

Act 1131 of 2015 Regional Workforce Planning Grant Application

Please complete each section of this application and submit to the Arkansas Department of Higher Education by **September 1, 2015**. Applications should be emailed to ADHE.Workforce.Grant@adhe.edu. Please note that applications will not be accepted without a completed Intent Form, due August 1, 2015.

SECTION 1 – PROGRAM NEED

30 Points

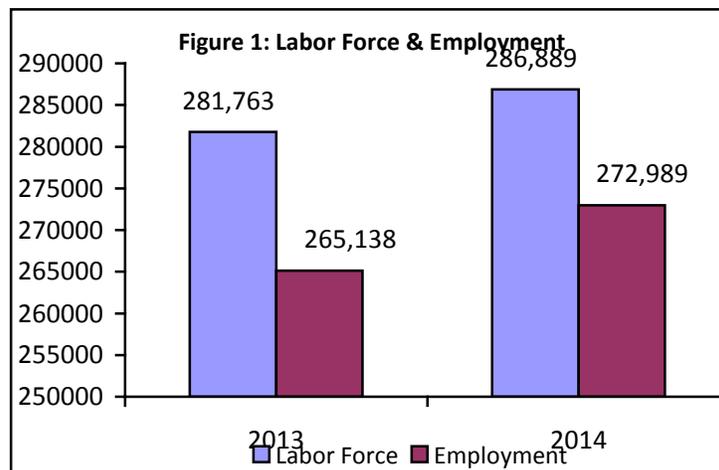
Proposals will include an overview of the labor needs, as determined by the Local Workforce Development Board, and specifically identify the skills gap employers face in the selected region and will continue to face in the future. Entities seeking grant funds must outline the proposed program and/or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

Keep the following rubric in mind when completing this section:

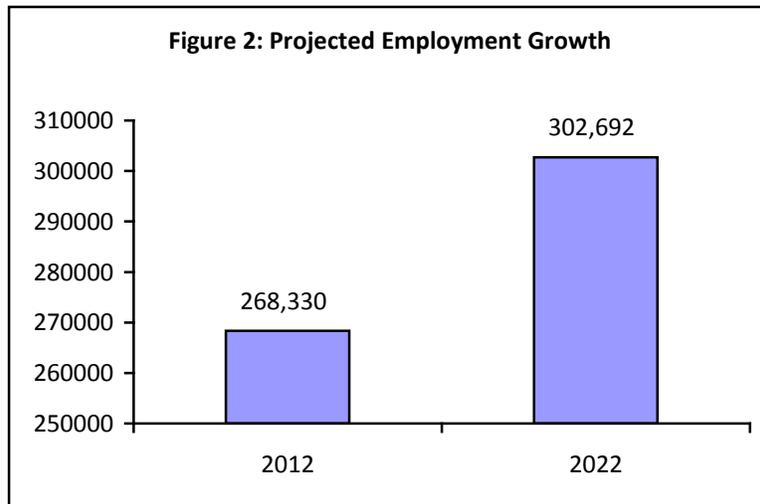
	Exemplary	Superior	Adequate	Needs Improvement
Program Need (30 Pts)	Significantly addresses a top 3 workforce need in the region (26–30 Pts)	Addresses in a more limited way a top 3 workforce need in the region (21–25 Pts)	Addresses in a limited way a less critical workforce need in the region (16–20 Pts)	Identified labor need is too narrow or not in a critical area (0–15 Pts)

Please enter your answer in the box provided below. Feel free to include any necessary charts, graphs or tables.

Northwest Arkansas Region 5 (Baxter, Benton, Boone, Carroll, Madison, Marion, Newton, Searcy, and Washington) has a current labor force of over 280,000 with just over 95% of the labor force actively employed as shown in Figure 1 (Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, 2014).

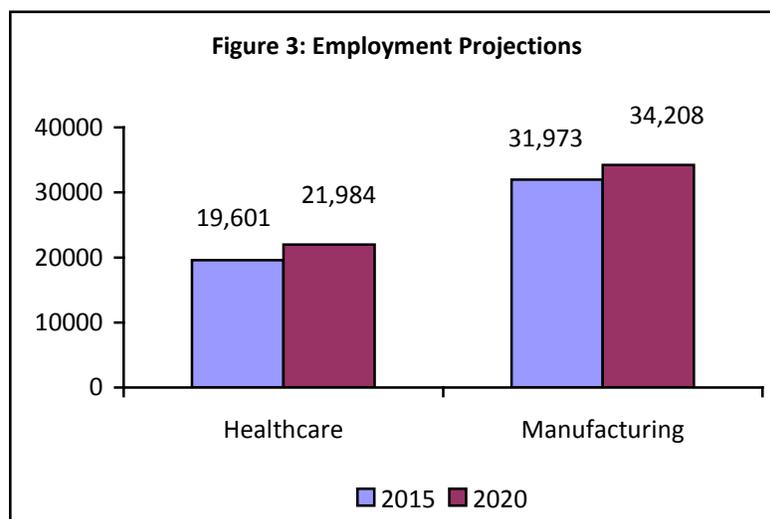


As shown in Figure 1, the labor force and those actively employed in the Northwest Arkansas Region 5 (Region) grew from 2013 to 2014 by 2% and 3% respectively. The Region is projected to experience an overall growth of 14% from 2012 to 2022 as shown in Figure 2 (Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, 2014).

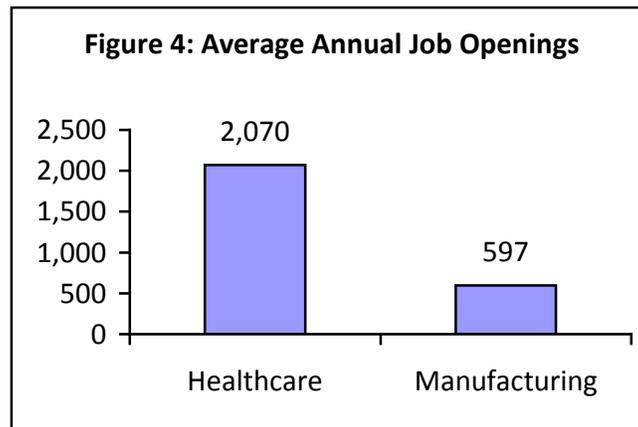


The Region relies heavily on large manufacturing industries like PACE Industries, Wabash Wood Products, and Baxter Healthcare Corporation for regional employment opportunities. Three counties within the Region lack large employers which contributes to the more than 21% of the Region’s population commuting for employment (Arkansas Economic Development Commission). Like manufacturing, health care constitutes another top employer in the Region such as North Arkansas Regional Medical Center and Baxter Regional Medical Center.

