



## FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act Good Jobs Challenge Project Narrative

### Section 1: Project Description and Overview

**Section 1a: Executive Summary.** The Northern New Mexico Workforce Integration Network (WIN) proposes to transform the workforce system and economy of a seven-county region in north-central New Mexico. Under the oversight of **system lead, North Central New Mexico Economic Development District (NCNMEDD)**, WIN will focus on two sectors: **1) Healthcare (Backbone: Santa Fe Community College [SFCC]), and 2) Skilled Trades (Backbone: Regional Development Corporation [RDC]).** These sectors were selected for high levels of employer-identified hiring need and because they offer quality jobs for a wide range of education levels and backgrounds. WIN will support the following outcomes: 1) Diversify the regional economy; 2) Create a robust workforce in sectors with systemic employment deficiencies; 3) Increase earnings in low-wage and persistent poverty counties; and 4) Address equity through career paths that provide mobility to historically underrepresented populations. This project will be open to eligible adults who are un- or underemployed or looking to skill up, but will focus outreach and supports on the following: **1) People underserved by each focus sector, 2) Low-skilled workers, and 3) People recovering from substance use disorder and/or former incarceration.** Participants will work with Navigators developing personalized plans that include wrap-around services, professional development, targeted industry-recognized training, and work and learn opportunities. WIN programs will emphasize region-wide credit/experience transferability and will offer shorter-term training for those looking for a direct path to a job. Thirty-three employers, unions, workforce organizations, and service providers; and 21 government entities have committed to serving an estimated 1,750 participants over 36 months.

**Section 1b: System Lead.** The system lead will be the North Central New Mexico Economic Development District (NCNMEDD), which was formed in 1967 under the EDA's Public Works and Economic Recovery Act. It is one of seven regional councils of government in New Mexico and serves eight-counties.<sup>1</sup> For over fifty years, NCNMEDD has helped the region to navigate economic adjustment and alleviate unemployment and underemployment in economically distressed communities through technical assistance, grants, loans, fiscal sponsorships, and grant/project administration.<sup>2</sup> NCNMEDD has increased its capacity to bring in EDA investments by assisting with three successful EDA CARES Act applications in 2021 and 10 pending EDA ARPA and EAA applications in 2022.<sup>3</sup>

NCNMEDD works with many area communities to offset their limited capacity for community planning and development. As such, staff have long-standing and deep connections region-wide, as well as a strong network of partner organizations that includes employers, training institutions, community organizations, and local governments. With a staff of 30 and an operating budget of \$4 million annually, NCNMEDD successfully manages over \$20 million in federal and state grants each year.<sup>4</sup> NCNMEDD's familiarity with EDA programs, grant administration, and understanding of the challenges, opportunities, communities, and regional partners make it an ideal system lead for WIN.

The sectoral approach proposed under WIN will be led by two backbone organizations: Santa Fe

<sup>1</sup> Seven of these counties in the NCNMEDD service area represent the WIN-IT performance region: 1) Colfax, 2) Los Alamos, 3) Mora, 4) Rio Arriba, 5) San Miguel, 6) Santa Fe, and 7) Taos.

<sup>2</sup> For example, NCNMEDD assisted the Village of Questa to obtain EDA funding for a business park as it recovered from the loss of mining jobs due to the closure of the Chevron molybdenum mine in 2014. NCNMEDD is providing grant administration for the project.

<sup>3</sup> Two of these projects— The Rio Arriba County Empowerment Center (funded), and The Northern New Mexico College Workforce Training Center (in progress)—will support WIN by leveraging workforce training facilities, programs, and partnerships with plumbers and pipefitters unions.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to NCNMEDD's core mission of economic development, it manages two Regional Transportation Planning Organizations and an Area Agency on Aging.



Community College (SFCC) for the Healthcare sector and Regional Development Corporation (RDC) for the Skilled Trades sector. Both Backbones have experience administering training programs and convening coalitions of regional partners. For nearly 40 years, SFCC has been a gateway to success by providing affordable, high-quality educational programs that address a diverse community’s social, cultural, technological, and economic needs. SFCC serves 13,000 diverse students in credit, noncredit, and adult education programs. It is a Hispanic-Serving institution, a Best for Vets school, and a Military Friendly school. In 2015, SFCC was the lead entity on a \$15 million, four-year Department of Labor grant. The New Mexico Skill Up Network: Pathways Acceleration in Technology and Healthcare (SUN PATH) consortium involved 11 higher education institutions statewide that trained thousands of low-skilled individuals for healthcare jobs. This experience cemented SFCC as a leader in healthcare training in New Mexico.

Founded in 1996, the RDC is a private nonprofit 501(c)3 dedicated to improving economic development in Northern New Mexico. The RDC was initially established to serve as the Department of Energy Los Alamos Site “Community Reuse Organization” (CRO) with a mission is to diversify the economy within the north central New Mexico region. The RDC maintains a close working relationship with the Department of Energy, Los Alamos National Laboratory, and its affiliate contractors. It focuses on workforce development, investment opportunities, and technical assistance to facilitate job growth and to diversify the regional economy. It also serves as a facilitator to bring organizations together, offering training and job placement supports and drawing on extensive region-wide networks of union and employer partners. The RDC has been engaging in highly-aligned and timely convening work for the past 11 months through its Workforce and Academic Network Development pilot, which seeks to train workers in skilled trades and construction and has already accomplished significant groundwork building stakeholder trust, planning, and convening in the skilled trades—all of which will be applied to WIN if funded. The organization also has experience managing federal grants, having recently completed a \$3.2 million workforce development grant from the Department of Energy’s Office of Environmental Management. The RDC’s training work centers on the skilled trades, a sector where local employers report severe hiring gaps and where new employees can be trained quickly. The RDC seeks to develop a talent pipeline that can serve private and public organizations region-wide, an effort that is all the more critical now that the nation is gearing up to spend the largest investment in infrastructure in a lifetime, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021.

