

EDUCATION COMMITTEE



AGENDA
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
Berry Hill Resort & Conference Center
3105 River Road, South Boston, VA 24592
Tuesday, October 4, 2022
2:45 P.M.

In accordance with §2.2-3708.2.D.2 of the Code of Virginia, the public may witness and participate in this meeting remotely (only audio participation will be utilized). The meeting number is: **2630 930 3163** and the password is: **73973989**. If participating via phone, dial: 1-408-418-9388 (toll) utilizing the above meeting number and passcode. If joining remotely, utilize the following link:

<https://virginiatobaccocommission.my.webex.com/virginiatobaccocommission.my/j.php?MTID=m7d9f09223b2fcf0ba9b58371b1a8205a>

If you experience problems calling in or transmission, please call: 804-894-9652 or email at JButler@revitalizeva.org. Any person needing accommodations in order to participate in the meeting should contact Ms. Joyce Knight, at 804-894-9651 at least (5) five days prior to the meeting, so that suitable arrangements can be made. In accordance with §30-179 of the Code of Virginia, the public may provide comment on their experience with this electronic meeting format. A copy of the comment form may be found here: http://foiacouncil.dls.virginia.gov/sample%20letters/reporting_reqs.htm.

Welcome and Call to Order	<i>The Honorable L. Louise Lucas, Vice Chair</i>
Call of the Roll	<i>Andy Sorrell, Acting Director</i>
Approval of the <u>3/28/22</u> Minutes	<i>(published on website)</i>
Public Comments	
FY 23 Competitive Education Applications	<i>Vicki Humphreys, Grants Program Director</i>
FY 23 TAP Funding & Update	<i>Stephanie Kim, Finance Director</i>
Other Business	<i>Andy Sorrell, Acting Director</i>
Public Comments	
Adjournment	

**FY23 Competitive Education
Staff Summaries and Recommendations**

Request #	Organization	Project Title	Requested Amount	Staff Recommended Amount
Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Training				
4084	Mountain Empire Community College	CWIA Expansion II	\$ 419,732	\$ 419,732
4086	Patrick & Henry Community College Foundation	Career and Technical Education (CTE) Credentialing	\$ 40,425	\$ 40,250
4085	Southern Virginia Higher Education Center	Welding Program Expansion	\$ 264,802	\$ 236,222.50
4091	Virginia Technical Institute	Advanced Industrial Maintenance Mechanics Laboratory	\$ 32,250	\$ 25,285
High School Equivalency Programs				
4087	Southside Virginia Community College - Adult Education	Southside Race to GED/NEDP	\$ 70,000	\$ 70,000
Healthcare / Post-Secondary Programs				
4089	Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center Foundation	Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center Virtual Cadaver Lab	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
4092	Wytheville Community College	Advancing Wytheville Community College's Health Programs	\$ 100,324	\$ 100,324
Workforce Training Programs				
4082	Institute for Advanced Learning and Research	ExTRA: Expanding Talent through Registered Apprenticeships	\$ 646,690	\$ 497,890
4083	Mount Rogers Development Partnership	Virtual Reality Career and Technical Education Workforce Training	\$ 50,000	No award
4088	Southside Virginia Community College Foundation	Fiber Technician Training Program	\$ 478,253	\$ 478,253
4090	United Way of Southwest Virginia	Increasing the childcare workforce in Southwest Virginia	\$ 121,175	WITHDRAWN
Requested Amount / Staff Recommendation			\$2,323,651	\$ 1,967,956.50

Mountain Empire Community College
CWIA Expansion II (#4084)
\$419,732.00 Requested

Project Summary:

Commission funds are requested to continue the development of MECC's Center for Workforce and Innovation in Appalachia, VA. This facility, a former public school building, houses several of MECC's training programs and provides an opportunity to expand capacity and programming beyond the space constraints of the college's main campus. The current proposal will utilize TRRC support to develop a machining laboratory resulting in the creation of a Precision Machining program required to meet the demands of local industries. Grant funds will be used for required building renovations and for equipment purchases. The request also supports the expansion of the CDL program. Funding will be used to transition a part time instructor to full time and to purchase an additional commercial vehicle for the program. The expansion will allow MECC to offer four additional cohorts classes each year.

Matching Funds:

Matching funds will be provided from MECC for adjunct faculty support (\$90,000), Komatsu (\$15,000 adjunct faculty support and \$50,000 donated consumables), and from a pending DoE AMLER application (\$264,732).

Project Outputs:

An additional 30 CDL credentials will be awarded each year. The precision machining degree program will graduate 8 participants each year.