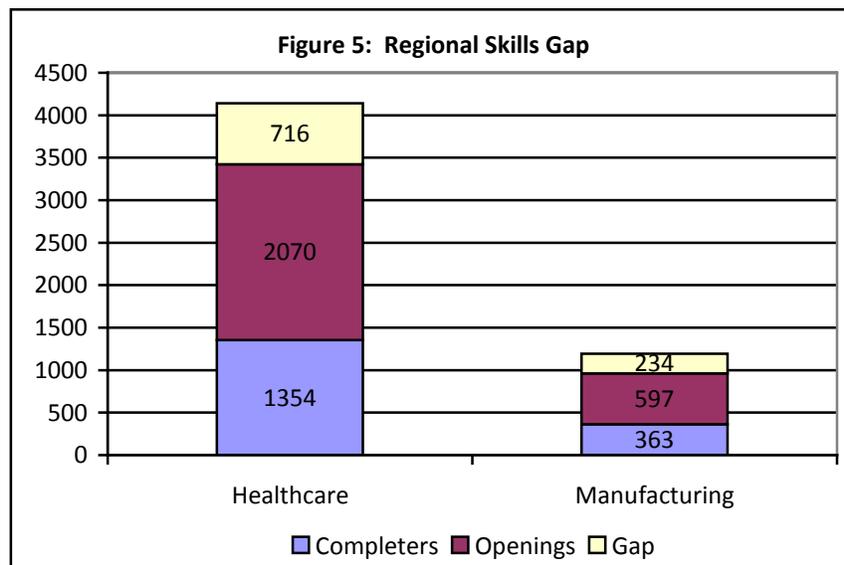
Manufacturing, as the top employment industry for the Region, constitutes 12% of all jobs. Healthcare related occupations equate for 10% of employment in the region (Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, 2014). Occupational Projections for 2015-2020 indicate that the top projected employment growth areas for the Region include manufacturing by 7% and healthcare by 11% as shown in Figure 3 (Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, 2014).



While employment projections for the Region are favorable, a high number of job vacancies continue to create challenges for healthcare and manufacturing with over 2,000 combined open positions as shown in Figure 4 (Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, 2014). Given that healthcare and manufacturing are the top regional employers, this creates an enormous gap in the labor force. With over 14,000 regional residents unemployed, the need to fill the vacancies with a skilled workforce is extremely critical to the vitality of the region.



While there are jobs available in the Region, many go unfilled because of the lack of a regionally skilled workforce. Based on data from the Arkansas Department of Career Education, the skills gap was calculated for Northwest Arkansas Region 5 to be 716 job openings (34%) for healthcare and 234 job openings (39%) for manufacturing as shown in Figure 5. The skills gap indicates the number of individuals completing a certificate and/or degree in a health care field and a manufacturing technology field each year in the region compared to the number of job vacancies in those particular fields.



Adding to the challenges of employment vacancies and completion gap, many regional employers experience difficulty retaining a skilled workforce. The Northwest Arkansas Region 5 Local Workforce Investment Board reports a significant gap in work-ready basic skills such as work habits, conduct,

communication, team work, and customer service. The lack of these basic skills contribute significantly to the 29% employee turnover rate in the Northwest Arkansas region.

As the Region's top employers, manufacturing and healthcare play a critical role in the economic structure of Northwest Arkansas. Ensuring that the Region has a ready and skilled workforce is paramount to the sustainability of the predominately rural area. These economic engines are essential to the economy in the Region and are experiencing a workforce shortage due to a lack of skilled, work-ready employees. To address this problem, planning for future employment projections and skills needs requires collaborative efforts between industry and K-12 and post-secondary institutions.

To meet the current employment gap as well as the projected future needs, North Arkansas College (Northark) will develop fast-track, employer-driven, competency-based, hands-on, certification pathways for entry- and mid-level employment in healthcare as well as entry-, mid-, and advanced-level training in advanced manufacturing. Northark is partnering with Arkansas State University Mountain Home (ASUMH) in the area of advanced manufacturing.

The skills gap for the Northwest Arkansas Region demonstrates the high demand for education and training to address current unmet workforce needs. The 2020 forecast, coupled with the current need, not only points to an urgency to prepare a skilled workforce for key entry-level healthcare and advanced manufacturing positions, but also points to the need to address the workforce gap in mid- and advanced-level positions as well.

Department of Labor research and employers in the Northwest Arkansas Region report a significant skills gap in the areas of entry-level health care positions such as health information management technicians and medical coding specialists. The emergence of electronic medical records has created a skills gap for health care receptionists, information clerks, and medical clinic staff. Employers report the future need for multidisciplinary entry level health technicians skilled in medical and insurance coding, electronic medical records, and patient intake. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics WIOA Region 5 reports a forecasted **12%** increase in employment growth for entry-level health care workers by 2020. Through working with the Region's healthcare employers, Northark will identify the specific skills need and gap to develop a new technical training and certification program for entry-level clerical and information management employment. The new program will be offered through the Northark Secondary Career Center for high school students in the service area. The equipment needed for implementation of the training for entry-level clerical and information management positions will include hardware and software for electronic medical records education training.

Like the gap in entry-level healthcare positions, there is a current and forecasted need for additional mid-level healthcare positions. For example, North Arkansas Regional Medical Center (NARMC) reports a need for advanced Certified Nursing Assistants (C.N.A.) with advanced skills to meet acute care needs. Mid-level healthcare positions are projected to increase **53%** by 2020 (Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, 2014). Through working with the Region's healthcare employers, Northark will identify the specific skills need and gap to expand technical training and certification for mid-level health care employment. The expansion of mid-level healthcare programs will enable the College to serve more high school students in the service area through the Northark Secondary Career Center as well as adults seeking job skills and/or career advancement. The equipment needed for implementation of training for these positions will include appropriate devices such as simulation manikins, IV carts, and mobile computerized medical records.

Similar to the gap in regional needs for healthcare positions, there is a sizable gap in entry-, mid-, and advanced-level advanced manufacturing technicians. Added to the need for skilled technicians, employers report a significant need for work-ready skills not traditionally included in post-secondary educational training programs.