**Section 2a: Employer Leadership and Commitments.** WIN will draw on its expansive employer networks, and analysis on credential alignment and skills needs to stand up programs quickly. These partnerships have been developed over decades by the project lead and two backbone organizations through developing training programs, conducting outreach, and helping to support regional economic development efforts. Employers were selected with the following considerations in mind: 1) A mix of large and small and public and private firms, 2) Commitment to working collaboratively to ensure that curricula are adapted to serve current skills needs, 3) Interest in hiring underrepresented participants, and 4) Willingness to actively participate in work and learn opportunities for participants. See attachment for commitment letters, which currently estimate a need of at least 1,020 jobs in the project period.

Employer	Commitment Type(s)
1) Arpad Builders LLC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve on the Industry Team</li> <li>• Offer a subject matter expert to review curricula and share relevant occupational information</li> <li>• Participate in outreach and recruitment,</li> </ul>
2) Bradbury Stamm Construction	
3) CHRISTUS St. Vincent	
4) Common Block Studio	
5) Darrin’s Place	
6) El Centro Family Health	



7) Holy Cross Medical Center	particularly among underserved and underrepresented individuals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize interviews and/or hiring for program completers</li> <li>• Participate in a clinical placements and/or work-based learning opportunities as available and appropriate</li> </ul>
8) HOY Recovery Program, Inc.	
9) Jaynes Corporation	
10) Jemez Mountains Electric Cooperative, Inc.	
11) Kit Carson Electric Cooperative	
12) Los Alamos County Fire Department	
13) Los Alamos Medical Center	
14) Los Alamos National Laboratory	
15) Miner’s Colfax Medical Center	
16) Montañas del Norte Area Health Education Center	
17) Mora-San Miguel Electric Cooperative, Inc.	
18) Northern Rio Arriba Electric Cooperative	
19) Presbyterian Hospital, Española	
20) Rio Grande ATP, Inc.	
21) Santa Fe Fire Department	
22) Santa Fe Recovery Center	
23) Wolf Corp	

WIN’s design draws on significant groundwork already laid from employer input on hiring needs, skills, and credentials. This has included employer and industry surveys and convenings, as well as work to align existing curricula to industry standards. If awarded, employers will designate representatives to serve on the WIN Industry Teams, which will meet at least quarterly to continue these conversations already underway formalize project design launch, evaluation, refinement, and improvement.

WIN’s recruitment strategy will involve many area organizations, including the local workforce board, WIOA training affiliate, and Workforce Connection offices; participating job training centers and higher education; community nonprofits; and community-based treatment centers. Employers will be a crucial part of recruitment, developing an aligned outreach strategy via the Industry Teams, and working with the Backbone organizations and staff, including the Work-Based Learning Coordinator, Clinical Coordinator, and Project Navigators to communicate skills needs and job demand.

**Section 2b: Other Stakeholders and Partnerships.** WIN will engage many stakeholders from around the region to support a variety of program functions. See below for a summary of partners and responsibilities and the attachment for letters of commitment.

Partners	Roles and Responsibilities
<b>Workforce system:</b> Northern Area Local Workforce Development Board, New Mexico Workforce Connection Centers, HELP New Mexico, Inc. (supports WIOA and SNAP employment and training)	Outreach and recruitment, benefits screening and enrollment, job search and placement, additional training, offer facilities to Navigators.
<b>Higher education:</b> <u>Training:</u> 1) Luna Community College (San Miguel County), 2) Northern New Mexico College (Rio Arriba County), 3) Santa Fe Community College (Santa Fe County), 4) UNM-Los Alamos (Los Alamos County), and 5) UNM-Taos (Taos County). <sup>5</sup> <u>Statewide curriculum alignment:</u> New Mexico Higher Education Department	Participant recruitment, deliver training, academic coaching, support developing fully aligned and transferable curriculum between institutions.

<sup>5</sup> While five higher education institutions have signed on as partners, any of the region’s 50 training centers could potentially enroll and train WIN project participants.



<p><b>Unions/Industry:</b> U.A. Local Union #412, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers #611, Association of General Contractors, Associated Builders and Contractors, Associated General Contractors, National Association of Development Organizations, Santa Fe Home Builders Association</p>	<p>Participant and employer outreach, defining necessary skills, curriculum review, work and learn, apprenticeships, and job placements.</p>
<p><b>Wrap-around Services:</b> Darrin’s Place, Hoy Recovery Program, Rio Grande ATP, Santa Fe Recovery Center, YouthWorks</p>	<p>Outreach and recruitment, coaching and counseling, residential and outpatient therapy, benefits assistance, and stabilization assistance.</p>

Additionally, WIN has the written support of 21 state, county, and local government entities, which includes the state’s Workforce and Economic Development offices, which will help with general support, referrals and may help to secure additional in-kind and financial resources to sustain the project.

**Section 3: Regional Description.**

**Location and region:** WIN will focus on a seven-county area of north-central New Mexico: 1) Colfax, 2) Los Alamos, 3) Mora, 4) Rio Arriba, 5) San Miguel, 6) Santa Fe, and 7) Taos. This region is home to about 284,305 people, 55% of whom identify as Hispanic/Latino and 4% Native American. As discussed in section 4b, the area’s resources are distributed unequally. The region has historically been disinvested compared to other parts of New Mexico, despite including the state capital, Santa Fe, and Los Alamos National Labs. Part of the reason for this is geography – it is a vast, rural region covering more than 19,000 square miles, larger than Connecticut and Rhode Island combined. Yet it has a population density of only 16.48 people per square mile, contrasted with a national average 94 people per square mile.<sup>6</sup> Outside of Santa Fe County, the rest of the region largely consists of small municipalities, unincorporated villages, and scattered ranches and farms. Residents of nine tribal nations have lived in the area for thousands of years. This region also includes centuries-old Hispanic communities that pre-date the formation of the United States and to this day speak predominantly Spanish. Income is distributed highly unequally; the region includes one of the richest counties in the nation, Los Alamos, as well as five counties with median incomes around \$20,000 below the state’s median.

