

North Dakota Workforce Innovation Grant

Section I Grant Information

A. Background

In response to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Commerce received funding under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to provide support for innovative solutions for some of North Dakota's most pressing workforce issues in industries that were hit hardest by the pandemic. The 67th Legislative Assembly provided a \$2 million appropriation for this initiative during the Special Legislative Session in November 2021. The North Dakota Workforce Innovation Grant (NDWIG) is a state program that is funded using ARPA dollars.

The NDWIG provides grants to North Dakota companies to design and implement innovative plans to address their most demanding workforce challenges. The grant program must be used to address the negative impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has had on workforce and industries by encouraging companies and local partners to develop sustainable, innovative solutions to help businesses attract and retain workers and promote job security or wrap-around support for workers. The NDWIG is a competitive funding opportunity that aims to offset the cost of local, innovative solutions that permanently mitigate a workforce challenge in Manufacturing, Healthcare, Tourism, Energy, Transportation & Logistics, and Childcare.

B. Purpose

The goal of the Workforce Innovation Grant is to empower locally led solutions and inject innovation into the way we address our workforce challenges in a post-pandemic economy. Innovation may be demonstrated through community collaborations that broadly support workforce in one or more of the eligible industries, initiatives that support in-migration of workers, offsetting costs for companies pursuing international talent attraction, hiring fairs in areas of high unemployment in North Dakota and throughout North America, and more. Companies must demonstrate direct impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including supply chain issues, and how grant dollars will be used to mitigate pandemic-related challenges moving forward.

Proposals for the Workforce Innovation Grant may fall into two tracks:

- Track A - Innovative, industry-led solutions to address direct workforce needs of a single company or multiple companies. An application's proposed solution must address immediate workforce challenges that were caused or exacerbated by the pandemic.
- Track B - Hiring events in new markets and/or areas of high unemployment throughout the United States. Preference will be given to companies that are recruiting for in-demand jobs, based on the Workforce Development Council's [list](#)

All projects must provide a dollar for dollar (1:1) match using private sector funds.

Maximum award: \$250,000

Minimum award: \$25,000

New and existing projects that are underway and began after May 17, 2021 may qualify for this grant; however, grant funds cannot supplant an existing budget.

C. Eligibility

- Eligible applicants include the following North Dakota based organizations:
 - Private businesses
- Economic Development Organizations (that run separate of City government)
- Industry-specific associations
- Eligible industries for talent attraction and hiring events include Manufacturing, Healthcare, Tourism, Energy, Transportation & Logistics, and Childcare
- Projects must take place in North Dakota and support North Dakota businesses

Note: Partners including incorporated Cities, Chambers of Commerce, Job Development Authorities, Regional Councils, and other organizations addressing local or regional workforce needs may be partners in program implementation but cannot be the lead applicant. The target audience for this grant are businesses in the following industries: Manufacturing, Healthcare, Tourism, Energy, Transportation and Logistics, and Childcare.

D. Ineligible Applicants and Sub-Recipients

Ineligible applicants and sub-recipients include:

- Individuals
- Institutions of postsecondary education
- School districts and private schools
- 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.
- Cities (Incorporated and/or unincorporated)
- Chambers of Commerce
- Job Development Authorities
- Regional Councils

- Counties
- Park Districts
- Nonprofit Organizations, other than those classified as 501c3 and 501c19

E. Administration

The Workforce Innovation Grant 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

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E-mail: ejmoser@nd.gov

Section II Grant Proposals

A. Proposal Requirements

All application materials **MUST** be submitted via email to Evan Moser at ejmoser@nd.gov. The items listed below will need to be completed and/or uploaded as part of the applicant's submission.

- 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 must meet a minimum required score of 75. 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, demonstrates pandemic impact and mitigation, targeted workforce initiative, milestones to achieve, population and industry served. Answer each part clearly and concisely within the proposal while not exceeding 6 pages for the narrative (this excludes the budget and attachments).

The Department of Commerce requires this section be used as a template for all applications.

Proposal elements must include the following sections:

Project Needs Statement (20 points)

Project Need - (10 points)

Identify the workforce challenge in your company and how this challenge has been caused by and/or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Explain how this challenge has operations within your company.

- Track A: If applying with multiple companies, describe the workforce challenges experienced by all partners involved in the project. Identify at least one metric that will be used to determine impact and provide the current status of that metric.

Identify the number of individuals projected to be impacted on or prior to June 30, 2023. All proposals must include project goals and projected capacity.

- Tracks B: Include how many workers you intend to recruit and the timeline to hire and relocation to North Dakota.

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 company and/or community. If your project is based on solutions that have been successfully implemented in other businesses, 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. These projects cannot supplant existing RWIP funded projects and cannot duplicate existing statewide projects, programs, or services.

Project Description and Implementation (30 points)

Project Description - (20 points)

Describe the proposed project, and how it meets the stated need and critical workforce issues in your company (and those with which you are partnering, if applicable). Explain how the proposed initiative will create a long-term solution to permanently mitigate workforce issues. How will the proposed program impact underserved populations and/or those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic?

Implementation (10 points)

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

- Programs that are already underway and began after May 17, 2021 may qualify (i.e., program expansion, program modification, transition in mode of delivery, etc.); Grant funds cannot supplant an existing budget.

Applicant Capability and Staffing (5 points)

Grant Management (5 points)

Describe the 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.

Future Outlook and Project Sustainability (25 points)

Sustainability (20 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 duplicated or replicated in other businesses. How will information about the lessons learned and successful implementation of the project be shared with others or applied to future iterations of the funded project?

Budget Proposal (20 points)

The budget section must include a line-item narrative that explains the budget breakdown. All items must be aligned with the projects categories listed above.

Eligible grant fund expenses:

- *Recruitment of workers in Eligible industries include Manufacturing, Healthcare, Tourism, Energy, Transportation & Logistics, and Childcare (Excludes the use of funds for bonuses, sign-on incentives, etc. as funds cannot go directly to individuals)*
- *Career counseling and coaching services*
- *Project-related marketing*
- *Training and/or certification of new workers*
- *Contracted services specific to the proposed project(s)*
- *Travel and lodging - for applicants (business representatives) to attend hiring events*

Ineligible grant fund expenses:

- *Travel and lodging – for individuals being recruited*
- *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 this also includes sign-on bonuses*
- *Projects already receiving funding from the Regional Workforce Impact Program grant (RWIP), or the Technical Skills Grant cannot receive funding for the same projects*

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 1:1 match. The grant may provide up to \$1 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 must be from the private sector.
- 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. This grant has a 1:1 dollar match requirement, thus the GRANTEE must obtain match up to the 1:1 amount. All cash match received and planned to be used as match for this project must be spent on this project and must be spent within the timeline of this agreement. Failure to adhere to these requirements may result in reimbursement or repayment of funds to the STATE.

Budget Breakout (10 points)

The budget breakout will be formatted as shown below. The tables listed below are for template purposes. Budgets may have more or less Line-Item Category(ies) or Line Items 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 (30 points)
 - c) Applicant Capability and Staffing (5 points)
 - d) Future Outlook and Project Sustainability (25 points)
 - e) Budget Proposal and Narrative (20 points)

Total Points = 100

2. Proposals written on behalf of one or more businesses must submit letters of support or agreement from the businesses being represented. The letters are required but will not be scored.
3. The division will certify demand in accordance with NDCC 54-60-22.1 in the review and rating process.
4. The Division may 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 Workforce Innovation Grant 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 North Dakota Workforce Innovation Grant 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: North Dakota Workforce Innovation Grant 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: **The subject line must read: North Dakota Workforce Innovation Grant 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: ejmoser@nd.gov. **The subject line must read: North Dakota Workforce Innovation Grant Request for Funds**

Upon reporting and documentation by the awardee showing 75% expenditures of the initial 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, mitigating audit exception and reducing grantee and administrator monitoring workload. 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).

D. 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.

E. 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.