Technical Skills Training Grant

Section I Grant Information

A. Background

The Technical Skills Training grant was first developed in 2020 in response to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The program supported new and expanding accelerated skilled workforce training programs for displaced workers. The Technical Skills Training grant program aims to offset the cost for program providers and employers in their effort to support the development of highly trained skilled workers to meet the demands of our labor market. Since the initial launch of this program, the following legislative assemblies provided additional funding to keep the program operational.

> **Funding History**
> - 2021-2023 - 67th Legislative Session - $1,000,000- Coronavirus Relief Fund; funding source closed
> - 2021-2023 - 67th Special Legislative Session - $3,000,000; sustain; American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA); added Track B; funding source open*****
> - 2023-2025 - 68th Regular Legislative Session - $2,000,000; sustain; added Track C; funding source open contingent upon all remaining ARPA funds utilized

*Remaining ARPA funds will be awarded until all allocated funds are extinguished. Funding source will then utilize 68th Regular Legislative session general funds. Once this transition occurs, guidance <u>will</u> be adjusted to reflect North Dakota Office of Management and Budget requirements for grant funding occurring in this biennium.

B. Purpose

The Technical Skills Training grant is designed to support eligible training providers and employers in their efforts to design and launch rapid, non-degree re-skilling and upskilling programs (with occupations listed on the In-Demand Occupations List), or expand capacity in existing programs that began after May 17, 2021. **All tracks require a 1:1 match.**

This program has three tracks, each focused on developing or expanding a highly skilled workforce:
- <u>Track A</u> reflects the initial intent of this grant program and is designed for new and expanding accelerated, non-degree training programs that prepare trainees for new jobs.
  - o Programs in Track A may be eligible for up to $200,000.
  - o Programs in Track A are not for incumbent workers.
- <u>Track B</u> is designed for companies wishing to provide internal upskilling opportunities for their existing staff to promote movement and advancement throughout the organization, create more comprehensive onboarding and new worker training programs, and/or provide safety training for employees.
  - o Programs in Track B may be eligible for up to $50,000 with a dollar-for-dollar match throughout the lifetime of the grant program.
- <u>Track C </u>is designed to support workforce automation enhancement including but not limited to training and/or upskilling existing employees related to automation that has been implemented

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prior to the funding period; or to new or enhanced strategies, not to include the actual purchase of automation equipment.

- o Programs in Track C may be eligible for up to $200,000 for training and or upskilling existing workforce related to automation.
- o Applicants for Track C may apply for up to $100,000 for a feasibility study, related to automation.

C. Eligibility

- Eligible applicants include North Dakota colleges and universities, business, non-profit organizations, city/county municipals, and/or trades organizations/associations in North Dakota.
  - o Note: Degree programs are not eligible for funding under this grant.
- Applicants must be registered and in good standing with the North Dakota Secretary of State's office.
- Training must take place in North Dakota.
- Majority of program participants must reside and intend to work in North Dakota.
- If tuition or training costs are part of the proposed application, the applicant may not pay those funds directly to the individuals receiving the education or training; the funds must be paid to the organization providing the education or training.
- Jobs for which workers are being trained must be on the In-Demand Occupations List

D. Administration

The Technical Skills Training 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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Section II Grant Proposals

A. Proposal Requirements

All application materials **MUST** be submitted online – https://commerceportal.nd.gov/Technical-Skills-Training-Grant/. The items listed below 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

Grant proposals must follow the format shown in Section II Part B, Proposal Format (below). Proposals that fail to meet the criteria set forth in Part B will not be rated and applicants will be required to resubmit using the proper format.

B. Proposal Format

Complete proposals need to demonstrate a clear and concise explanation of the project, training, labor demand, and population served. <u>The Department requires this section be used as a template for</u> applications. **Applications will only be received and accepted through the online portal.**

IMPORTANT NOTE: Applicants must identify all sections of the proposal format to be considered for review.