A few sectors dominate the regional economy. The government and tourism sectors alone represent nearly half of all jobs.<sup>7</sup> The pandemic has exacerbated calls for diversification to support long-term resiliency and to increase the region’s ability to attend to the needs of its residents and attract new ones. Two of the sectors projected to grow the most rapidly in northern New Mexico are Healthcare and social assistance (16.9%) and Construction (11.4%), yet employers report dire talent shortages in each of these areas, which WIN seeks to address.<sup>8</sup>

**Challenges:** Primary among the region’s challenges is an aging population. None of the counties in the WIN service area has a median age below 40. The three counties with the highest median age are: 1) Mora (55.2), 2) Colfax (50.2), and 3) Taos (48.8).<sup>9</sup> For comparison, New Mexico’s median age is 37.8, and the nation’s is 38.1. The above-average median age results from the region losing working-age population, which declined 7.5% between 2010 and 2020, compared to a 5.5% increase nationally.<sup>10</sup> Part of what is

<sup>6</sup> StatsAmerica, 2019; U.S. Census, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> StatsAmerica, Regionizer, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> StatsAmerica Regionizer statistics for the seven-county region, 2019.



driving this shift is outmigration, estimated by NCNMEDD to be 20,000-40,000 working-age people between 2014-2018.<sup>11</sup> Young people move to cities to pursue education and work opportunities rather than staying closer to home, despite many employers struggling to fill quality jobs.

For around two decades, New Mexico has had one of the nation's highest drug overdose rates, and its alcohol-related death rate has ranked first, second, or third in the country since 1981. Further, a significant proportion of the regional workforce faces factors that compound finding quality employment, particularly substance use disorder and related justice-system involvement.<sup>12</sup> In the WIN service area, Rio Arriba County is the county that struggles the most with substance abuse. While it can be hard to gauge the true prevalence of dependencies, one estimate is 20% in Rio Arriba County or one out of every five adults.<sup>13</sup> Many of these individuals may have professional skills or relevant education, but require coordinated services to complete a training program and reenter the workforce. Helping this population to find employment would reintroduce thousands of individuals each year to the workforce and help to reduce recidivism rates among a high-risk population. Of the four recovery centers committed to working with the WIN project, over 1,000 individuals are estimated to be good fits for project participation. Supporting this many people in recovery could create added benefits, including less strain on health systems, reduced crime, increased revenues from income and gross receipts taxes, and increased family and community stability. The robust sectoral strategy offered by WIN holds promise as a solution to the region's challenges, helping to retain people in the area and bringing others back into the workforce by broadcasting the region's opportunities and reducing the challenges that stand in the way.

**Alignment to CEDS:** WIN closely aligns with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which was updated in 2021. Healthcare is one of the eight priority sectors identified in the north-central region, which was based on quantitative NAICS code analysis and community input. It is the fastest-growing and largest employment sector in New Mexico and serves a critical community need, particularly in the region's remote, frontier, and aging communities.

Skilled Trades is also a vital component of the CEDS Action Plan, specifically Goal 1: Build on Existing Strengths: Increase local procurement and trades employment with federal contract opportunities. Driven by the presence of Los Alamos National Laboratory, the need for workforce depth in the specialty trades is critical.

The CEDS takes the approach of seeking to build on strengths while simultaneously addressing systemic weaknesses. The Healthcare and Skilled Trades sectors are emblematic of this approach.

- Education and job training are noted as one of the region's greatest strengths. However, these resources are not equally accessible region-wide. WIN seeks to address this gap via online learning and a mobile classroom. Both sectors enjoy established workforce training programs at two and four-year colleges, with programs developed in close partnership with employers and unions. The institutes of higher education that have worked most closely with each sector are included in the WIN design as training delivery sites.<sup>14</sup>
- Both sectors address regional systemic weaknesses, including reliance on tourism and income inequality.<sup>15</sup> Increased employment in Healthcare and Skilled Trades both have the potential to shift the region's reliance on lower-paying, seasonal tourism jobs toward more highly paid, reliable

<sup>11</sup> While data are lagging, anecdotally, the shrinking workforce-age population has accelerated during the pandemic due to early retirements, particularly in the healthcare sector.

<sup>12</sup> New Mexico's Indicator-Based Information System (NM-IBIS), New Mexico Department of Health.

<sup>13</sup> Ted Alcorn, "The Judge Who Keeps People Out of Jail," The Washington Post, November 30, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/magazine/2021/11/30/new-mexico-drug-court/>.

<sup>14</sup> North Central Development District, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, 2021-2025, page 13

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, page 20-21



jobs and even to foster new small businesses that address local needs.

- Both sectors have entry points to lower-skilled occupations, for example, peer support workers, laborers, and technicians, which address equity and income equality in ways that other professional and high-tech sectors cannot. By providing onramps for lower-skilled workers, Healthcare and Skilled Trades level create career ladders to higher wages over time.

Other areas of alignment with the CEDS include:

- Rapid hiring growth (both new positions and replacements) at Los Alamos National Labs will include an additional 2,000 jobs by 2022.
- The need for more skilled and specialty trade workers includes utility companies and other employers region-wide due to high retirement rates among the current workforce.
- There will be an increased need for construction and trades workers for projects that come online as a result of the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021.
- Skilled Trades overlap with the Green Energy and Specialty Manufacturing sectors, identified as priorities in the CEDS and projected to grow statewide due to rapid adoption of renewable energy.
- New Mexico has an acute need to address the shortage of doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers, particularly in the north-central region. The state has 6,000 open nursing positions but only certified around 1,200 new nurses in 2021.<sup>16</sup> As a result, 53% of New Mexico hospitals report critical staffing shortages.<sup>17</sup> The clinical placement pilot proposed in WIN seeks to alleviate this shortage.
- WIN has synergy with efforts to bolster broadband technology and make telehealth widely available. The internationally-recognized and New Mexico-grown Project ECHO currently offers real-time collaborative sessions with local healthcare providers, helping to build the capacity and expertise of community providers so they can better serve their patients, no matter where they live.