The Northwest WIOA Region 5 report forecasts the future need for manufacturing employees in the areas of entry-level production and maintenance occupations. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics WIOA Region 5 reports a forecasted **7%** increase in employment growth for entry-level production and maintenance occupations by 2020. Northark and ASUMH will collaborate with industry partners from the Region to create “earn and learn” opportunities for high school students in entry-level advanced manufacturing technologies. Northark and ASUMH plan to align the curriculum so that industry within a six county area will recognize the training programs and provide “earn and learn” opportunities to area students. In addition to “earn and learn,” the curriculum will also include work-ready skills such as work habits, conduct, communication, team work, and customer service.

Regional employers report that current openings for mid- and advanced-level industrial maintenance technicians and CNC technicians far exceed the DOL projections because position titles are not defined in a uniform manner, resulting in inconsistent data reporting. Given the number of current openings, Northark proposes to develop aligned curricular pathways with educational (K-12 and ASUMH) and industry partners (PACE Industries and Wabash Wood Products) to close the skills gap and expand training to include credit for prior experience, apprenticeships, and short-term certifications. The expanded program will be designed for both high school students as well as adults seeking job skills and/or career advancement. In order to reduce the technical skill gaps and accelerate students’ progress, advanced technology will be incorporated into the curriculum as identified in cooperation with industry leaders during the planning phase. Examples of technology likely to be identified during planning may include automated robotics simulation cell equipment, strategic automation technologies, and distance education technologies supporting program delivery between institutions (secondary, post-secondary and industry partners).

To address the various needs for entry-level, mid-level, and advanced-level employees, the project plan will include two distinct training pathways including Job-Ready and Career-Ready. The Job-Ready Pathway will include training for entry-level healthcare and manufacturing programs designed for high school students to gain a technical certificate for immediate entry into the workforce. The Career-Ready Pathway, will include training for mid-level healthcare and mid- and advanced-level manufacturing programs for high school students, currently employed adults, and adults seeking job skills enhancement and/or advancement.

By creating a new program and expanding current programs to accelerate student learning, Northark and its partners will be able to actively examine the number of annual job vacancies and employee turnovers, and provide opportunities for credentials to reduce the employment skills gap.

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.

Keep the following rubric in mind when completing this section:

	Exemplary	Superior	Adequate	Needs Improvement
Program Plan (25 Pts)	Plan addresses all goals and core requirements and identifies significant outcomes (22–25 Pts)	Plan addresses most goals and requirements and identifies outcomes (18–21 Pts)	Plan addresses many goals and requirements and identifies few outcomes (14–17 Pts)	Plan lacks significant requirements or lacks apparent outcomes (0–13 Pts)

Please enter your answer in the box provided below. Feel free to include any necessary charts, graphs or tables.

The Pathways program will be designed to meet the goals and core requirements of the Regional Workforce Grant program by increasing the overall job-related credentials needed by current and potential employees to fill the skills gap in the regional workforce pool. The proposed approach will build an alliance that will provide clear linkages between secondary and postsecondary credentials and the needs of employers. Partners have repeatedly mentioned demand for employability skills and stress the need for this to be addressed beginning as early as middle school.

Northark currently serves as a Secondary Career Center for high school students in the College’s six county service area (Boone, Carroll, Madison, Marion, Newton, and Searcy) with an average enrollment of 150 students each year. Additionally, Northark provides concurrent credit for high school students in the service area using face-to-face and online delivery options.

Receipt of the planning grant will permit a Job-Ready Pathway to be designed to accelerate high school student attainment of workforce-ready credentials in the focus areas of healthcare and advanced manufacturing while students are still enrolled in high school. The Career-Ready Pathway curriculum will be designed to include credit for prior work experience and/or skill attainment. Each pathway will include basic skills emphasis, student progress monitoring, advising, and employment, financial, and personal coaching. Each pathway may also include apprenticeships and enhanced classroom simulation designed to accelerate credential completion and entry into the workforce. Northark’s partnership with ASUMH will assure that alignment of curriculum and certificates will allow students to maximize educational opportunities throughout the Region and ensure ease of access for employability.

The primary outcome of the planning phase is to create an overall methodology that will enable educational partners to produce curriculum and a systematic educational delivery system. This will allow students and employees to acquire credentials that have portability and that are recognized and accepted by workforce partners. Credentials will be valuable to students, prospective employees, and current employees by providing additional employment opportunities and will be valuable to

workforce partners by signaling the employability and promotional potential of those holding the credentials.

The expected outcomes would include:

- 1) Development of Job-Ready and Career-Ready Pathways curriculum
- 2) Identification of “earn and learn” partners
- 3) Identification of apprenticeship partners
- 4) Identification of industry and healthcare credentials valuable to employers
- 5) Identification of equipment and resources required for effective implementation of pathways
- 6) Development of strategies that will allow industry and healthcare partners the ability to stabilize their workforce and move toward an expansion model through certification and credentials
- 7) Development of strategies to communicate the pathway opportunities

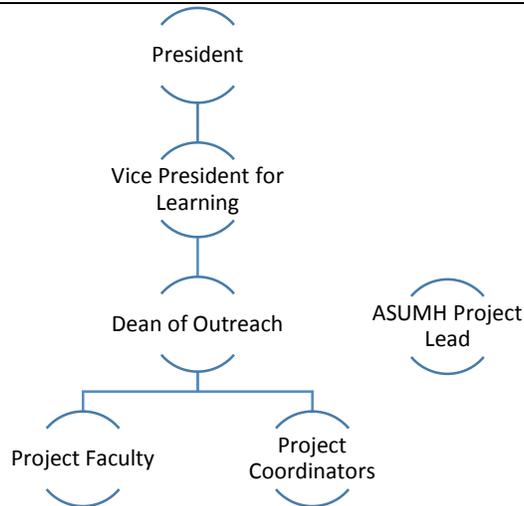
Two career pathways will be created during the planning phase. The first pathway, Job-Ready, will include the creation of a new entry-level healthcare related training program and the expansion of advanced manufacturing technology programs leading to a technical certificate. The second pathway, Career-Ready, will include the expansion of mid-level healthcare related training and mid- and advanced-level advanced manufacturing technology programs leading to a certificate or degree.

The Job-Ready Pathway will be designed for high school students for employment entry-level skills in health care and advanced manufacturing. The Job-Ready Pathway will include work-ready skills curriculum such as work habits, conduct, communication, team work, and customer service. The Job-Ready Pathway will also include “earn and learn” opportunities and technical simulation designed to accelerate student progress.

The Career-Ready Pathway will be designed to provide prospective employees with mid-level skills in healthcare and mid- and advanced-level skills in advanced manufacturing. The Career-Ready Pathway may include credit for prior experience, technical simulation, open-entry open-exit, and apprenticeships.