Proposal elements must include the following:

1. <u>Project Description</u>

   Describe the project in general, the training involved, and demand:
   a. Identify which track (A, B, or C) the training program is in; provide a brief narrative of how this training program aligns with this track.
   b. Identify the skills in which individuals will be trained in high-demand occupations in the grantee's region that require those skills.
   c. Indicate whether the project leads to new skill training, stackable credentials, a certificate, safety training and/or serves to enhance an existing program. Degree programs are not eligible for this grant.
   d. Explain the demand in North Dakota for the training and how it will aid in meeting a critical workforce need in a high-demand occupation and is expected to lead to full-time employment, or if the training creates a pipeline for internal advancement and entry level job openings and how that was determined. This information will be used to determine whether the proposed project meets criteria for program eligibility. Alignment to demand in North Dakota must be clearly articulated. Cite information such as:
      • Identification of the occupations for which training prepares workers, and the fit of those occupations into the category of:
         o High demand occupations as determined by the Workforce Development Council and Job Service ND
      • Job Service North Dakota Labor Market Information (LMI) can be found online (NDLMI - Home Page). LMI provides 2-year and 10-year projections by occupation. Demand data must reflect the geographic area served by the institution/program. Local industry studies may also provide demand data. Data must not be percent-based alone. Include actual job numbers when providing data on job demand.
   e. Identify North Dakota wage information for the occupations served through the training.
   f. Explain how and where the training will be provided.
   g. Explain the need for this project, such as
      o preparing displaced workers to re-enter the workforce;
      o training for individuals interested in making a career change;
      o training for incumbent workers, including but not limited to upskilling, onboarding, and company safety training;
      o expanding program capacity;
      o upgrading an existing training program to align with new technology;
      o meeting an unmet or under-met employer demand;
   h. Identify how this program is different than what is currently offered.
   i. Demonstrate business and industry involvement in the determination of need for the training.
   j. Identify partnership efforts that coordinate training, expand access to training and recruit trainees.

2. Project Impact

Show project responsiveness to employer demand:
a. Identify the number of individuals projected to receive training/or be enrolled on or prior to June 30, 2025.
    o All programs must include program capacity. Existing programs must identify current and projected capacity after expansion.
b. Identify the projected start date for the first training session.
    o Programs that are already underway and began after May 17, 2021, may qualify.
c. Identify the length of the training program (i.e., how long will it take a cohort to complete). Also include how the program will be sustained after grant contract ends or if the program is a one-time offering.
d. Explain accessibility to training such as expanded/non-traditional locations, hours, and delivery methods.

3. Goals and Timeline

    a. Identify progress milestones, including project goals and timeline.

4. Budget Proposal

    The budget section must include a line-item budget and a narrative that explains the budget breakout and how funds will be used.

    Eligible grant fund expenses:
    - *Curriculum development to subcontractors*
    - *Equipment (excluding automation)*
    - *Tools and supplies for trainees*
    - *Technology to offer virtual training*
    - *Recruitment of participants*
    - *Scholarships for participants, except for Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) participants*
        o ***A minimum of 5 scholarship participants is required for this to be an eligible expense***
        o ***Scholarships must align with in-demand occupations***
        o ***Scholarships must be awarded and used within the grant agreement period***
    - *Training and/or certification for instructors*

    Ineligible grant fund expenses:
    - *Travel and lodging for instructor training and/or certification*
    - *Operational expenses (including but not limited to salary/fringe, organizational operations, and indirect costs)*
        o *Note: This grant cannot supplant an existing budget.*
    - ***This grant may not be used to create a scholarship fund or account.***

5. Budget Narrative:

    a. Identify total project cost, grant funds requested, match obtained, 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.
   o Projects will require at least one dollar of private sector matching funds for each dollar of state funding requested.
c. Describe how the match and match provider relate to the proposed training.
d. Explain any fund-leveraging and activities beyond match.

6. Budget Breakout:

The budget breakout will be formatted as shown below.

