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WORKFORCE STRATEGY INVESTMENT

June 24, 2024

SUMMARY

The Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE) and the Arkansas Department of Commerce (ACOM) announce a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) designed to invest in strategic workforce training focus areas aligned with the Arkansas Workforce Strategy with up to \$88M of total funds available through ADHE Workforce Initiative grant funding and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

APPLICATION/RFP PROCESS

To effectively communicate with all stakeholders and strategically utilize these funds, there will be one RFP process with two tracks of funding for the Workforce Strategy Investment.

The RFP will set clear expectations for applications, including but not limited to:

- Alignment (both funding and operational) between industry and institutions.
- Demonstration of workforce need and industry participation/partnerships.
- Outcomes and goals including increased capacity, credentialing, jobs, and placement opportunities, etc.
- Demonstrated return on investment and long-term viability.

The RFP opens on June 24. Applicants must submit a Letter of Intent by July 8, designating which targeted industry sector their proposal addresses, consistent with the focus areas identified in the Arkansas Workforce Strategy. The Evaluation Committee (comprised of representatives from the Department of Commerce, Department of Education, Chief Workforce Officer, and other critical state partners) will review letters of intent to determine which funding source or combination of sources is the best match for proposals and may invite applicants to submit full proposals by July 22.

The Committee will review and score applications using the rubric(s) in the RFP. Further information and negotiation with applicants may be required/requested by the Committee. The Committee will establish the maximum amount of funds to be awarded per project and the maximum number of awards an entity can receive.

Titling of RFP: HIRED – Higher Industry Readiness through Educational Development

FUNDING AMOUNT

- Up to \$48M ARPA
- Up to \$40M ADHE Workforce Initiative Grants (funds of up to \$8M annually allocated to ADHE through previous legislation)