#### Section 4: Impacts of the Regional Workforce Training System

**Section 4a: Project Components.** WIN requests funds to support each of the three project components, including a six-month System Development period, a six-month Program Design period, and up to 24 months for Program Implementation. While much of the groundwork for System Development and Program Design has been laid, this structure of progressing through the project components will allow for a strong, cohesive, and effective regional rollout of WIN’s goal to expand and formalize two sectoral partnerships. It will create seamless connections from training to career placement in two high-need sectors while providing the wrap-around services that meet northern New Mexico’s unique needs. The proposed approach emphasizes regional alignment and access across programs. WIN will accelerate work already underway at the state level that seeks to align programs to employer needs and create better connections between the training system and the workforce. See section 5b, Program Description, and a timeline provided as an additional attachment for the activities contained within each component.

As the region seeks to recover from the pandemic while also countering pre-existing trends, a number of factors may influence WIN success. The project has considered the regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing economic development and workforce training projects in the region. Relevant considerations are summarized as follows.

<b>Strengths</b>	Culture of small business/entrepreneurship; 50 registered training centers and institutions
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<sup>16</sup> Griffin Rushton, New Mexico hospitals end the year with most critical staff shortages in US, KOB News, December 31, 2021, <https://www.kob.com/albuquerque-news/new-mexico-hospitals-end-the-year-with-most-critical-staff-shortages-in-us/634682/>.

<sup>17</sup> Becker’s Hospital Review, 2021.



	of higher education in the region; Existing employer/industry relationships with training centers
<b>Weaknesses</b>	Income inequality; Infrastructure deficiencies; Widely dispersed populations
<b>Opportunities</b>	Transportation networks; Technology assets (including an expanding broadband network); Quality of life; Potential to bring un- and under-employed population back into the workforce
<b>Threats</b>	Aging population; Brain drain/outmigration; Challenges in training higher-risk populations

Recognizing that small life challenges can derail participant progress, the wrap-around services component is crucial. WIN seeks to overcome weaknesses and threats by strategically plugging holes in the education to career pipeline using high-touch Navigators, a mobile classroom, offering transportation solutions, and including wrap-around supports that are catered to individual needs. Program affordability, short-term training options, and bringing access to participants where they live via a Skilled Trades mobile classroom and remote learning will offset income inequality and infrastructure issues. By focusing on Healthcare and Skilled Trades sectors, WIN will help diversify the economy, address employer needs, potentially attract new businesses, and provide a path into the workforce for the un- and underemployed who face barriers.

**Section 4b: EDA Investment Priorities.** WIN is designed to help position northern New Mexico for **Recovery and Resilience** through diversification. Historically, about 25% of jobs in the region relate directly to tourism, a sector that took a disproportionate hit during the COVID-19 pandemic. These jobs have slowly been recovering, but the pandemic underscored facts with which the region was already grappling—these positions tend to be seasonal, lower-paying, and sometimes are high risk.

With the presence of Los Alamos National Labs in the heart of the service area, federal and related contracting positions represent another 25% of jobs. While these jobs are of high quality and LANL is a strong employer for the region, North Central New Mexico has identified a need to diversify from reliance on any single industry. Instead, LANL should be viewed as an engine for creating new private sector businesses through technology commercialization and contracting. By strategically supporting both LANL hiring needs and other employers in the region, WIN has the potential to help spin off new companies.

In the current CEDS plan, it is a priority to diversify to strengthen the economy, create jobs for a wide range of people, and support greater long-term resiliency by decreasing dependency on limited sectors. As such, WIN focuses on the most significant growth sector in the region, healthcare, and a flexible sector that can support many different businesses and has ample opportunities for entrepreneurship, Skilled Trades. Further, WIN will focus on reaching people disengaged from the workforce, including those recovering from substance abuse disorder and the un- and underemployed, expanding the local talent pool while building structures that promise to make the region appealing for young people to stay.

WIN also aligns closely with two additional EDA priorities, as follows.

**Equity:** WIN's service area is incredibly diverse. More than 55% of residents identify as Hispanic or Latino, and 4% are Native American (there are nine tribes located within the service area); only 37% of residents identify as white.<sup>18</sup> Income levels range hugely across the region, from Los Alamos County, with a median household income of over \$121,324, to Mora County, where the median household income is only \$28,446.<sup>19</sup> In San Miguel and Rio Arriba Counties, more than one-quarter of residents live in poverty. Historically, resources have concentrated in the wealthier areas of the region, struggling to reach more remote communities.

Four of the seven counties served by this project (57% of the counties in the planned area of impact and 36.3% of the population) are Persistent Poverty Counties, per the EDA: 1) Mora, 2) Rio Arriba,

<sup>18</sup> StatsAmerica, Regionizer.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Census, Geography Profiles, 2019.



3) San Miguel, and 4) Taos Counties. Even in the rural areas of wealthier counties, there are pockets of poverty born out of poor access to resources, low educational attainment levels, and limited quality employment, and northern New Mexico counties often struggle to deliver effective services to all communities. WIN seeks to overcome geographic, structural, and socioeconomic barriers to help local residents to more fully access local resources. WIN will connect region-wide using Navigators who will travel across the area to provide high-touch services and leverage a mobile classroom and online learning where in-person options are not available.

Outreach and communications for WIN will specifically seek to reach underserved individuals within the region, including ensuring that materials are available in Spanish and other languages to reach the large proportion of individuals in the service area who do not speak English well. In the region's Persistent Poverty Counties, for instance, the proportion of individuals who speak Spanish or a Native American language at home approaches or exceeds 50%, as follows: 1) Mora County, 67.3%; 2) Rio Arriba County, 59.7%; 4) San Miguel County, 53.7, and 4) Taos County, 45.4%.<sup>20</sup>

**Workforce Development:** WIN's two sectors were selected because of the range of education and training requirements for different occupations, which will provide options for individuals from diverse backgrounds and with different training goals. Through the use of the proven I-BEST contextualized basic education model, participants who do not have a diploma at the start will be able to attain credentials and a quality job in the 36-month grant period. Demand in both sectors has never been higher, and both hold opportunities for significant wage growth over time.

