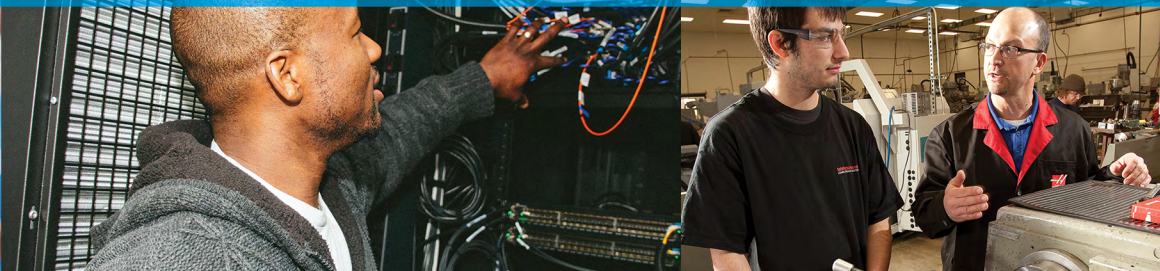




NORTH DAKOTA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL REPORT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

October 2022





FACTS

78%

ND HIGH
SCHOOL
STUDENTS IN
CTE COURSES

1,350

RELEASED
ANNUALLY
FROM ND
CORRECTIONAL
FACILITIES

620

WIOA
PARTICIPANTS

20+

PROGRAMS

SUPPORTED
BY TECHNICAL
SKILLS GRANT
IN 2020

ROLE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The role of the North Dakota Workforce Development Council is to advise the governor and the public concerning the nature and extent of workforce development in the context of North Dakota's economic development needs, and how to meet these needs effectively while maximizing the efficient use of available resources and avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort.

The Workforce Development Council consists of more than 30 members, with representation from industry; K-12, post-secondary and career and technical education; organized labor; Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act state workforce partners and local and state elected officials.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

As chair of the North Dakota Workforce Development Council, I am pleased to forward 10 recommendations and four endorsements that the council believes can help address the greatest workforce challenges faced by the state of North Dakota today and in the coming years. These recommendations fall under four themes: earlier and more diverse career exploration, addressing the technical skills gap; removing barriers to employment; occupational licensing reform; and recruitment and retention of North Dakota workers.

David E. Innsworth

WDC MEMBER LOCATIONS



Council members represent large and small communities across the state.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND ENDORSEMENTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Workforce Development Council recommends investing \$171.3 million in Career and Technical Education for new and expanding CTE programs, continuation of Area Career and Technology Centers (ACTC), including those that were not funded in the 2021-2022 interim and to support the impact of inflation on the construction of ACTCs. Further, the council recognizes the critical role Job Service North Dakota can play in connecting student and adult job seekers alike with career opportunities in their communities.
2. The Workforce Development Council recommends that the Department of Career and Technical Education create and train a minimum of 16 work-based learning coordinators to support students attending Area Career and Technology Centers (ACTCs). Work-based learning coordinators will primarily be based at the ACTCs and will be employees of the district or ACTCs. Additionally, to support career awareness and exploration, the council also recommends that funding be made available to every school district to have access to a dedicated career advisor. These two positions will play an instrumental role in enhancing career exploration at all levels of K-12 education, and the council recommends that these professionals work with local employers to develop and implement career exploration programs in their school districts.
3. The Workforce Development Council recommends developing a sustainable funding mechanism to support locally led workforce solutions, with an initial biennial investment of \$50 million. The council prioritizes private sector investment and recommends a 25% match for projects that receive funding within this model.
4. The Workforce Development Council recommends investing a minimum of \$15 million in talent attraction and retention initiatives to support recruiting workers to the state.
5. The Workforce Development Council recommends investing \$5 million in a workforce training grant for employers and training providers that are utilizing automation as a workforce solution. To further emphasize support for automation, the council endorses the Automation Tax Credit and efforts to expand this resource so it can be utilized by more companies in a variety of industries.
6. The Workforce Development Council recommends creating a Global Talent Task Force dedicated to researching the unique barriers experienced by employers seeking to employ immigrant and refugee job seekers; understanding foreign labor laws, processes, and visas; and aligning partners and state agencies working in this space. A subject-matter expert should be contracted to effectively lead this work and produce recommendations to best support North Dakota's workforce and employers.
7. The Workforce Development Council recommends creating a full-time apprenticeship coordinator to help employers navigate the process of developing apprenticeship programs in rural and urban communities throughout North Dakota; promote apprenticeship to students, adult learners, underrepresented and underserved populations in registered apprenticeship including women, youth, people of color, justice-involved individuals, and people with disabilities; identify funding opportunities; and align state and federal resources and partners. The council also recommends investing in a comprehensive online resource to direct interested parties to apprenticeship programs.