Staff Comments:

The Commission has provided two previous grants to support the development of the CWIA and its associated programs. These grants (\$425,905 in 2018 and \$253,593 in 2020) assisted with building upgrades and equipment needs for MECC's Lineman, CDL, and Dental Assistant Program. The current request will expand the CDL Program to meet the growing demand for the credential. Over the past 12 months there were 394 active job advertisements for CDL drivers in MECC's service region. The ability to add four additional cohorts each year, likely offered on nights and weekends, will help to fill these positions.

Additionally, a new Precision Machining program will be established. The college will partner with a local manufacturer, Komatsu, to establish the machining program. Komatsu and others have documented substantial demand for precision machinists and cited the lack of qualified employees as an issue impacting their ability to grow operations. Komatsu's commitment to provide faculty support and donated equipment is a strong indicator of the need for this program. A large portion of Komatsu's contribution to the project is in the form of in kind support representing donated supplies and materials. Only a vague description of these materials has been provided. Care will be needed during the administration of the grant to document these donations and to determine appropriate values.

Financial Viability Assessment:

This new degree program for Precision Machining will strengthen the region's ability to retain existing industry and attract new ones by filling a documented need for qualified candidates in this field. Modest renovation to the current CWIA facility will allow MECC to accommodate an existing inventory of large machinery, along with requested new equipment, necessary for the establishment of this new lab. By expanding the capacity of the CDL program, MECC will alleviate months-long waiting lists and increase the rate at which qualified licensees

become available for employment. MECC is positioned financially to sustain the ongoing programs through tuition and other state revenue.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the approval of a \$419,732 grant award contingent upon the receipt and documentation of all required matching funds necessary to complete the project as described.

**Patrick & Henry Community College Foundation
Career and Technical Education (CTE) Credentialing (#4086)
\$40,425.00 Requested**

Project Summary:

Patrick & Henry Community College Foundation seeks funding to cover student certification costs within the high-demand fields of advanced manufacturing. Despite the value of industry recognized credentials in validating and confirming student skills to future employers, current state policy prohibits P&HCC from embedding student certification costs into tuition, which eliminates the ability to use most scholarship funds to cover these costs. While most certification testing fees are \$150 or less, these fees represent a significant financial burden for students and limits their ability to earn certifications that would assist them in the job market. P&HCC Foundation requests funding to cover certification testing fees within the advanced manufacturing field, which will increase the number of certifications earned and improve student success upon entering the job market.

Matching Funds:

A total of \$79,426 in Match is committed. P&HCC is providing \$20,000 to support annual dues to both Festo-NC2 and Siemens. Federal funding commitments from two sources, \$15,000 from Postsecondary Perkins Fund and \$34,320 from Defense Manufacturing Community Support will be used for staff professional development.

Project Outputs:

- An estimated 100 students per year will receive nationally recognized industry certifications; with an estimated 537 certifications anticipated to be awarded annually from the following organizations:
 - American Welding Society (AWS) – 180 certifications
 - American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) – 20 certifications
 - Siemens – 32 certifications
 - National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS) – 15 certifications in year 1 (30 in year 2)
 - Festo Didactic-National Coalition for Certification Centers (Festo-NC3) - 290 certifications

Staff Comments:

The Commission has supported advanced manufacturing industry certification costs at P&HCC through the two grants awarded to the New College Institute for the Advanced Manufacturing Center of Excellence. This funding request continues this initiative and reflects the success P&HCC has maintained in delivering this training to provide a qualified workforce for the regional employers. Virginia's FastForward program provides support for certification costs for non-credit short term workforce programs. Whereas, this funding request is to support students in for-credit programs in obtaining industry recognized certifications that are embedded in multiple Career Studies Certificates and Associate degree programs. Employer letters with hiring estimates for companies benefiting from P&HCC's site in Patrick County were provided by Ten Oaks, LLC, Thomas Industrial Fabrication, and Mechanical Designs of Virginia. The college's People Soft Oracle program will be used to track all data regarding student completion rates. This project provides direct Education program outcomes within the Advanced Manufacturing priority area and staff is recommending full funding.

Financial Viability Assessment:

There is likely demand for this kind of support at all educational institutions in the footprint. Recognizing the need for this type of support and the direct outcomes that result, and to provide similar funding opportunity to other colleges in the Tobacco Region footprint, staff is recommending a change to the guidelines for the FY23 Workforce Financial Aid program to allow certification costs to be budgeted under for-credit scholarship priorities in addition to the current allowance for use of funding to support tuition and fees.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of a \$40,425 grant award.

