



## Relocation Opportunity for Outstanding Talent (ROOT) Grant Program

### Background

The cost of moving can be a significant barrier to relocating for work, often deterring individuals from pursuing new job opportunities. Expenses associated with relocation, such as hiring movers, transportation, temporary housing, and even utility connection fees, can add up quickly. Employers that offer relocation assistance can provide it either in advance or upon arrival, depending on company policies and the nature of the relocation package. Some employers offer upfront assistance, covering expenses like moving services, travel costs, and temporary housing directly, or providing a lump sum payment to help cover costs before the move. This approach is particularly helpful for employees who need financial support to manage the immediate expenses of relocation.

Relocation assistance can be a highly effective tool for employers to fill in-demand jobs, especially in industries facing talent shortages. By offering financial support to cover moving expenses, companies can widen their candidate pool to include qualified workers who may otherwise be unable or unwilling to relocate due to the high costs associated with moving. This incentive can be particularly appealing for positions in fields like tech, healthcare, and engineering, where specific skills are in high demand but the local talent supply may be limited, according to the Society for Human Resource Management Employee Relocation Toolkit.

This is especially important in rural or lower-income regions where it might be harder to attract qualified professionals due to lower wages, fewer amenities, or limited housing options. Relocation assistance not only makes the move more feasible but also signals that the employer or community values their contribution and is willing to invest in their well-being. For educators, in particular, relocation packages can help districts struggling to fill teaching positions, ensuring that students have access to quality education. In both sectors, relocation support can lead to better staffing outcomes, improved services, and a stronger connection between professionals and the communities they serve.

The purpose of this workforce solution strategy is to evaluate and demonstrate the effectiveness of relocation assistance in filling critical roles in the North Dakota workforce.

### **Effective March 4, 2025 - June 30, 2025.**

Employers can access up to \$5,000 of matching funds for each candidate the business is eligible for. A 1:1 match is required. An additional \$500 per candidate is available if the applicant is identified in the Find the Good Life Candidate Marketplace. The additional \$500 for candidates identified through the Marketplace is not subject to match.

## Business Eligibility

Employers must be located and registered in North Dakota. Out-of-state candidates must be relocating to North Dakota and cannot currently live within **100 miles** of the job site. **Relocation assistance can be used for airfare, moving vehicles, securing rental housing, transfer of licensure, exams or other costs related to relocation and requirements to fill the role for which they have been hired.**

Employers with 5-20 employees are eligible to apply for up to 5 individuals.

Employers with 20-50 employees are eligible to apply for up to 10 individuals.

Employers with 50-100 employees are eligible to apply for up to 15 individuals.

Employers with 100 or more employees are eligible to apply for up to 20 individuals.

For a position to be eligible for relocation assistance, there must be an expectation that the individual will remain employed in the position for at least one-year.

The primary focus of the ROOT program is to support public and private sector employers who are hiring out-of-state job seekers into in-demand occupations. In-demand occupations are determined using the [Workforce Development Council's listing](#). Funding may also be granted for other high demand occupations and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

\*State agencies are not eligible to apply

## Business Requirements

Positions must be considered in-demand occupations. Businesses must be able to demonstrate that relocation is possible to the community or within a reasonable commuting distance. The position must be located in North Dakota with the position's work being performed in North Dakota.

A business must include a one-year employment requirement for any position being included in the request for grant funding. If an individual does not remain in the position for at least one-year, the business may be required to reimburse a pro-rated amount of the grant funds provided for the position. The determination for reimbursement will be made by the Department on a case-by-case basis.

## Business Recommendations

Commerce recommends posting positions on the following websites:

- Job Service North Dakota - [www.ndworkforceconnection.com](http://www.ndworkforceconnection.com), and
- College and university career services offices.

## Candidate Recommendations

Commerce recommends that the candidates:

- Be a United States citizen or have permanent legal immigration status,
- Meet all requirements to be licensed and practice in North Dakota based on any occupational licensure requirements for the positions.

