

**NC Department of Commerce
Division of Workforce Solutions**

**American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
Grant Guidelines**

Introduction

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was enacted on March 11, 2021, to provide relief to address the continued impact of COVID-19 on the economy, public health, state and local governments, individuals, and businesses. A component of ARPA is the State Fiscal Recovery Fund (SFRF), which provides \$5.4 billion to North Carolina to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery.

The N.C. General Assembly appropriated SFRF in Session Law 2021-180. The N.C. Pandemic Recovery Office (NCPRO) is responsible for overseeing and monitoring the use of the SFRF, as well as reporting to the U.S. Treasury on behalf of state agencies.

The Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) has been allocated ARPA funds to focus on three workforce development areas. DWS has designated \$2 million in funding to assist individuals with a Substance Use Disorder, \$2 million for expanding Reentry Jobseeker Services, and \$6 million of the \$10 million awarded to DWS for Work-Based Learning opportunities to assist small- and micro-businesses (i.e., businesses with twenty-five [25] or fewer employees), as well as expand funding for On-the-Job Training (OJT), Work Experience (WEX), and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT). These programs are in keeping with the spirit of both North Carolina's ["First in Talent" Plan](#) and [NC Job Ready initiative](#).

Each grant provides DWS an opportunity to engage with new partners or provide innovative and enhanced services that are not easily administered through current Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) guidelines. The grants are to serve individuals and businesses during the period of October 24, 2022 to December 31, 2026. Funding must expended by December 31, 2026.

These additional resources will have a positive impact on jobseekers and small businesses, particularly in underserved communities.

NCWorks Substance Use Disorder Recovery Grant - The goal of this grant initiative is to increase workforce participation and job retention of persons in recovery through an increase in education, knowledge, and workforce skills and by ensuring they are ready to work. These efforts could include training in soft skills required in the workplace, providing access to postsecondary opportunities for training specific to high-demand employment sectors, and offering support for job retention. Grant activities could also include providing direct support from the case managers and supportive services (e.g., transportation, childcare, food stabilization) to assist in removing barriers to employment.

NCWorks Reentry Support Grant – The goal of this grant initiative is to provide comprehensive services to Justice-Involved (JI) individuals focusing on their specific challenges and job search needs post-release. Grant activities could include providing individuals information about community resources for housing, clothing, and medical needs. Supportive services could also include assistance with transportation needs. NCWorks Reentry staff will provide information on expungement clinics, vital records

appropriation, certificates of relief, letters of explanation, and resume writing within correctional facilities.

Local Area WDB applications that include partnering with the Fierce Fellows Reentry training program and have an active Reentry program will be given special consideration.

NCWorks Small Business Work-Based Learning Grant – The goal of this grant initiative is to establish work-based learning opportunities targeting small- and micro-businesses (i.e., businesses with twenty-five [25] or fewer employees) to bridge the gap for business retention and expansion with funding for OJT, WEX, and IWT. This initiative will focus on historically underutilized business, industries most impacted by the pandemic (including manufacturing and hospitality), priority industries with substantial occupational skills gaps, and other risk indicators. Dislocated workers with transferable skills will also be targeted as priority job candidates.

In addition to historically underutilized businesses and industries significantly impacted by the pandemic, emphasis should also be placed on businesses located in economically distressed Tier 1 or Tier 2 counties. This funding will also assist with marketing and technology expenses to develop and maintain the training platform and to market and promote the trainings.

Grants were reviewed and awarded based on the strength and viability of the conceptual framework, substantive involvement of strong partnerships, and indications that projects are innovative in nature with measurable outcomes and clarity of budget. Selection criteria considered may include: alignment with the North Carolina Department of Commerce’s “First in Talent” strategic plan, the targeting of jobseekers in underserved communities, and the prioritization of Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) vendors. It is allowable for specific counties or NCWorks Career Centers within a local region to be targeted for funding. Local workforce boards may utilize program funds for staffing, provided the workforce boards implement set criteria for duties and established goals.

ARPA grant participants are to be co-enrolled in WIOA. When grant funds are expended for an individual (i.e., WEX Wages, OJT, tuition, Career Readiness Certificate [CRC]), the individual must be WIOA eligible as a youth, adult, or dislocated worker. Eligibility information for each training participant, including specific information identified for the grant initiative, must be entered in NCWorks.gov.

Grant Reporting

Regular Reporting:

Grant recipients will be required to submit monthly and quarterly status reports and quarterly financial updates during the life of the grant. Reports will cover areas such as partnership updates, solutions implemented, challenges encountered, participants enrolled, demographics of participants, expenditures, and other subjects. A **sample** report may be viewed at Attachment 5 of

Operational Guidance 04-2022. Changes to the report format may be provided after the implementation process is underway.

Monitoring/Follow-up/Fiscal Final Report:

Monitoring and grant follow-up will occur on a quarterly basis, and as needed, through December 31, 2026.

Project Evaluation:

Upon closeout of the grant, all grant recipients must provide a final evaluation and summary of the project to include an analysis of the project's challenges, successes, expenditures, and promising practices, and a template about how the project could be sustained locally and replicated in other regions, if deemed a success. The evaluation will also identify each goal and whether the measures were met, exceeded, or not, and an explanation of successes and failures.

Resources

WorkforceGPS (<https://strategies.workforcegps.org>) provides a library of promising practices and workforce system strategies that can be browsed for resources by clicking the tabs. Items listed with numbers next to them indicate the number of resources tagged with that term.