Southern Virginia Higher Education Center

Welding Program Expansion (#4085)

\$264,802.00 Requested

Project Summary:

The Southern Virginia Higher Education Center (SVHEC) will expand the Welding@SVHEC Training Program to include 1) new and enhanced curricular components focused on planning and executing a metal fabrication project (these components will be embedded in the currently-offered Welding Levels 1 through 3 courses); and 2) the addition of Welding Level 4 curriculum for aluminum and stainless steel welding. This expansion is a direct response to employer-specified needs for advanced skill sets and abilities. Welding@SVHEC is a highly successful workforce training program that has prepared almost 100 individuals for welding jobs since 2014. Requested funding will be used toward the support of an additional full-time instructor and part-time lab assistant, long lived supplies and equipment, and recruitment marketing materials, and a small scale renovation to the welding lab.

Matching Funds:

A total of \$236,222.50 in Match is committed. The SVHEC and the Southern Virginia Higher Education Foundation (SVHEF) will provide \$211,296.50 in cash match for partial support of new staff, recruitment marketing materials, equipment, supplies and materials for the new program, and renovations for the welding lab. In-Kind Match valued at \$24,926 is for current existing support of the Welding Program Lead Instructor.

Project Outputs:

- Creation of new NCCER Welding Level 4 instructional program within the SVHEC, focused on aluminum and stainless steel welding.
- Attainment of NCCER Welding Level 4 Certifications by 8 participants annually.
- Development of expanded curriculum components for Welding Levels 1-3, to incorporate enhanced blueprint reading, project layout and planning, and GMAW spray transfer and pulse welding techniques for 10 participants annually. Students can earn up to seven industry-recognized credentials from the Welding@SVHEC program.

Staff Comments:

Demand continues to climb for qualified welders, as the application forecasts the need to hire ~22 new welders annually over the next decade within the service area. The funding requested in this proposal will add critical new elements to the Welding@SVHEC Training Program, focused on the stated requirements of existing and potential employers. Letters of support for the proposal were submitted by Hitachi Energy, Old Dominion Machine and Fabrication, Lewis Metal Works, and Comfort Systems USA Mid-Atlantic. Of particular note, Hitachi Energy generates 35% of its revenue through stainless steel and aluminum welding. The addition of the Welding Level 4 training component and the potential to earn up to seven industry-recognized credentials will

help generate qualified candidates for the anticipated 70 welding positions this manufacturer will hire within the next three to five years. Starting salaries for welders at this firm are in the range of \$19-\$25/hour.

Staff notes that \$41,890 of the proposed in-kind matching funds in the original proposal were tied to oversight positions not directly involved in the creation and delivery of the new program. TRRC funding guidelines do not permit the acceptance of these indirect costs as match. In addition, \$49,852 of the \$65,138 in supplies proposed as cash match were deemed to be directly related to the offering of the Welding Level 4 program. As such, the total cost of the program drops to \$472,445, of which the TRRC proposes to fund \$236,222.50. SVHEC submitted a revised project budget to reflect the additional \$28,578.50 required for the remaining match through rebudgeting some of the requested TRRC expenses to the SVHEC.

Financial Viability Assessment:

The Welding@SVHEC program is proposing a way to make higher and better use of existing space and tailor programs to meet both current and future employer demand, thereby supporting business retention and recruitment to the region. The Welding Level 4 program will be open to the public, including previous completers, based on their interest and availability. The staff expansion creates the capacity to add expanded and evening cohorts, while maintaining compliance with safety requirements. The current space only needs minor renovations to accommodate equipment for the Welding Level 4 program. SVHEC projects sufficient revenue through tuition and state funding to continue to support the program after the project period is complete.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of a \$236,222.50 grant award.

Virginia Technical Institute

Advanced Industrial Maintenance Mechanics Laboratory (#4091)

\$32,250.00 Requested

Project Summary:

Virginia Technical Institute is a nonprofit workforce training center for construction trades and technical occupations, located in the Town of Altavista on the southern border of Campbell County. The goal of the Advanced Industrial Maintenance Mechanics Laboratory project is to create an interactive laboratory incorporating local methods/practices most commonly found in local manufacturing industry. Requested funding will be used toward the purchase of interactive trainers in pneumatic, hydraulic, electro-hydraulic, and electrical disciplines; as well as initial fees with Smart Automation Certification Alliance offering specialist certifications for Industry 4.0 technical skills. A \$31,952 estimated from Amtek Company for the Portable Pneumatic and Portable Basic Hydraulic Learning Systems was provided. The interactive trainers will show the core concepts of each process in a hands on manner but more importantly can incorporate troubleshooting faults which industry has repeatedly stated is a weakness in their workforce. These trainers will replicate many issues found in manufacturing shut downs and require the students to employ critical thinking skills in a controlled environment resulting in a higher skilled workforce.

