North Dakota Regional Workforce Impact Program

Section I Grant Information

A. Background

The Department of Commerce received an appropriation from the 69th North Dakota Legislative Assembly to provide support to organizations addressing workforce challenges and barriers to employment through the ND Regional Workforce Impact Program (RWIP). The RWIP provides grants to regional workforce entities in North Dakota to plan, design, and implement innovative plans to address their region's most demanding workforce challenges. The grant program is designed to encourage regions and communities to develop sustainable, innovative solutions to help businesses find workers, and help workers and jobseekers connect to jobs and communities. The RWIP grant aims to support the cost of local solutions that will have a broad impact through a community or region. Funds may be provided as a resource to implement a long-term, sustainable solution to permanently mitigate workforce participation issues in a community or region. Single business solutions are not eligible.

B. Purpose

The goal of the Regional Workforce Impact Program is to empower locally led solutions to one of the state's greatest challenges. Workforce needs vary by region throughout North Dakota, so a one size fits all approach is unrealistic and would not adequately address challenges in all parts of the state. By creating a regional funding mechanism to support workforce initiatives, local and regional partners have the opportunity to articulate their needs and the ability to access funding to address them. The Department of Commerce aims to increase participation in the workforce statewide by equipping communities with resources to invest in initiatives that are catered to the needs of employers in their region.

An application's proposed solution must be a sector strategy which will require each project to connect with a prominent industry that is in the region. This program will assist applicants in funding workforce initiatives through two separate tracks.

- Track A: Sector Strategy Planning
- Track B: Implementation of sector strategy plans that have been created in the last 5 years.

These sector strategies must promote economic stability and prosperity by addressing workforce challenges. The Department of Commerce encourages utilizing new and existing collaborations of regional partners and employers to leverage resources that foster the development of partnerships to implement sustainable workforce development solutions.

A sector strategy is a targeted plan that focuses on the development and growth of a specific industry or economic sector, aligning workforce development (WFD) efforts with the current and future needs of employers in that field. Its primary purpose is to ensure a skilled and competitive

workforce by bridging the gap between labor market demand and the available talent pipeline. Sector strategies are often informed by labor market data, employer input, and regional economic priorities. Workforce development initiatives that can be built into a sector strategy include industry-specific training programs, apprenticeship or internship opportunities, career pathway development, partnerships with educational institutions, upskilling and reskilling for incumbent workers, and support services that help individuals enter and remain in the workforce. These initiatives are designed to meet employer needs while also providing individuals with sustainable career opportunities. (Note: Applicants pursuing a strategy that includes training are encouraged to apply for the Technical Skills Training Grant through Commerce).

Collaboration to develop initiatives that address the region's most pressing workforce challenges and impact various geographies and/or populations throughout the region representing both rural and urban is encouraged; however, it is not required. Each project will be submitted on its own application. A single application on behalf of the region is not required. Applicants must be able to articulate the greatest impact possible to the region as a whole. Please note that regions are defined as the eight planning regions.

To ensure equitable access to these grant dollars, a portion of funding is reserved for each of the eight planning regions based on population as provided by the 2020 decennial US Census. Applicants are required to demonstrate 25% match for each project. Below is the breakout of maximum funding amount per region and the counties that are included in each region. Funds will not be reallocated to other regions after application rounds. All regional allocations are final.

Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
$536,455	$635,705	$489,562	$620,767	$919,917	$531,219	$788,983	$515,134
Divide	Bottineau	Benson	Grand Forks	Cass	Barnes	Burleigh	Adams
McKenzie	Burke	Eddy	Nelson	Ransom	Dickey	Emmons	Billings
Williams	McHenry	Cavalier	Pembina	Richland	Foster	Grant	Bowman
	Mountrail	Ramsey	Walsh	Sargent	Griggs	Kidder	Dunn
	Pierce	Rolette		Steele	LaMoure	McLean	Golden Valley
	Renville	Towner		Trail	Logan	Mercer	Hettinger
	Ward				McIntosh	Morton	Slope
					Stutsman	Oliver	Stark
					Wells	Sheridan	
						Sioux	

