

North Dakota Regional Workforce Impact Program

Section I Grant Information

A. Background

In response to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Commerce received economic support under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to provide support for revitalizing regional economies whose labor force challenges and workforce constraints continue throughout pandemic recovery. The 67th Legislative Assembly provided a \$15 million appropriation for this initiative during the Special Legislative Session in November 2021. The Regional Workforce Impact Program is a state program that is federally funded under ARPA.

The North Dakota Regional Workforce Impact Program (RWIP) provides grants to regional workforce entities in North Dakota to design and implement innovative plans to address their region's most demanding workforce challenges. The grant program will respond to the negative impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has had on workforce and industries by encouraging regions and communities to develop sustainable, innovative solutions to help businesses find workers, and help workers and jobseekers prepare for and connect to better, higher-quality and better paying jobs. The RWIP grant aims to offset the cost of local solutions that will have a regional impact. Funds may be provided as a resource to implement a long-term solution to permanently mitigate workforce participation issues.

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 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 their region.

The RWIP grant is designed to support evidence-based solutions reasonably related and proportional to the pandemic-related impact in each region of the state. An application's proposed solution must address the region's most immediate workforce challenges that were caused or exacerbated by the pandemic. This program will assist regional partners in funding workforce initiatives that promote

economic recovery by addressing workforce challenges experienced by employers, employees, and organizations that support local workforce. The Department of Commerce encourages utilizing new and existing collaborations of regional partners to leverage resources that foster the development of partnerships to implement sustainable workforce development solutions.

Partners within each region representing both rural and urban populations should work together and submit one application that includes projects that will address the region’s most pressing workforce challenges and impact various geographies and/or populations throughout the region. 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, although the impact of a project may extend beyond a [region’s borders](#).

To ensure equitable access to these grant dollars, a portion of funding is reserved for each of the eight planning regions, based on the population of each region as provided by the 2020 decennial US Census. Applicants are required to demonstrate a 25% match of the of the overall project budget. The grant may provide up to \$4 for every \$1 applied by the regional applicant. Below is the breakout of maximum funding amount per region and the counties that are included in each region.

Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
\$1,060,000	\$1,830,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,710,000	\$4,040,000	\$1,020,000	\$3,020,000	\$1,000,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide • McKenzie • Williams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottineau • Burke • McHenry • Mountrail • Pierce • Renville • Ward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benson • Eddy • Cavalier • Ramsey • Rolette • Towner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand Forks • Nelson • Pembina • Walsh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cass • Ransom • Richland • Sargent • Steele • Trail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barnes • Dickey • Foster • Griggs • LaMoure • Logan • McIntosh • Stutsman • Wells 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burleigh • Emmons • Grant • Kidder • McLean • Mercer • Morton • Oliver • Sheridan • Sioux 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adams • Billings • Bowman • Dunn • Golden Valley • Hettinger • Slope • Stark

Up to two bordering regions may work together to combine projects and funding resources. If this choice is made, a formal agreement must be developed and signed by all regional partners and submitted to the Department of Commerce with the grant application.

To qualify, proposals must fall under at least one of the following categories:

- Up-skilling and/or re-skilling initiatives for [in-demand jobs](#) (these programs can include educational classes and On the Job Training)
- Infrastructure investments that directly contribute to expanding access to job training, employment opportunities and workforce support

- Investments in childcare or related supportive services to assist employees in accessing new training opportunities and/or expanding and supporting participation in the labor force
- Providing career counseling or coaching services that aid in employees in pursuing new training and employment opportunities
- Capital investments, capital purchases for new or renovated space to support the applicant's proposed program
- Talent attraction for the following industries: manufacturing, healthcare, energy, tourism, and hospitality. Applicants must identify the direct connection in aiding in pandemic recovery and proposing a solution to a problem exacerbated by the pandemic.
- Housing projects to address homelessness or the housing needs of low-income individuals and families. Housing projects must demonstrate the most productive and most effective use of the funds and impact the most people possible.

In addition to new projects, existing projects that began after May 17, 2021 may qualify for this grant; however, grant funds cannot supplant an existing budget. Grant funds must be spent by June 15, 2023.

C. Eligibility

- Eligible applicants include the following North Dakota based organizations:
 - ⊖ Economic Development Organizations,
 - ⊖ Cities (must be incorporated),
 - ⊖ Chambers of Commerce,
 - ⊖ Job Development Authorities,
 - ⊖ Regional Councils,
 - ⊖ Other organizations addressing local or regional economic development needs.
- Projects must take place in North Dakota.
- Program participants must reside in North Dakota.
- Eligible only in the capacity of sub-recipients:
 - Institutions of postsecondary education
 - School districts and private schools
 - Businesses

D. Ineligible Applicants

Ineligible applicants include:

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

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:

Katie Ralston

ND Department of Commerce

P.O. Box 2057

Bismarck, North Dakota 58502-2057

Phone: 701-328-5313

E-mail: keralston@nd.gov

Section II Grant Proposals

A. Proposal Requirements

All application materials **MUST** be submitted online at: <https://ndgov.link/RWIP>. 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 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; the lead applicant must upload/attach the letters in a single PDF.