SECONDARY RECOMMENDATION: To successfully expand apprenticeship opportunities in North Dakota, the council recommends that the Governor's Office work with North Dakota's Congressional Delegation to increase funding for the Department of Labor State Apprenticeship Office, to support increased volume of apprenticeship programs being built and individuals pursuing apprenticeship.

8. The Workforce Development Council recommends developing a job placement pilot program through a coordinated effort between Job Service North Dakota, Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation, local organizations that serve and support ex-offenders, and employers with a goal of placing recently or soon-to-be released individuals into in-demand jobs.

9. The Workforce Development Council recommends the development of a central directory of all licensing boards to make it easier for licensed professionals to navigate the licensure system in North Dakota.

ENDORSEMENT: The Workforce Development Council endorses policies that expedite pathway to licensure for current and new North Dakotans, as long as the health and safety of North Dakota citizens is protected.

10. The Workforce Development Council recommends leveraging federal Digital Equity Act funds to advance digital skill training opportunities for adult learners, job seekers, and workers, to prepare them for entrance and movement throughout the workforce.

ENDORSEMENTS

1. The Workforce Development Council endorses Gov. Burgum's child care proposal to support working families through solutions that address affordability, availability, and quality of child care in North Dakota.
2. The Workforce Development Council endorses skilled workforce training programs through the Department of Commerce Technical Skills Training Grant (TSTG) as it has been an effective tool for training workers across industry workforce throughout North Dakota, in addition to the proposed Workforce Education Innovation Grant, designed to support degree programs at two- and four-year institutions that are addressing current and emerging workforce needs. The council supports the \$2 million request to sustain the Technical Skills Training Grant and the \$24 million request to launch the Workforce Education Innovation Grant.
3. The Workforce Development Council endorses the North Dakota University System's Re-Energize North Dakota proposal to recruit, train, and retain individuals interested in working in the energy sector.

DETAILS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS AND ENDORSEMENTS

1. RECOMMENDATION

The Workforce Development Council recommends \$171.3 million for funding operations and programming of new and expanding Area Career & Technology Centers and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming. Also included within this recommendation is funding to account for inflation impact experienced by ACTCs that received funding under the CTE Capital Investments grant program. Further, the council recognizes the critical role Job Service North Dakota can play in connecting student and adult job seekers alike with career opportunities in their communities.

PURPOSE

More than half of North Dakota jobs¹ (55%) require training beyond high school, but less than a four-year degree. CTE is an important partner in helping students explore and start preparing for these middle skills jobs prior to graduation. Area Career and Technology Centers (ACTC) advance career exploration opportunities and provide expanded access to advanced Career and Technical Education courses for students, often serving multiple school districts throughout a geographic region. CTE programs provided at the ACTCs align with the workforce needs of their regions and the state as a whole. ACTCs also provide an excellent opportunity for adults to pursue skilled workforce training to prepare for new jobs and career advancements in their communities. Job Service North Dakota can strengthen the relationship between ACTCs and communities by co-locating in the space to bring job search services and support to students, job seekers, and workers.

In March 2022, the State Board for Career and Technical Education awarded over \$88 million in CTE capital project grants to 13 new and expanding CTE facilities, from various areas of the state. These grants are designed to expand access to opportunities for education and training to students and adults alike; however, challenges with the federal funding source have created delays in getting the funds to local projects and have impacted the timeline to build and open the ACTCs. Additionally, inflation has caused budgets to fluctuate beyond grant awards and local funds raised for these projects. For North Dakota's goal of supporting new and expanding ACTCs to be achieved, it is necessary to allocate funds to offset the impact of inflation. This recommendation is the state's commitment to the future success of the ACTCs. The Workforce Development Council prioritizes local investment and private sector buy-in as business participation is critical to the success of ACTCs in any community, therefore, the council supports local match requirements set forth by the CTE Board of Directors to build and expand ACTCs throughout North Dakota.