Total Project Cost: $_____

Grant Funds Requested

Equipment Breakout	Cost
Equipment Item	$
Equipment Item	$
Curriculum Development	**$**
Trainee Recruitment Costs	**$**
Instructor Training Breakout	
Registration	$
Total Funds Requested	**$**

Match Description

Equipment Breakout	Match Value
Equipment Item – donation or discount	$
Equipment Item – donation or discount	$
In-Kind Services Breakout	
In-kind description – i.e., salary, travel (mileage/lodging only)	$
In-kind description	$
Cash – Business Providing Donation	$
Total Match	**$**

Section III Proposal Review and Approval

A. Proposal Review and Rating

Application reviews will be completed by the Work-based Learning Program Coordinator and the Director of the Workforce Division of the North Dakota Department of Commerce. The Division will work with designated individuals to clarify proposals, verify match requirement, and to ensure completeness.

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B. Application Timeline & Grant Approval
Open for application - https://commerceportal.nd.gov/Technical-Skills-Training-Grant/
- Applications will be reviewed in the order received.
- Applicants will be notified of follow-up questions and clarification in approximately 3 weeks from received date.
- Notice of award will be issued in approximately 4 weeks from received date.
- Funds will be awarded until all program allocated funds are secured under a grant agreement.

The Division will 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 contact the Department of Commerce prior to publicizing the award.

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.

B. Match Requirements

1. General Match Requirements

   a) Cash, equipment, supplies and/or in-kind (i.e., salary/fringe, mileage, and lodging) may be used as match under the Technical Skills Training 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, the grant award will be contingent upon submission and approval of match by the Division.

   c) Identified match collected prior to May 17, 2021 will not be eligible.

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

   e) Match should be from the private sector. State and federal funds may qualify as match if the source of the funds allows. If using state or federal funds as match, applicant must specify the source and demonstrate that they can be used as match per funding source regulations.

   f) Match must be approved by the Division and must be directly related to the approved project.

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

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

2. <u>Cash Match</u>

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.

3. <u>Equipment/Supplies Donation or Discount Match</u>

a) Match from equipment or supplies <u>donation or discount</u> 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. <u>In-Kind Match</u>

a) In-kind match is defined as <u>temporary use</u> 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.

C. Reporting Requirements

1. <u>Performance Reporting</u>
   Performance reporting for the Technical Skills Training Grant program is required under the Common Accountability Measures established by the Division of Workforce Development in compliance with NDCC 54-60-19(2). GRANTEE will submit the performance data as required in Attachment II, Workforce Division Performance Accountability Reporting. GRANTEE will send separate notification of delivery (exclusive of data) to the Department of Commerce via email to: kkraft@nd.gov. **The subject line must read: Technical Skills Training Grant**.

2. <u>Progress Narrative</u>
   Progress Narratives will be required by the 30th of the month after each quarter. (January-March; due April, April-June; due July, July-September; due October, October-December; due January)
   The final report due within 45 days upon completion of awarded project or June 30, 2025.
   Reporting must include a brief narrative of implementation progress and basic demographic information, which will include number of participants enrolled per course/program, completion numbers to date, employment status, and early program departures. Narratives will be sent via email to: kkraft@nd.gov. **The subject line must read: Technical Skills Training Grant**.

   The final report must include a complete line-item list of how grant and matching funds were used.

3. <u>Expenditure Report/Request for Funds</u>
   Payment may be made to the grantee monthly. A complete SFN 59313 (Attachment I), Technical Skills Training Grant Reimbursement Request Form will be submitted by the 30th of each month. 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: kkraft@nd.gov**The subject line must read: Technical Skills Training Grant**

   Reimbursement Schedule as follows:
   - Initial Disbursement - Twenty-five percent – 25% of total award- upon completion of the execution of the contract.
   - Second Disbursement - Twenty-five percent – 25% of total award- upon reporting and documentation by the GRANTEE showing 75% expenditures of the initial payment.
     - (e.g., If the initial payment was $10,000; the GRANTEE must provide reporting and supporting documentation of $7,500, in addition to applicable (1:1) match, to release the second disbursement.
   - Final Disbursement - Remainder of funds will be provided upon report and documentation by the GRANTEE after the first milestone described in the application has been met.

NOTE: Failure to comply with the reporting requirements for the Grant may result in termination of the Grant.

D. Grant Agreement Modification

The GRANTEE will contact the Division to get <u>prior</u> 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 <u>line-item</u> 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.

E. Grant Agreement Closeout

Near the end of the grant agreement, the Division will notify the GRANTEE via 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.