

Statement of Need

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area Consortium Board (NRMRDACB), on behalf of a multi-partner/multi-jurisdictional collaborative in southwest Virginia, seeks \$1,500,000 for a 40 month Construction Plus YouthBuild program, *Pathways to Youth Opportunities (Pathways)* to serve 90 at-risk/disadvantaged youth in the region for an average grant-funded cost of \$16,667 per participant. *Pathways* builds on the collective impact model developed in the America's Promise Job-Driven grant project awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor in 2017 and is matched by and leveraged with the NRMRDACB's WIOA programs as well as other federal and state funded programs. The New River/Mount Rogers region comprises 4,300 square miles and is made up of 13 localities, five in the New River Valley (NRV) and eight in the Mount Rogers (MR) Planning Districts. Nine of the jurisdictions have at least one Opportunity Zone for a total of 14 Opportunity Zones in the footprint. The region is complex with natural resources and major interstates, but it is struggling with lower economic stability due to industry declines in coal, tobacco farming, and manufacture of textiles and furniture. The full scope of the problem, including unskilled labor and substance use disorder, is due to limited resources and efforts that address the real needs of disadvantaged youth to help them become the skilled workers needed by businesses. The weighted average **unemployment rate** for youth ages 16 to 24 is 47.5% and weighted average **poverty rate** is 13.6%. Data from the ACS 2018 5-Year Estimates are shown in the Source Documentation and Zip Code Map Attachments.

Training and Curriculum

Due to the size of the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area, the collaborative proposes to have one training program in NRV and one in MR. During the two program years, four cohorts of 10-12 members will be recruited for both programs for a total of 90 (approximately 45 at each build site). The *Pathways* model integrates in-demand, industry-recognized, credential-based training and work readiness skills while providing wraparound services and coaching to

promote participant success. These efforts will assist participants in obtaining employment that leads to self-sufficiency along an identified career pathway.

1. **Construction Training**. The collaborative's plan to **ensure that sufficient youth will participate in the construction skills training** to build or renovate one unit of housing over the period of performance is to have a comprehensive Recruitment Plan, engaging numerous partners, including the Justice System, K12 to recover dropouts (anticipated to be higher due to COVID), Adult Education programs, WIOA Operators, Virginia Career Works centers (American Job Centers), Faith-based and non-profit organizations, local CTE programs, local Departments of Social Services, Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), Department for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI), local government, business and industry, and all other local workforce system partners. Marketing strategies are transparent in communicating to youth that the *Pathways* program has a community service element ("Build a House & Build a Career") in addition to helping them obtain meaningful employment. Therefore, all participants are expected to participate in the construction training and build site. To ensure the delivery of a **comprehensive training program**, the collaborative has devised and attached a Construction Training Plan, depicting the full scope of the Construction Integrated Education and Training (IET) program, designed using Virginia's IET model, PluggedInVA (pluggedinva.com). Construction training will be provided by Build Smart Institute, LLC (BSI) (buildsmartinstitute.com), whose mission is to educate and train individuals to become career-ready and advance within construction industry occupations. BSI is endorsed by Home Builders Institute® and the National Association of Home Builders®, as well as accredited by the National Center for Construction Education and Research® (NCCER) and the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI). The BSI instructors will work closely with program staff, the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board (NRMWDB) Navigators and Adult Education teachers, to help meet the

holistic needs of participants. The work the participants will do on the build site will be a value add to the community as there is a **great need for affordable housing** in the NRMR Workforce Development Area, which had a total of 177,592 housing units in 2019, 17% of which were vacant. Of the occupied housing, only 69% is owner occupied. The NRV has particularly high rental rates, approximately 38%, and over a quarter of the region's housing (26%) was built before 1960. Median housing price is about \$150,600 (ACS 2019 5-Year Estimates, data.census.gov.) According to the 2020 County Health Rankings (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2020), affordable housing is by far the largest concern in the region. Data is presented in the Source Documentation attachment, which illustrates households that face at least 1 of 4 housing problems: overcrowding, high housing costs, lack of kitchen facilities, or lack of plumbing facilities. Nationally, about 18% of households experience at least one severe housing problem. In the NRMR region, approximately 12% of households spend 50% or more of their household income on housing. Housing cost burden is particularly high in the City of Radford, Montgomery County, and the City of Galax. Meanwhile, many households pay monthly housing costs greater than one third of their monthly income and consist of homeowners with a mortgage (24%), homeowners without a mortgage (9%), and renters (46%). The NRMR Region is in the VA-521 Continuum of Care region focused on homeless individuals. This region averaged about 4.5 homeless individuals for every 10,000 people in 2019. This rate only represents a small decline of 2% since 2015 compared to the state's decline of 17% in the homeless population. Family homelessness in the region has actually increased by 9%, compared to the state's overall 25% decline in family homelessness (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2020, State of Homelessness, endhomelessness.org). **Safety** and **responsibility** are of utmost concern for the collaborative. As part of the program screening, applicants will be assessed for their maturity level, and during Boot Camp, individuals are expected to complete OSHAcademy's General Industry and Health program