To qualify, applicants must apply within only one of the two Tracks listed below per application. All applications in Track A and B are eligible for up to $150,000:

- Track A: Comprehensive Strategic Planning
    - This application must include partnership with at least one, and no more than two, industries which the sector strategy will benefit.
    - Industry partners must be a part of the project team.
    - The plan must be completed by a 3rd party consultant of disinterest
    - The deliverable from Track A projects must include the sector's strategic plan with the final narrative
    - All projects require more than one partner within the selected industry for which the applicant is applying. Single business solutions are not eligible.
- Track B: Implementation of a Sector Strategy developed with the last five years.
    - The established strategy must be included in the grant application.
        - Applicants are required to have a sector strategy plan established within the last 5 years in order to apply for implementation
    - Implementation strategies can include, talent attraction marketing, retention, and other strategies that were analyzed within the plan for attracting and retaining workers
        - If strategies include talent attraction marketing or retention those applications must leverage the existing statewide talent attraction platform and pipeline to recruit employees nationwide and retain students and recent graduates.

- Industry partners must be a part of the project team.
- Skill Development can be apart of the plan, but can not be a part of the implementation phase as this may be funded through other funding opportunities (i.e. Technical Skills Training Grant, etc.)
- All projects require more than 1 partner in each industry the applicant is applying for. This is not a single business solution.

Grant funds must be used for newly proposed activities and cannot be applied toward projects that are duplicative of state-funded initiatives. Grant funds cannot supplant an existing budget. Grant and match funds can only cover expenses during the term of the agreement. Grant funds must be spent by June 30, 2027.

C. Eligible Applicants and Projects

Eligible applicants include the following types of North Dakota-based organizations:

Eligible applicants include

- Economic Development Organizations
- Cities (must be incorporated)
- Counties
- Chambers of Commerce
- Job Development Authorities
- Tribal Entities
- Regional Councils
- Regional Education Association
- Convention and Visitors Bureau
- NOTE
  - Projects and populations impacted must be in North Dakota.
  - Enhancements to projects previously funded by RWIP and in one of the Tracks categories stated above may be eligible.

Eligible projects include

- Enhancement or expansion of previously funded talent attraction or retention strategies may be eligible, but must be included in the sector-specific strategic plan.
- Comprehensive Strategic Planning
- Implementation of a Sector Strategy developed within the last five years.

Applicants may submit no more than 2 applications during open application windows. Each project must clearly show how it is expanding upon workforce solutions and cannot be an extension of any current or previously funded projects or current applications.

D. Ineligible Applicants and Projects

Ineligible applicants include:

- Applicants that reside outside of North Dakota
- Individuals
- Political organizations subject to tax under IRC section 527, such as political parties; campaign committees for candidates for federal, state, or local office; lobbying organizations, and political action committees.
- Institutions of postsecondary education
- School districts and private schools
- Private Businesses
- Childcares

Ineligible projects include:

- Project with a sector strategy plan created over 5 years ago applying for Track B.
- Program that are duplicative of state resources or programs
- Subsidized or Supplanted projects that are an extension and do not clearly show how they are expanding upon their current or previous funds by RWIP, Technical Skills Training Grant, and/or Workforce Innovation Grant funds.
- Investments in childcare including training or capital investment for infrastructure development. (Alternate Funding Sources Found in ATTACHMENT A)
- Housing projects that include capital investment for property, structure, or construction. (Alternate Funding Sources Found in ATTACHMENT A)
- Workforce training programs to upskill, reskill, or prepare new and existing staff. (Alternate Funding Sources Found in ATTACHMENT A)
- Funds cannot be used for lobbying at the local, state, or federal level.
- Track A proposal currently awarded and under agreement
- Single business solutions

E. Administration

The Regional Workforce Impact Program is administered by the Workforce Development Division of the Department of Commerce. References to 'division' throughout this guide are in reference to the Workforce Development Division.