PARTNERS IN IMPLEMENTATION

- ND Department of Career and Technical Education*
- Local Business, Industry & Labor Partners, Economic Development, Chambers of Commerce
- Department of Public Instruction
- Higher Education & TrainND
- Job Service North Dakota
- Local school districts
- ACTC Administrators

FUNDING

- New and Expanding Programs – \$23 million
- Continuation of new and expanding CTE Centers – \$88,276,228
- New and expanding CTE Centers inflation impact — \$40 million
- CTE Centers not approved in 2021-23 - \$20 million

TIMELINE

- Timeline for funding request: 2023 Legislative Session
- Timeline for implementation: 2023–2025 biennium

¹ ND-Skills-Mismatch-Fact-Sheet-2020.pdf (<https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ND-Skills-Mismatch-Fact-Sheet-2020.pdf>)

* Signifies lead organization

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

- Short term
 - Appropriation from the 68th Legislative Assembly
- Long term
 - Increased enrollment in CTE courses after ACTCs open
 - Higher enrollment in CTE programs that align with in-demand jobs list, with an increase of 25% within four years of ACTC completion
 - Increase in community colleges enrollment in programs aligned with in-demand jobs
 - Increase in employment in in-demand jobs and increase in total number employed

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Workforce Development Council recommends that the Department of Career and Technical Education create and train a minimum of 16 work-based learning coordinators to support students attending Area Career and Technology Centers (ACTC). Work-based learning coordinators will primarily be based at the ACTCs and will be employees of the district or ACTC. Additionally, to support career awareness and exploration, the council also recommends that funding be made available to every school district to have access to a dedicated career advisor.

These two positions will play an instrumental role in enhancing career exploration at all levels of K–12 education, and the council recommends that these professionals work with local employers to develop and implement career exploration programs in their school districts.

PURPOSE

Career exploration and hands-on exposure with jobs in which students are expressing interest are critical components in North Dakota's workforce development and talent retention strategy. These opportunities should be made available throughout a students' education, starting in elementary school and progressing through high school upon which time, they should be choice ready and prepared to choose the path that is best suited for them. Work-based learning (WBL) coordinators and career advisors go hand in hand, and both play a crucial role in ensuring these activities are successfully implemented at all grade levels and in ACTCs. Further enhancing this effort can be achieved through the development of comprehensive career exploration programs in each school district. Utilizing virtual career exploration through RUPReady.ND.gov and new work-based learning modules offered by the North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education is an excellent foundation for these programs.

WBL Coordinators will engage with the business community to establish a network of industry partners to work with students and educators. They will also work closely with CTE instructors to ensure students have valuable work-based learning experiences while also collaborating with business and industry partners to build and monitor detailed training plans. They will develop relationships with students to understand career goals, conduct job training workshops, explain workplace expectations, assess outcomes, and monitor work experiences. Their role is essential in creating the framework for a statewide WBL program that provides quality experiences to all areas of the state. They will be the teacher of record for work-based learning experiences in all program areas and will have the ability to teach career management and career seminar courses.

Career advisors were created by the North Dakota legislature in 2009². They can come from any educational background but must have a bachelor's degree. Their responsibility within the school setting is to provide sequential career development activities, current career information, and related career exploration opportunities to students in grades seven through twelve.

A career advisor's work is based in a school district and supports career exploration activities for students starting in middle school; whereas a WBL coordinator's role is designed to work specifically with CTE and in ACTCs to ensure students have work-based learning experiences outside of the classroom. Both positions should be filled by individuals with industry experience.

² NDCC 15-20.1-24, CC 15-20.1-25, 15.1-06019, and 15.1-06-20

PARTNERS IN IMPLEMENTATION

- ND Department of Career and Technical Education*
- Local school districts
- ACTCs
- Department of Public Instruction
- Business, industry, & labor partners, chambers of commerce, economic development
 - Industry partners that contribute matching dollars to ACTCs should be engaged in WBL experiences.

FUNDING

- \$3 million for WBL Coordinators
- \$500,000 (biennial) for virtual career exploration
- Note: Funding for career advisors is included in the \$23 million request for new and expanding CTE programs.

TIMELINE

- Timeline for funding request: 2023 Legislative Session
- Timeline for implementation: 2023–2024 school year

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

- Short Term
 - Appropriation from the 68th Legislative Assembly for school districts to access for the purpose of hiring career advisors.
 - Appropriation from the 68th Legislative Assembly to the North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education to support creation and training of WBL coordinators, career advisors, and expansion of virtual career exploration tool.
 - Identification of a mechanism for tracking industry/student engagement and career exploration activities.
- Long-term; trackable after 2022–2023 school year as baseline participation will need to be tracked in 2023–2024 school year.
 - Increased participation in WBL experiences for students through ACTCs. This may be measured in a student's Career Ready Practices Report.
 - Increased number of career advisors in school districts throughout North Dakota to successfully engage more students in career exploration opportunities.
 - Creation and implementation of career exploration activities in school districts.
 - More engagement between business and students throughout a K–12 system. Career advisors and WBL coordinators should track:
 - Number of businesses engaged with student learning.
 - Number of students who participate in career exploration activities with businesses and work-based learning experiences.