The equipment needed will include: automated robotics simulation cell equipment, strategic automation technologies, and distance education technologies supporting program delivery between institutions. Also included will be hardware and software for electronic medical records education, training simulation manikins, IV carts, and mobile computerized medical records.

The governance structure will include project oversight by the Dean of Outreach. The Dean will supervise the proposed personnel, manage the project budget, and provide direct oversight for project planning. The organizational structure of Northark, the proposed project, and the relationship with ASHMH is outlined below.



Authority for day-to-day management of the project will be the responsibility of the Dean of Outreach while the project coordinators will have administrative control of the projects and will be primarily responsible for accomplishing all project objectives. The Project Faculty will be responsible for assisting with curriculum development in coordination with the Project Coordinators. The Dean of Outreach and Project Coordinators will have direct access to the Vice President of Learning and will communicate regularly with the ASUMH Project Lead. The Project Coordinators will document all project activities and report monthly to the Vice President of Learning and quarterly to the President.

Northark uses accounting procedures consistent with generally accepted accounting principles, applicable state and federal laws, and OMB circulars relating to grant-funded programs. The College has a Contracts and Grants Accounting Office, staffed by professional accountants, responsible for all accounting and billing related to grant programs. An accountant will be assigned to the project grant and will work closely with the Project Leads to ensure effective fiscal management.

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.**

Keep the following rubric in mind when completing this section:

	Exemplary	Superior	Adequate	Needs Improvement
Strength of Partnership (25 Pts)	Plan includes broad representation and each partner has a defined role with identified critical contributions (22–25 Pts)	Plan includes broad representation but partner roles are not clearly defined (18–21 Pts)	Plan lacks one or two important partners or not all partners are critical to success of the plan (14–17 Pts)	Partner participation is too narrow or some partners do not contribute meaningfully (0–13 Pts)

Please enter your answer in the box provided below. Feel free to include any necessary charts, graphs or tables.

The strength of this proposal, and thus the likelihood of success for this project, rests with the commitment of the partners involved. Each partner has a vested interest in the overall success of this undertaking as institutional progress and reputations are at stake. Each partner has expressed in writing (see letters of commitment) a firm commitment and each is aware of their level of responsibility required to achieve success.

Partnership strengths include the accumulated knowledge, experience, and skills of preparing, placing, and promoting students and employees in the workforce environment. This is demonstrated by the fact that Northark’s mandatory partnerships include Ozarks Unlimited Resource Educational Service Cooperative (O.U.R Educational Cooperative), PACE Industries, Wabash Wood Products, North Arkansas Regional Medical Center, the Northark Technical Center (Secondary Career Center), and Arkansas State University Mountain Home (ASUMH). The regional alliance with ASUMH includes strong collaboration with the Northwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board for cooperative workforce development efforts. In addition, Northark and ASUMH will work together to hold joint regional meetings with educational and industry partners in each service area to address regional industry needs through alignment of training and education to support economic growth. This regional alliance will work to create clearly defined career pathways and common training programs through curriculum alignment, course articulation, and workforce training to support economic growth in our region. As indicated below, each partner has defined rolls, provides critical contributions, and enhances the combination of complementary skills to be directed toward the overall success of the project.

Mandatory Partner Contributions

- PACE Industries – In cooperation with Pace, the regional team will develop entry level educational pathways and identify career ladder pathways for specific partner workforce needs. Pace will assist in this effort by identifying skill sets required for each level of the

pathway. Pace has already prepared a proposed design of a robotics training cell to meet their specific training needs. Pace will assist with curriculum mapping and identification of appropriate industry certifications at each level of the career ladder pathways.

- Wabash Wood Products - Wabash has expressed a need to address skills gaps in the areas of workforce readiness. Wabash will assist with identifying specific workforce skills gaps in personal qualities and people skills, professional knowledge and skills, and technology knowledge and skills that will be infused across the curriculum from secondary to post-secondary pathways and into employment.
- North Arkansas Regional Medical Center (NARMC) – NARMC will assist with identifying needed preparation of students and development of programs in a pathway format to address emerging allied health and nursing occupations. As a result, new occupational preparation programs will be designed to prepare students for entry-level positions in a particular health field or for advanced training in health occupations at the technical and professional levels. Specifically, NARMC will assist Northark with the design of programs that address therapeutic, diagnostic, rehabilitative, and supportive services for management of emerging Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH) environments.
- Arkansas State University Mountain Home (ASUMH) – Northark will work in partnership with ASUMH to look at regional industry needs, visit regional employers jointly and put together a regional perspective of needs. Regional surveys will be used to collect employer information as part of research activity during the planning year. A projection of 5 year trends will be developed using employer provided data to put together a plan to address regional needs for additional employees to support employers’ increased automation efforts. In partnership with regional employers, we will identify internal Career Pathways (or career ladder) positions in the region. Curriculum alignment will be designed to ensure that certificate completers at either institution may enter seamlessly into an Associate Degree completion program either direction. Modularized curriculum and implementation of guided pathways across institutions will be used to create a seamless experience for students. Distance Learning technology will be utilized to connect students to programs across both institutions along with “earn and learn” apprenticeship opportunities to combine educational pathways with employment opportunities.
- Northark Technical Center (NTC) – The NTC will utilize key employer input into areas of skill development, emerging technology needs, and labor market trends to shape curricular offerings and educational programs. As a partner in this effort, the NTC will work collaboratively to provide increased opportunities for high school students to obtain concurrent credit and complete college certificates and industry certifications. The NTC currently serves 15 high schools in a 6-county area of our region.
- O.U.R. Educational Cooperative – The O.U.R. Cooperative will work collaborative with the Regional Alliance partners to serve secondary schools through communication of grant activities with all secondary school partners, as well as teacher and student preparation for opportunities that develop through the work of the alliance. Collaborative work with the CTE Regional Partnership Council already in place provides increased access to partners and an opportunity to build increased momentum for positive changes.

The inherent strengths of creating the above partnerships will ensure the opportunity to achieve the desired results of the grant of improving workforce development in the Region. The proposed formation of a cohesive workgroup of partner institutions may also result in expansion of the scope of the partnerships and potentially broaden the overall impact of the project beyond the Region.

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.

Keep the following rubric in mind when completing this section:

	Exemplary	Superior	Adequate	Needs Improvement
Budget Plan (20 Pts)	All requested resources are essential and clearly support the goals of the plan. (18–20 Pts)	Most requested resources are important and clearly support the goals of the plan (15–17 Pts)	Plan includes some questionable resource requests (11–14 Pts)	Budget includes requests deemed unnecessary (0–10 Pts)

Section 4.1 – Budget Plan Detail

Please provide your detailed financial plan in the box below.