that covers a variety of general industry safety and health hazards that a worker may encounter in the workplace and emphasizes hazard identification, avoidance, control, and prevention. Participants in *Pathways* will receive additional safety training in the Construction IET and earn an OSHA 10 for Construction certification. While at the build site, participants will be overseen by Build Site staff (Habitat for Humanity for NRV and People, Inc. for MR). Both Habitat and People, Inc. have liability insurance. Any participant not practicing safety and responsibility will be removed from the build site until the matter is resolved. The NRMROWDB's Deputy Director will serve as project manager and is responsible for its overall success, which includes quarterly reporting and **submission of the Annual Housing Census Form**. Internal Controls to ensure the timely submission of reports includes the NRMROWDB's use of a project management tool, ProjectHub®, as well as staffing a Data & Program Coordinator. A reporting calendar is in ProjectHub® along with copies of reports and other documents to keep the collaborative on task and informed. Members of the collaborative work together to complete reporting requirements.

2. **Education and Occupational Skills Training Alignment**. To directly support the collaborative's primary goal of providing disadvantaged youth with opportunities to obtain education and employment skills in local in-demand jobs to achieve economic self-sufficiency, the *Pathways* design intentionally strives to align partners, services, and resources to influence positive behavior change and empower youth through employment in meaningful careers. Project activities address barriers that often impede youth from successfully completing postsecondary training, earning credentials, and attaining (and retaining) employment. The **education component** includes Foundational, Sector, and Occupational skills development (see Figure 1), and strategies (included in the Construction Training Plan) that support maximum co-enrollments with local workforce preparation programs. Program components are provided to all participants and use best-practices models to address the elements.

Figure 1

Pathways to Youth Opportunities

FOUNDATIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT		SECTOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT		TECHNICAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT	
Assessments + Career & Services Plan	Boot Camp	Construction Integrated Education & Training (Project-based Learning)	Occupational Bridge Training (Contextualized Instruction)	Occupational Skills Training	Skilled Employment & Follow-up
1 Week	1 Month	4-6 Months	1 Month	6-18 Months	12 months
Educational Functioning Level	Personal Effectiveness	NCCER Core: Introductory Craft Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Science • Manufacturing • IT • Skilled Trades 	Postsecondary Training	Job Placement Services
Career Interest & Aptitude	Team Development	Build Site		Apprenticeship (as applicable)	Adult Mentoring
Professional Soft Skills	Workplace Readiness	Leadership Development	Work Experience	Paid Internship (as applicable)	Job Retention Services
Digital Literacy	General Industry Safety Training	Academic Preparation			
Financial Literacy					

*Integrated Resource Teams * Case Management * Wraparound Support Services*


FOUNDATIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT: During this component, applicant eligibility is determined. At Intake, the Navigator assesses an individual’s educational functioning level (Test of Adult Basic Education[®]), career interest and aptitude (CareerScope[®]), professional soft skills (Conover[®]), digital literacy (NorthStar[®]), and financial literacy (Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s *Your Money, Your Goals*[®]). The Navigator will also use custom-designed tools (created in the DOL America’s Promise Grant) to assess motivation, support system, learning style and preference, barriers, family obligations, work schedule, availability for participating in training, and access to technology and the internet. Together, the Navigator and applicant will devise a “Career & Services Plan,” which describes the full training plan, back-up plans, and services the individual will need to work through obstacles that might interfere with success. Following Dr. Beverly Ford’s appreciative inquiry and motivational interviewing approaches, the *Career & Services Plan* will be built on the individual’s strengths. Intake occurs at various partner locations, including the Virginia Career Works centers (Career One Stop) in the region. All eligible applicants will be invited to participate in a one-month “Boot Camp,” offered at an Adult Education facility and provided collaboratively by the Navigator and Adult Education Teacher

(AE Teacher). Because *Pathways* is a significant investment in youth, the Boot Camp is designed to be rigorous to help determine applicant suitability for the program. During Boot Camp, applicants focus on developing their personal effectiveness, teamwork, workplace readiness, and safety skills. Curricula includes Conover Workplace Readiness® and Success Profiler®, McGraw-Hill's Workforce Access®: Tools for Workplace Success, and OSHAcademy's General Industry and Health program. All applicants who show up on time, work cooperatively, and demonstrate a desire to participate will be invited to move forward. The collaborative anticipates that approximately one-third of the individuals in the Boot Camps will not be enrolled in *Pathways* due to not demonstrating readiness for the full program model. They will be referred to a more suitable program for their particular situation. They can reapply at a later time when they are ready. Individuals successfully completing Boot Camp will be enrolled in the program and begin the Sector Skill Development component of *Pathways*.

SECTOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: During this component, the AE Teacher, Build Safe Institute (BSI) Instructors, and Build Site Instructors will have the shared responsibility of addressing participants' barriers to employment. Participants will advance their workplace skills through participating in (1) construction training provided by BSI located at their training facility; (2) the construction or renovation of a dwelling for a low-income family (Floyd for NRV and Bristol for MR); and leadership and academic training provided by the AE Teacher at an AE facility. Included in the Construction IET, following the PluggedInVA model, is a capstone project (project-based learning) that helps to develop their interpersonal, team-work, and leadership skills. Much emphasis will be placed on team-building so participants can both give and receive support from their peers as well as develop soft-skills. Some participants may require more support (for substance use disorder, emotional disturbance, food/shelter insecurities, etc.) and may need to be connected to additional services in the region through their Integrated Resource Team (IRT). To

allow for maximum flexibility, *Pathways* will provide both classroom and technology-based curriculum delivery, housed on the NRMRWDB's Canvas platform and BSI's BuildSmartVirtual Portal. Curriculum used by BSI is NCCER's Core Introductory Craft Skills. The leadership curriculum is Growing Leaders' Career Readiness Habitudes®, which teaches youth valuable perspectives and leadership habits, helping them to take initiative and set the pace for other team members; overcome complex problems through creative persistence; capitalize on personal strengths to be career-ready; and develop critical thinking skills that produce better life choices. Curricula for academic preparation is the WorkKeys Curriculum® and McGraw-Hill's High School Equivalency Achieve®. WorkKeys Curriculum® includes Workplace Documents (measures skill levels in reading and using written text in order to do a job); Graphic Literacy (working with workplace graphics); and Applied Mathematics (applying mathematical reasoning, critical thinking, and problem-solving techniques to work-related problems). High School Equivalency Achieve® is a blended test-prep program that helps learners prepare for high school equivalency exams more quickly and retain more of what they learn. It is built upon the standards and assessment targets for the 2014 GED® Test, TASC™ test, and HiSET™ Exam. The AE Teacher's instructional approach will be multidisciplinary, and the cohort's Capstone Project enables participants to practice **project-based learning**, helping them gain knowledge, practice skills, and be engaged in solving a real-world concern in their community. The IET model is by its nature **integrating** the educational, occupational, and personal effectiveness skills training; however, the model adheres to the program level 50-40-10 percentage requirement. Once the construction and build site goals are achieved, participants continue their academic preparation but phase into an "Occupational Bridge" program using McGraw-Hill's Workforce Career Companions® (aligned with the 16 career clusters in the National Career Clusters® Framework), which is contextualized instruction to help participants prepare for success in postsecondary

credentialing programs by providing synopses of careers and the demand for each, helping participants explore areas of professional interest and prepare for family-sustaining careers. Also during the Bridge, participants will have opportunities for work experiences to practice effective workplace skills. Participants going into an occupational field that requires a high level of mathematical ability will also complete the Workforce Access® Transitions Math course. At the conclusion of Bridge, participants transition into the Technical Skills Development component of their *Career and Services Plan*.

TECHNICAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: In this component, participants will advance into a career pathway of their choice. They can stay in the Construction industry with BSI, advancing into one of their Construction Tech Courses, or they may transition into a related “skilled trades” occupation (e.g. HVAC, Heavy Equipment, Machining, Truck Driving) or an occupation in the Healthcare, Manufacturing, or Information Technology industry, also considered high-growth, high-demand in the region. Another option for participants to advance their technical skills is to be placed in an apprenticeship with an employer. Participants will break into smaller teams as they move into their occupation of choice with training provided by local community colleges and MedCerts®. The Follow-up Specialist (FUS) will hold the larger cohort together through monthly social events or meetings so cohort members can continue to give and receive support to one another. Intended curricula for participants’ occupational skills training can vary depending on their career goals. (See Construction Plus Plan). After completion of their occupational skills training, participants are placed into employment and provided follow-up for twelve months by the FUS. Job placement services is overseen by the Business Services Coordinator (BSC) and directly provided by Career Support Systems (CSS) coaches. The FUS works closely with the Navigators, CSS coaches, and other members of the IRT. **Qualifications and experience** of Adult Education teaching staff vary between the two Regional Adult Education programs. Each program

uses specific hiring criteria, but all staff are well trained, experienced, and qualified to provide Adult Education instruction (minimum Bachelor's Degree). For the construction training, BSI uses credentialed instructors, including NCCER, OSHA, and qualifications for various other skilled trades to provide instruction. The Build Site Instructors used by Habitat for Humanity and People, Inc. are credentialed contractors with the appropriate qualifications to construct or renovate homes. Both partners will secure contractors who are willing to work with at-risk youth. **Skill mastery** for all levels of the training will be determined by standardized tests (TABE®, GED®, WorkKeys®, and industry credentials) and numerous forms of alternative assessments including Project-based assignments, Problem-based assignments, Presentations, Reports, Reflective pieces, Concept maps, Critical analyses, Case-based scenarios, and Portfolios. The standards used with the alternative assessments align with the Residential Construction Competency Model (Career OneStop) for Personal Effectiveness, Academic, and Workplace competencies. **Approaches for non-traditional Career Pathways Programs** is to provide targeted marketing and outreach strategies, especially using the NRMR's participant and business CRM, B2B Engage®. The NRMRWDB will network with colleagues in the Hampton Roads Workforce Development Board, which is currently operating a *Women in Pre-Apprenticeship Building Trades* program, to glean best practices in successful strategies in targeting women for predominantly male occupations. The NRMRWDB will also collaborate with Adult Education and WIOA colleagues in the Newport News, Virginia YouthBuild program to glean best practices and share ideas. Further, the NRMRWDB will reach out to its participants in nontraditional career pathways to highlight them in a series of Spotlight Success Stories to be shared region-wide with all Workforce System Partners to disseminate. **Industry partners have been involved** in the *Pathways* design to meet business partners' needs for a skilled workforce. Through strong business services and engagement, the Business Services Coordinator and Business Solutions teams have regular

communications with businesses, providing support to meet their hiring needs and receiving intel regarding their specific needs. The NRMRWDB's Deputy Director, with successful experience in program design and working with at-risk youth, created the original design and made adjustments as feedback was provided. Businesses are eager to hire skilled workers who possess emotional intelligence and a solid work ethic. As demonstrated by the variety of commitment letters, businesses are in support of the *Pathways* program.

