

North Dakota Regional Workforce Impact Program

Section I Grant Information

A. Background

The Department of Commerce received an appropriation from the 68th 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 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 their region.

An application's proposed solution must address the region's most immediate workforce challenges. This program will assist applicants in funding workforce initiatives that promote economic stability and prosperity by addressing workforce challenges. 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.

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 no longer 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, 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 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.

| Region 1 | Region 2 | Region 3 | Region 4 | Region 5 | Region 6 | Region 7 | Region 8 |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| \$1,313,000 | \$1,566,000 | \$1,215,000 | \$1,535,000 | \$2,319,000 | \$1,319,000 | \$1,957,500 | \$1,275,500 |
| 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, proposals must fall under at least one of the following categories:

- Talent attraction marketing and locally implemented strategies for business, industry, and communities that leverages existing statewide assets like *Find the Good Life* platform and pipeline to recruit employees nationwide and retain students and recent graduates. - cap of \$250,000
- Retention - cap of \$250,000.00
- Infrastructure investments that directly relate to the proposed workforce solution – cap of \$500,000
- Infrastructure investments that expand a childcare center – cap of \$500,000
 - The childcare must be a center and cannot be home-based or in a site that can be repurposed for housing

- Capital investments, capital purchases for new or renovated space to support the applicant's proposed program must be able to show direct influence on the workforce solution- cap of \$500,000.

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 15, 2025.

C. Eligible Applicants and Projects

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

- Economic Development Organizations
- Cities (must be incorporated)
- Chambers of Commerce
- Job Development Authorities
- Tribal Entities
- Regional Councils
- Counties
- Other organizations addressing local or regional economic development needs.
- Childcare Centers
- Schools (may be eligible for childcare facility projects)

NOTE

- Projects and populations impacted must be in North Dakota.
- Enhancements to projects previously funded by RWIP and in one of the qualified categories stated above are eligible.

Applicants may submit no more than 2 applications. 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 (except for childcare centers which may be eligible)

Ineligible projects include:

- 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.
- 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.

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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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; the lead applicant must upload/attach the letters in a single PDF.

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 Parts 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, target workforce initiative, 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. Applicants are limited to 2 applications per round.** Within the proposal format you will see points awarded to each section. To be considered for award, you will need to meet or exceed 75 points overall.

C. Proposal Submission

The department requires this section be used as the template for all applications. Within the application portal each text box will have a character limit of 3,000.

Proposal elements must include the following sections:

Project Description (80 points)

Project Needs Statement (20 points)

Project Need - (10 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, 2025. 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 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. 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

Implementation (10 points)

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

- Grant funds must be spent by June 15, 2025.

Implementation 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.

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?

Partner Communication and Coordination (10 points)

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.

Applicant Capability and Staffing (5 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. The name and contact information for the individual managing the grant should be included in this section.

Outlook and Project Sustainability (15 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.

For Childcare Centers

Describe the plan for staffing the center. Please indicate how you will recruit new staff and who you will be recruiting. If new staff need to be trained, describe the process for achieving all training requirements.

Capacity Building (10 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 (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. All line items must be supported by a bid/quote/estimate or supporting documentation of how that expense was determined.

Eligible grant fund expenses:

- *Equipment*
- *Technology, including hardware, software, digital subscriptions during the timeframe of the grant.*
- *Career counseling and coaching services*
- *Capital investments*
- *Project-related marketing*
- *Contracted services specific to the proposed project(s)*
- *Infrastructure supplies and materials*
- *Travel and lodging using current GSA rates ([Per Diem Rates | GSA](#)) for participation in hiring/recruitment events (paid to the grant recipient)*

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 for match contribution

Budget Narrative (10 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 will be required to obtain a \$25,000 match. In this example, the total project budget with grant and match combined is \$125,000. 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 (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. 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 (20 Points)
 - a. Project Description and Implementation (20 points)
 - b. Partnership and Collaborations (20 points)
 - c. Applicant Capability and Staffing (5 points)
 - d. Outlook and Project Sustainability (15 points)
 - e. Budget Proposal and Narrative (20 points)Total Points = 100
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 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, 2025.

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, 2025 (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.