3. RECOMMENDATION

The Workforce Development Council recommends developing a sustainable funding mechanism to support locally led workforce solutions, with an initial biennial investment of \$50 million. The council prioritizes private sector investment and recommends a 25% local match for projects that receive funding within this model.

PURPOSE

The workforce challenges facing North Dakota are decades in the making and our investment in dedicated workforce development initiatives does not reflect the emphasis we place on this issue or the demand for qualified workers in all industries throughout the state. Now is the time to invest in initiatives that balance today's immediate needs with investments that will prepare us for success tomorrow. 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 funding mechanism to support locally led workforce solutions, we give local and regional representatives the opportunity to articulate their needs and access to funding to address them. A similar initiative is currently active through the Department of Commerce's Regional Workforce Impact Program.

* Signifies lead organization

In March 2022, the Department of Commerce launched the Regional Workforce Impact Program (RWIP), which received \$15 million during the 2021 Special Legislative Session. The RWIP was designed to support locally-led workforce solutions that addressed workforce challenges that were caused or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This program awarded nearly 40 projects throughout North Dakota that addressed worker training, talent attraction, child care, workforce housing, and more. Although a future local funding model might look different, the RWIP set the stage for how this type of mechanism can operate in North Dakota. By equipping communities with tools to invest heavily in workforce initiatives that are catered to the needs of their region, North Dakota will see more job vacancies filled today and in the future, as dedicated workforce development initiatives that have previously been out of reach financially will become more accessible.

PARTNERS IN IMPLEMENTATION

- Department of Commerce*
- Local and regional workforce partners
- Business and industry partners
- Job Service North Dakota
- State agencies

FUNDING

- \$50 million

TIMELINE

- Appropriation: 2023 Legislative Session
- Programmatic implementation: 2023-2025 biennium

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

- Initial appropriation by 68th Legislative Assembly
- Development and deployment of program for local, community-based workforce solutions
- Investment in strategic, data-driven initiatives with trackable results

4. RECOMMENDATION

The Workforce Development Council recommends investing a minimum of \$15 million in talent attraction and retention initiatives to support recruiting workers to the state.

PURPOSE

With more than 30,000 open jobs in North Dakota and one of the highest labor participation rates in the nation, most of the North Dakotans who can work are doing so. This means that we must proactively recruit new residents to the state to fill our job vacancies and grow our communities, while also building stronger partnerships with college and university partners to retain students after graduation. Effective talent attraction and retention initiatives are comprehensive and may include contracted marketing and talent attraction services, partnership with local leaders and employers, grants for local talent attraction and retention programs, staff to support a robust initiative that effectively recruits new North Dakotans, and more. This multi-faceted approach requires significant investment by the state and industry partners.

Currently, the Department of Commerce is administering Find the Good Life in North Dakota, a talent attraction initiative that includes a system for generating and tracking leads and connecting them with community leaders and employers. It is critical that talent attraction initiatives are data driven and trackable to demonstrate the impact of the state's investment. Finally, to accelerate the connection between out-of-state job seekers and employers, talent attraction initiatives should include increasing the investment in Job Service North Dakota's virtual job fairs, which have successfully created opportunities for companies to hire from a global talent pool.

PARTNERS IN IMPLEMENTATION

- Department of Commerce*
- Business and industry partners
- Job Service North Dakota
- State agencies

* Signifies lead organization

- Colleges and universities
- Economic development organizations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local and regional workforce partners

FUNDING

- \$15 million; initial appropriation
- \$300,000 for virtual job fairs

TIMELINE

- Appropriation: 2023 Legislative Session
- Programmatic implementation: 2023-2025 biennium

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

- Appropriation by 68th Legislative Assembly
- Development and deployment of a comprehensive talent attraction and retention plan, led by the North Department of Commerce's Workforce and Tourism and Marketing Divisions
- Increase in leads through Find the Good Life 2.0, and increased rate at which leads are generated and converted to employees and residents
- Long-term increase in population, increase in total number of employed individuals, number of job placements, and economic impact on communities and businesses

5. RECOMMENDATION

The Workforce Development Council recommends investing \$5 million in a workforce training grant for employers and training providers that are utilizing automation as a workforce solution. To further emphasize support for automation, the council endorses the Automation Tax Credit and efforts to expand this resource so it can be utilized by more companies in a variety of industries.

PURPOSE

North Dakota employers across multiple industries are investing in automation to address workforce shortages and to create better paying jobs for workers. Adapting to new technology in the workplace necessitates training and the development of new skillsets, which requires an investment in a company's own workforce. Although the Automation Tax Credit has been a resource for primary sector businesses by providing a partial credit for machinery and equipment, it does not allow for workforce upskilling which is a critical component in successfully implementing automation into a company. This training may be provided by the company that sells the equipment or by a training provider, such as TrainND. With more companies in industries such as manufacturing, agriculture, construction, and more turning to automation to address their workforce shortages, North Dakota must support the investment into workers who have the need to develop new skills so they can remain competitive in the workplace.