WIN will draw on existing best practices and proven curricula, which will be reviewed and adapted by the Industry Teams to align with current skills needs. Because curricula, partnership networks, and training sites exist, the program will be able to enroll participants quickly. Navigators will be a connective resource that helps to knit together training and employment opportunities across the region while educating residents on the available jobs.

**Section 4c: Job Details.** Below is a table summarizing jobs for which WIN completers could qualify. Every one of these is anticipated to either offer employer benefits and/or union membership. Note that this is merely a selection of positions and not the full list of jobs for which graduates might qualify. The data are state-level estimates, as reliable regional occupation-level data are not available.

Targeted occupations and details by backbone area <sup>21</sup>				
Sample occupations	Current jobs	Annual job openings (2018-2028)	Projected growth (2018-2028)	Median annual earnings
<b>Backbone Area: Healthcare</b>				
Community health worker	280	40	18%	\$61,000
Counselors	180	20	11%	\$51,150
EKG Technician	340	20	6%	\$47,710
EMT/Paramedic	1,580	120	5%	\$35,240
Licensed alcohol and drug counselor	1,910	240	16%	\$49,350
Licensed practical nurse	2,290	200	8%	\$51,350
Medical assistant	6,420	880	18%	\$31,320
Medical and clinical laboratory tech.	1,470	120	12%	\$47,980
Medical secretary and administrative ass.	5,180	690	14%	\$32,520

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Census, Geography Profiles, 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Information from O\*Net.





Nursing assistant	6,540	830	10%	\$29,510
Phlebotomist	770	110	26%	\$32,250
Registered nurse	18,330	1,240	11%	\$75,350
Respiratory therapist	850	70	21%	\$58,020
Social and human service assistant	3,400	450	9%	\$36,790
<b>Backbone Area: Skilled Trades</b>				
Carpenter	5,580	650	8%	\$49,520
Cement masons and concrete finishers	1,230	150	11%	\$37,960
Construction laborer	13,120	1,690	11%	\$33,510
Electrician	4,570	610	11%	\$56,900
Heating and air conditioning technician	1,330	150	11%	\$43,210
Maintenance and repair workers	8,800	940	7%	\$33,940
Plumber, pipefitter, steamfitter	2,810	370	14%	\$48,300

The above selection of jobs represents an estimated 9,590 new positions per year attainable by WIN completers (5,030 in healthcare and 4,560 in skilled trades).<sup>22</sup> Median salaries are presented in the table above rather than a prevailing wage. Per the New Mexico Public Works Minimum Wage Act, the prevailing wage applies to employers and employees working on state- or locally-funded public works construction jobs only. As such, state prevailing wage data are not available for non-construction positions.

Both sectors offer clear pathways to progressively higher-wage jobs over time, with completers having the chance to move from positions that pay \$32,000 to \$35,000 to more experienced positions that may pay over \$70,000, or even \$100,000. It is anticipated that the average wage for completers within the grant period will be around \$40,000, or about \$10,000 greater than the state's median earnings for workers of \$30,276.<sup>23</sup> Strong union involvement will also support placing program completers in higher-wage positions. In 2021, union members had median weekly earnings \$194 higher than non-union members.<sup>24</sup> WIN Navigators can help participants to chart a path to additional training to achieve higher-skilled positions over time. Further, it is anticipated, particularly within the skilled trades sector, that some completers will start their own small businesses—creating uncertainty over wages but supporting the creation of new positions in a sector that is poised for explosive growth over the next few years.

WIN will leverage the regional workforce system and workforce offices, which will contribute office space as needed for Navigators, help with job placements, and support screening participants for wrap-around services and benefits. Employers are already committed to working with the project staff to help align curricula and work and learn experiences to industry credentials and identified skills needs. Further, by utilizing the region's economic development district as lead, the project will be able to leverage staff and an organization that has established regional relationships and trust.

**Section 4d: Achievable.** This program is achievable because it builds on the strong foundation of current partnerships and the experience gained from ambitious past initiatives to help close gaps, better unite and leverage resources, and target individuals who are traditionally not considered “good” candidates for jobs. It draws on best practices, including I-BEST contextualized skills training, the Arizona Clinical Education Consortium (AzCEC) system for clinical training placements, and the RDC's recent efforts under its Workforce and Academic Network (WAN) Development pilot project. This project has also identified the director-level staff to allow a quick ramp-up (see Staffing Plan attached to the Budget Narrative).

<sup>22</sup> It is important to note that these numbers do not include replacements and requirements, which drive the available positions even higher. Because of retirements outpacing new hires, in the skilled trades industry alone, the Association of General Contractors estimates that there is a need for at least 10,000 skilled trades workers needed in upcoming years.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2019.

<sup>24</sup> Union Members—2021, Bureau of Labor Statistics.



NCNMEDD, as the region's economic development district entity, is at the center of the area's major economic development and training projects. It has also been recognized as a leader in recovery efforts due to its innovative and nationally-recognized recovery initiatives developed in response to the high rate of substance abuse. NCNMEDD was one of ten regions in the nation selected to receive technical assistance from the National Association of Development Organizations in 2021 (see attached letter from NADO). NCNMEDD is now playing a lead role in recovery infrastructure and obtained and is administering state funding to acquire and renovate properties for two recovery centers in Rio Arriba and Taos counties.

SFCC, Healthcare Backbone, has ample experience managing complex federal training grants. As mentioned previously, it led a \$15 million Department of Labor grant, uniting 11 colleges, 23 employers, 17 industry partners, and three workforce system partners to train low-skill workers along a career pathway in healthcare. Over three years, this program served 4,266 individuals, with 2,793 completing a program of study and 2,022 receiving a wage increase after participation. These structures and relationships have proven durable, with close alignment between training partners persisting years later. However, clinical training has long been a bottleneck to graduating new healthcare professionals into the workforce, which WIN seeks to address with its centralized, region-wide clinical placement system. This clinical placement system will be based on the AzCEC successful model.