Hands-On Meaningful Learning Activities Connected to Education and Training

Hands-on work experience vary in scope and design. Through the Construction IET, participants will have opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills learned in the NCCER Core: Introductory Craft Skills course directly with BSI and on the build site where they will build affordable housing for low-income families, working directly with specialized contractors hired by People, Inc. and Habitat for Humanity who understand the goals of the program. As these dwellings are being constructed, the Build Site Instructor understands the importance of providing opportunities for the youth to work directly with tradespeople who can help them experience the real-world of work. **Work experience** has been built into the program design in the Bridge component of the training. **Commitment Letters** from businesses depict their willingness to be a part of the *Pathways* program by providing **diverse work-based learning opportunities**. Additional hands-on meaningful activities in the design give youth opportunities to practice the leadership skills learned both at the build site and in the classroom as they devise and carry out their capstone project. Academic preparation (development of math, reading, writing, communication, and employability skills) are contextualized in the curriculum and provide opportunities for hands-on activities. AE Teachers will construct the learning environment to encourage participants, through use of cognitive behavioral therapy, to bring in real-life problems that can be solved practicing program competencies. For example, if a participant needs to provide

a written report to his parole officer to verify success in the program, this real-world activity can be used as a teaching moment using multiple competencies such as verbal and written communication skills, higher-order thinking, and professional etiquette.

Career Counseling, Leadership Development, and Supportive Services

1. Supportive Services and Post-Program Follow-Up Services. Work readiness and career exploration opportunities are integrated in to the *Pathways* model. During Boot Camp, participants completed the Conover Workplace Readiness® and Success Profiler® and McGraw-Hill's Workforce Access® program. During the Construction IET, participants completed Growing Leaders' Career Readiness Habitudes® training, and during the Occupational Bridge, they completed McGraw-Hill's Workforce Career Companions® program. Conover, which has proven to be impactful in several of the NRMRWDB's programs, helps (1) build behavior awareness applicable to workplace settings based on U.S. cultural standards and is beneficial for those who have never worked, are new to the workplace, or have trouble conforming to cultural behavior norms; and (2) measure interpersonal skills that are necessary when working with internal or external customers, leading people, or navigating challenges among people, compelling participants to understand the cost and benefit of decisions in a given scenario. McGraw-Hill's Workforce Career Companions® program also includes online resources for further career exploration. In lead of the Integrated Resource Team (IRT), the Navigators are instrumental in helping participants "navigate" the workforce system, which includes providing **educational and career counseling**. They use the CareerScope® interest and aptitude assessment to help guide participants' career choices, which are consistent with O*NET and the U.S. Department of Education's 16 Career Clusters and Pathways. Additional resources the Navigators use include (1) the Holland Personality Type Career Test that measures what career best fits an individual's personality; (2) What Career Is Right for Me?, which helps measure career aptitude to understand

natural skills and what jobs are a good match. It also depicts the highest paying and fastest growing careers and required training; (3) O*Net Interest Profiler *My Next Move*, which measures career interests and how they relate to specific career fields; and (4) the NRMRWDB's In-Demand Occupations list and quarterly reports provide by the Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development. **Transition services** in the *Pathways* model to prepare youth for employment (including apprenticeship) and/or educational placements, occur in the Occupational Bridge component and begin with the Virginia Education Wizard (vawizard.org) through the Virginia Community College System to help participants choose a career, get information to pursue their career, find the college that is right for them, pay for college, transfer from a community college to a university, and get answers to questions about their future. Also during the Occupational Bridge component, the AE Teacher will use McGraw Hill's Workforce Career Companions® program. Participants will also be placed in work experiences to practice their skills and understand company expectations and culture. Based on satisfactory completion of program components detailed on the participant's *Career & Services Plan*, the participant, AE Teacher, Follow-up Specialist (FUS), and Navigator will come to an agreement as to the participant's readiness to transition into occupational skills training or employment. At the point of transition, the *Career & Services Plan* is modified, as needed, to include additional supportive services the participant believes are needed to help him be successful in postsecondary training and/or employment (or apprenticeship). **Follow-up**, carried out by the FUS, occurs monthly during active participation and continues for twelve months post-program exit. The FUS will make contact at least monthly to ensure participants are performing satisfactorily in the program. ProjectHub® is used to support the collaboration and corresponding case notes for the Integrated Resource Team (IRT), and B2B Engage® is used for the FUS to manage participant success for reporting purposes. As a team (and with proper release of information in place), the members of the IRT are enlisted by the FUS to

