

The Birmingham Region Health Partnership

Section 1: Project Description and Overview

Section 1a: Executive Summary

The Birmingham region has the largest number of healthcare providers per capita in the country and employs 80,000 workers at the highest wage level in the region. The region is heavily reliant on the healthcare sector as an economic driver, and an acute lack of qualified healthcare workers both nationally and regionally poses a substantial risk to the economic future of employers, jobseekers, and the region as a whole.

The Mayor of Birmingham, the County Commissioner of Jefferson County, and CEOs from the five largest regional healthcare employers recognize the importance of solving this problem for both the businesses and residents of the region. These organizations have come together to create the **Birmingham Region Health Partnership (BRHP)**, which is intentionally designed to place historically excluded jobseekers into high-demand healthcare roles. This partnership includes healthcare and digital health employers, workforce training providers, and community-based organizations in greater Birmingham that have committed to strengthening pathways to quality jobs for marginalized Birmingham region residents.

Birmingham region healthcare employers have voiced a near-universal concern for the lack of available healthcare and digital health workers. At the same time, 39 percent of the region's population is not participating in the labor force – limited by education, access to transportation and childcare, involvement with the justice system, and systemic racism. The 1,000 workers trained through this proposal are just the first step toward establishing a long-term partnership that matches larger numbers of skilled workers with the employers who require their skills to succeed.

Section 1b: Backbone Organization and Advisory Council

The City of Birmingham (the City) will serve as the Lead Applicant and Backbone Organization for the Birmingham region. While the City will ultimately be responsible for the success of this proposal, it also recognizes the need for deep employer engagement and ability to sustain this work beyond the current administration. Mayor Randall L. Woodfin and CEO leadership from the five largest healthcare employers in the region will compose the Health Sector Leadership Council (HSLC), which will serve as a formal advisory council to the BRHP¹. The HSLC will also include executive leadership from regional municipalities, training providers, and organizations that represent employers and jobseekers. This public-private partnership will establish itself as the convening and organizing body for healthcare and digital health workforce development strategy across the greater Birmingham region. The initial HSLC includes:

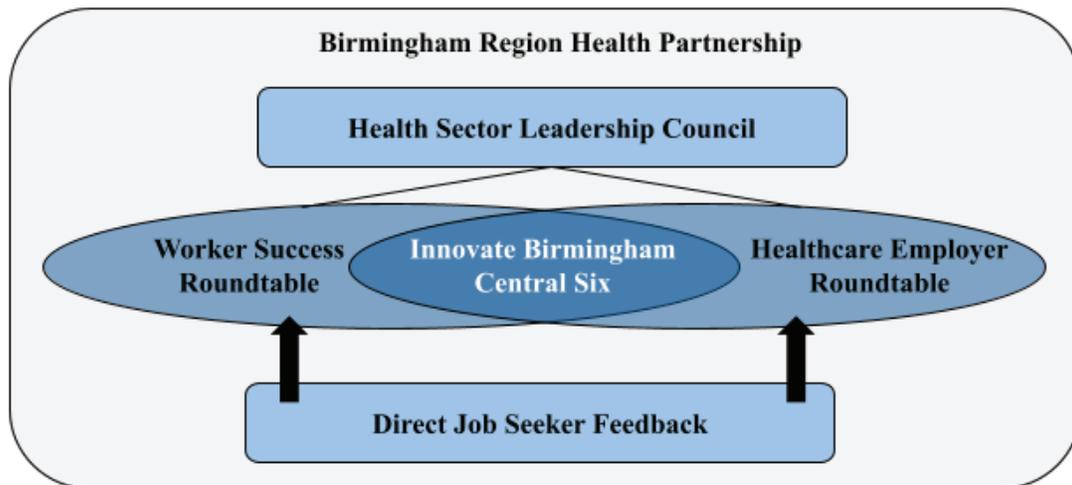
- University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) - Dr. Ray Watts, President*
- Ascension St. Vincent's - Jason Alexander, SVP, Market CEO*
- Children's of Alabama - Thomas G. Shufflebarger, President and CEO*
- Encompass Health - Mark Tarr, CEO*
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama - Tim Vines, CEO*
- Alabama Hospital Association - Dr. Donald E. Williamson, President and CEO*
- Birmingham Business Alliance - Mark Tarr, Board Chair*

¹ See Letters of Support in Attachments D and E for commitments to serve on the HSLC. Formal MOUs are in process and will govern the operation of this council.

- Prosper Birmingham - Mark Crosswhite, Board Chair
- City of Birmingham - Mayor Randall L. Woodfin
- Jefferson County - Economic Development Chair
- Central Six AlabamaWorks! - Stacia Gaines, Board Chair
- Innovate Birmingham - Martha Underwood, President of the Board of Directors

**Employer or employer-representing organization*

In order to distribute grant resources efficiently, the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPC), which leads the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), will serve as fiscal agent and provide reporting support. The City will also direct grant funds and activities in close consultation with the HSLC. Innovate Birmingham (Innovate) will provide additional operational capacity for the City, building upon their current performance of the same activities in the technology sector (Section 2b). This structure ensures that the BRHP is buffered from municipal politics and the political cycle, and it can be sustained beyond the end of Mayor Woodfin’s term in Fall 2025. *Below is a graphic that represents the BRHP structure.*²



Backbone Organization as Lead Convener: The City is the anchor of the Birmingham region, which contributes 21 percent of the state's GDP. As the City's executive, Mayor Randall L. Woodfin wields significant convening power across the region, and he leverages his state and national platforms to build public-private partnerships that advance economic inclusion and racial justice. Recently re-elected with 64 percent of the vote, Mayor Woodfin also has a popular mandate based on a first-term track record of increased economic opportunity and neighborhood revitalization. The City works across siloed local economic development organizations to design and deliver programs that meet the needs of residents and the region.

The City will leverage its convening power and track record of incubating new public-private partnerships to establish the BRHP. