

**Workforce Initiative Act of 2015  
Regional Workforce Grant Program**

**Request for Proposals and Guidelines for Submission**

***Planning Grants***  
***Implementation Grants***

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## ***I. General Information and Overview***

Passed into law in 2015, the Workforce Initiative Act Regional Workforce Grant Program seeks to create a statewide, comprehensive structure enabling students in Arkansas universities, community colleges and secondary centers to participate in career and technical education programs developed with input from area employers. The General Assembly found that for Arkansas to compete with an aggressive and effective 21<sup>st</sup> century economic development strategy, we must start by properly evaluating and addressing the workforce education needs of our state. The proper coordination of secondary and post-secondary education, including career and technical programs, is essential for creating a successful economic climate in Arkansas. Additionally, preparing and encouraging Arkansans to pursue high-demand jobs, including but not limited to, those stemming from industry recognized credentials, career and technical certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees is essential to building a skilled and employment-ready workforce. Programs offering short-term career and technical training, as well as, those producing Certificates of Proficiency, Technical Certificates, Associate of Applied Science, or similar degrees, and Bachelor of Applied Science, or similar degrees, are critical to the success of Arkansas' economic development.

The Regional Workforce Grant competition will encourage and facilitate regional workforce and education alignment through a competitive grant process. Grants are awarded by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, based on recommendations from the following state workforce development partners:

- The Arkansas Department of Education Commissioner or his or her designee
- The Director of the Arkansas Department of Career Education or his or her designee
- The Director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education or his or her designee
- The Director of the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services or his or her designee
- The Director of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission or his or her designee

Regional Workforce Grant funds will be disbursed and administered by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE). These funds will be available to regional workforce alliances, as defined by the Workforce Initiative Act of 2015, through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

The Regional Workforce Grant process will be divided into three phases:

- 1) Phase one-planning grants of up to \$100,000 will be available to regional workforce alliances for a period of up to twelve (12) months to support development of a plan to create employer-driven career pathways that are aligned with workforce goals set by Local Workforce Development Boards and include both K-12 and higher education institutions. These plans, if approved, will be the basis of a Phase 2-Implementation Grant proposal, to be developed during the planning phase.
- 2) Phase 2-Implementation grants, up to \$1 million over two years that will provide resources to implement approved Phase 1 projects. Regional workforce alliances that are approved for a planning grant will be invited to submit a Phase 2 proposal to implement their Phase 1 plan.
- 3) Phase 3- Continuation grants, up to \$1 million over two years, for alliances that meet or exceed Phase 1 outcome metrics and are selected by the state workforce development partners for continued support.

The primary goal of this program is to create long-term relationships between employers and regional workforce alliances to identify and address the challenge of job candidate skills gaps in the regional workforce pool. By ensuring that post-secondary educational institutions are producing the credentials

employers need through consortia and data driven decision-making, Arkansas can meet the needs of current employers and also be more effective in recruiting new industry to the state. Projects will incorporate the following core requirements:

1. Include representation from mandatory partners: a high school or secondary center that awards concurrent credit courses; a technical institute, community college or university offering career and technical education programs; and employers representing critical needs in the identified workforce region;
2. Enhance, expand, or create clearly defined career and technical education pathway program(s) at technical institutes, community colleges or universities that includes concurrent secondary center programs to fill a critical, demonstrable local workforce need;
3. Include programs which emphasize basic skills instruction concurrently with occupational training;
4. Embrace diversity of student enrollment;
5. Provide essential support services which link to resources that assist students in progressing along the identified pathways, including advising on academic, employment, financial, and personal issues; and
6. Develop and implement collaborative apprenticeship or training programs that prepare workers for rapid entry into the workforce or provide recognized industry certifications.

Below is a grant program timeline from inception through the end of the continuation award phase.



## ***II. Planning Grant Proposal Specifications***

Grant applicants must demonstrate the viability of a regional alliance that includes the following mandatory partners:

- 1) An Arkansas community college or university that will serve as the lead applicant and fiscal agent for all grant activities and will execute a grant contract with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education. Any public or private, non-profit, technical institute, two-year institution, or four-year institution may participate as additional partners.
- 2) Two or more area employers representing industry sectors with a demonstrated shortage of skilled workers seeking credentialed graduates from the proposed program.
- 3) Career and Technical Education (CTE) educators or other appropriate representatives from a local K-12 school district.