Matching Funds:

Cash Match for the project includes \$12,000 from the Greater Lynchburg Trust already secured for purchase of lathe and mill; and a second request of \$7,000 to be submitted to the Trust. In-Kind Match valued at \$20,250 is for the market value of new equipment donations by Fluke Incorporated.

Project Outputs:

- Creation of the Advanced Industrial Maintenance Mechanics laboratory within the Industrial Maintenance program at VTI.
- Industrial Maintenance enrollment increased by + 10 annually, from 5 to 15 students; and an increase in NCCER Industrial Maintenance Mechanic Certifications by + 6 annually, from 5 to 11 certifications.
- Addition of the SACA Certified Industry 4.0 Mechanical Systems Specialist Certifications for 11 annually.

Staff Comments:

Virginia Technical Institute has a solid track record for meeting the needs of manufacturing companies in the region. VTI first discussed this project with grants staff in July 2021. This project is a modest request to enhance VTI's Industrial Maintenance program to address a critical need of manufacturing companies in the region. The application lists seven companies with current opening for industrial maintenance positions, and an employer letter was provided by Goodyear-Danville supporting the request. Completion of the laboratory set-up with utilization of the interactive trainers is targeted for May 2023. As a result of this project VTI students will be qualified for an additional industry recognizing credential from SACA for Industry 4.0 specialist certifications. Staff notes that the mill and lathe equipment purchases from the \$12,000 match occurred in April 2022, and staff recommends this be allowed toward as cash match for this award. The Commission is limited to only accepting 25% In-Kind Match toward the 1:1 match requirement. With this limitation the total amount of grant funding that can be recommended to \$25,285, and an additional \$7,000 cash Match is needed toward the total project costs. VTI has indicated a plan to submit an application to the Greater Lynchburg Trust for this amount.

Financial Viability Assessment:

VTI has a good relationship with area employers and connecting graduates to open positions. This modest request will provide the capacity for VTI to enhance its current programs and expand the pool of qualified industrial maintenance technicians, a position in high demand in this region of the Commonwealth.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of a \$25,285 grant award, contingent on VTI securing the remaining required matching funds prior to disbursement of grant funding.

High School Equivalency Program

Southside Virginia Community College - Adult Education
Southside Race to GED/NEDP (#4087)
\$70,000.00 Requested

Project Summary:

Southside Virginia Community College's Regional Adult Education program leads a partnership with the four regional adult education and literacy programs that serve Southern Virginia (Regions 11, 12, 13 and 14). The program provides an incentive to cover credentialing testing fees for individuals pursuing a high school equivalency diploma. To receive a GED individuals must receive a passing score in four subjects- Math, Science, Social Studies, and Reasoning through Language Arts. The objective of the Southside Race to GED/NEDP program is to increase basic education attainment levels in order to help families move out of poverty, into jobs, and towards self-sufficiency. The majority of the requested funding, \$60,000 is to support scholarships for the GED test fees which ranges from \$10 for a retake test and \$30 for each subject, for up to a total of \$160 per

person depending on the number of retakes. Another \$10,000 of grant funding is requested to support marketing and promotional efforts to reach participants. To be eligible individuals must be a resident of the Tobacco Region, 18 years or older, enrolled in an adult education program and they must pass an official practice test with a score of 145 or better. Students are also required to attend class to remediate any deficient skills before taking a retest in a subject in which they did not meet minimum passing requirements.

Matching Funds:

Match of \$74,529.66 will be provided from Virginia Department of Education grants to Regions 13 and 14, to support the Pearson Vue Test Center administrator costs shared by the two regions, testing proctors, and the regional program manager for test administration and grant oversight.

Project Outputs:

- Implementation of marketing plan to promote Southside Race to GED Program.
- Baseline enrollment in the adult education programs for the four regions of 1,311 individuals is projected to increase by 13% to 1,481 participants enrolled.
- Individuals receiving their GED is estimated to increase 25% from 80 students annually to 100 students.

Staff Comments:

The Commission has supported GED attainment programs in both the Southern and Southwest areas of the region for more than a decade. Four past grant awards for the Southside Race to GED program total ~ \$289K. Unfortunately, Southern Virginia has some of the lowest education attainment levels in the Commonwealth, with significantly higher than average populations without a high school diploma. The Commission's most recent grant #3413 awarded in May 2018 for \$80,000, has a balance of \$26,822 as is estimated to cover testing fees through the end of December 2022. Grant funds are requested to continue covering testing fees over the next two years. The applicant requests \$10,000 for marketing, and staff is recommending a marketing and promotional plan for these funds be approved in advance of spending.

