyWerx (ENWX) is an established Partnership Intermediary between DOE and small businesses, small/medium manufacturers, state/local governments, academia, tribal organizations, nonprofits, and other entities that do not typically work with the US government (USG) or DOE. Once selected, the agreement and all milestone payments are issued by ENWX, a non-profit entity and all payments will be issued a 1099 by DWX at the conclusion of each tax year.

Q: Can faculty effort, existing lab facilities, equipment usage, and innovation center resources count toward the 20% cost share? What documentation is required?

A: For additional information about cost share please see 7 CFR 1486.400. For additional information on eligible cost share, please see 7 CFR 1486.401.

Q: Previous calls reserved $25,000/yr towards faculty and student research awards, is that still the case?

A: Applicants are free to propose reserving funding to support faculty and/or student research awards.

Q: Are postdoctoral researchers eligible to receive salary support under a Track 1 award? If so, are there any restrictions on the roles or activities that may be supported

(e.g., conducting assessments, supervising students, research, or program administration)?
A: Applicants may propose postdoctoral researchers as members of their respective teams and there are no restrictions on their roles/activities except that they cannot serve as the PI or Co-PI because they are not faculty members.

Assessments: Targets, Client Eligibility and Scope

Q: how strictly is the employee threshold applied? E,g., if an individual mining operation has approx 700 employees, but Gross annual sales below 250 million, could that operation still qualify for ITAC services, or must an eligible operation satisfy both the employee and Gross annual sales thresholds?
A: Standard Track 2 clients must have gross annual sales below $250M AND fewer than 500 employees, so an operation with about 700 employees would not meet the standard criteria. ITACs may provide a limited number of DOE-approved "special assessments" falling outside the criteria.

Q: May an ITAC focus on individual mine sites or operations rather than evaluating eligibility at the parent company level? E.g, individual operation has < 500 employees and sales < 250 mil, but the parent company exceeds those thresholds, would that individual operation be eligible for ITAC services?
A: The idea is for it to be by site, not by company. However with Track 2 being a brand new Track, there may potentially be exceptions.

Q: Does manufacturing fit into track 1? Also, do you consider additive, subtractive, upscaling and recycling as part of track 1?
A: Yes. Track 1 is the traditional manufacturing ITAC, serving SMEs in SIC codes 20–39 and 49 with gross annual sales below $250M, fewer than 500 employees, and annual energy bills between $100,000 and $3.5M.

Q: If a Track 1 applicant proposes 15 assessments/year rather than the historical target of 20, should the applicant also scale its requested funding below $375,000/year, or could the full amount be justified based on the overall proposed scope and milestones?
A: The full amount is justified based on the overall proposed scope and milestones.

Q: What is the number of assessments expected of centers per year and per track?
A: Roughly 20 assessments.

Q: Previous iterations of the program expected 20 assessments/year. Does Track 1 have a minimum or expected number of assessments/year? Would an applicant

proposing 12 assessments per year still be considered fully competitive, or would proposing fewer than 20 negatively affect the application?
A: 20 is not a firm fixed number, but the target that we try to aim for.

Q: Is the 500-employee and $250M test for Track 2 applied per plant site or per company?
A: The idea is for it to be by site, not by company. However with Track 2 being a brand new Track, there may potentially be exceptions.

Q: Does Track 2 need to meet the 150 mile radius requirement? Can the mining company be located well beyond the 150 mile radius requirement? (edited)
A: No.

Q: Is Track 2 intended to include oil and gas extraction facilities (SIC 13)? Or should these be excluded to maintain a focus on mining and mineral processing?
A: Yes. Track 2 serves SMEs in SIC codes 10–14, 32, and 33, which includes SIC 13 (oil and gas extraction). However, the intent of the solicitation is to focus on mining and mineral processing activities, so the final negotiated statement of performance objectives (SOPO) would likely exclude these facilities.

Q: For Track 2, targeting 20 per year is really impossible to achieve. Does DoE have any specific numbers in mind as a reasonable assessment?
A: 20 is a target, not a firm fixed number, and is negotiable.

Students and Certification

Q: Student certificate: what certificate must half of incoming students earn, and what does a student have to do to earn it (number of assessments, semesters)? How is "incoming student" defined?
A: The certificate is a DOE credential and not defined by the University. It is largely based on assessments and the assessment of the director's evaluation of the students performance relative to a set number of criteria.

Q: Our certified students tend to stay with the program - as opposed to leaving in a year. If the goal is to have 50% of the incoming students becoming certified, will we be expected to "push certified students out" of the program in order to make room for more of them in following years?

A: ITACs must "train both new and existing students annually" and issue certificates to at least half of the number of incoming students annually, so retaining returning students is expected.

Q: Is there any guidance on how many new versus returning students should be trained per year and if there is a preference or requirement for undergrad/grad?
A: The mix of graduate versus undergraduate students is entirely up to the Center Director and the individual university. The same answer applies to the mix of new versus returning students.

Selection Criteria and Geography

Q: Does DOE consider geographic proximity to existing ITAC centers when evaluating new applications? For example, could a university in South Florida establish a new center even though another university in the same region already operates an ITAC?
A: We consider region since we are trying to cover the country. However, geographic location is not a restriction on eligibility.

Q: How does DOE evaluate applications from universities that have not previously operated an ITAC compared with established ITAC centers? Is prior ITAC experience a significant consideration in the selection process?
A: We evaluate applications based on the quality of applications. There is no incumbent credit.

Q: Are you expecting to renew for most of the current 36 active centers?
A: We do not have any expectations on that. The only rule of thumb that dictates if you are selected or not is the quality of your application.

Q: Does DOE consider geographic gaps in the existing ITAC network when evaluating applications? For example, there appear to be no university-based ITACs in the six-state region of ND, SD, MN, IA, MT, and WY. Would a proposal explicitly focused on serving this underserved region be viewed favorably?
A: DOE considers region because it is trying to cover the country, but geographic location is not an eligibility restriction.

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Transition for Existing Centers

Q: Would the new program be compatible with a no-cost extension of the current program for an existing center? Could this be worked out in negotiations?

A: This is going to be a clean-slate circumstance. We will not be harmonizing the current program for an existing center.

Q: We have lined up assessments beyond our contract number, shall we schedule them after the program is renewed?

A: The current 36 ITACs complete their five-year projects at the end of 2026, and DOE selection is expected in winter 2026. This is going to be a clean-slate circumstance. We will not be harmonizing the current program for an existing center.