Questions may be directed to:
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ND Department of Commerce
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Bismarck, North Dakota 58502-2057
Phone: 701-328-5324
E-mail: ejmoser@nd.gov

Section II Grant Proposals

A. Proposal Requirements

All application materials **MUST** be submitted online at: (The link will be here once application window is open). The items listed below will need to be completed and/or uploaded as part of the applicant's submission.

- Complete vendor registration with Office of Management and Budget to receive payment (if you have never received or have not received payment from the state within the past 12 months): Supplier Registration
- Upload Letters of Commitment from all partners and sub-recipients identified in the proposal

Grant proposals must follow the format shown in Part B Proposal Format and Part C, Proposal Submission (below). Proposals that fail to meet the criteria set in Part B and C will not be rated until clarification or additional information is sufficient for the proposal rating process.

B. Proposal Format

Ensure a detailed proposal that clearly explains the project, targeted industry, milestones to achieve, population served, and impact to the region. **An application may contain only one project. If an application is submitting multiple projects, they must submit a separate application for each project.** Within the proposal format you will see points awarded to each section. The scoring will be done in 1 point increments up to 3. This scoring will be 1=Did not meet requirements, 2=Meets Requirements, and 3=Exceeds Requirements. To be considered for award, you will need to meet or exceed 20 points overall.

C. Proposal Submission

The department requires this section be used as the template for all applications.

Proposal elements must include the following sections:

Project Description (24 points)

Project Needs Statement (6 points)

Project Need - (3 points)

Identify the workforce challenges facing your region and any reason identified as a contributing cause. Identify who is impacted by the workforce challenges including if the challenge is unique or disproportionate to underserved populations. Underserved populations may include, but are not limited to people with disabilities, women, veterans, justice-involved persons, low-and moderate-income individuals, individuals transitioning out of homelessness, workers with lower levels of educational attainment, workers of color

and other minority groups. Identify at least one metric that will be used to determine impact and provide the current status of that metric.

Describe and define the geographic extent of the challenge and the proposed solution; include the populations, municipalities and/or counties impacted. Provide data, research and/or evidence to support the project need and include how you engaged with affected stakeholders to support the project need.

Identify the number of individuals projected to be impacted on or prior to June 30, 2027. All programs must include program capacity. Existing programs must identify current and projected capacity after expansion.

Project Approach - (3 points)
How did you determine that the identified issue is not being addressed (or fully addressed) through existing programs and/or funding in your region? Explain how this project provides a solution to minimize the workforce challenges and goes beyond the status quo in your region. If your project is based on solutions that have been successfully implemented in other regions, provide information about those outcomes. Provide data, research, and evidence to support your proposed approach to address the workforce challenge.

Project Description (3 points)

Project Description - (3 points)
Describe the proposed project, as aligned with which track you are applying for, and how it meets the stated need and critical workforce challenges of the region. Prioritize sector partnerships that will implement the most impact. If you are applying for Track A go into detail the sector strategy and the plan itself. If you are applying for Track B go into detail the Sector Strategy plan from within the last 5 years and how you will be implementing the Sector Strategy Plan. You will be required to attach the Sector Strategy Plan with the application in order for full review.

Partnerships and Collaborations (3 points)

Partner Experience, Communication and Coordination - (3 points)
Describe the regional partners and industry partners involved in the proposed workforce solution; describe each partner's experience and expertise providing relevant services/solutions in the region and how that experience will benefit the project. What role will each partner play? How does this collaboration support objectives and outcomes? What assurances are there that each partner will maintain its commitment for the length of the project? Industry partners must be invested and help fund the match required.

Describe how partners were involved in identifying the proposed workforce solution. How will communication and coordination with partners be maintained through the project

period to maintain accountability and meet program objectives? Provide letters of support from within the region that these organizations have reviewed the project and are on board. **At least 3** unique letters of support are required. If you are not a regional council you will be required to provide a letter of support from the regional planning council in your region.