In addition, proposals must be based on input from a Local Workforce Development Board. During the Planning Grant Phase 1 process, alliances will respond to the following criteria in summary form, with the intention, if selected, of presenting a detailed plan for achieving the outlined objectives in their Phase 2 Implementation Grant proposals.

### **Section 1: Program Need (30 points)**

Proposals will include an overview of the labor needs, as determined by the Local Workforce Development Board, and specifically identify the skills gap employers face in the selected region and will continue to face in the future. Entities seeking grant funds must outline the proposed program and/or equipment needed and how creation of the program and/or acquisition of equipment will address those labor needs.

### **Section 2: Program Plan (25 points)**

Program plans must be designed to meet the goals and core requirements of the Regional Workforce Grants program. At a minimum, the plan must include a summary of expected outcomes, a description of career pathways that will be created or enhanced, a description of any anticipated equipment needs and a proposed governance and accountability structure for the program.

### **Section 3: Strength of Partnership (25 points)**

Proposals are required to address how the program plan incorporates each of the mandatory partners, as identified above, and other regional partners who can contribute significantly, in a unique and meaningful role. Describe the anticipated role for each member of the alliance. Include with the proposal a commitment letter from each partner and the Local Workforce Development Board.

### **Section 4: Budget Plan (20 points)**

Proposals will include a detailed financial plan assigning cost estimates to all proposed planning activities and a completed budget template. Efficiency in planning grant expenditures is expected.

### **III. Implementation Proposal Specifications**

Successful planning grants are expected to culminate in Implementation Grant proposals incorporating the essential elements of a successful workforce development program as outlined in this document. Grant applicants must demonstrate the viability of a regional alliance that includes the following mandatory partners:

- 1) An Arkansas community college or university that will serve as the lead applicant and fiscal agent for all grant activities and will execute a grant contract with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education. Any public or private, non-profit, technical institute, two-year institution, or four-year institution may participate as additional partners.
- 2) Two or more area employers representing industry sectors with a demonstrated shortage of skilled workers seeking credentialed graduates from the proposed program.
- 3) Career and Technical Education (CTE) educators or other appropriate representatives from a local K-12 school district.

In addition, proposals must be based on input from a Local Workforce Development Board and address the following proposal requirements.

#### **Section 1: Program Need (20 points)**

Proposals will include a thorough description of the labor needs, as determined by the Local Workforce Development Board, and specifically identify the skills gap employers face in the selected region and will continue to face in the future. Entities seeking grant funds must outline the proposed program and/or equipment needed and how creation of the program and/or acquisition of equipment will address those labor needs.

Essential Components:

- *Regional data demonstrating the need for action* - provide empirical data that illustrates needs of the local workforce, with a particular emphasis on anticipated or future needs.
- *Clear linkages between grant activities and local needs*- clearly illustrate how the proposed grant project is directly linked to addressing the workforce needs and deficits of the region. Successful applications will provide a thorough description of the region's high-demand and high-skill industrial occupations, and identify how the proposed activity will address job candidate deficits in those areas. **Applicants must also submit letters of support from at least two area employers for the proposal, citing need and outlining benefits for local industry.**
- *Alignment with Arkansas economic and workforce goals*- describe how the proposed project will increase overall higher education attainment in the region and provide clear linkages between a postsecondary credential and the needs of employers.

#### **Section 2: Program Plan (25 points)**

Program plans must be designed to meet the goals and core requirements of the Regional Workforce

Grants program as well as the following Essential Components:

- *Detailed project timeline and overview*- provide a month-by-month overview of the critical convenings, activities, and actions that will comprise the project.
- *Measurable objectives for each phase of the project*- detail the metrics utilized throughout the project to track how credentialed job candidates possessing the skills needed by employers will be provided.
- *Project governance and accountability plan*- clearly describe the plan for governance, meetings, and decision-making structure; identify a project director; and identify members of a project steering committee that will maintain oversight throughout the project period.
- *Pathways articulation and support*- clearly describe the educational pathway(s) and support services that will be developed, or existing pathways that will be enhanced, to meet the identified workforce needs. Pathways should incorporate all appropriate student outcomes from short-term industry-recognized credentials through the highest certificate or degree programs appropriate to the identified career goals and include career step-out points at the completion of each credential.
- *Role of equipment request*- required only for those proposals seeking equipment purchases. Outline how equipment purchase will specifically address local labor market needs; provide detailed description of equipment, educational value of equipment in preparing workforce, and justification for purchase.
  - *NOTE: Equipment may not be purchased during the planning phase*
- *Performance assessment*- clearly define measurable outcomes to be achieved through implementation of the plan and strategies to measure and report achievement of those outcomes. Priority will be given to programs which prepare candidates for high wage jobs or which create capacity to move candidates from unemployment to employment.