A. Partner Participant Support Costs

Personnel/Stipend – Costs listed are based on estimated costs common to the budget item(s) and in accordance with normal and ordinary rates and allowances. Historical costs for like projects were used where applicable as a basis of estimated costs.

The comprehensive nature of this planning process requires coordination of the efforts and inputs of participants in education, industry, and healthcare. The complexity, compressed timeframe of this assignment, and the disparity between workforce entities will require a significant amount of personnel time. Therefore, accomplishment of the tasks involved requires the use of two local grant coordinators, one with familiarity of industry needs and one with familiarity of healthcare needs. The role of coordination, planning, facilitation, overall success of grant accomplishments and reporting results will be shared by the coordinators.

Each coordinator will be employed on a part-time basis and each will receive a salary and benefits of approximately \$23,000 for the nine month planning period. This figure includes part time benefits and is based on 29 hours per week.

Additional Personnel/Stipend – Stipends will be required to support two faculty members to participate in the planning process related to curriculum expansion and development. This will require a total stipend amount of \$16,000 for an estimated 320 combined hours devoted to project completion. These individuals will be responsible for assisting the coordinators with curriculum development and coordinating activities across programs and among partners.

Travel – Coordinators will need the opportunity to visit successful workforce development agencies in other states to get a perspective concerning best practices. Additionally, coordinators will need to meet planning partners within region to review progress toward goal accomplishments.

Periodically, travel and related expenses will also be required to bring all project participants together for information sharing and planning purposes. When possible, webinar technology will be used to accommodate participants' schedules to allow them to attend meetings remotely. This approach will allow a sufficient number of required meetings to be held and reduce overall travel costs. Planning team meetings will require \$16,000 of estimated travel expenses for out-of-state and in-region trips to include regional partners.

Other – As previously indicated, webinar technology will be used to accommodate group and single partner meetings with coordinators. This will enable flexibility of participants' schedules and allow them to attend meetings remotely. A GoToMeeting license for each coordinator has been budgeted at a total cost of \$1000 to provide meetings to be held via the Internet. This will save participants' time and travel expenses related to attending meetings.

B. Other Direct Costs

Materials and Supplies – Costs associated with this category are estimated at \$5000 and include purchasing of curriculum related documents and texts along with costs associated with the acquisition of miscellaneous reports, survey instruments, tests, and survey results.

Publication Costs/Documentation/Dissemination – These costs are estimated at \$1,000 and include amounts associated with document publication and expenses related to dissemination of information to participants, and fulfilling end of project reporting requirements.

Consultant Services -- No consultant services are required.

Other – Requested here is nominal amount of \$2000 for such miscellaneous items as postage, and consumable office supplies and materials expenses, including media for document storage and dissemination.

Section 4.2 – Budget Plan Template

Please complete the budget template below. Totals will calculate automatically based on your input.

A. Partner Participant Support Costs

1. Personnel/Stipend	\$62,000.00
2. Travel	\$16,000.00
3. Other (Explain Below)	\$1,000.00
Briefly Explain Other Costs	
TOTAL PARTNER PARTICIPANT COSTS	\$79,000.00

B. Other Direct Costs

1. Materials and Supplies	\$5,000.00
2. Publication Costs/Documentation/Dissemination	\$1,000.00
3. Consultant Services	\$0.00
4. Other (Explain Below)	\$2,000.00
Briefly Explain Other Costs	
TOTAL OTHER DIRECT COSTS	\$8,000.00

C. TOTAL DIRECT COSTS

\$87,000.00

SUBMIT BY SEPTEMBER 1, 2015Email to ADHE.Workforce.Grant@adhe.edu*Applications that are received without an Intent Form (Due August 1) will not be accepted.***PLANNING GRANT SCORING RUBRIC**

Critical Elements	Exemplary	Superior	Adequate	Needs Improvement	Value
Program Need	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 Pts
Program Plan	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 Pts
Strength of Partnership	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 Pts
Budget Plan	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 Pts
Total Points Possible					100 Pts

**Act 1131 of 2015
Regional Workforce Planning Grant**

APPLICATION COVER SHEET

DUE SEPTEMBER 1, 2015

To:	Arkansas Department of Higher Education	
Requesting Institution:	North Arkansas College	
Title of Project:	Advanced Manufacturing and Emerging Clinical Healthcare Workforce Initiative	
Project Partners:	1. ASU Mountain Home 2. OUR Educational Cooperative 3. PACE Industries 4. Wabash Wood Products 5. North Arkansas Regional Medical Ctr.	6. Northark Technical Center 7. 8. 9. 10.
Requested Budget:	\$87,000	
Date Submitted:	9/1/2015	
Applicant Contact:	Dr. Jackie Elliott	
Applicant's Information:	1515 Pioneer Drive Harrison, AR 72601 870-391-3212 jelliott@northark.edu	

Authorized Signatures for Project Partners

If the institution has more than 10 partners, you may attach an additional page for signatures.

North Arkansas College	 Authorized Official		
Lead Institution			
ASU Mountain Home	 Authorized Official	Northark Technical Center	
Partner		Partner	Authorized Official
OUR Educational Cooperative	Mr. Richard Nance Authorized Official		
Partner		Partner	Authorized Official
PACE Industries	 Authorized Official		
Partner		Partner	Authorized Official
Wabash Wood Products	 Authorized Official		
Partner		Partner	Authorized Official
North Arkansas Regional Medical Ctr.	 Authorized Official		
Partner		Partner	Authorized Official



NORTHWEST ARKANSAS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT, INC.

NWAEDD PLAZA
818 Highway 62-65-412 North • P.O. Box 190
Harrison, Arkansas 72602-0190
(870) 741-5404

August 20, 2015

Dear Dr. Elliott,

As part of the statewide effort in Arkansas to enhance our workforce system and contribute to strong regional economies through active community and workforce development, the Northwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board submits this letter of commitment in support of North Arkansas College's Planning Grant Application for the Regional Workforce Grant.

Participating in this effort offers counties in the region the opportunity to transform local economies and gain a competitive advantage by developing the local workforce to better meet employer needs. Working collaboratively with employers to address the needs of businesses and develop skilled workers will drive solutions and contribute to increased economic growth.

The planning grant focus areas of Advanced Manufacturing and Emerging Clinical Healthcare will allow us to address critical needs of regional employers through a process that aligns education, workforce development, and economic development strategies within our communities by using a collaborative approach across the region.