Applicant Capability and Staffing (3 points)

Grant Management (3 points)

Describe the lead organization's experience in managing local, state, or federal grant programs within the last five years; please provide specific examples and details of the experience. Please indicate who specifically will be responsible for grant management activities as part of this project, and their grant management and reporting experience. The name and contact information for the individual managing the grant should be included in this section.

Outlook and Project Sustainability (9 points)

Sustainability (3 points)

Describe the resources and activities that the applicant will employ to ensure deliverables of the workforce project will continue beyond the grant period. Be specific about the financial and human resources that will continue and who will be responsible for ensuring continuation. If a project is intended to be a one-time expense, note this information accordingly.

Implementation Schedule (3 points)

Describe the activities and outcomes of the proposed project. Include the timeline for implementation, and project milestones. If you are applying for a planning project your timeline will not include implementation, but will contain the timeline for the required research and planning. Include long term impact of the Sector Strategy Plan.

- Grant funds must be spent by June 30, 2027.

Implementation and planning must include a timeline that identifies project milestones. (The initial milestone will be a trigger for funding and must be a milestone that is obtainable within a reasonable time period in order to request funds). When approved, agreement compensation schedule is partially based on milestones identified in the Implementation timeline.

Capacity Building (3 points)

Describe how this project will meet workforce needs in your region. Explain how the project will increase the capacity of your workforce. Be specific about the workforce capacity building and how you will be able to continue to grow the capacity.

Budget Proposal (6 points)

The budget section must include a line-item narrative that explains the budget breakout. All items must be aligned with the projects categories listed above. All line items must be supported by a bid/quote/estimate or supporting documentation of how that expense was determined.

Eligible grant fund expenses:

- *Contracted services specific to the proposed project(s)*
- *Travel and lodging using current GSA rates (Per Diem Rates | GSA) for participation in hiring/recruitment events (paid to the grant recipient)*
- *Venue Rental for stakeholder engagement purposes*
- *Marketing costs that are a part of an implementation project*

Ineligible grant fund expenses:

- *Direct payment to individuals. Funds must be paid to a registered organization.*
- *Current and future operation expenses (including but not limited to salary/fringe, organizational operations, and indirect costs)*
    - *Note: This grant cannot supplant an existing budget.*
- *Housing projects*
- *Administration rate for grant*
- *Fees incurred preparing and submitting an application (i.e., time, research, grant writing fees, etc.)*
- *Administrative, personnel and programmatic funding for operations of the lead applicant, program partners, and sub-recipient(s)*
- *Taxes, except sales taxes on eligible expenses*
- *Advocacy or lobbying efforts (not eligible for match)*
- *Programs that propose work stipends or wage subsidies*
- *Scholarships and scholarship funds*
- *Rental expenses for applicant entity*
- *Private sale purchases of approved items (i.e., Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist, BisMan Online, garage sale, etc.)*
- *Incidentals (i.e. Misc. expenses) or indirect costs*

NOTE: Some ineligible grant fund expenses may be eligible as match contribution

Budget Narrative (3 points):

The budget narrative is the connection between the line-item budget and the project activities.

a. Identify total project cost, grant funds requested, match obtained, and/or match pending. Describe what the line items will be used to purchase.
b. Provide a description of the match (equipment donations or discounts, in-kind activities, cash donations) and the private sector entities supplying the match.

c. Describe how the grant funds requested, by line item, relate to the proposed workforce initiative(s)
d. Describe how the match and match provider relate to the proposed workforce initiative(s)
e. Explain any fund-leveraging and activities beyond match

General Match Requirements - Applicants are required to obtain a 25% match of the grant funds requested. This means that when calculating match, you will take your requested grant amount and calculate 25% of that total. For example, an applicant requesting grant funds of $100,000.00 will be required to obtain a $25,000.00 match. In this example, the total project budget with grant and match combined is $125,000.00. Match is defined as the portion of project costs that are not covered by grant funding provided from the Department of Commerce. The grantee must contribute the balance to complete the project. All line items must be supported by a bid/quote/estimate or supporting documentation of how that expense was determined.

Cash, equipment, supplies and/or in-kind match (i.e., salary/fringe, mileage, and lodging) may be used as match under this grant.