The RDC, Skilled Trades Backbone, will build on existing well-established workforce training programs, which it runs in close cooperation with area unions and employers. A particularly well-aligned and timely effort is the RDC's Workforce and Academic Network (WAN) Development pilot project, which convened construction industry and academic stakeholders to find solutions to building a trained skilled trades workforce. Since February 2021, the WAN project has interviewed, surveyed, and held focus groups that engage job seekers, training and academic entities, support agencies, and government bodies. This effort also collaborated with New Mexico State University and Strategic Doing® consultant, Dan Gerry, to develop the process by which targeted actions would be collectively addressed and completed; this process culminated in a Strategic Doing summit in October 2021. Through its Higher Education Workforce project, the RDC is working with six regional higher education institutions to create clear, coherent, and structured educational experiences for students pursuing relevant certificates and/or degree programs. The RDC has been cultivating these strong relationships with employers and training partners for over a decade, something that was cemented under a \$3.2 million Department of Energy grant in 2011, a partnership between the RDC, Los Alamos National Laboratory, and six Hispanic Serving Institutions to launch a technical training program to provide underserved students with a high-quality certificate and associate degree programs and wrap-around services. The program served 120 students per year for five years.

WIN is reasonable and attainable as it builds on the experience, networks, and curricula of its core partners, utilizes proven models and leverages and connects area resources to expand program reach and impact. The approach will leverage existing community resources and help participants navigate the barriers and hurdles that stand in the way of training for quality jobs. Estimated numbers to be served were based on employer-estimated demand, and the program will be united under the trusted leadership of NCNMEDD and in coordination with the regional workforce system and sector-specific Industry Teams.

**Section 4e: Target Demographics.** This project will be open to adults who are un- or underemployed or looking to upskill who live in the seven-county northern New Mexico service area. To ensure wide reach and that unrepresented groups are enrolled, outreach will be a coordinated effort between employers, unions, other industry partners, training centers, the workforce system, recovery centers, and other community partners. This project will emphasize the enrollment of populations who are underrepresented in quality jobs in the service area. This includes Hispanics/Latinos and Native Americans, those who speak English as a second language, women (in Skilled Trades), men (in healthcare, especially nursing), low- and



moderate-income households, people struggling with substance use disorder (SUD), and/or those with a criminal background.

The rationale for including the individuals targeted is to enroll participants who are representative of the sociodemographic profile of the region, with emphasis on serving those who traditionally find navigating and completing programs difficult. For instance, people with SUD are included as a target group because northern New Mexico struggles with substance abuse more than virtually any other region of the country.<sup>25</sup> Addiction has led to low workforce participation, poverty, and high crime. Existing workforce training programs do not specifically target this group’s needs, despite training and job placement being positively associated with lower rates of recidivism.<sup>26</sup> Work is an integral part of a successful recovery plan because it provides structure, meaning, a healthy routine, and income.

During project year one, the backbone organizations will work with partners, including the Industry Teams and project Navigators, to refine an estimate of the number of individuals to be served and placed into jobs. The initial estimate is that the two sector Backbones will serve a total of 1,750 people over 36 months, with 1,050 being served via the healthcare track (60%) and 700 via the skilled trades track (40%).

**Section 5: Funding Request and Program Design and Implementation**

**Section 5a: Estimated Funding Request.** NCNMEDD requests \$6.53 million over three years to support Northern New Mexico WIN. Funds will be used to hire staff and contractors, sub-awards to partners to ensure adequate training capacity, establish a clinical placement system, a mobile classroom to support equitable training opportunities in remote and tribal communities, translation services, and a robust outreach plan. By adapting existing curricula, proven models, and drawing on existing partnerships and structures, much of the System Development work has already been done for this multi-sectoral strategy. EDA funds will focus the largest proportion of resources on serving participants in WIN’s 24-month Program Implementation phase. Funds will be broken out as follows: \$1 million for System Development and Program Design in year one; and \$5.4 million for Program Implementation (\$2.78 million in year two, and \$2.66 million in year three). See the attached program Budget Narrative for additional details.

While matching funds are not required, WIN will leverage significant existing resources, both internal to the system lead and backbone organizations and at partner organizations. The cash value of partner leverage is estimated at over \$1 million, with significant additional resources contributed in-kind and via cost abatements available from WIOA, Pell, and scholarships to eligible applicants. See the Budget Narrative for additional detail on leveraged resources and calculations.

NCNMEDD and backbone organizations SFCC and the RDC all have experience managing federal funds and commit to tracking and reporting on metrics mandated by the EDA. WIN expects to track EDA-required measures, with project-end estimates as follows:

Metric	Estimate
1) Number of workers participating in the program	1,750
2) Number of workers who complete the program	1,313
3) Number of workers placed into jobs	1,116

<sup>25</sup> Ted Alcorn, “The Judge Who Keeps People Out of Jail,” The Washington Post, November 30, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/magazine/2021/11/30/new-mexico-drug-court/>.

<sup>26</sup> Stephanie Lusk and Francis Veale, “Increasing Successful Vocational Rehabilitation Outcomes for Individuals with Substance Use Disorders,” Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling Vol 49, Issue 1; Danielle Newton, et al, “The Impact of Vocational Education and Training Programs on Recidivism: A Systematic Review of Current Experimental Evidence,” International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, May 13, 2016.



4) Average wages of job placements	\$40,560 (\$19.50/hr.)
5) Average increases in wages for incumbent workers	10%
6) Retention of workers placed (after 6 and 12 months)	85%
7) Total average amount of grant funds spent per worker	\$3,734

Demographics for the above metrics will be tracked, including race/ethnicity. Overall, the project expects to serve participants that are in line with regional demographics, at least 50% Hispanic/Latino and 5% Native American. Wage gains will be compared against pre-project earnings and median income and will be tracked for 12 months post-completion. The project will utilize Results-Based Accountability™ (RBA), nationally-recognized accountability tool<sup>27</sup>, to measure WIN's region-wide impact.

