



# Artificial Intelligence (AI) Skills Training in EDA Programs

June 29, 2026

Some analysts have observed that artificial intelligence (AI) may impact national and regional economies and [job markets](#) in ways that [vary](#) depending on the [industry](#), [skills](#), and [region](#) (geography). For decades, economic development practitioners have noted that a [skilled technical workforce](#) is important to regional development as well as national competitiveness and innovation. Congress has expressed [interest](#) in workforce and economic development strategies that are responsive to the role of AI in the U.S. labor market and regional economies.

Congress oversees multiple federal agencies that support workforce and economic development programs, including those administered by the [Economic Development Administration](#) (EDA). Since mid-2025, EDA has incorporated aspects of AI training and skills development into guidance for select grant programs and launched a pilot program focused on AI skills training.

At the same time, the Trump Administration has issued multiple reports outlining the ways in which existing federal policies can support AI training and economic development. Beginning in 2025, the Trump Administration issued multiple executive orders (EOs) and reports on AI that included considerations for AI workforce development. For instance, in July 2025, the Administration published the [AI Action Plan](#), which identified AI pilot initiatives and roles for several agencies, including EDA, to implement through existing workforce and economic development programs. In August 2025, the Administration published a report, [America's Talent Strategy \(Talent Strategy\)](#), outlining how the Administration plans to use existing program authorities for AI reskilling and how it plans to revise existing workforce training programs to help workers and businesses prepare for AI.

This report summarizes recent AI-related efforts undertaken by EDA and select considerations for Congress. EDA's actions are part of a broader response to the potential impacts of AI on the U.S. labor market and regional economies; the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Departments of Education, Energy, and Labor have also developed AI education and training initiatives. For additional CRS reports on AI, see CRS Insight IN12458, [Artificial Intelligence: CRS Products](#).

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IN12699

## EDA Program Overview

EDA administers grant programs that fund economic development activities, primarily through competitive processes that solicit community-directed proposals aligned with the agency's statutorily established [investment priorities](#). Many EDA grant programs are flexible and can be used for one or more activities, such as workforce development, infrastructure development, or planning. In January 2025, P.L. 118-272 [reauthorized EDA](#) and established a new authority specifically for workforce training grants.

## AI Elements in Existing and New EDA Programs

### Existing Programs

Since mid-2025, EDA has integrated options for AI adoption in workforce training projects supported by the Public Works and EAA (PWEAA) program. EDA included guidance in the FY2025 [PWEAA Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#) that workforce projects “should include AI skill development where relevant and feasible” and “be aligned to the [Administration’s] ... [Talent Strategy](#),” which includes five strategic pillars. The pillars, such as flexibility and innovation and integrated systems, outline an interest in coordinated, data-informed, and adaptable workforce systems so that workers may gain new skills to meet changing industry needs.

Prior to integrating AI-specific guidance into the PWEAA NOFO, EDA awarded a number of grants to expand the AI workforce and support aspects of AI adoption as part of its support of [regional innovation strategies](#). In 2022, for example, EDA provided [Build Back Better Regional Challenge \(BBBRC\)](#) grants to a [manufacturing coalition](#) and a [regional development organization](#) to help train workers and accelerate business AI adoption. In 2024, several [implementation awards](#) for EDA's [designated Tech Hubs](#) included AI-related project activities.

### New Pilot Program: AI Upskill Accelerator

In May 2026, EDA announced \$25 million in funding for a new grant initiative—the [AI Upskill Accelerator Pilot \(AI Upskill\) Program](#)—that will use a [sectoral partnership](#) approach to address “opportunities created through AI adoption and workforce upskilling.” Through these partnerships, public and private entities are to work collaboratively to train and place workers in AI positions for in-demand sectors. According to [EDA](#), the pilot program may also advance innovation and technology commercialization objectives by training workers with skills to use AI productively.

The funding is available through an addendum to the FY2025 PWEAA NOFO under the agency's authority for workforce training grants established under P.L. 118-272 (42 U.S.C. §3154e). [EDA](#) plans to make 5-8 awards for projects ranging from \$1 million to \$8 million.

## Select Considerations

A perennial debate in economic and workforce development policy centers on the integration of educational and government training systems and their capacities to align with private sector training needs. Like other existing federal workforce training programs, the AI Upskill program allows grantees to address industry- and community-specific conditions and requires private sector input. [Stakeholder groups](#) and [researchers](#) note that aligning AI skills training with industry needs may be particularly challenging because of the rapid pace of AI technology development and implementation.

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As a pilot program, EDA plans to [evaluate projects](#) to glean best practices that may be used to inform future programs, models, and approaches. Congress may also seek to study the types of regions, tasks, occupations, and industries likely to be impacted by AI as it develops policies involving EDA and other agencies. The *AI Action Plan*, for instance, calls for an evaluation of AI’s impact on the labor market and firm-level AI adoption trends. Congress may wish to review the analysis upon completion and consider it in future legislation or conduct its own inquiries.

Congress could also address AI-related industry issues through continuing to provide EDA with discretion to adopt AI-specific policies, allow nonfederal grantees to determine the focus of their economic development interventions and strategies on a project-by-project basis, or use a combination of these. If interested in potential [regional disparities](#) in “AI readiness,” Congress may evaluate options to further target economically distressed areas with training, [regional innovation](#), or related policies.

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