Grant proposals should follow the format shown in Section B, Proposal Format (below). Proposals that fail to meet the criteria set in Part B 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, target workforce initiative, milestones to achieve, population served, and impact to the region.

The Department of Commerce requires regional partners work together to submit one application per region that may include multiple projects. Each project within the application must include all required all required proposal elements and be uploaded at the same time within the application portal. Scoring will be evaluated on the entire application (all projects included).

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

Proposal elements must include the following sections:

Project Description

Project Needs Statement (20 points)

Project Need - (10 points)

Identify the workforce challenge facing your region and how this challenge has been caused by and/or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Identify who is impacted by this workforce challenge and how this challenge affects underserved populations and/or those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Populations may include, but are not limited to people with disabilities, veterans, justice-involved persons, low-and moderate-income individuals, individuals transitioning out of homelessness, women, 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, 2023. All programs must include program capacity. Existing programs must identify current and projected capacity after expansion.

Innovative Approach - (10 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 an innovative solution to minimize the workforce issue 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. If your project is a completely new approach, explain why you believe it will be successful. Provide data, research, and evidence to support your proposed approach to address the workforce challenge.

Project Description and Implementation (20 points)

Project Description - (10 points)

Describe the proposed project, as aligned with one or more of the categories listed above, and how it meets the stated need and critical workforce issues of the region and/or industry. Explain how the proposed program implements a long-term solution to permanently mitigate or remove workforce participation issues. Include information on how the proposed program is reflected in the region's comprehensive economic development strategy or other economic

development planning efforts. How will the proposed program impact underserved populations and/or those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and promote economic opportunity enhancements in their region?

Implementation (10 points)

Describe the activities and outcomes of the proposed project. Include the timeline for implementation, and project milestones.

- New initiatives and those that began on or after May 17, 2021 may qualify (i.e., program expansion, program modification, transition in mode of delivery, or housing, infrastructure, recruitment, etc.); Grant funds cannot supplant an existing budget.
- Grant funds must be spent by June 15, 2023.

For projects that include workforce training, see *Project Description for Training Programs*

Partnerships and Collaborations (20 points)

Partner Experience and Commitment (10 points)

Describe the regional 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?

Identify a fiscal agent and explain how funds will be distributed to each partner organization and/or project lead.

Partner Communication and Coordination (10 points)

Describe how the partners identified 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?

Applicant Capability and Staffing (10 points)

Grant Management (5 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.

Workforce System Experience (5 points)

Describe your knowledge and experience working within the regional workforce and economic development systems. Explain your familiarity and experience working with regional system stakeholders and leaders.

Outlook and Project Sustainability (10 points)

Sustainability (5 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.

Capacity Building (5 points)

Describe how the proposed project could be easily duplicated or adapted in other regions to address similar workforce issues or needs. How will information about the lessons learned and successful implementation of the project be shared with others?

Project Description for Training Programs

If training is part of the proposal, describe the project in detail, and include:

- a. Explain the need for this project, such as preparing displaced workers to re-enter the workforce; expanding program capacity; upgrading an existing program to align with new technology; meeting an unmet or under-met employer demand; or to provide employer recognized certification that previously did not exist.
- b. Explain the demand in North Dakota for the training in meeting a critical workforce shortage in a target industry or other high-demand occupation and how that demand was determined. This information will be used to determine whether the proposed project meets criteria for program eligibility. Cite information such as:
 - a. Identification of the occupations for which training prepares workers, and the fit of those occupations into the category of:
 - i. Governor's target industries (advanced manufacturing, energy, value-added agriculture, technology-based business, and tourism); or
 - ii. [High demand occupations](#) as determined by the Workforce Development Council and Job Service ND
 - b. Job Service North Dakota Labor Market Information (LMI) can be found online ([NDWIN – Home Page](#)). LMI provides 2-year and 10-year projections by occupation. Demand data must reflect the geographic area served by the institution/program. Local industry studies may also provide demand data. Data must not be percent-based alone. Include actual job numbers when providing data on job demand. Identify the skills in which individuals will be trained and the target industries and/or high-demand occupations in the grantee's region that require those skills.
- c. Indicate whether the project leads to new skill training, stackable credentials, a certificate, safety training and/or serves to enhance an existing program. Degree programs are not eligible for this grant.
- d. Explain how and where the training will be provided.
- e. Identify how this program is different than what is currently offered.
- f. Identify North Dakota wage information for the occupations served through the training.
- g. Demonstrate business and industry involvement in the determination of need for the training.

- h. Identify partnership efforts that coordinate training, expand access to training and recruit trainees.