### **Section 3: Strength of Partnership (20 points)**

Proposals are required to address how the program plan incorporates each of the mandatory partners, as identified above, in a meaningful role.

Essential Components:

- *Detailed description of role of each partner in implementation of the project*- describe how each partner will carry out components of the grant project; provide a description of assigned tasks for each of the mandatory partners; identify specific personnel and the roles they will play throughout the project; describe the integration of each role into the overall project; and describe the process for implementing fully articulated pathways from K-12 through a baccalaureate degree, as appropriate.
- *Capabilities of each partner in ensuring project success*- discuss the unique strengths of each partner in executing planned proposal; describe how each partner is qualified to participate in

the proposed project and how each partners strengthens the overall partnership.

- *Consideration of all potential partners in the region* – describe the process for identifying each selected partner, including the consideration of regional community colleges, universities, public schools, education service cooperatives, businesses and industries, career and technical education programs, multidistrict vocational centers, and private partnerships.

#### **Section 4: Budget Plan (15 points)**

Proposals will include a detailed financial plan that maximizes efficient use of existing resources and a completed budget template.

Essential Components:

- *Clear alignment between funding request and grant activities*- detailed discussion of how each component of the grant budget supports the goals and stated outcomes of the program.
- *Local match of at least 10% of the total request, with a maximum cap of \$50,000*- all proposals will include a plan for local funding to match 10% of the total grant proposal. For example, a grant requesting \$400,000 in funding would be required to provide \$40,000 in matching funds. However, the local match is capped at \$50,000, meaning grants in excess of \$500,000 will have the same match as a \$500,000 project.

*Note: With a submitted written commitment and payment guarantee from an industry partner, internship wages paid during the initial twenty-four (24) months of this program may be used to offset the local match amount on a dollar-to-dollar basis. Additionally, wages paid to incumbent workers of the employer while enrolled in academic training may be deducted from the match as well. Any entity wishing to utilize this method of funding the match must include the appropriate documentation with their proposal and, if selected for funding, will be monitored to ensure compliance.*

#### **Section 5: Sustainability (20 points)**

Proposals will include a commitment and detailed plan for sustaining grant activities beyond the twenty-four (24) month implementation period. Equipment requests will clearly specify how purchased equipment will continue to be linked to addressing labor and workforce needs beyond the grant period.

Essential Components:

- *Detailed plan for sustaining the program beyond the twenty-four (24) month implementation grant funding period*- describe how the work supported by this grant will continue beyond the grant period; outline the roles and funding sources of each partner after the grant period.
- *Detailed plan for maintaining communication and sharing resources* among all the program partners beyond the twenty-four (24) month funding period;
- *Identify availability of long-term resources* to maintain and/or repair any equipment requested.



- *Describe plan for redistribution of equipment* to meet additional workforce needs once the employer needs addressed by the proposal have been satisfied.

## ***IV. Grant Application Procedures***

### *Planning Grants*

Grant applications must address all required components detailed in Section II of these guidelines. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Intent to Submit forms (Appendix A) must be received by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education no later than August 1, 2015. Completed planning grant proposals must be submitted by September 1, 2015. Completed proposals must include the following:

- Application Cover Sheet (Appendix B)
- Proposal Narrative
- Budget Template (Appendix C)

Proposals will be reviewed and scored by the state workforce development partners using the Scoring Rubric (Appendix D). Each partner will score each proposal individually and an average proposal score calculated to rank proposals from most favorable to least favorable. Funding is not guaranteed for any submitted proposals.

Notice of approval and permission to proceed will be submitted by ADHE to the applicant no later than October 1. Planning grant funding for approved plans will be disbursed on November 1 and March 1, with 50% of approved funding disbursed on each date.