We look forward to actively participating in Regional Workforce Activities and will support these important efforts to address critical workforce needs in our region. We look forward to working with North Arkansas College and other regional partners to develop a plan to support career pathways that create linkages between secondary and postsecondary education providers and provide a pipeline of skilled employees to meet employer needs.

Using a common vision to develop a unified regional plan that integrates education, training, and support will allow us to align services within our regional economies and support sector strategies that are tailored to meet the needs of our regional Manufacturing and Healthcare employers. We look forward to continued collaboration and the work ahead.

Sincerely,

Joe Willis, Executive Director
Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District, Inc.



August 25, 2015

Dear Arkansas Workforce Development Board,

Please accept this letter as commitment of partnership between Arkansas State University – Mountain Home (ASUMH) and North Arkansas College (Northark) to form a regional workforce alliance. This partnership will support development of regionally aligned employer driven career pathways. A collaborative approach will allow Northark and ASUMH to collectively identify and address job candidate skill gaps in our region, particularly in the Advanced Manufacturing and Emerging Clinical Healthcare job sectors.

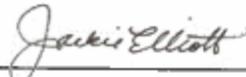
Northark and ASUMH are committed to engaging with our regional service area in the following ways:

- Pursue a collaborative approach for identifying and addressing regional industry needs through regional meetings of industry partners, joint visits to employer facilities during the planning year, and a comprehensive regional employer survey to determine realistic 3-5 year labor market projections for workforce needs in our region.
- Work collaboratively to identify employer career pathways, identification of specific positions and job skills required for upward mobility within regional manufacturing companies and healthcare centers, and alignment of training and education to support economic growth opportunities.
- Align curriculum to ensure that completers of technical certificate programs at each institution can enter seamlessly into Associate Degree completion programs either direction.
- Develop guided pathways for student educational attainment between institutions (secondary and postsecondary) that allow students to pursue opportunities in the region through common curriculum, course articulation, and workforce training.
- Work jointly with secondary education providers to develop improved communication and marketing campaigns targeting parents to educate and build understanding regarding regional career opportunities within the Manufacturing job sector.
- Develop common training programs for entry level skills to attain a broad, regional approach to meeting employer needs.
- Incorporate distance learning technology as appropriate to link areas of our region.

- Engage regional partners (secondary education, postsecondary education, and employers) through workforce alliance efforts to create clearly defined career pathways.

As we work in partnership to develop a strong regional workforce alliance, we are focused on creating a skilled and employment-ready workforce through alignment of educational programs and joint efforts to address regional workforce needs. We look forward to the opportunity to work together with regional employers and other partners to develop an educational pipeline to support economic growth in our region.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jackie Elliott, President
North Arkansas College



Dr. Robin Myers, Chancellor
Arkansas State University – Mountain Home





 A Wabash National Company

August 25, 2015

Dear Dr. Elliott,

Wabash Wood Products would like to partner with North Arkansas College in the effort to improve the labor force in northern Arkansas. As manufacturers, we continue to face labor challenges in our ongoing operations. Some operations are experiencing a labor shortage; however, Wabash is experiencing instability driven by turnover. We believe this instability is driven by a lack of job skills and the employee's lack in understanding their role in a job function. We believe we could close these gaps and improve the workforce in our area with proper education and targeted training.

Wabash is a growing international company currently expanding its manufacturing footprint. Historically, the Harrison, Arkansas labor pool has helped Wabash Wood Products produce some of the highest performing work teams in the Wabash family. Wabash's current struggles in this market create barriers for expansion and job creation in Boone County as well as the entire state of Arkansas. Wabash National has a voracious appetite for continuous improvement in all of its manufacturing operations. These initiatives include new products, improved processes, strategic automation for variation reduction, and being an industry leader in everything we do. This approach requires an educated and dedicated workforce at all levels. Opportunities currently exist in all employment levels with Wabash National. The Harrison, Arkansas facility has expanded our employee base 50% over the last 36 months and routinely has over 25 positions open at any given time. As a current director with the Harrison Regional Chamber of Commerce and a member of the Economic Development Subcommittee, I am aware that Wabash Wood Products is not the only employer experiencing challenges with northern Arkansas labor shortages.

We believe the Regional Work Force Alliance, formed through this project, creates a great opportunity for Wabash Wood Products to provide detailed elements for local workforce improvements as well as opportunities to vet improvement strategies.

Wabash is prepared to openly share current business analytics related to labor impacts. Examples of these metrics include turnover, training costs, productivity impacts, etc. Wabash is also prepared to support the initiative by supplying members on committees, conducting seminars/training, or other areas that would enhance the program for the improvement of the local employee base.

As an attachment, I have provided monthly turnover, estimated training hours, and estimated training costs. Based upon these metrics, it is imperative to seek a long term solution to our issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Eddie Bartlett'.