In addition to the investment in upskilling incumbent workers, the North Dakota University System is working to prepare students for jobs that will require them to operate automated equipment and machinery. Both employer-led and post-secondary training opportunities should be supported by the state, along with private sector investment through a matching grant with a minimum state investment of \$5 million in the 2023-2025 biennium.

PARTNERS IN IMPLEMENTATION

- Department of Commerce*
- Business and industry partners
- Job Service North Dakota
- Economic development organizations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local and regional workforce partners

* Signifies lead organization

FUNDING

- \$5 million; Department of Commerce

TIMELINE

- Appropriation: 2023 Legislative Session
- Program implementation: 2023-2025 biennium

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

- Appropriation by 67th Legislative Assembly
- Development and deployment of automation upskilling grant by Department of Commerce Workforce Division
- Number of jobs created and filled by this program
- Number of companies that take advantage of this resource to upskill their workforce

6. RECOMMENDATION

The Workforce Development Council recommends creating a Global Talent Task Force dedicated to researching the unique barriers experienced by employers seeking to employ immigrant and refugee job seekers; understanding foreign labor laws, processes, and visas; and aligning partners and state agencies working in this space. A subject-matter expert should be contracted to effectively lead this work and produce recommendations to best support North Dakota's workforce and employers.

PURPOSE

North Dakota has an opportunity to increase immigrant and refugee participation in our communities and in our workforce, but to do so we need to examine the systems and policies that may be slowing down or preventing this population from entering or moving throughout the workforce. Additionally, North Dakota employers recognize the opportunity to hire foreign workers, but need resources and support in navigating complex federal foreign labor processes and programs. Questions about visa types, application timelines, and the cost of recruiting foreign workers are often raised, yet answers can be hard to find as the state lacks a central resource for employers to utilize when exploring this opportunity to address their workforce needs. To help immigrant and refugee job seekers get connected with jobs that leverage their skillsets and to help North Dakota businesses crack the code on foreign labor laws, programs, and processes, we need to first understand the challenges that exist, populations that are affected, and identify who is working in this space, in addition to identifying the most appropriate state-supported resource to better support businesses and new North Dakotans.

Partners in North Dakota's Global Talent Task Force include state government, employers, nonprofits, and more. The full list of suggested task force members is included in the Partners in Implementation section below.

PARTNERS IN IMPLEMENTATION

- Governor's Office
- Legislators (1 House, 1 Senate)
- Representatives from North Dakota's Congressional Delegation
- Department of Commerce*
- Job Service North Dakota
- Department of Human Services: Refugee Resettlement
- Department of Labor and Human Rights
- North Dakota University System
- Department of Public Instruction: Adult Education
- Private businesses (no less than five)
- Organizations that serve and/or represent New American populations (no less than three)
- Economic Development
- Housing Authority
- Department of Transportation
- An expert in foreign labor laws

* Signifies lead organization

FUNDING

- \$250,000; one-time investment

TIMELINE

- Q3/2023, if funding is available prior to the legislative session

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

- Obtaining \$250,000 in funding to support creation of task force and procurement of subject-matter expert to lead
- Assembly of task force that includes diverse organizational and geographic representation
- Production of recommendations that identifies and/or creates support immigrants, refugees, and employers

7. RECOMMENDATION

The Workforce Development Council recommends creating a full-time apprenticeship coordinator to help employers navigate the process of developing apprenticeship programs in rural and urban communities throughout North Dakota; promote apprenticeship to students, adult learners, underrepresented and underserved populations in registered apprenticeship including women, youth, people of color, justice-involved individuals, and people with disabilities; identify funding opportunities; and align state and federal resources and partners. The council also recommends investing in a comprehensive online resource to direct interested parties to apprenticeship programs.

SECONDARY RECOMMENDATION: To successfully expand apprenticeship opportunities in North Dakota, the council recommends that the Governor's Office work with North Dakota's Congressional Delegation to increase funding for the Department of Labor State Apprenticeship Office, to support increased volume of apprenticeship programs being built and individuals pursuing apprenticeship.