provide direct participant support to assist with needs as they arise. The CSS coach will directly interact with the participant's employer and work with the Business Services Coordinator to provide support to the business. Additional members of the IRT will be added as necessary. The IRT approach, one of the key strategic service delivery components of the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI), a project of the U.S. Department of Labor of which the NRMRWDB participated, is an informal agreement at the "customer level" that involves diversified service systems coordinating services and leveraging funding in order to meet the needs of an individual jobseeker. This strategic approach is customer-centered and supports the integrated nature of WIOA, resulting in enhanced coordination of services and supports to a jobseeker. While not all participants in NRMRWDB programs have a disability, the IRT approach has been identified as a best-practice to assist participants as they prepare for and transition into employment. Tools such as the *Career & Services Plan* and the *Collaborative Funding Agreement (CFA)*, created in the America's Promise grant, help the members of the IRT clearly understand the participant's needs and who is responsible (financially and otherwise) for supporting each specific need. The CFA is a living document, shifting as the needs of the participant change throughout his experience in the program. Other follow-up activities the FUS will engage in is to create a closed Facebook Group and will also host a "social" event or team meeting every other month for continued peer support. Follow-up activities are critical to the participant's continued success, especially conversations and support around opportunities for advanced training. B2B Engage® is an essential tool in managing follow-up and participant engagement, and custom-designed, personal text messages sent from B2B Engage® at critical milestones encourage open communication. Should participants be uncommunicative for longer than 30 days, the FUS will contact the two back-up people (family members or other support person) indicated on their *Career & Services Plan*. Participants typically do not want the back-up person, often a grandparent, to become involved, so they maintain good

communication, especially because they continue to receive the benefit (social, emotional, financial) of being involved in the program. **Transitions to postsecondary training** are natural, especially with the three local community colleges and MedCerts, which offer short-term workforce training programs. Community College workforce credentialing programs like FastForward (fastforwardva.org) directly lead to industry credentials and employment. These programs are aligned with LMI and additional career training in the career pathways. *Pathways* training providers are excellent partners and wholeheartedly welcome all students. The NRMRWDB has frequent and open communications with these training providers. Students who complete a FastForward training and earn credentials are awarded a \$1,000 stipend by the Virginia Ready Initiative (virginiaready.org). This extra incentive is a great selling point for transitions into and completion of postsecondary training and industry recognized credentials. These training providers do not discriminate against individuals who have not received a traditional high school diploma. They recognize that all people, regardless of their background or prior choices, are critical to helping businesses obtain the skilled workers they need to sustain and grow. Further, New River CC provides the Adult Education program for the NRV area. **Employment placement** strategies are provided by the Business Services Coordinator (BSC) and Career Support Systems (CCS) coaches. Working closely with the BSC, the coaches will provide job development activities as well as follow up with businesses each month to ensure that participants are meeting the expectations of the company. The NRMRWDB, including the BSC and Business Solutions Teams as well as CCS have a network of businesses and continue to add to their network. Both the BSC and CCS coaches will work with the Program & Data Coordinator to input participant data, including employment data, into B2B Engage® for effective management of participant employment outcomes.

2. **Leadership Development and Community Service.** Using the PluggedInVA IET model,

Pathways includes a Capstone project. From *A Curriculum Framework for Contextualized Instruction in Workforce Readiness* (Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center), a Capstone Project, which serves as a culminating event that encapsulates the rigor, dedication, and mastery of skills, offers participants the opportunity to (1) demonstrate knowledge and skills gained, (2) deliver a formal presentation; and (3) demonstrate professional soft skills and 21st century skills (teamwork, collaboration, problem-solving, critical thinking, and innovation). The capstone project may take any form, but it is participant-driven, assisted by instructor(s). Projects must be completed in teams where each team member has an explicit and collaborative role, and they must also address a perceived or expressed need. Project presentations are formal events with invited guests from the community. While leadership skills will be learned and practiced throughout the duration of the *Pathways* program, the Capstone Project is instrumental in carrying out **service learning**, teamwork, and leadership skills. In conjunction with the capstone project, *Pathways* offers the Growing Leaders *Habitudes for College and Career Readiness*® program, which introduces participants to leadership principles rooted in real life and build leadership habits and attitudes that everyone needs to be effective workers and community members. **Staff training** and technical assistance for the PluggedInVA model will be provided by the Virginia Adult learning Resource Center (VDOE). Growing Leaders® will provide a train-the-trainer certification for the program staff.

Industry-Recognized Credentialing

Industry-recognized credentials offered in the Construction IET of the Sector Skills Development component of *Pathways* include NCCER Core certificates, HBI Certificates, OSHA 10 for Construction, and First Aid and CPR certificate. These credentials directly align with the NCCER Core: Introductory Craft Skills training. **Curriculum and training plan** topics, detailed in the Construction Training Plan, include Basic Safety, Introduction to Construction Math,