Financial Viability Assessment:

Southside Virginia Community College cites a U.S. Census Bureau figure of 67,000 individuals without a high school credential in its service area, which is a contributor to 5% unemployment in some areas and the highest levels of poverty in the Commonwealth. This ongoing partnership project has demonstrated its effectiveness in removing financial barriers to GED attainment for many unemployed and underemployed individuals, and put them on the path to better employment opportunities. The sustainability of this program is dependent on continuing grant support.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of a \$70,000 grant award, contingent on a Marketing Plan being approved by staff in advance of disbursement of grant funds approved for marketing.

Healthcare / Post-Secondary Programs

Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center Foundation *Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center Virtual Cadaver Lab (#4089)* \$100,000.00 Requested

Project Summary:

Commission funds are requested to support the development of a Virtual Cadaver Lab at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center. The Lab will provide opportunities for interprofessional training across five programs including Doctor of Pharmacy, Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia, Family Nurse Practitioner, and RN & RN to BSN. Governor's School students will also utilize the lab in their programs. Two Anatomize Virtual Cadaver Tables will outfit the lab and feature numerous support task trainers (skeletal system, brain, joints, heart, respiratory system, reproductive system, etc.). The total cost for the tables and related task trainers is \$211,754. Commission funds will be used for the purchase of one table (\$100,000).

Matching Funds:

The Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center will provide \$61,754 toward the purchase of an Anatomize Virtual Cadaver Table and the related training equipment required for the tables. The A. Linwood Holton Governor's School will provide \$50,000 for the table and related equipment.

Project Outputs:

- The lab will provide 5,000+ training hours to approximately 350 students enrolled in 5 programs. Each program will achieve minor increases in enrollment:
 - College Transfer Credit +35
 - Doctor of Pharmacy +3
 - Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia +2
 - Family Nurse Practitioner +4
 - RN & RN to BSN +3

Staff Comments:

This project provides a valuable enhancement for the healthcare programs located at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center. Currently no similar lab exists in the region and the creation of this space, as well as the future development of a regional simulation laboratory, will allow the SWHEC to attract and grow multiple healthcare programs with varying levels of credentials. Interprofessional Education (IPE) is an emerging trend for healthcare education programs. IPE requires that students, in a variety of healthcare programs, learn together in a collaborative environment. The Virtual Cadaver Lab will provide a space where this team learning model can be implemented.

Only modest increases in credential attainment are expected as a result of this project. This is not unusual for program enhancement projects considered in the Competitive Education Program. The potential for the Lab to have a positive effect for existing students is also important. Research has shown that IPE learning opportunities result in better educational outcomes for medical profession students as well as better health outcomes for patients. Southwest Virginia region is notoriously "medically underserved" by all types of healthcare providers. This project presents an opportunity to provide state of the art training to produce a better trained workforce needed to meet the region's critical workforce demand.

Financial Viability Assessment:

This project presents a creative and versatile solution for the delivery of education to healthcare providers, community college students, and dually-enrolled high school students. The application was accompanied by strong letters of support from the Appalachian College of Pharmacy, Virginia Highlands Community College, VCU College of Health Professions, A. Linwood Holton Governor's School, and King University School of Nursing. It is solidly matched by private and local contributions. This request is for equipment only, and the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center will provide ongoing support for operating expenses. This lab has the potential to be a model for medical education in other underserved regions.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the approval of a \$100,000 grant award.

Wytheville Community College

Advancing Wytheville Community College's Health Programs (#4092)

\$100,324.00 Requested

Project Summary:

This request supports enhancement of several of WCC's healthcare programs. Simulated training opportunities will be expanded through the use of virtual reality technology. Additionally, the Pharmacy Technician program will be expanded through the creation of a simulated pharmacy lab space. The simulated lab space will create the capacity for the Pharmacy Tech program to offer an advanced credential.

Matching Funds:

Matching funds will be provided from Wytheville Community College utilizing Perkins Grant funding (\$50,000) and Equipment Trust Funds (\$10,524). An additional \$39,800 has been provided by WCC for the recent purchase of a MedDispense Cabinet.

