

PY2023 (Updated May 2024)

The High Country region has received two grants funded via the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) with two specific focus areas of substance use recovery and work-based learning for small employers. Each grant provides an opportunity to engage with new partners or provide innovative and enhanced service delivery to customers and employers. The funds are anticipated through June 2025 or sooner if expended.

- Customers receiving services via ARPA funds at a minimum must be enrolled in Wagner-Peyser. Customers may also be dually enrolled in WIOA adult/dislocated worker or youth services when appropriate (such as a positive performance outcome or the need for dual funding).
- Due to the nature of these funds, those enrolled in ARPA services are not subject to income eligibility guidelines as included in the local priority of service policy as required for regular WIOA services. All other eligibility criteria/documentation is required if dually enrolled in WIOA.
- Staff should key the corresponding ARPA activities in NCWorks online. Please see the ARPA Grants Guide under Staff Online Resources.
- Staff should refer to the [DWS FAQ](#) for additional information.

NCWorks Substance Use Disorder Recovery Grant: \$200,000

This grant is designed to further implement and enhance programs to assist local communities impacted by the opioid epidemic and other substance use disorders (SUDs). The goal is to increase workforce participation and job retention of persons in recovery through an increase in education, knowledge, and workforce skills and by ensuring they are ready to work. These efforts may include training in soft skills required in the workplace, providing access to postsecondary educational opportunities for training specific to high-demand employment sectors, and offering support for job retention. Grant activities could also include direct support from case managers and wraparound services (e.g., transportation, childcare, food stabilization) to help remove barriers to employment.

Through working with key partners in the area, lack of funding to provide supportive services and addressing social determinants of health have been identified as gaps and are key to assisting those in recovery to become successful. Staff should utilize local partners for referrals and guidance in serving this population.

Customers served via the grant should be actively working towards a goal of employment/training and career advising services are to be documented in case notes. Through the work of the grant and with the support of community partners, the scope of work will include serving young adults, adults, and dislocated workers in recovery to include identifying those in need of recovery support; identifying barriers to their progression; providing case management services including supportive services to address barriers of economic mobility; promote and assist with skill and credential attainment

including soft skills, short-term training, and work-based learning to assist in being successful in the workforce; and to increase skills and awareness of staff and employers through training opportunities. Those customers receiving supportive services should also receive career advising to ensure customer remains on track to complete their goals. It is anticipated that through this grant, to serve 35 participants, *of which 16 will participate in skills enhancement opportunities*. When appropriate, customers may also be dual enrolled in the ARPA work-based learning grant.

Staff should utilize case notes to document need for services, career advising, referrals, supportive services, and any known outcomes related to employment and skills development.

Through this grant, all NCWorks staff should receive training in recovery awareness and, when appropriate, other training related to serving this population. In an effort to increase awareness and promote recovery friendly workplaces, it is anticipated that employer “lunch and learn” opportunities will be hosted allowing attendees to provide feedback on workforce needs to enhance service delivery.

Key goals include the following:

- Increase staff training on serving those in recovery/SUD.
- Increase employer awareness of working with those in recovery.
- Provide wrap-around services to meet the needs of approximately 35 customers.
- Provide opportunities for skills enhancement.

Funding includes the following:

- Portion of service provider staff salary/fringe.
- Supportive Services for wraparound services that may include, but are not limited to transportation needs, housing/utilities, childcare, vital records, health/dental care/mental health (fees/costs/prescriptions), digital divide, incentives, food insecurity, toiletries, clothing, work/training related items. (clothing/tools/supplies/fees, etc.), or other emergencies that may disrupt progress towards goals for approximately 35 customers at average of \$2,000 per person (average \$1,000 per year).
- Training/Certification/Credentialing for customers related to skill enhancement/training/credentials (such as Serve Safe \$110 each, HRD \$180 per class, Soft Skills, Guest Services \$60, Computer Classes, Ed2Go classes range \$75+, Peer Support, curriculum/tuition costs, exam fees, training costs) to include approximately 16 customers.
- Funds for meeting expenses for staff training, training fees/registration, lunch and learn employer sessions.