### *Implementation Grants*

Grant applications must address all required components detailed in Section III of these guidelines. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Completed implementation grant proposals must be submitted by June 1, 2016. Completed proposals must include the following:

- Application Cover Sheet (Appendix E)
- Proposal Narrative
- Budget Template (Appendix F)

Proposals will be reviewed and scored by the state workforce development partners using the Scoring Rubric (Appendix G). Each partner will score each proposal individually and an average proposal score calculated to rank proposals from most favorable to least favorable. Funding is not guaranteed for any submitted proposals.

Notice of approval and permission to proceed will be submitted by ADHE to the applicant no later than July 1. Program activities are expected to begin no later than September 1. Implementation grant funding for approved plans will be disbursed semi-annually throughout the two-year implementation phase on August 1 and January 1; with 25% of approved funding disbursed on each date.

**Appendix A. Intent to Submit**

The Intent to Submit a Proposal form is a tool used by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education staff prepare for and manage the application review process. Please provide all information that is available at the time the form is completed.

Workforce Initiative Alliance Lead Institution

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Workforce Initiative Alliance Partners

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Proposal Contact Information

First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Program/Dept. \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

If you have a title for the project, please include it below.

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Appendix B. Planning Grant Cover Sheet

**Workforce Initiative Act of 2015 Planning Grant  
Application Cover Sheet**

To: Arkansas Department of Higher Education

Requesting Institution: [Institution Name]

Title of Project: [title]

Project Partners: [List all partners]

Requested Budget: [Not to exceed \$100,000]

Date Submitted: [date]

Applicant Contact: [Contact name]

Applicant's Information: [Address]  
[Phone]  
[Email]

Authorized Signatures for Project Partners:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lead Institution Authorized Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Partner Authorized Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Partner Authorized Official

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Partner Authorized Official

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Partner Authorized Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Partner Authorized Official

**Appendix C. Planning Grant Budget Template**

**Workforce Initiative Act of 2015 Planning Grant  
Proposed Budget**

**Requesting Institution:** [Institution Name]  
**Title of Project:** [Title]  
**Project Partners:** [List all partners]  
**Requested Budget:** \$[Not to exceed \$100,000]

**Project Budget:**

**A. PARTNER PARTICIPANT SUPPORT COSTS**

1. PERSONNEL/STIPENDS	\$[Amount]
2. TRAVEL	\$[Amount]
4. OTHER _____	\$[Amount]
<b>TOTAL PARTNER PARTICIPANT COSTS</b>	<b>\$[Amount]</b>

**B. OTHER DIRECT COSTS**

1. MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES	\$[Amount]
2. PUBLICATION COSTS/DOCUMENTATION/DISSEMINATION	\$[Amount]
3. CONSULTANT SERVICES	\$[Amount]
4. OTHER _____	\$[Amount]
<b>TOTAL OTHER DIRECT COSTS</b>	

**C. TOTAL DIRECT COSTS (A AND B)** \$[Amount]

**Total Requested Planning Grant Budget** \$[Amount]

**Appendix D. Planning Grant Scoring Rubric**

<b>Critical Elements</b>	<b>Exemplary</b>	<b>Superior</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>	<b>Value</b>
<b>Program Need</b>	Significantly addresses a top 3 workforce need in the region (26–30)	Addresses in a more limited way a top 3 workforce need in the region (21–25)	Addresses in a limited way a less critical workforce need in the region (16–20)	Identified labor need is too narrow or not in a critical area (0–15)	30
<b>Comments</b>					
<b>Program Plan</b>	Plan addresses all goals and core requirements and identifies significant outcomes (22–25)	Plan addresses most goals and requirements and identifies outcomes (18–21)	Plan addresses many goals and requirements and identifies few outcomes (14–17)	Plan lacks significant requirements or lacks apparent outcomes (0–13)	25
<b>Comments</b>					
<b>Strength of Partnership</b>	Plan includes broad representation and each partner has a defined role with identified critical contributions (22–25)	Plan includes broad representation but partner roles are not clearly defined (18–21)	Plan lacks one or two important partners or not all partners are critical to success of the plan (14–17)	Partner participation is too narrow or some partners do not contribute meaningfully (0–13)	25
<b>Comments</b>					
<b>Budget Plan</b>	All requested resources are essential and clearly support the goals of the plan. (18–20)	Most requested resources are important and clearly support the goals of the plan (15–17)	Plan includes some questionable resource requests (11–14)	Budget includes requests deemed unnecessary (0–10)	20
<b>Comments</b>					
<b>Potential Points</b>					<b>100</b>