Eddie Bartlett

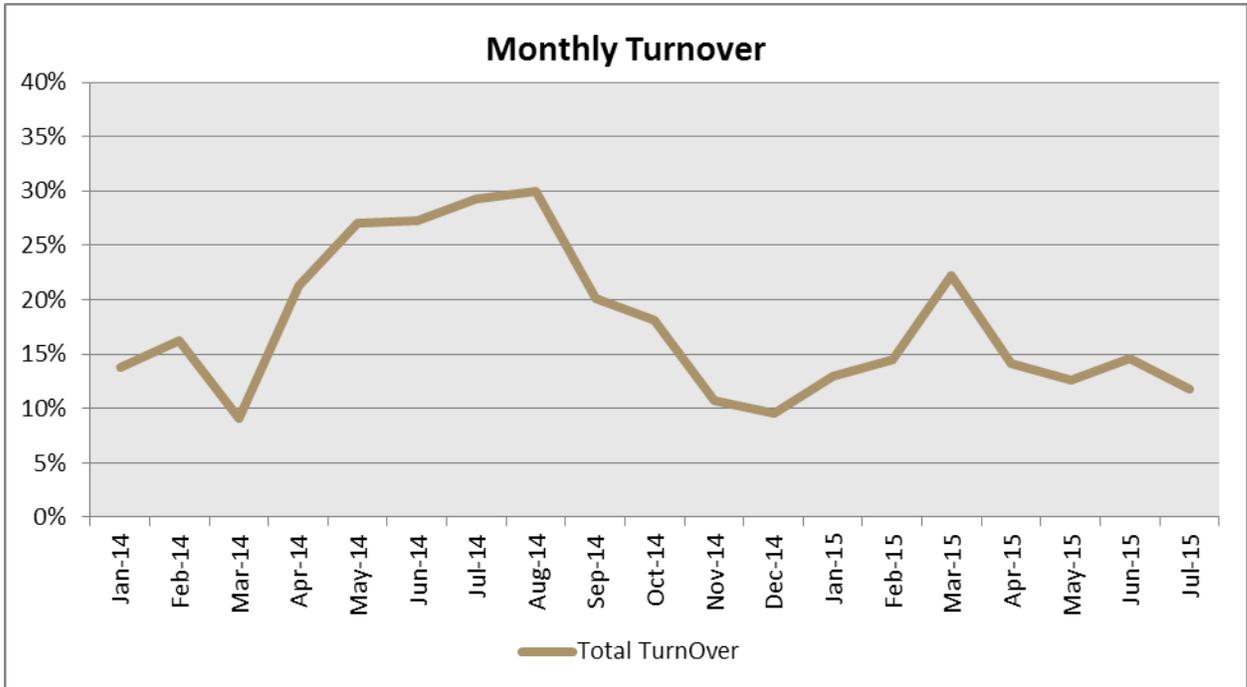
Plant Manager, Wabash Wood Products

P.O. Box 597 • Harrison, AR 72602
339 Industrial Park Rd. • Harrison, AR 72601
Phone (870) 741-6644 Fax (870) 741-7033

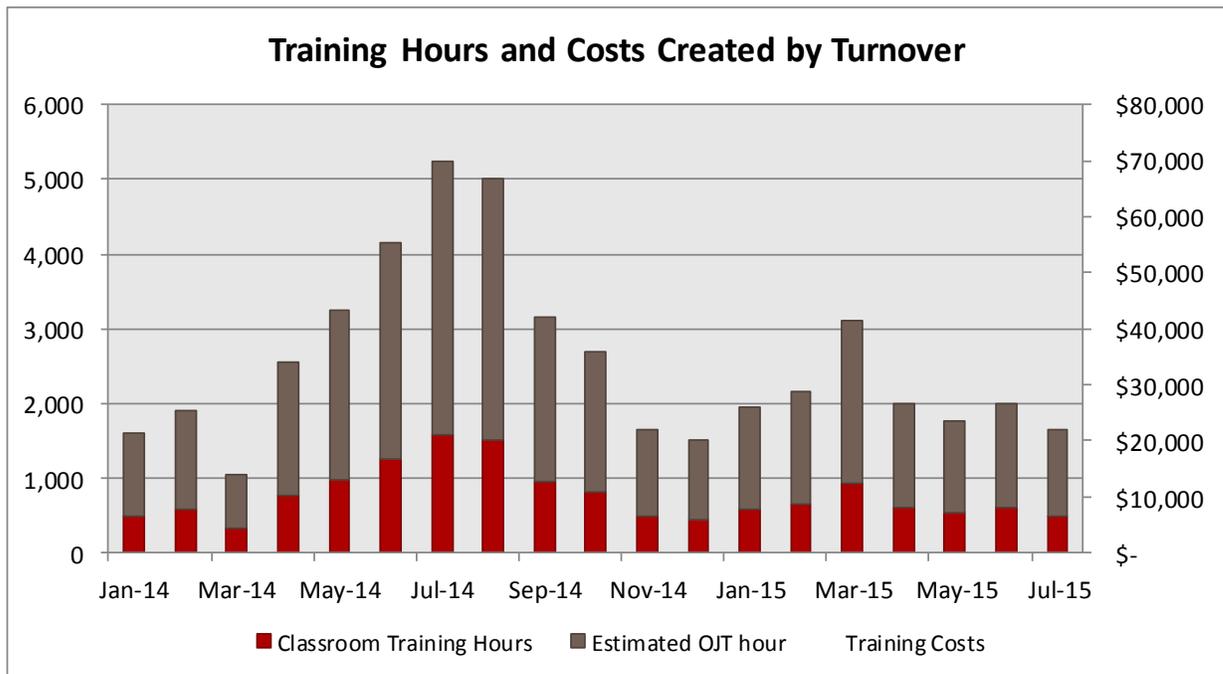
WWWP

WABASH WOOD PRODUCTS

A Wabash National Company



Estimated 48,000 hours of training at a cost of \$662,000





The best in care...close to home

620 North Main • Harrison, AR 72601 • (870) 414-4000

August 24, 2015

Dr. Jackie Elliott, President
North Arkansas Community College
1515 Pioneer Drive
Harrison, AR 72601

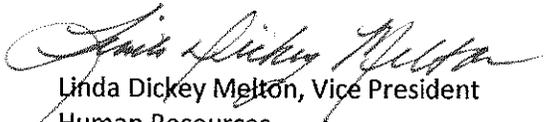
Dear Dr. Elliott:

North Arkansas Regional Medical Center is committed to working with North Arkansas College as a principle partner in the effort to address labor market shortages and the healthcare skills gap in our region of the state. We continue to face many challenges in finding employees who are skilled and credentialed in the healthcare industry in order to promote our continued expansion and strategic plans for operational growth. As NARMC continues to enhance acute care hospital services and expanding associated clinical agency operations, we have a strong desire to partner with the college to provide educational opportunities for current and future employees who are critically needed to help our hospital and clinic services grow. This is essential to the livelihood and improved health status of the communities served.

NARMC has expanded its services to include providing resources to address critical areas of need within this region including behavioral health services, community physicians and specialists, community paramedic program, home care and hospice, and other services to ensure continuity of quality care for the citizens and visitors to this region. In recent years, NARMC has identified a need for additional qualified staff in many areas in order to address emerging technological, regulatory, and insurance-directed changes. Currently, NARMC has approximately 125 open positions including entry level positions, professional and technical healthcare provider positions, and technical and professional systems and business positions. Additionally, we have a continuing need for on-going training for our 800+ employees. Areas of need include: nursing (all levels PN, RN, APRN), advanced nursing assistant, respiratory therapy, physical therapy, behavioral health and social work, surgical assistant / tech, radiology technician, pharmacy technician, coding, business office and reimbursement processing, information services, etc. Building the local workforce is a key component to allow NARMC to remain responsive and effective in our business and to promote long-term, sustainable growth for healthcare services to meet the needs of the five county area we serve.