## Business Responsibility

Commerce requires employers to:

- Sign and return to Commerce within 14 business days of position posting:
  - One signed copy of the Letter of Agreement, and

- Job description/posting that includes relocation language.
- Register with the Office of Management and Budget to receive payment: <https://www.nd.gov/omb/vendor/vendor-payments> (If you have previously registered but have not received any state payments within the past 18 months, please contact OMB to be re-activated at 701-328-2773.)
- Maintain documentation of wages paid and/or other compensation and provide to Commerce upon request.
- Submit a completed Request for Funds form once employee has relocated to North Dakota and employee has received their first employer compensation. Failure to submit the Request for Funds form by the end of the program year may result in loss of access to the funding.
- The employer is responsible for selecting and hiring candidates.
- The employer is responsible for retention of employees for a minimum of one year. If the employee ends employment voluntarily prior to one (1) year, grantee is required to notify the state of the employee's departure and will be responsible for a pro-rated reimbursement of the grant amount.

Approximately 10% of participating businesses are reviewed annually for fiscal and employee verification. If a business is selected, documentation of expenses and verification of employment must be provided, or funding will need to be returned.

## Funding

The maximum amount of ROOT funds an employer can receive per funding round is based on employer size, number of employees, and level of grant requested up to the maximum per position. Funding will be open until all funds are obligated and spent. The funding will start on March 4, 2025.

Applications will be accepted beginning on March 4, 2025.

Application reviews will be completed by the Workforce Division of the North Dakota Department of Commerce. Applications will be reviewed in the order received. A company's eligibility will be based on ability to demonstrate challenges to filling critical vacancies, relocation feasibility based on housing availability, and match funds identified. Funding will then be obligated to the companies that have met all guidance eligibility.

## Match

A one-to-one match or more of relocation and hiring incentives to the employee is required. Examples of compensation are hiring bonus, costs related to the ability to license or practice in North Dakota, and relocation expenses paid by the employer.

The one-to-one matching grant funds are provided after relocation has occurred and work has been performed for the initial employee pay period. Documentation of wages paid and/or other compensation provided must be maintained by the employer and made available upon request. Commencement of funding as outlined in the terms of the Letter of Agreement.

## Application Process

Applications must be submitted via the portal. For any questions related to the ROOT Program, please contact Janna Pastir, Deputy Director, Workforce Development Division at the North Dakota Department of Commerce, 701-328-5393 or [japastir@nd.gov](mailto:japastir@nd.gov).

## Application Questions (To be completed in portal):

Employer name

Employer Address

Employer EIN

Total number of employees

Total number of relocation grant positions being requested

Industry: Education, Healthcare, Financial, Engineering & Architecture, Information Technology, Skilled Trade, Social Service, Management, Transportation, Sales, Professional/Other Occupation (from [In-Demand](#)

[Occupations](#)):

1. How many positions for this occupation are currently vacant and are being applied for?
2. Is this occupation essential to operations? Please explain.
3. How long has this position(s) been vacant?
4. Where have the positions been posted to date?
5. What costs have been used in the recruitment of this position? (Job fairs, recruitment services, job posting ads and boosting services, etc.)
6. Have any offers been made to candidates that were not accepted?
7. Have any candidates that did not accept job offers share the reason? Was cost to relocate ever indicated as a barrier?
8. Have hiring bonuses or relocation incentives been offered in the past for this occupation? If so, what was the maximum dollar amount?
9. Is this employer enrolled in the Find the Good Life Candidate Marketplace?

Supplemental documentation to upload include existing job descriptions/postings, commitment of match, and if match is from a third party. The portal will ask if there are additional positions being requested for. If yes, additional position dropdowns will open to complete. Employers can request up to the allowed number of positions based on employer size, all at once. Employers can submit more than one request during the grant time period but cannot exceed the total number of positions.

## Reporting Requirements:

1. Length of time position was open.
2. Number of qualified applicants.
3. How applicants heard of the position.
4. Where employees relocated from.
5. If relocation influenced decision to accept the position.
6. Did the employee relocate with a partner or family?
  - a. Number of individuals that relocated as a result of employment of the individual.
7. If the employee was found through the Find the Good Life Candidate Marketplace.
8. What feedback did you receive, if any, about the relocation assistance being offered?
9. Did the employee report any unexpected challenges to the relocation process?
10. Based on your experience offering relocation, do you anticipate this will be something that you will budget for in the future to offer to more candidates?
11. Signed hiring incentive and relocation agreement(s).
12. Documentation of first pay period.
13. Documentation of 12 months of employment.