Match must be identified in the proposal. In some instances, match may not be fully obtained at the time the proposal is made. This is allowable; however, in this instance, once match is identified, it must be approved by the Department of Commerce and the grant agreement will be modified to describe the match.

a. Match collected and/or applied prior to agreement start date will not be eligible.

b. All match contributions must be properly valued by the donor and clearly identifiable from the grantee's records and have adequate supporting documentation.

c. Match should be from the private sector. Federal funds may qualify as match. If using federal funds as match, applicant must specify the source, federal funding period, confirmation of federal award, and demonstrate that the funds can be used as match per funding source regulations.

d. Match must be approved by the Department of Commerce and must be directly related to the approved project.

e. Project records must include documentation to demonstrate that match was used to support acquisition or provision of the approved grant project.

f. All match used to support grant reimbursement must be used solely for this project during the grant agreement period.

Cash Match

a. All cash match reported must be supported by documentation of the day the cash was received and the related accounting records that show the cash was used for the project.

b. Cash match must be applied to the project and must be spent within the grant agreement dates of the project.

Equipment/Supplies Donation or Discount Match

a. Match from equipment or supplies donation or discount must include documentation to support valuation of the donated/discounted item(s) at the time of use for the project. The match contributor must describe the item(s), state the value, and explain how the value was determined. The match contributor must sign and date the document containing this information. **Note:** If the match contributor is unwilling to provide this information, the requestor will contact the Division for assistance in determining an alternate method.

b. Donation of equipment or supplies received prior to use for the project will not be eligible as match for this project.

In-Kind Match

a. In-kind match is defined as temporary use of equipment, space, or personal services. In-kind match can also include, but is not limited to, salary/fringe and/or travel expenses (mileage and lodging).
b. Documentation of in-kind match must include a description of the process for determining the value of the services.
c. If in-kind match consists of personal service that is provided on a fixed contract amount, the documentation must include the services to be provided, the name of individual(s) providing the services and the time period in which the services are to be provided.
d. If the in-kind match consists of personal service that is provided based on an hourly amount, the documentation must include a description of the services provided, the name of individual(s) providing the in-kind personal services, the hourly rate for the service and a time sheet with an hourly log reflecting the time services were provided.
e. In-kind space must be valued at market rate for the area. Documentation must include the methodology for determining the rate and proof of rates for the market.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Match contributions spent prior to agreement start date are not eligible and will not be applied toward overall match for this grant.

Budget Breakout (3 points)

The budget breakout will be formatted as shown below. The tables listed below are for template purposes. The number of Line-Item Categories or Line Items may be adjusted as needed. Applicants should demonstrate in writing and through attached documentation how they came to line-item costs (i.e., bid from vendor, retail website, etc.)

Total Project Cost: $_____

Grant Funds Breakout

Line-Item Category	Cost
Line Item	$
Line Item	$
Line-Item Category	**$**
Line-Item Category	**$**
Line-Item Category	
	$
Total Funds Requested	**$**

Match Description

Line-Item Category	**Match Value**
Line Item	$
Line Item	$
In-Kind Services Breakout	
In-kind description	$
In-kind description	$
Cash – Business Providing Donation	$
Total Match	**$**

Section III Proposal Review and Approval

A. Proposal Review and Rating

Review and rating of proposals is conducted by the Workforce Development Division of the Department of Commerce. The Division will work with designated individuals to clarify proposals, verify match requirements, and to ensure completeness.

1. Proposals will be rated by the division
    a. Project Needs Statement (6 Points)
    a. Project Description (3 points)
    b. Partnership and Collaborations (3 points)
    c. Applicant Capability and Staffing (3 points)

d. Outlook and Project Sustainability (9 points)
e. Budget Proposal and Narrative (6 points)
Total Points = 30

2. The Division will recommend funding to the Commissioner of the Department of Commerce.

B. Grant Approval

The Division will officially notify the grantee of the award by contacting the respective applicant. The notification will include:

1. Amount awarded,
2. Request that the applicant name an authorized agent as the contact with the division on the specific grant,
3. Request that the grantee not publicize the award, pending a press release by the Department of Commerce first.