**Section 5b. Program Description.** WIN goals are as follows: 1) Diversify the regional economy; 2) Create a robust workforce in sectors with systemic employment deficiencies; 3) Increase earnings in low-wage and persistent poverty counties; and 4) Address equity through career paths that provide mobility to historically underrepresented populations. Northern New Mexico Workforce Integration Network (WIN) will offer training in healthcare along four tracks: 1) Nursing, 2) Allied Health, 3) Emergency Medical Service, and 4) Community/Health Counseling for the Recovery population. The Skilled Trades sector will train in various fields, helping participants progress from pre-apprenticeship to apprenticeships to contractor-level jobs. Each program of study will offer stacked credentials to make training accessible to participants from basic education to degrees, including participants who are most interested in a direct path to the workforce. Navigators and training partners will work with community and employer partners to offer a seamless pathway and support from training through careers, with longer-term plans on gaining additional skills over time. This includes colleges delivering training in both sectors via in-person and online courses. For Skilled Trades, training and apprenticeship opportunities will be offered through several local unions with which the RDC has strong ties. A mobile classroom will be a significant innovation in training delivery for the region and accessibility for trades programs requiring specialized equipment knowledge. Across both sectors, online coursework will improve access for all participants that need it.

WIN will connect together long-term, regionally-oriented work in both sectors that is already well underway and that will become more coordinated and collaborative with the support of EDA funds and the creation of Industry Teams. According to a Public/Private Ventures study on sectoral employment strategies, this kind of sectoral approach can lead to significantly higher rates of employment, higher wages, and better benefits.<sup>28</sup> The programs studied had five major components, all of which WIN has.

1. Strong organizational capacity—with the ability to adapt.
2. A solid link to local employers that results in an understanding of the target occupation and connections to jobs.
3. Job readiness, basic skills and hands-on technical skills training offered through the lens of a specific occupation or sector.
4. Recruitment, screening, and intake processes that result in a good match between the applicant, the program and the target occupation.
5. Individualized services to support training completion and success on the job.

WIN aligns with regional economic development strategies that are expected to foster economic growth and resilience and which will be scalable to other sectors and other regions statewide upon evidence of

<sup>27</sup> Wandersman, Abraham, et al. "Getting to outcomes: A results-based approach to accountability." Evaluation and program planning 23.3 (2000): 389-395.

<sup>28</sup> Sheila Maguire, et al, "Tuning into Local Labor Markets: Findings from the Sectoral Employment Impact Study," Public/Private Ventures, 2003.



success. One of the significant outputs of WIN will be course crosswalks and credit articulation plans to ease transfers between instructions and speed the rate of training program completion, a project that the state’s Higher Education Department seeks to take statewide. A more detailed timeline is attached to the Project Narrative, which includes the parties responsible. Below are activities associated with each of the three program component phases.

Project component and Details
<b>System Development (~6 months):</b> Finalize partner MOUs and commitments; Attract additional employers (both sectors); Job descriptions; Hire and train Project Director; Begin course crosswalk and articulation work to ensure statewide transferability of credits and credentials.
<b>Program Design (~6 months):</b> Hire and train Project Navigators (x4); Convene Industry Teams; Develop outreach and recruitment strategies; Curricula review; Translation of materials; Design remote learning system; Hire and train I-BEST, healthcare, and skilled trades instructors; Purchase and outfit mobile classroom; Continue work on course crosswalks and articulation agreements.
<b>Program Implementation (up to 24 months):</b> Hire and train remaining staff; Launch outreach strategy; Navigators begin fieldwork; Mobile classroom deployed to remote communities; Industry Team meetings; Ongoing data collection and review; Final report, training materials, and curricula prepared and shared; Final course crosswalk and articulation documents shared with NM Higher Education Department

To inform and engage, WIN will employ a strong media presence to communicate the benefits of careers in Healthcare or Skilled Trades. Further, the program will emphasize that it offers quality opportunities for people looking for a range of options from a fast track to employment to a college degree.

The high-touch approach proposed by WIN represents a missing ingredient that has inhibited progress in the past. With widely dispersed communities, training and employment resources have not been able to evenly reach populations that would benefit from workforce training. Wrap-around supports and regular contact with Navigators will keep participant progress from being derailed by life events. I-BEST integration in both sectors will help individuals needing basic education to participate while learning their profession. I-BEST is a proven model that integrates basic education with in-demand occupational training to allow participants to avoid remedial coursework, accelerate through coursework, and earn credentials more quickly.<sup>29</sup> An increasingly robust broadband network across the northern region will also help individuals to access training where in-person attendance is not feasible.

Further, WIN seeks to solve specific problems related to each sector. For instance, regional rural community college healthcare programs lack adequate local clinical placement opportunities for its nursing, emergency medical services (EMS), and allied health students. Local colleges are all vying for the same clinical slots at major healthcare employers such as Presbyterian Medical Services and CHRISTUS St. Vincent Hospital. These employers give students exposure to a variety of experiences, including cardiac, neurological, pediatric, and obstetric departments that produces well-educated, prepared healthcare workers. The pandemic has exacerbated this problem, stretching hospital resources and limiting the number of students that programs can educate. Preparing students for clinical experiences also burdens local college healthcare programs due to the increased immunization requirements and required recordkeeping. A regional centralized clinical placement system that streamlines and optimizes clinical placements from partner colleges’ healthcare programs is needed. Based on the successful Arizona Clinical Education Consortium (AzCEC) system,<sup>30</sup> SFCC will employ a clinical placement software program,

<sup>29</sup> Workforce GPS, <https://strategies.workforcegps.org/resources/2020/07/27/15/46/Integrated-Basic-Education-and-Skills-Training-Brief-PACE>.