Introduction to Hand Tools, Introduction to Power Tools, Introduction to Construction Drawings, Basic Rigging, Basic Communication Skills, Basic Employability Skills, and Introduction to Materials Handling. The Construction IET is four to six months in duration, incorporating the NCCER Core training as well as the build site, academic preparation, and leadership development. The program will be offered five days per week for six hours. The days the specific training content can be delivered is flexible, depending on the build site construction schedule. The Navigator, AE Teacher, and BSI Instructor will communicate on Friday of each week to plan the following week's IET Construction schedule and instructional content. To meet targeted performance numbers (and stay within the cohort number size to provide individual attention each participant may need), approximately four different cohorts at NRV and MR (total of eight) will be implemented. With the amount of time provided and the anticipated number of hours to complete each component, earn credentials, and decide on transition plans, the collaborative believes that the duration is an acceptable amount of time per cohort. Total length of program time will vary per participant depending on the occupational skills training selected after completion of the Construction IET and are included in the Construction Plus Training Plan. Staff for BSI, local community colleges, and MedCerts are **credentialed and qualified** to teach and certify credentialing for participants, but the NRMWRDB will do its due diligence and request credentials for all instructors for the various training components. Specific training information is gathered on the NRMWRDB's Preferred Training Provider list. Training providers that cannot deliver industry recognized credentials required by businesses will not be used in *Pathways*. The **accrediting agency** for the NCCER Core Introductory Craft Skills is the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER). The accrediting agency for training programs offered in the Technical Skills component are indicted in the Construction Plus Training Plan. The **strategy to ensure continuity of training and credential attainment** is for all training providers to provide the credentialing at

the completion of the Construction IET. Should there be staff turnover, training providers are aware of their responsibility to re-staff the position. BSI is made up of a consortium of contractors to advance construction careers in the region. The NCCER Core Introductory Craft Skills course, which is a prerequisite to all other NCCER Level 1 Craft curricula (plumbing, carpentry, electrical, welding, industrial maintenance, etc.), directly **supports and leads** to a career pathway placement in the Construction Industry. For participants who choose to transition into Technical Skills Training in the Healthcare, Manufacturing, or IT industries, the knowledge, skills, and credentials earned will provide a foundation on which they can build their lives and careers.

Partnerships with Placement into Education, Employment, and Apprenticeship

1. **Partners.** The *Pathways* program fulfills the responsibilities of a required **One Stop Partner Program**. As the local Workforce Development Board, the NRMRWDB has oversight of the region's one-stop system and seven Virginia Career Works Centers (American Job Centers). The Navigators will inform and update regional partners during their quarterly meetings, and recruitment events will also occur at all centers. The Business Services Coordinator (BSC) will inform and update the four Business Solutions Teams. One Navigator is housed in the Virginia Career Works Bristol center and the BSC is located in the Virginia Career Works Wytheville Center, which is the region's comprehensive center. Pathways **connects with local programs** through the development of Integrated Resource Teams (IRT). The NRMRWDB is striving to strengthen relationships with key partners and stakeholders with an on-going, collaborative approach for recruiting, referring, and providing holistic services. Partners included in the Active Resource Coordination and Case Management of the IRT (depending on the needs of the particular youth) are: Career Supports Systems, Adult Education, Alternative Education/Schools, Apprenticeship/Pre-Apprenticeship, business partners, Community/Faith Organizations, Career & Technical Education (secondary/post-secondary), Job Corps,

Juvenile/Adult Justice Organizations, TANF, Vocational Rehabilitation, and various other funding sources for Training and Supportive Services that might be available at any given time.

Co-enrolling participants in WIOA services will be natural as the NRMWDB is a subrecipient of WIOA Title 1 programs. All Youthbuild applicants will be referred to the appropriate Title 1 program operator for review of eligibility for co-enrollment in the appropriate Title 1 program. In addition, the Title 1 program operators will make appropriate referrals to *Pathways* from their applicant and participant pools. (See People, Inc. and Goodwill Letters of Commitment). **Connecting with postsecondary institutions** occurs regularly. The workforce system navigators are well versed in seeking additional funding to support all forms of postsecondary training and education, recognizing that no one funding source can meet all the needs of participants. Relationships with the region's postsecondary education providers are well established through other programs the NRMWDB is currently operating.

2. Partnership Engagement Strategies. Partners in the collaborative are critical to helping **implement and operate** the program. Partners were engaged through meetings, phone calls, and emails to plan, discuss and refine the *Pathways* model. All who have joined the collaborative believe in the model and are enthusiastic to have the program offered in the NRMW Workforce Development Area. It will take all partners in the collaborative to successfully implement and operate the program because each partner plays an important role. Adult Education will provide critical academic training to help participants advance their basic and personal effectiveness skills, and, as needed, earn a secondary credential. The Virginia Department of Education will provide the much needed technical assistance to help the region develop its capacity in providing effective Integrated Education and Training programs. K12 School Systems have agreed to provide dropout referrals and collaboration for students in vocational training with barriers to employment Goodwill Industries of the Valleys and People, Inc., the NRMWDB's WIOA