Section IV Grant Agreement

A. Grant Agreement Development

Upon approval of a grant proposal, the division will develop a grant agreement. The division will work with the authorized agent to finalize grant agreement details.

The budget breakout section of the grant proposal will be inserted into the grant agreement under Section 3, Compensation. Payment of grant funds will be based on the grantee reaching certain milestones. The payment schedule for funding will be made in accordance as follows:

a. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the total award will be disbursed upon completion of the execution of the grant agreement and successful submission of Request for Funds form
b. Twenty-five (25%) of the total award will be disbursed upon reporting and documentation by the grantee showing 75% expenditure of the initial payment.
c. Remainder of funds will be provided, upon report and documentation by the awardee after the first milestone described in the application has been met.

All unspent funds must be returned to the State by July 15, 2027.

B. Reporting Requirements

The Regional Workforce Impact Program is state-funded. The applicant and all organizations receiving grant funds as sub-recipients will be subject to State reporting and auditing requirements with all other applicable statutes, regulations, and executive orders.

1. Performance Reporting

Performance reporting for the Regional Workforce Impact Program is required under the Common Accountability Measures established by the Division of Workforce Development in compliance with NDCC 54-60-19.2. The GRANTEE will submit the performance data as requested by the Department of Commerce, Workforce Division Performance Accountability Reporting. Grantee will send separate notification of delivery (exclusive of data) to the Department of Commerce via email to: ejmoser@nd.gov. **The subject line must read: Regional Workforce Impact Program Performance Reporting**

2. Progress Narrative

Progress Narratives will be required, at minimum, every 6 months from the commencement of the agreement, and with any request for funds disbursement and budget modifications (As outlined in the agreement) . The required information will be sent out with the required documentation form upon approval.

The progress narrative must include a brief report of implementation progress and basic demographic information, which will include progress on milestones identified in the project proposal description and implementation. The progress narrative must also include a detailed report of expenditures under this grant, including both grant and match funds. (Note: If it is determined that grant funds have been utilized for ineligible expenses, the Department of Commerce may terminate the grant and seek recoup the misused funds). Narratives will be sent via email to: ejmoser@nd.gov. **The subject line must read: Regional Workforce Impact Progress Narrative ending (date)**

3. Expenditure Report/Request for Funds

Payment of grant funds will be made as outlined, in the signed agreement. Requests for funds will include a clear description and valuation of match received to date. Request for Funds forms will be sent via email to the following email address: ejmoser@nd.gov. **The subject line must read: Regional Workforce Impact Request for Funds**

Upon reporting and documentation by the awardee showing 75% expenditures of the initial grant payment, the awardee must include invoices to support proof of match spent, documentation that match item was received, or in-kind applied, as it relates to the project. This will ensure expenditures and match are being applied and tracked accurately. All grant expenditures will be required by May 15, 2027 (45 days prior to the closure of the grant to ensure complete reconciliation and closeout).

C. Grant Agreement Modification-

The grantee will contact the Department of Commerce to get prior approval on changes to match, authorized use of grant funds, grant agreement term, or funding. Approved requests may be denied if not appropriate to the grant or may require grant agreement modification prior to implementation. A line-item deviation from grant agreement budget of no more than 10% will be

accepted without prior permission and will not require grant agreement modification. This deviation allowance does not include total grant agreement amount.

Grant agreement modifications should be completed during the grant agreement period.

D. Grant Agreement Closeout

Near the end of the grant agreement, the Division will notify the grantee via letter and or email, that the grant agreement has been closed. This notification signifies the end of the grant agreement and releases the administrator and the grantee from any further obligations under the grant agreement.

Section V Monitoring

The division will monitor at least 50% of all grants during the grant term. Monitoring via desk review is allowable if documentation can satisfactorily support the review. Monitoring times will be targeted to allow the grantee to have submitted at least one request for funds. This gives the monitor and grantee an opportunity to review the process more completely.