Project Outputs:

- Modest increases (65 total) in credential attainment are expected from several of WCC's healthcare programs:
 - Nursing - + 2
 - Practical Nursing - + 2
 - Nurse Aid - + 40 (program relaunch)
 - Pharmacy Tech - Basic - + 1
 - Pharmacy Tech Advanced - + 15 (new program)
 - Physical Therapy Assistant - +1
 - Physical Therapy Assistant - +1
 - Medical Laboratory Technology - +1
 - Phlebotomy - +1
 - Dental Hygiene - +1
 - Dental Assisting - +1

Staff Comments:

This request supports enhancements benefiting several of WCC's existing healthcare programs. Virtual reality is a newer option for traditional healthcare simulation training which has been a familiar investment for the Commission over the past two decades. Numerous Manikin simulation labs have been established at higher

education facilities across the TRRC region. Virtual reality technology will allow these simulations to become even more lifelike and to provide hands on, real world, training opportunities for WCC's students. The College's existing healthcare programs will realize only modest increase in enrollment as a result of the project. The primary benefit will be realized through student retention and graduation rates. WCC anticipates that more students will complete the programs and pass the required certification examinations. The largest increases in enrollment are the result of the restart of the Certified Nursing Assistant Program which has been dormant during recent years as a result of the COVID pandemic.

The second component of the application, the development of a dedicated lab space for the WCC's Pharmacy Tech Career Studies Certificate Program, will provide WCC with the space necessary to offer an Advanced level CRC option. Currently only the Basic certification is offered at WCC. The lab space will allow students to simulate a real world pharmacy environment.

While outcomes are modest for this proposal there is a clear and documented need for healthcare professionals in the TRRC region. The application provided excellent documentation of job demand in WCC's immediate service region for graduates of all healthcare programs. Clinical opportunities are limited for students who rely on simulated training to prepare them to enter the workforce.

Financial Viability Assessment:

This well detailed application is representative of WCC's track record of commitment to outstanding learning environments in its health care programs. These enhancements will bring expanded capabilities to their facilities. WCC has committed to sustain the ongoing maintenance of the equipment and software beyond the grant period.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the approval of a \$100,324 grant award.

Workforce Training Programs

Institute for Advanced Learning and Research
ExTRA: Expanding Talent through Registered Apprenticeships (#4082)
~~\$646,690.00 Requested~~ \$497,890 Reduced Request

Project Summary:

Grant funds are requested to support development of a regional work-based learning program for the creation of new apprenticeship opportunities by employers within the 15 localities of Southern Virginia that are included in Go Virginia Region 3. Virginia's Registered Apprenticeship program is an occupation specific training model designed to produce highly skilled workers to meet the demands of employers, through a combination of on-the-job training and related technical instruction with a paid job experience for the employees.

IALR is proposing to focus on expansion of apprenticeships for occupations in construction, healthcare, early childhood education, manufacturing, and information technology. Three critical areas of funding support are identified: 1) continuation support for a dedicated Apprenticeship Coordinator to provide technical assistance to employers in designing apprenticeship opportunities; 2) incentives to employers to cover the direct costs of the required Related Technical Instruction (anticipated at 144 hours per year per apprenticeship), and limited to ≤ \$2,700 per year per apprentice; and 3) development of a regional Apprenticeship Consortium with a website and marketing materials to support recruitment. IALR plans to provide assistance for thirty-six new apprentices each

year for three years, for a total of 108 apprentices (recognizing that depending on the selected occupation apprenticeship terms can run one, two, three or four years); and with employers providing wages and fringe benefits averaging \$16 per hour for more than \$7 million of Match contributions. New apprenticeships will be registered through the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry. Apprentices who succeed in this program will receive their Journeyworker credential, a nationally recognized certificate demonstrating an individual has completed an apprenticeship and has the ability to perform all tasks of the trade in the area certified.

Matching Funds:

- \$116,940 Match committed from Danville Regional Foundation to support 50% of Apprenticeship Coordinator, travel and office supplies, as well as training support for eight employers.
- \$497,890 to be paid by employers for apprenticeship wages and benefits will documented for the required Match. (Total estimated contribution from employers is over \$7 million.)

Project Outputs:

- New apprenticeships will be created and registered through the Virginia Registered Apprenticeship Program, with 35 apprentices placed over each of three years for a total of 108 apprentices.
- An estimated 61 apprentices will receive their Journeyworker credential during the grant period.
- A regional Apprenticeship Consortium will be created with a supporting website and marketing materials.

Staff Comments:

This proposal is a follow-up to the 2021 Education application from IALR approved in September 2021 (#3907), at \$64,800 for 50% of the Apprenticeship Coordinator position over two years. This grant required development of an implementation plan with a list of employers, by sector, who were interested in establishing an apprenticeship program; and details on the credentials for the different apprenticeship programs and associated training needs. IALR has identified the content in this new application, results of a Go Virginia Region 3 survey, as well as a detailed spreadsheet with current job openings in the targeted sectors, with examples of program providers and the duration of apprenticeship along with cost estimates for training, to satisfy the implementation plan requirement.