<sup>30</sup> Maricopa Community Colleges, <https://www.maricopa.edu/community-business/workforce-economic-development/healthcare-education-department/azcec>.



develop memorandums of understanding between healthcare education programs and clinical sites, create a shared online clinical orientation course, collect required student documentation, and finally, coordinate the clinical placement of students throughout the region to increase the number of placements, remove burdens on institutions, and get more graduates into the workforce.

Regional rural skilled trades training programs can struggle to enroll enough students in a single location to meet class size minimums, impacting students' ability to complete a program, earn industry credentials, and gain employment in the construction industry. Students also cannot transfer seamlessly between training programs or into registered apprenticeships as there is a lack of aligned curriculum articulation and credit for prior learning policies between regional training partners. In response to the above barriers, the project will procure a mobile classroom in coordination with a local union partner to facilitate basic Skilled Trades training in remote and tribal communities. The mobile classroom may also serve as a recruitment tool, as it can visit high schools and community centers, showing in a hands-on way the benefits of skilled trades. With a large area, limited transportation options, and many barriers such as childcare and travel time hindering participation, the mobile classroom represents an equitable solution.

Further, the New Mexico Higher Education Department will coordinate with project partners to articulate curriculum, implement credit for prior learning policies, and to develop an online course sharing structure, allowing students from different training partners to enroll in centralized classes. Employers will be engaged to provide hands-on skills development through various work-based learning models.

**Section 5c. Barriers.** Barriers for participants will vary depending on background, needs, and location within the service area. For instance, a single mother who lives in Mora County may need to secure childcare and transportation in order to attend classes or an apprenticeship. A man with a history of substance use disorder may need to work with a counselor and receive additional residential services to stay on track with treatment and with the project Navigator to determine which career paths are open to him, given his history.<sup>31</sup> Below is a summary of potential barriers and how they may be overcome.

Barriers to:	Commonly Identified Barriers/Gaps
Employment	Limited work experience limits hiring opportunities; Lack of understanding of how skills in one occupation might translate to another (e.g., veterans have useful career skills that could be applied to a range of occupations); Lack of opportunities or understanding of how to gain skills and advance; Position requires specialized training; Lack of soft skills diminishes competitiveness for open positions; History of substance use disorder or criminal background limits hiring options; Incumbent workers do not advance because of lack of understanding of programs that will help them do so
Access to Wrap-Around Services	Lack of awareness of services; In some cases, lack of coordination of care; Incomplete understanding of benefits for support services/ education; Limited understanding of how to navigate systems without help, including training, education, and benefits options already in existence; Instability due to homelessness, hunger, disabilities, or health issues (physical or mental) prevent individuals from accessing services
Training and Education	Lack of high school diploma/GED; Lack of college readiness (math, reading, English); Limited access to/High cost of childcare, transportation, etc.; Scheduling issues; Cost; Time to credential/degree; Limited college/job readiness in core subjects; Lack of awareness and confidence to seek training/job opportunity in an unknown capacity or industry

<sup>31</sup> For some jobs, particularly in healthcare, people with SUD disorder need to be clean for at least three years before taking a job. This regulation is a safety concern based on the potential for controlled substances at the work site. Participants with a criminal background may run into numerous barriers, particularly with employers requiring background checks. WIN-IT employers have committed to working with these individuals to help them gain long-term employment, including starting with a trial period before moving to a permanent hire.



In a large region with sparsely populated areas, transportation to programs is a serious issue. The mobile classroom and online coursework will help. Further, NCMEDD hired a Transportation Coordinator who can schedule on-call ride services for participants needing to get class. Close connection to employers and industry through the WIN Industry Teams will mitigate employment barriers, as will programs of study that are closely aligned with stated employer needs. The Work-Based Learning Coordinator will facilitate, promote, and support access to work-based learning experiences, including internships and apprenticeships. By offering programs of study that are accessible to individuals with a wide range of education and skill levels, affordable programming, and contextualized learning and basic education via I-BEST integration, barriers to training and employment will be diminished.

**Wrap-around services:** Prior to enrollment in a program of study, all participants will meet with a Navigator, be registered in the workforce system, and be screened for wrap-around services needs and eligible benefits (e.g., SNAP, WIC, LIHEAP, Lifeline, Affordable Connectivity Program [for affordable internet], etc.). The Navigator will screen for special considerations, such as being in substance use recovery, having a criminal history, or being unstably housed—and will refer to the services that will be needed to help these individuals succeed in a program (e.g., counseling, housing supports, etc.). The Navigator will take into account career goals and preferred program of study in Healthcare or Skilled Trades, any barriers to specific occupations, and scheduling and transportation needs (e.g., childcare, bus pass, internet access, etc.). Wherever possible, the program will leverage and connect to existing resources at community partners rather than drawing down grant funds. See section 2b for details on partners and commitments and the Budget Narrative for a summary of leveraged resources.

Navigator support will initiate at enrollment and continue through job placement. For 12 months after completion, Navigators will maintain contact with participants using phone, text, and/or email check-ins to track employment outcomes, ongoing training, and other factors. This follow-up data will be supplemented with ongoing and active communication with employer partners on WIN completer performance.

**Sustainability:** WIN was designed to leverage and connect existing community resources to the extent possible to increase the grant's impact and ensure long-term sustainability. The relationships and structures developed under WIN are expected to persist long-term via partnership agreements. Further, the effort fits with state-level goals to better align training programs across the state, develop course crosswalks and a system of inter-institutional credit articulation, and support skills-based hiring. As such, there is already broad buy-in for this program's approach, which will be part of greater and ongoing efforts. State-level support for initiatives like WIN also signals a likelihood that New Mexico may commit resources to sustain and expand the work beyond the grant period. Upon evidence of success, staff may be considered for inclusion in organizational budgets at participating partners. Finally, responsibility for the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the mobile classroom will be taken on by the unions using it after the close of the grant period, with additional funding sought from employer, public, and private partners.

The north-central region appreciates EDA's support. The EDA has invested over \$9 million in the last five years on ten projects. These dollars are helping to fund sites for new business development, create jobs, and support resiliency. We welcome this opportunity to partner on another high-impact project that will support job growth and economic health in northern New Mexico.