program operators, are essential for cross-referrals, enrollment in appropriate WIOA programs, and offering additional programming that will provide supportive services to participants. People, Inc. is also the owner of the build site in MR. Habitat for Humanity is the owner of the build site in NRV. Both of these partners have graciously agreed to support *Pathways* to help address the needs of these young people as well as the housing needs in the region. Build Smart Institute, the three local community colleges, MedCerts, and ProTrain are essential partners in providing occupational skills training. MedCerts brings registered apprenticeship opportunities to the region. The net.America Corporation, a DOL Apprenticeship Intermediary, has agreed to assist with the development of additional apprenticeship opportunities. Career Support Systems has agreed to work with the NRMWDB's Business Services Coordinator and Business Solutions Teams to provide direct job development, placement, and retention services for youth. Local economic development and business partners have agreed to provide work-based learning opportunities for youth and provide valuable workforce information pertaining to hiring needs, qualifications, and expectations. Among all of the partners, with the NRMWDB in the lead (see Past Performance), the collaborative believes it will have a solid YouthBuild Construction Plus program. One area of growth for the NRMWDB, however, is the development of **apprenticeship opportunities**. Through technical assistance provided by The net.America Corporation, the NRMWDB is in the early stages of becoming a Sponsoring Agency. As a DOL Industry Intermediary, The net.America Corporation will contribute subject matter experts to help prepare a pathway to Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs). From this work, the collaborative will focus on establishing **industry and apprenticeship partners** to be involved in the design of the education and occupational skills training components, ensuring that the skills learned match business needs so youth can seamlessly transition into apprenticeship programs. (See Letter of Commitment). MedCerts brings national apprenticeship opportunities registered

through the Department of Labor Apprenticeship Office and include the following offered in *Pathways*: Medical Assistant, Phlebotomy Technician, and Pharmacy Technician. Apprenticeship fields the NRMWDB is working to develop include Peer Recovery Specialists, Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic, Cable Installer/Repairer, Carpenter, Maintenance Repair Worker, Truck Driver, Help Desk Technician, Health Support Specialists, Nurse Assistant, and Licensed Practical Nurse. As with all programs, the NRMWDB strives to **increase equity** in apprenticeship opportunities by actively pursuing opportunities for increased participation of minorities and women. This effort will continue into our Apprenticeship program. Single women with children often struggle with the demands of parenthood and training; however, the NRMWDB's programs, and those of its partners, provide many supportive services to help these women be successful. Marketing materials will show diversified participants and include, when possible, pictures and personal statements from real program participants. However, to increase efforts, the NRMWDB has reached out to colleagues at the Hampton Roads Workforce Council (Tidewater, VA) to seek discuss their "Women in Skilled Careers" program, to glean beneficial recruitment and service delivery best practices.

3. Employer Engagement Strategy. Understanding the current labor force is crucial to building and achieving the economic goals in the region. The NRMWDB has had a long standing relationship with Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development (VT OED) to provide annual, quarterly and specific **Labor Market Information** data. This information not only provides overview data about employment and wages but also breaks down this information by sectors and dives deeper into the issues of underemployment in the region's workforce. This work is an important contribution toward sectoral business services by helping to provide an understanding of individual and categorical business partner workforce needs. Annual and Quarterly Reports are shared with many workforce and economic development partners, including K12 CTE and

postsecondary education partners. Quarterly Reports (http://bit.ly/wda2_qtr_rpts) can be viewed on the NRMRWDB website (vcwnewrivermtrogers.com) as well as the region's "In-Demand" Occupation list, which informs frontline staff where to invest training funds (Region2-indemand-occupation-list-2015-2020.pdf). This LMI is complemented by information garnered from discussions with individual employers. The Business Solutions Teams routinely communicate with employers through on-site visits, business roundtables and Workforce Exchange events and gather information on recruiting and training needs. This information is shared amongst partner organizations and is critical in not only meeting business needs but also in guiding our training offerings. Serving as the regional convener for business engagement, the NRMRWDB's **outreach strategy in targeting businesses** is through its dedicated Business Services Coordinator (BSC) who provides business engagement services and facilitates coordinated activities between the region's four Business Solutions Teams (BSTs). A variety of business services are provided to all businesses, particularly those in in-demand sectors (as identified by regional economic developers). Targeted businesses will be identified by each BST as well as next steps and desired outcomes. A Listen & Deliver Strategy is required. Intel will also be gathered through an advisory board made up of "Skilled Labor" employers that will assist in providing input into appropriate curriculum and work-based learning opportunities (e.g. work experience, on-the-job training and apprenticeships). All information gathered is documented and tracked in the B2B Engage® Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The applicant, as the **Local Workforce Development Board**, has a BSC who is located in the region's Comprehensive Workforce Center and has a strong working relationship with the job developers employed by the Virginia Employment Commission and Career Support Systems. The BSTs use the LMI provided by VT OED. **Ongoing communication** occurs in person through BST meetings and Roundtable Discussions with skilled labor employers as well as using the B2B Engage® campaign tools. Also,

through Workforce Exchange events, employers are given the opportunity to talk to Workforce System Partners to discuss their business, skilled needs, and hiring practices. The NRMWRDB partners with (and holds membership in) many business organizations such as Local Chambers of Commerce, the Roanoke/Blacksburg Technology Council, the Southwest Virginia Technology Council, and Southwest Virginia Alliance for Manufacturing.