In 2018 IALR completed an Apprenticeship Analysis for Go Virginia Region 3, to assess apprenticeship efforts and best practices and including a survey of businesses. Over 100 companies' responded and 87 employers expressed interest in considering offering apprenticeships in the near future (within three years). These employers indicated that their highest needs were for information and technical assistance, and funding for the related technical instruction, both of which are addressed as critical elements of this proposal.

For several years, IALR has been a leader in the region for educating employers and workforce professionals on the value of the apprenticeships model for addressing workforce needs. This proposal provides the necessary support and incentives for implementation of a regional apprenticeship program. IALR is the only Intermediary Sponsor recognized by DOLI within the targeted project area, which is a formal role whereby IALR directs employers to the registered apprenticeship model and works with them to develop a work plan and to identify options for the related technical training. A letter of support from DOLI was included with the application; and IALR plans to use DOLI's Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Database System to register apprenticeships for case management and to be used to qualify project outcomes.

During the review process staff worked with IALR to scale down this request to under \$500K, to serve as a demonstration grant in order to get a better idea of the actual demand by employers. *Target numbers and output projections included in this staff report are based on the reduction for the \$497,890 grant request.*

There are some companies in the region within the targeted sectors who already employ apprentices, and IALR clarified their primary focus will be on employers that are starting new apprenticeship programs; and secondarily, on providing assistance to employers willing to scale existing programs by adding apprentices/employees. IALR also clarified their intentions to leverage other available funding to support the related technical instruction, including encouraging employers to apply for the Commonwealth's CRAFT Grant (up to \$3,000 per apprentice, and up to \$36,000 per employer in certain sectors available through June 30, 2023); as well as utilizing Virginia's Fast Forward and G3 funding when apprentices are eligible. The Commission's Workforce Financial Aid program currently provides annual grants to community colleges to support scholarships to students in workforce and two year programs. Staff notes that the apprenticeship program funding will need to allow flexibility for employer to select the training providers and curriculums (which may or may not be through VCCS), and the need for multi-year commitments of incentives to employers for occupation specific related training instruction. However, in keeping with the Commission's long standing policy under the WFA program for being last dollar, and in recognizing the availability of state funding for the Fast Forward and G3 programs, it is important that the parameters for IALR's apprenticeship program make certain that when apprentices are eligible for these other financial assistance programs, that those funds are committed first, prior to TRRC funding and this is recommended as a condition for approval of this grant request.

Financial Viability Assessment:

The IALR has made significant strides in developing partnerships in support of implementation of this apprenticeship program. The concept's popularity is evidenced by enthusiastic letters of support from local employers, such as Axxor, Daniel Builders, Global Center for Automotive Performance Simulation (GCAPS), SOVAH Health, Blair Construction, Comfort Systems USA, Nucor Building Group, Haymes Brothers, Southside Mechanical Services, and Hitachi Energy. The Virginia Department of Labor and Industry's (DOLI) Division of Registered Apprenticeship has established IALR as a regional intermediary sponsor, and is dedicated to working with them to identify state and federal resources to support the expansion of registered apprenticeships. The IALR has committed to working with all of its partners to identify ongoing alternative funding sources for related technical instruction expenses.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of a \$497,890 grant award, conditioned on IALR's program design including parameters to make certain that when apprentices who are eligible for federal Pell grants or state Fast Forward and G3 Funding, to support the employers selected related technical instruction, that these other sources of financial assistance be utilized prior to TRRC funding being committed.

Mount Rogers Development Partnership

Virtual Reality Career and Technical Education Workforce Training (#4083)

\$50,000.00 Requested

Project Summary:

Commission support is requested to provide virtual reality career exploration and job training technology equipment to CTE programs in Bland and Wythe Counties. The Transfer VR technology will allow students to explore several career pathways and to participate in training simulations in their program of study. The Wythe CTE program will focus on nursing, machining, and welding while the Bland CTE program will focus on auto service technology, certified nurse aid, and business information systems.

Matching Funds:

Bland County Public Schools and Wythe County Public Schools will each utilize Perkins funding to contribute \$25,000 (\$50,000 total) for the purchase of the Transfer VR platform. The systems will also commit in-kind support of \$6,250 each (\$12,500 total) for related staff support.

Project Outputs:

The application anticipates that 46 additional credentials will be awarded as a result of this project.

Staff Comments:

This project is similar to the proposal under consideration from Wytheville Community College due to the use of virtual reality simulation to enhance training in a variety of CTE programs. Unlike the WCC proposal, this project appears to be more aligned with career exploration opportunities for students in high school CTE programs. TRRC requires that all projects submitted to Competitive Education result in a nationally recognized workforce credential or degree. While students enrolled in these programs may obtain workforce certifications and credentials, the proposal lacked sufficient evidence to document it will be the primary benefit of the program.