Appendix E. Implementation Grant Cover Sheet

**Workforce Initiative Act of 2015 Implementation Grant  
Application Cover Sheet**

To: Arkansas Department of Higher Education

Requesting Institution: [Institution Name]

Title of Project: [title]

Project Partners: [List all partners]

Requested Budget: [Not to exceed \$1,000,000]

Date Submitted: [date]

Applicant Contact: [Contact name]

Applicant's Information: [Address]  
[Phone]  
[Email]

Authorized Signatures for Project Partners:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lead Institution

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Partner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Official

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Partner

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Authorized Official

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Partner

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Authorized Official

**Appendix F. Implementation Grant Budget Template**

**Workforce Initiative Act of 2015 Implementation Grant  
Proposed Budget**

Requesting Institution: [Institution Name]  
Title of Project: [Title]  
Project Partners: [List all partners]  
Requested Budget: \$[Not to exceed \$1,000,000]  
Program Start Date: [No later than September 1, 2016]  
Project Budget:

<b>A. PROGRAM LEADERSHIP SUPPORT COSTS</b>	
1. PERSONNEL	\$[Amount]
2. TRAVEL	\$[Amount]
4. OTHER _____	\$[Amount]
TOTAL PARTNER PARTICIPANT COSTS	\$[Amount]
<b>B. OTHER DIRECT COSTS</b>	
1. EQUIPMENT	\$[Amount]
2. MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES	\$[Amount]
3. PUBLICATION COSTS/DOCUMENTATION/DISSEMINATION	\$[Amount]
4. CONSULTANT SERVICES	\$[Amount]
5. OTHER _____	\$[Amount]
TOTAL OTHER DIRECT COSTS	
<b>C. TOTAL DIRECT COSTS (A AND B)</b>	\$[Amount]
<b>D. COST SHARING (Minimum 10% of C; up to \$50,000)</b>	\$[Amount]
<b>Total Requested Planning Grant Budget</b>	\$[Amount]

## Appendix G. Implementation Grant Scoring Rubric

Critical Elements	Exemplary	Superior	Adequate	Needs Improvement	Value
<b>Program Need</b>	Significantly addresses a top 3 workforce need in the region (18–20)	Addresses in a more limited way a top 3 workforce need in the region (15–17)	Addresses in a limited way a less critical workforce need in the region (11–14)	Identified labor need is too narrow or not in a critical area (0–10)	20
<b>Comments</b>					
<b>Program Plan</b>	Plan addresses all goals and core requirements and properly connects all activities to measurable outcomes that address workforce needs (22–25)	Plan addresses most goals and requirements and substantially connects activities to measurable outcomes (18–21)	Plan addresses many goals and requirements and connects some activities to measurable outcomes (14–17)	Plan lacks significant requirements or connections of activities to measurable outcomes are not clear (0–13)	25
<b>Comments</b>					
<b>Strength of Partnership</b>	Plan includes broad representation and each partner has a defined role with identified critical contributions (18–20)	Plan includes broad representation but partner roles are not clearly defined (15–17)	Plan lacks one or two important partners or not all partners are critical to success of the plan (11–14)	Partner participation is too narrow or some partners do not contribute meaningfully (0–10)	20
<b>Comments</b>					
<b>Budget Plan</b>	Plan identifies efficiencies that take full advantage of existing human and physical resources and all requested resources clearly support the goals of the plan (13–15)	Plan includes significant efficiencies from existing resources and all requested resources clearly support the goals of the plan (10–12)	Plan includes limited efficiencies from existing resources or includes some questionable resource requests (7–9)	Budget includes limited or no existing resources from partners or includes requests deemed unnecessary (0–6)	15
<b>Comments</b>					



<b>Sustain-ability</b>	Identifies existing resources to continue the program with no reduction in services at the end of grant funding period (18–20)	Identifies significant resources to continue the program with limited reduction in services at the end of grant funding period (15-17)	Identifies limited resources to continue the program or proposes significant reduction in services at the end of grant funding period (11-14)	New funding sources must be identified for continuation of program at the end of grant funding (0-10)	20
<b>Comments</b>					
<b>Potential Points</b>					<b>100</b>