Organizational, Administrative, and Fiscal Capacity

Organizational Structure and Management of the lead applicant, the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area Consortium Board (NRMWRDACB), is made up of the thirteen Chief Local Elected Officials in the region. Its structure, mission, and relevant experience help qualify it to administer an effective Construction Plus YouthBuild program and meet expected outcomes. Through a Joint Exercise of Power, the NRMWRDACB is a regional government entity (Va. Code § 15.2-1300) that may enter into agreements for joint or cooperative exercise of any power, privilege or authority. It has authorized the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board (NRMWRDB) as the convener of the workforce system in the region. The NRMWRDB **envisions** a region where every business has access to a qualified, job-ready workforce and every citizen in the region has the skills needed to secure sustainable, meaningful employment, competitive wages, and career advancement through an integrated workforce support infrastructure. The NRMWRDB's **mission** is to support the region's economy through a collaborative approach to meeting needs of businesses and jobseekers that is flexible and adaptable to the changing economic ecosystem, and it holds itself accountable to all stakeholders in the region. An Executive Director reports directly to both boards and provides oversight of discretionary grants. The NRMWRDB has a Deputy Director who serves as project manager for grant programs; a Grants Finance Coordinator who ensures integrity of funds; a Data and Program Coordinator who ensures reliable data for reporting; two Workforce System Navigators who lead field

operations and the Integrated Resource Teams as well as provide direct services to participants; and a Business Services Coordinator who coordinates the Business Solutions Teams and directly engages with businesses to meet their needs for sustainability and growth. These staff serve as an internal Management Team and play an essential role in implementing and aligning the workforce programs in the region. The NRMRWDB has a region-wide Memorandum of Understanding with workforce system partners to achieve the directive under WIOA to “help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in a global economy.” To help fulfil this directive, the NRMRWDB has a three-year strategic plan that prioritizes offering Integrated Education and Training Programs to help individuals with barriers increase their employability skills and obtain employment. Workforce system partners help the region achieve the WIOA goal of creating a more strongly aligned workforce development system that helps guide individuals on a path into family-sustaining careers. **Relevant experience** includes successfully managing and administering WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services for the past 20 years. (See Past Performance for Youth). **Previous experience** implementing projects of similar design and magnitude includes a \$6,000,000 America’s Promise grant awarded by the U.S. DOL in 2017. All performance outcomes in this project were exceeded, and the NRMRWDCB was identified for a DOL Best Practices review and an evaluation. Lasting effects from projects have heightened the NRMRWDB’s ability to serve, partner, and advance the region. Efficiencies have been gained by integrating best practices into operations and include the development of sustained regional partnerships; successful business outreach; enhanced participant service delivery; participant eligibility, suitability, intake, and data management related to performance outcome tracking, benchmarking and reconciliation; a powerful Customer Relationship Management (CRM), B2B Engage®, for both businesses and jobseekers; and use of a project management tool, ProjectHub®,

for effective staff and partner communications and transparency. Both tools assist the Management Team in efficiently **monitoring, tracking, and managing grant performance**. B2B Engage® not only includes PIRL data but also manages participants from prescreening to Follow-up. Further, it allows staff to manage financial resources invested in participants directly from grant funds and indirectly by leverage and match dollars. Specialized reports from the system enable participant outcomes to be tracked in minute detail. Each month, the NRMWDB provides to stakeholders reports that depict deliverables achieved against program goals. **Fiscal and Administrative Controls** are managed by the Deputy Director who uses a custom-designed system within ProjectHub® to complete fiscal tasks and track grants. Expenditures are managed by the Grants Finance Coordinator then submitted to the New River Valley Regional Commission, the NRMWDB's Fiscal Agent, who handles all accounting, financial, grant reporting, and payroll duties. Financial procedures are in compliance with all Generally Accepted Accounting Procedures (GAAP), Office of Management and Budget (OMB) policies, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR), and any other federal or state regulatory requirements. Technical assistance, monitoring, corrective action plans, reductions in funding, and contract terminations are a part of our contract agreements. The NRMWDB has policies that comply with Part 200 of Uniform Guidance, and it is in good standing with the U.S. DOL and the Commonwealth of Virginia. The **Staffing Plan** during the **four-month start-up and twenty-four month program period** includes all staff depicted above who will be shared with a similar program funded by an Appalachian Regional Commission POWER grant. ProjectHub® and B2B Engage® are used to manage and track staff time to ensure there are sufficient resources for the effort. For the **twelve-month follow-up period**, however, only the field staff will continue their same level of effort. Due to anticipated decreased workloads, the remaining staff will decrease to .25 FTE. The NRMWDB will hire a (1 FTE) Follow-up Specialist (FUS) who will provide

support to the two Navigators as well as provide monthly follow-up on all participants from active participation until twelve months post-exit. The FUS will adhere to the expectations of the YouthBuild project by actively connecting participants to services to ensure life stability and job retention (and advancement, as applicable). The board's **strategy in hiring this position**, as with all other staff positions, is to work with the Virginia Workforce Center (American Job Center) in securing referrals and a good position match. **Staff turnover** can occur toward the latter end of grant-funded programs. In that event, staff continue working without interruption until the staff person can be replaced. They are able to continue working due to the team-based approach the NRMRWDB uses where all staff are cross-trained. Further, much effort is placed on sustainability very early in a grant's implementation. The NRMRWDB makes an intentional effort for staff to believe in what they do, feel satisfied with their job, supported in their work, and reasonably confident that their jobs will be sustained. They are directly involved—and have an active voice in—the pursuit of additional grant-funded programs to ensure they work within their capacity to fulfill grant obligations. Because of this team environment, the NRMRWDB sees very little staff turnover and feels confident in its ability to satisfactorily achieve performance outcomes, ultimately providing opportunities for youth to obtain education and employment skills in local in-demand jobs to achieve economic self-sufficiency.