The 46 new credentials awarded as a result of this project appear to be the result of additional program enrollment due to the career exploration opportunities available using the platform. Assuming these programs can accommodate additional enrollment, this is a worthy result of the project however, once again, no direct link with completion and job placement was provided. While this is an interesting addition to CTE programs, it does not appear to be the highest use of TRRC funding and could set a precedent for similar requests from high school CTE programs across the region.

Financial Viability Assessment:

While the proposal appears to meet matching funds requirements, it does not address how ongoing equipment and software maintenance and replacement will be supported into the future.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends no award.

Southside Virginia Community College Foundation

Fiber Technician Training Program (#4088)

\$478,253.00 Requested

Project Summary:

This project provides for the creation of a two-pronged Fiber Technician Training Program to address critical workforce demand for fiber technicians. This program will support needed workforce for broadband fiber installation in the region, and information technology workers to support fiber industry installations and services for data center operations. The offerings will take advantage of two existing facilities. Southside Virginia Community College's Occupational Technical Center at Pickett Park, the location of the accomplished Power Line Worker Training School, will be expanded to offer the OpTIC fiber technician certification training through the Fiber Broadband Association. The second location at the Center for Information Technology Excellence at the Lake Country Knowledge Center in South Hill will provide a BICSI Authorized Training Facility. Project costs include a full time faculty member, an adjunct faculty member, program administration support, substantial equipment and materials purchases, and the initial marketing of the program during the start-up phase.

Matching Funds:

Matching funds total \$547,500. This includes \$345,300 committed by Southside Virginia Community College for instruction and marketing; and private contributions from Microsoft of \$190,000 toward equipment (\$140K) and supplies (\$50K), and \$12,200 from S&N Communications toward supplies and materials.

Project Outputs:

- Establish the new Fiber Technician Training Program with a BICSI Authorized Training Facility at the Lake County Advanced Knowledge Center; and equipping of the new program for Fiber Broadband Association OpTIC Training at the Occupational Technical Center.
- 132 students served annually beginning in January 2023; with 116 students earning credentials, and 121 workforce certifications awarded annually based on the following estimates:
 - OpTIC, certification through Fiber Broadband Association – 60 students (55 completers)
 - BICSI Installer I – 40 students (35 completers)
 - BICSI Installer 2, Copper – 15 students (13 completers)
 - BICSI Installer 2, Optical Fiber – 15 student (13 completers)
 - BICSI Technician – 5 students (5 completers)

Staff Comments: This projects provides a comprehensive fiber workforce training program to address immediate workforce needs for the region’s electronic cooperatives, Microsoft, and other construction contractors and information technology and communications businesses serving the region. Grant funds will primarily support Personnel Costs (\$318,550) during the 3-year start up period including support for the BICSI Instructor, an Adjunct Instructor during the first year, and a portion of an Administrative Assistance’s position to support the program over the three year period. Other funds from the Commission would be used toward the Supplies & Materials (\$36,112) for long-lived supply purchases for start-up of both the BICSI Lab and for the FBA Op TIC classes; as well as Contractual Services (\$25,000) funding to be used toward 50% of the initial marketing campaign to launch the new program. Detail budget information were provided and strong Match commitments have been made by private sector employers and by the College. Microsoft has provided a verbal commitment to assist with getting \$140K of donated new equipment for start-up of the BICSI program as well as \$50K of grant assistance for purchase of supplies and materials. S&N has committed to assisting with getting new equipment/materials donated for the FBA OpTIC training.

Compelling letters were provided from employers including ComNet Communications indicating a need for 30 persons with BICSI certifications to be hired for the Southern Virginia market over next two years; and from S&N Fiber Optic Services with a need to fill 100-200 jobs to meet projected demand; as well as support letters from Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative’s EMPOWER Broadband, and from IES Communications verifying their role in doing fiber contract work in the region for Microsoft. The 1:1 Match requirement on this grant is satisfied with \$395,300 cash contributions, and \$152,200 In-Kind for equipment and supplies/materials.

Financial Viability Assessment:

This project will establish the only BICSI Authorized Training Facility outside of the Northern Virginia, Richmond, and Charlotte, NC metropolitan areas. This project aligns favorably with Virginia’s economic development and workforce goals, based on the labor demand figures, continued high-speed fiber network expansion, and efforts to attract more data centers to the Commonwealth.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of a \$478,253 grant award.