The Regional Workforce Alliance created through this project provides an enhanced opportunity for NARMC to deliver key input into our local workforce needs. We are very interested in working together to develop a plan that will provide opportunities for new models of education and training programs to better prepare workers and help build our future workforce. While much of this work will occur over the next year in the "planning phase", we are ready to begin this partnership in order to support growth and progress for both our respective organizations. We are ready to move forward.

Very truly yours,


Linda Dickey Melton, Vice President
Human Resources



Office: 870.741.8255
Fax: 870.741.4998
P.O. Box 1198
Harrison, AR 72601
www.paceind.com

August 25, 2015

Dear Dr. Elliott,

Pace Industries is committed to working with North Arkansas College as a principle partner in the effort to address labor market shortages and the manufacturing skills gap in our region of the state. We continue to face many challenges finding employees who are skilled in technical trades in order to promote our continued expansion and strategic plans for operational growth. As Pace Industries continues to transition toward a more automated environment with increased use of robotics equipment and computer controlled technologies, we have a strong desire to partner with the college to provide educational opportunities for current and future employees who are critically needed to help our company grow.

Pace Industries was ravaged by a fire in the spring of 2013, and since then has invested millions of dollars into the Harrison facility to rebuild and upgrade operations. Pace Industries currently has approximately 15 positions open, including entry level positions, skilled trades and engineering, and a need for training for over 50 existing employees. Additionally, we anticipate an increase in business which would necessitate adding approximately 30%, or 100 to 130 people, to our workforce over the next three years. Approximately 15% to 20% of that increase would be skilled trades and engineering. Building the local workforce is a key component for us to continue to remain competitive in our industry and to promote long term sustainable growth for our company.

The Regional Workforce Alliance created through this project provides an enhanced opportunity for Pace Industries to deliver key inputs into our local workforce needs. We are very interested in working together to develop a plan that will provide opportunities for new models of education and training programs to better prepare workers and help build our future workforce.

While much of this work will occur over the next year in the "planning phase", we are ready to begin this partnership in order to support growth and progress for both of our respective organizations. We are ready to move forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Cheryl Goodman'.

Cheryl Goodman
Senior Manager, Administration and Operations
Pace Industries, Inc. Harrison Division



OZARKS UNLIMITED RESOURCES COOPERATIVE

5823 Resource Drive, Harrison, AR 72601
P.O. Box 610, Valley Springs, AR 72682
PHONE: 870.429.9100 FAX: 870.429.9099
www.oursc.k12.ar.us

Harrison, Arkansas 72601

Rick Nance, Director

August 26, 2015

MEMBERSHIP

BAXTER COUNTY
Cotter S.D.

BOONE COUNTY
Alpena S.D.
Bergman S.D.
Harrison S.D.
Lead Hill S.D.
Omaha S.D.
Valley Springs S.D.

CARROLL COUNTY
Berryville S.D.
Eureka Springs S.D.
Green Forest S.D.

MADISON COUNTY
Jasper S.D.
Kingston Campus

MARION COUNTY
Flippin S.D.
Ozark Mountain S.D.
Bruno-Pyatt Campus
Yellville-Summit S.D.

NEWTON COUNTY
Deer / Mt. Judea S.D.
Jasper S.D.
Jasper Campus
Ozark Mountain S.D.
Western Grove Campus

SEARCY COUNTY
Ozark Mountain S.D.
St. Joe Campus
Searcy County S.D.
Leslie Campus
Marshall Campus

**NORTH ARKANSAS
COLLEGE**

Nell Bonds, Dean of Outreach
North Arkansas College
1515 Pioneer Drive
Harrison, AR 72601

Dear Mrs. Bonds:

We are excited about the opportunity provided by the Workforce Initiative Act Regional Workforce Grant Program, passed into law in 2015 that gives the opportunity to identify workforce needs, develop a plan to address the needs and implement the plan.

A part of the O.U.R. Cooperative operational mission is to, "Foster public and private sector educational partnerships" to respond to the diversity of needs and opportunities in our constituency. Through the Regional Workforce Alliance, O.U.R. Cooperative will be building stronger partnerships to better serve the sixteen school districts within the constituency. The O.U.R. Cooperative CTE Department held the first Regional Partnership Council Summit March 18, 2015. This partnership comprised of partners from secondary, postsecondary, Workforce Services, Arkansas Department of Career Education, Arkansas Department of Education, Business & Industry, Chambers of Commerce, elected officials, students, etc. The grant will allow the opportunity to work closer with manufacturers on addressing the identified gap from secondary to workforce-soft skills and emotional intelligence.

The Career and Technical Department Coordinator will be available to assist with the grant targets and help with communication between secondary schools. Carl D. Perkins funds could potentially be utilized to help prepare teachers and students. The CTE Department will continue to support the work after the end of the grant in the same capacity. Through the O.U.R. CTE Regional Partnership Council, the work will continue.

O.U.R. Cooperative is committed to the work of the grant and continuing on past the end of the grant through the CTE Department. As this opportunity is a positive for our constituents and provides workforce opportunity for students, O.U.R. Cooperative supports the grant. We look forward to hearing the Regional Workforce Alliance's success in approval.

Sincerely,

Richard Nance, Director

C Dr. Kim Fowler, Teacher Center Coordinator
Mrs. Billie Reed, CTE Coordinator



August 27, 2015

Dear Arkansas Workforce Development Board,

Northark Technical Center (NTC) is committed to working with North Arkansas College and its other education and industry partners to address labor market shortages and job candidate skills gaps in our region. This partnership will allow Northark to be more responsive to our regional industry needs, particularly in the Advanced Manufacturing and Emerging Clinical Healthcare job sectors.

NTC is a shared-time secondary technical center providing high school students the opportunity to obtain concurrent credit in six programs of study leading to industry certifications and college certificates prior to graduation. This unique opportunity allows students to significantly reduce the time from high school graduation to successful employment or degree completion. NTC serves high schools in our six-county service area which includes Boone, Carroll, Madison, Marion, Newton, and Searcy counties. These schools include:

- Omaha High School
- Lead Hill High School
- Bergman High School
- Berryville High School
- Green Forest High School
- Alpena High School
- Harrison High School
- Yellville Summit High School
- Flippin High School
- Bruno-Pyatt High School
- Valley Springs High School
- Western Grove High School
- St Joe High School
- Jasper High School
- Kingston High School

The Regional Workforce Alliance created through this project will allow Northark and its students to receive invaluable employer input in the areas of skill development, emerging technology needs, and labor market trends. NTC is excited to enter into this partnership to improve student outcomes and fill labor market gaps.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Howie', is written over a horizontal line.

Scott Howie, Assistant Director

Northark Technical Center