



Santa Fe Community
College
6401 Richards Avenue

Bill McCamley
Cabinet Secretary
NM Department of Workforce Solutions
401 Broadway NE
Albuquerque, NM 87102

May 6, 2020

RE: NMDWS/NMICC/NMACC Request for Collaborative Application to Department of Labor for National Dislocated Worker Grant Program Option B: (Employment Recovery Dislocated Worker Grants)

During this unprecedented time of job loss and a profusion of dislocated workers, the New Mexico Independent Community Colleges (NMICC) and New Mexico Association of Community Colleges (NMACC) stand ready to assist the state of New Mexico with an immediate, agile, and creative response to COVID-19-related workforce training needs. The consortium of NMICC and NMACC proposes a joint application between these groups of higher education institutions and the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions for funds available through the U.S. Department of Labor's National Dislocated Worker Grant Program.

NMICC was formed in 2006 to support the mission of independently governed community colleges in New Mexico. Membership is also open to constitutionally-created institutions that have a significant community college mission.

NMICC is well-positioned to support the growing number of workers dislocated by the COVID-19 pandemic. New Mexico Independent Community Colleges annually serve more than 60,000 students in college credit courses. Approximately 4 in 10 New Mexico college students are enrolled in NMICC institutions. In addition to college credit courses, NMICC institutions serve thousands more through Adult Basic Education, non-credit courses, technical training courses, certificate/credential programs, and a comprehensive array of community service and economic development programs.

The New Mexico Association of Community Colleges (NMACC) comprises ten branch community colleges from around the state and serves over 20,000 credit-bearing students. NMACC provides quality higher education through the ten branch community colleges and the communities they serve and strives to create a shared teaching and learning environment fostering student development. In addition, and similar to NMICC, NMACC also provides dual credit enrollment, non-credit courses, early college studies, adult basic education, English as a secondary language, GED preparation, and

community events. The NMICC and NMACC colleges serve every corner of our large rural state and are ready to respond to the needs of our communities brought on by this COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the NMICC and NMACC colleges have proactively, aggressively, and effectively moved most face-to-face courses online and have increased the availability of online learning. Our collective programs, many of which are both online and eligible for WIOA funding, will address the needs of the many displaced workers that are anticipated in New Mexico over the next months and possible years. Leveraging our combined resources, we can and will continue to provide wrap-around services for current students and newly displaced workers who will need immediate support, such as emergency scholarship assistance, academic coaching, professional development, internships, apprenticeships, and employer partnerships.

New Mexico's unemployment rate (4.8%) was already higher than the national average (3.5%) before the coronavirus outbreak. Since March 13, the unemployment rate has risen to 5.9% and is still rising. Over 125,000 New Mexicans have filed for unemployment out of a total workforce of just over 800,000. With thousands of new unemployment claims being filed weekly, and about half of the state's current workforce at high risk for layoffs (e.g., retail, manufacturing, food service), a workforce training and opportunity push of unprecedented scale is absolutely necessary. With broad and deep workforce training capabilities, flexible and affordable academic and non-academic programs, strong connections with industry partners throughout the state, and supporting resources, NMICC and NMACC colleges are in a strong position to lead the effort to re-skill recent displaced workers for the most high-need and recession-resistant employment opportunities that currently exist and will become available over the coming months.

As a group, the colleges are prepared to quickly ramp-up the availability of online courses that fit immediate workforce needs, such as healthcare, education, professional and business services, construction, and manufacturing. The consortium colleges will also collaborate to explore competency-based education (CBE) and credit for prior learning (CPL) options for programs that provide retraining opportunities for dislocated workers. NMICC and NMACC are also willing to recognize credentials, certificates, and degrees across all collaborating colleges. New programs will also be developed in response to the immediate needs of New Mexico industry and employers, thus enabling any dislocated worker anywhere in the state to learn what they need to know to quickly re-enter the workforce and contribute to a sustainable economic recovery.

Both individually and combined, the colleges represented in the NMICC and NMACC have proven track records of simultaneously managing large-scale, multi-million-dollar, grant-funded projects.

Recent consortium project success includes a Department of Labor Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant which created the "Skill-UP Network Pathways Acceleration in Technology and Healthcare" (SUN PATH) project. In partnership with NMHED, NMDWS, and several New Mexico Healthcare Employers, this nearly \$15 million project successfully expanded and improved healthcare career pathways for NM students, aligned workforce training curriculum with employer needs, increased the number of degrees, certificates, and industry-recognized credentials earned by participating students, and helped to improve employment outcomes in healthcare fields. The SUN PATH project development, execution, lessons learned, and resulting successes will serve as a model for partnership, communication, and collaboration among the NMICC and NMACC colleges.

During this unprecedented time of economic distress, increased uncertainty, and severe job losses, NMDWS support is critical. Because the current WIOA formula funding allocation is insufficient to serve the increasing number of displaced workers in New Mexico, the funding available through the National Dislocated Worker Grant Program can provide vital funding during this period of economic distress. The consortium of NMICC and NMACC is committed to working with NMDWS to find mutually agreed-upon solutions to assist New Mexicans in obtaining the high-quality training assistance they need to help create and be successful in the new economy.

We look forward to discussing next steps for collaborating on a proposal to the Department of Labor for Displaced Worker Grant funding.

Sincerely,



Katherine L. Ulibarri
Executive Director, New Mexico Independent Community Colleges

Ty Trujillo
Executive Director, New Mexico Association of Community Colleges