NOTE: Funding levels are provided in service provider contracts. Additionally, budgets are set by the board to ensure limits are not exceeded; however, these may be adjusted by the board with state approval. Customers enrolled in ARPA SUD may exceed the regular dollar limits in the local WIOA Supportive Policy following the above guidelines as well as expand the types of supportive services that may be needed due to the often-significant barriers facing this population that assist them in meeting their employment and training goals.

NCWorks Small Business Work-Based Learning Grant: \$500,000

This funding may be used to establish work-based learning opportunities targeting small- and micro-businesses (i.e., businesses with twenty-five [25] or fewer employees) to bridge the gap for business retention and expansion with funding for on-the-job training (OJT), work experience (WEX), and Incumbent Worker Grant training (IWG). Emphasis should be placed on historically underutilized businesses, industries significantly impacted by the pandemic, or businesses located in an economically distressed Tier 1 or Tier 2 county. A non-profit is eligible to participate as a WEX worksite and only eligible to participate in OJT if it is a W-2 employer. OJT funds may also be used to assist with wage reimbursement for those participating in apprenticeship activities.

This grant will address some of the limited services currently available via regular program funding for work-based learning activities and help employers address the skills gap they are experiencing as part of the tighter labor force by assisting with the cost of training new employees via OJT, building the future workforce via WEX, and addressing skills gaps of the incumbent workforce.

For OJT activities, wages will be reimbursed at a rate of fifty percent (50%) to seventy-five percent (75%). Wages for WEX will be paid at the hourly rate of the prevailing wage for similar positions. Staff should refer to the specific ARPA OJT forms when developing OJT agreements. Services provided to employers should be keyed into NCWorks Online.

For ARPA OJT, part-time positions of no less than 20 hours a week are eligible for wage reimbursement for employers that have this as their hiring needs or for those who may be engaged in apprenticeships opportunities where these hours align with their training plan. Part time ARPA OJT positions must be approved by Board staff.

Salesforce is being used by the state of North Carolina to track WBL ARPA activities; therefore, WBL participants must be co-enrolled in NCWorks and Salesforce. Salesforce should reflect what staff document in terms of contracts, modifications, hours worked, payroll, and any of the following metrics of success: trainings, retention, skills increase, number of hours completed, increased responsibilities, pay increase, and completion of a certification. All Salesforce keying should be done timely, whether enrollment or close-out.

Incumbent Worker Grant (IWG) training is available up to \$10,000 per small business (with no employer match required). All IWG activities must be entered into Salesforce.

Funding includes the following:

- Portion of service provider staff salary/fringe.
- Work based learning activities to include Incumbent Worker Grants (goal of 4); WEX wages (goal of 14); OJT wage reimbursement (goal of 15).
- Supportive Services for those in work-based learning for work clothing/tools (\$200 per customer) or other costs related to the placement by the employer such as safety training/classes.

NOTE: Funding levels are provided in service provider contracts. Additionally, budgets are set by the board to ensure limits are not exceeded; however, these may be adjusted by the board with state approval.

Reporting

Service Providers must submit their monthly ARPA reports to the Board **no later than the 8th of each month**. This allows for review and submission to DWS by the required 10th of each month. Reports (Word and Excel) will cover areas such as partnership updates, staff training, solutions implemented, challenges encountered, participants enrolled, demographics of participants, expenditures, etc. Reports should be completed clearly and accurately with all information and participant notes updated as appropriate. ARPA expenses should be submitted with the regular monthly invoices.

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

Reference

[NCWorks Commission Policy Statements and DWS Operational Guidance | NC Commerce](#)

[ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Funds Grant Local WDB Q&A updated November 2023](#)