PURPOSE

Currently, North Dakota has over 100 apprenticeship programs and approximately 1,054 apprentices. Employers and job seekers alike are realizing the benefits of registered apprenticeship programs (RAPs), which are a partnership between employer and employee that delivers a high-quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and individuals can obtain paid work experience, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally recognized credential from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). With an increased interest by North Dakota employers to train their own talent utilizing an apprenticeship program that's designed to meet their workforce needs, the state has an opportunity to serve as a liaison for businesses as they go through the process of building a program and navigating the complex federal RAP system. The state's apprenticeship coordinator will also educate stakeholders, including educators, parents, students, adult learners, underrepresented and underserved populations in registered apprenticeship including women, youth, people of color, justice-involved individuals, and people with disabilities about the benefits of apprenticeship and help them connect with opportunities in North Dakota. An online resource for those who are interested in apprenticeship and learning about where these opportunities exist in North Dakota is a vital component to effective promotion of RAPs in our state.

There are many benefits of RAPs; however, building and running an apprenticeship program is a lot of work for employers and includes significant reporting requirements to DOL. A dedicated coordinator will be able to guide and support employers through this process, so they remain in compliance with the DOL standards. Finally, as federal funding to support RAPs continues to be made available, this coordinator will ensure North Dakota is able to capitalize on federal grant opportunities designed to expand and promote apprenticeship, and to provide financial support to employers that are building apprenticeship programs.

Apprenticeship is a post-secondary education format that is facilitated in partnership with industry, business, and labor that promotes high-quality career pathways in which employers can develop their future workforce, and individuals can obtain paid work experience, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally recognized credential. Apprentices get paid on-the-job (OTJ) experience while developing the skills and credentials that employers in their industry recognize and value. Apprenticeships vary in the amount of OTJ required, ranging from 2,000 to 6,000 hours of OTJ training, with 144

hours of related technical instruction (RTI). A RAP is a more thorough program of study, training, educational coursework, and skill attainment that will require at least two years to complete. This level of job specific training sets apprenticeship apart from internships.

An internship is a professional learning experience that offers meaningful, practical work related to a student's field of study or career interest, and typically takes place for a limited period of time (i.e., one semester, three to six months, etc.)

PARTNERS IN IMPLEMENTATION

- Department of Commerce*
- Business and labor partners
- Job Service North Dakota
- Department of Career and Technical Education
- ND Information Technology: State Longitudinal Data System
- Department of Public Instruction: Adult Education
- North Dakota Congressional Delegation
- North Dakota Department of Labor and Human Rights
- North Dakota Department of Health & Human Services: Vocational Rehabilitation

FUNDING

- \$300,000 (biennial appropriation)
- \$100,000 for online resource

TIMELINE

- Timeline for funding request: 2023 Legislative Session
- Timeline for hiring position: Q2/2023
- Timeline for long-term goal achievement: Indication of projected impact should begin by December 2025.

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

- Short-Term
 - Funding for 1 FTE in the Department of Commerce budget in the 2023 Legislative Session
- Long-term
 - Increase in number of apprentice leads, number of apprenticeship programs, and in new apprentices to successfully complete their program
 - Enhanced utilization of online resource through Statewide Longitudinal Data System to aid promotion of apprenticeship programs and in tracking participation
 - As demand increases, the state may find value in adding a second position, with one focusing on the Eastern side of the state and the other on the Western side

8. RECOMMENDATION

The Workforce Development Council recommends developing a job placement pilot program through a coordinated effort between Job Service North Dakota, Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation, local organizations that serve and support ex-offenders, and employers with a goal of placing recently or soon-to-be released individuals into in-demand jobs.

PURPOSE

With more than 30,000 open jobs and an unemployment rate that has dropped to pre-pandemic levels, North Dakota employers must consider a variety of populations to fill job vacancies. One underutilized talent pool is ex-offenders. As of 2020, an average of 1,400 individuals exit North Dakota's prison system each year, with nearly half settling in Bismarck or Fargo after release. In addition to the lifelong impact of a criminal conviction on their record, ex-offenders experience barriers to entering the workforce. Without a steady paycheck allowing for basic needs to be met, such as housing, food, and transportation, ex-offenders are more likely to return to the prison system.

* Signifies lead organization

North Dakota's recidivism rate is currently 40%; however, by helping ex-offenders establish stability through successful job placement, intensive case management, and wrap-around services upon release, we will see this number decrease. The Job Placement Pilot Program for recently or soon-to-be released ex-offenders will create a partnership between Job Service North Dakota, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Department of Human Services, local organizations that support ex-offenders, and most importantly, employers. This strategic initiative is supplemental to existing services provided by Job Service of North Dakota through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and is designed to serve a minimum of 75 participants per year in both Fargo and Bismarck, totaling 150 participants annually. The program will also incentivize employers to hire ex-offenders by offering a wage match for the participant's salary for up to six months by utilizing WIOA federal funds.