Budget Proposal (20 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.

Eligible grant fund expenses:

- Curriculum development to subcontractors
- Equipment
- Tools and supplies for trainees
- Technology, including hardware, software, digital subscriptions during the timeframe of the grant
- Recruitment of participants for training programs
- Scholarships, except for Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) participants
- Childcare assistance provided directly to a facility on an individual's behalf, except for WIOA participants
- Career counseling and coaching services
- Capital investments (must demonstrate alignment with pandemic impact)
- Project-related marketing
- Training and/or certification for instructors
- Contracted services specific to the proposed project(s)
- Infrastructure supplies and materials (must demonstrate alignment with pandemic impact)

Ineligible grant fund expenses:

- Travel and lodging
- 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.
- Speculative housing projects
- Direct 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 existing operations of the lead applicant, program partners, and sub-recipient(s)
- Taxes, except sales taxes on eligible expenses
- Funding advocacy or lobbying efforts
- Programs that propose work stipends or wage subsidies
- Rental assistance
- Other uses ineligible under the ARPA [Rules and Regulations](#)
- Direct payment to individuals; the funds must be paid to a registered organization.

Budget Narrative (10 points):

- a. Identify total project cost, grant funds requested, match obtained, and/or match pending
- 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 match and match provider relate to the proposed workforce initiative(s)
- d. Explain any fund-leveraging and activities beyond match

General Match Requirements - Applicants are required to identify a 1:4 match totaling 25% of the overall project budget. The grant may provide up to \$4 for every \$1 applied by the regional applicant.

- a) Cash, equipment, supplies and/or in-kind (i.e, salary/fringe, mileage, and lodging) may be used as match under this grant.
- b) 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 that instance, once match is identified, it must be approved by the Division and the grant contract will be modified to describe the match.
- c) Match collected and/or applied prior to May 17, 2021 will not be eligible.
- d) All match contributions must be properly valued by the donator and clearly identifiable from the grantee's records and have adequate supporting documentation.
- e) Match should be from the private sector. State and federal funds may qualify as match, if the source of the funds allows. If using state or federal funds as match, applicant must specify the source and demonstrate that they can be used as match per funding source regulations.
- f) Match must be approved by the Division and must be directly related to the approved project.
- g) Project records must include documentation to demonstrate that match was used to support acquisition or provision of the approved grant project.
- h) All match used to support grant reimbursement must be used solely for this project during the grant contract period.

2. 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 contract dates of the project.

3. 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.

Note: Educational discount is an approved match, but the division discourages using this as a form of match.

4. 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 not limited to, salary/fringe and/or travel (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 personal service 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 personal service 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 May 17, 2021 are not eligible and will not be applied toward overall match for this grant.

Budget Breakout (10 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.

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. The division will work with designated individuals to clarify proposals, verify match requirement, and to ensure completeness.

1. Proposals will be rated by the division
 - a) Project Needs Statement (20 Points)
 - b) Project Description and Implementation (20 points)
 - c) Partnership and Collaborations (20 points)
 - d) Applicant Capability and Staffing (10 points)
 - e) Outlook and Project Sustainability (10 points)

f) Budget Proposal and Narrative (20 points)

Total Points = 100

2. The division will certify demand in accordance with NDCC 54-60-22.1 in the review and rating process.
3. 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 Contract

A. Grant Contract Development

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

The budget breakout section of the grant proposal will be inserted into the grant contract under Section 3, Compensation. 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 contract.
- b. Twenty-five (25%) upon reporting and documentation by the awardee showing 75% expenditures 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.

B. Reporting Requirements

The Regional Workforce Impact Program is federally funded under ARPA. The applicant and all organizations receiving grant funds as sub-recipients will be subject to State and Federal reporting and auditing requirements with all other applicable Federal 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: keralston@nd.gov. **The subject line must read: Regional Workforce Impact Program Performance Reporting**

2. Progress Narrative

Progress Narratives will be required every 6 months from the commencement of the contract. (As outlined in the contract)

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. If the project includes training, additional reporting as it relates to number of participants enrolled per course/program, completion to date, employment status, and early program departures must be included. Narratives will be sent via email to: keralston@nd.gov. **The subject line must read: Regional Workforce Impact Progress Narrative ending (date)**

3. Expenditure Report/Request for Funds

Payment will be made in accordance with, as outlined, in the signed contract. Request 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: keralston@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, 2023 (45 days prior to the closure of the grant to ensure complete reconciliation and closeout).

C. Grant Contract Modification

The grantee will contact the division to get prior approval on changes to match, authorized use of grant funds, grant contract term, or funding. Approved requests may be denied if not appropriate to the grant or may require grant contract modification prior to implementation. A line-item deviation from grant contract budget of no more than 10% will be accepted without prior permission and will not require grant contract modification. This deviation allowance does not include total grant contract amount.

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

D. Grant Contract Closeout

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

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.