PARTNERS IN IMPLEMENTATION

- Job Service North Dakota*
- Department of Corrections*
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Public Instruction: Adult education
- Business and industry partners
- Organizations that serve justice-involved populations
- North Dakota Department of Health & Human Services: Vocational Rehabilitation

FUNDING

- \$640,000; one-time appropriation

TIMELINE

- Timeline for funding request: 2023 Legislative Session
- Timeline program implementation: 2023-2025 biennium

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

- Short-Term
 - Appropriation to Job Service of North Dakota from the 68th Legislative Assembly
 - Hiring two temporary employment advisors (one in Fargo, one in Bismarck)
- Long-term
 - Successful development and launch of job placement program
 - Job placement of 60 ex-offenders in each program location & workplace retention
 - Reduction in North Dakota's recidivism rate

9. RECOMMENDATION

The Workforce Development Council recommends the development of a central directory of all licensing boards to make it easier for licensed professionals to navigate the licensure system in North Dakota.

ENDORSEMENT

The Workforce Development Council endorses policies that expedite pathway to licensure for current and new North Dakotans, as long as the health and safety of North Dakota citizens is protected.

PURPOSE

According to the Council of State Governments, the number of jobs that require a license to practice has increased to 1 in 4, which is up from 1 in 20, 60 years ago. We see this increase even more in the healthcare field with 75% of jobs requiring a license. With ramped up efforts to recruit workers to North Dakota, the state needs to increase efficiencies in the licensing process, starting with simplifying the way in which licensed professionals connect and interact with our occupational and professional licensing boards. A central directory with updated contact information, website links, and brief information related to the licenses each board oversees will simplify the job seekers' search and path to licensure in North Dakota.

Additionally, North Dakota must prioritize exploring and implementing policies to refine our licensing processes so professionals can get to work quickly. It is important to note that since last surveyed in 2020, many boards have significantly decreased their application processing timeframe. Although many boards cite same-day approval or a

* Signifies lead organization

one-week turnaround, there are still some that state their regular process takes up to four to six months. The average timeframe is approximately 18 days, while the median response was just seven days. This information suggests that the majority of North Dakota boards are prioritizing rapid, yet thorough licensure approval, but there is still room to improve as critical licensed professions continue to face significant challenges in recruiting out-of-state job seekers due to delays in the licensure process.

PARTNERS IN IMPLEMENTATION

- Department of Commerce*
- Occupational & Professional Licensing Boards
- Industry & Professional Associations
- Business, Industry & Labor Partners

TIMELINE

- Q3/2022 – Q4/2022: Continue engagement with occupational licensing boards, legislators, and stakeholders to identify best opportunities to break down barriers and increase efficiencies in licensure process
- Q1/2023: Development of directory

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

- Success will be measured by development and launch of directory; measuring site traffic, and feedback from boards regarding applicants and timeline to licensure.

10. RECOMMENDATION

The Workforce Development Council recommends leveraging federal Digital Equity Act (DEA) funds to advance digital skill training opportunities for adult learners, job seekers, and workers, to prepare them for entrance and movement throughout the workforce.

PURPOSE

The DEA, passed as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), aims to provide digital literacy skills and education to low-income populations, improve online accessibility, and empower rural communities to enhance broadband availability. Currently, North Dakota is in the process of finalizing a pre-Kindergarten through workforce (PK-20W) state plan for computer science and cybersecurity education to create a pipeline of future workers who have the skills necessary to excel in a global, digital economy, regardless of industry. Equipping our students for today's jobs is important; however, it is equally important that adult workers and job seekers do not get left behind. Given the shortage of workers we have in our state, we simply cannot afford to lose these individuals in the workforce. North Dakota is continuously working to diversify our economy and there is a mismatch in the skillsets of some of job seekers and opportunities in a variety of industries including energy, agriculture, health care, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), biotech, cybersecurity, manufacturing, and engineering.

According to North Dakota's digital scorecard, 32.9% of unemployed individuals lack foundational digital skills which are required for 72.7% of open jobs in the state. Job Service North Dakota Job Center and Adult Learning Center staff reinforce this statistic with anecdotal examples of clients not knowing how to navigate the Internet or not knowing how to use software such as Microsoft Word to create a resume, and struggle to understand how to apply for jobs online. This problem becomes more challenging to address in rural areas and in minority populations.

To address this issue, North Dakota was one of six states that participated in the National Governors Association Workforce Innovation Network and laid the foundation for a state plan for increasing digital skills among North Dakota adult learners, job seekers, and learners. A more comprehensive plan will be developed under the DEA Planning Grant, starting in the fall of 2022. Current goals for this work include:

- Improve appropriateness & consistency of digital literacy assistance delivered across agencies
- Increase clients receiving fundamental digital skills training from agencies
- Engage with Tribal partners to identify digital skill gaps and training opportunities

* Signifies lead organization

PARTNERS IN IMPLEMENTATION

- Department of Commerce*
- North Dakota Information Technology*
- Job Service North Dakota
- Department of Public Instruction: Adult Education
- North Dakota State Library
- North Dakota University System
- Department of Human Services + Vocational Rehabilitation
- Business, industry and labor partners

FUNDING

- Current Federal Funding: \$500,000
- Future Federal Funding: Pending

TIMELINE

- Begin state plan development once DEA Planning Grant is received in Fall 2022
- Continue stakeholder engagement throughout 2022-2023 fiscal year
- Enhance promotion of available state resources for digital skill development and Internet starting in Winter 2022

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

- Number of individuals utilizing resources for digital skill development and Internet affordability programs
- Training Adult Learning Center, Job Service of North Dakota Workforce Center, library staff and others to identify and help individuals develop digital skills for the workforce.

ENDORSEMENTS

1. The Workforce Development Council endorses Governor Burgum's child care proposal to support working families through solutions that address affordability, availability, and quality of child care in North Dakota.

PURPOSE

The lack of affordable, high quality child care is impacting workforce throughout the state and in every industry, thus necessitating a collective effort between businesses, state government, and communities to lead the implementation of effective solutions. To address this widespread issue, we must take a creative, multifaceted approach to make child care more affordable for working families, increase availability in communities of all sizes, and improve the quality of child care to ensure children are engaged in curriculum that will enhance their development and prepare them for school.

PARTNERS IN IMPLEMENTATION

- Department of Health and Human Services*
- Business, industry, and labor partners
- Child care providers

2. The Workforce Development Council endorses skilled workforce training programs through the Department of Commerce Technical Skills Training Grant (TSTG) as it has been an effective tool in training workers across industry throughout North Dakota, in addition to the proposed Workforce Education Innovation Grant, designed to support degree programs at two- and four-year institutions that are addressing current and emerging workforce needs. The council supports the \$2 million request to sustain the Technical Skills Training Grant and the \$24 million request to launch the Workforce Education Innovation Grant.

PURPOSE

Many North Dakota employers cite a skills gap in the talent pool and have committed to training new employees to meet the needs of their companies. This training can come at a great expense to the employer and often needs to be outsourced to other organizations, including TrainND or consultants who are brought in to provide training on-site. The Technical Skills Training Grant (TSTG) was first developed in 2020 in response to the economic impacts of the COVID-19

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pandemic. During the 67th Legislative Assembly Special Session, the Department of Commerce received \$3 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to sustain and evolve this program. The TSTG aims to offset the cost for program providers and employers in their effort to support the development of highly trained skilled workers. Since its inception, the TSTG has supported the launch or expansion of 26 training programs in health care, IT, transportation, welding, and more. Currently, the TSTG is supporting eligible training providers and employers in their efforts to design and facilitate rapid, non-degree re-skilling and upskilling programs, expand capacity in existing programs, and to provide incumbent worker training and onboarding programs.

To further address the current and emerging workforce needs of North Dakota's business and industry, the Workforce Education Innovation Grant is designed to support degree programs aligned with North Dakota's most in-demand labor force needs. Facilitated by the North Dakota University System, this grant will be available to two- and four-year postsecondary institutions to assist in the development of new programs that will respond to critical workforce needs of the state.

PARTNERS IN IMPLEMENTATION

- Department of Commerce*
- North Dakota University System
- Job Service North Dakota
- Department of Career & Technical Education
- Business, industry and labor partners

3. The Workforce Development Council endorses the North Dakota University System's Re-Energize North Dakota proposal to recruit, train, and retain individuals interested in working in the energy sector.

PURPOSE

The Re-energize North Dakota program is intended to assist with Gov. Burgum's Initiative on workforce recruitment and training needs by embracing the recruitment and training of those who are interested in or have previously worked in the energy sector in western North Dakota, but are currently under or unemployed. To achieve this, Re-energize North Dakota will make a concerted effort to retain individuals that have left the energy sector by offering them State of ND funded scholarships to retrain or re-educate and re-enter the workforce either in or out of the energy sector. The intent is to keep these individuals in North Dakota's workforce. This program will create a 'standing-reserve' of energy sector workers by targeting individuals ranging from recent high school graduates to out-of-state job seekers interested in training and/or relocating for good paying jobs. The intent is to build a 'bullpen' of workers ready to step into energy sector jobs as they become available in the future.

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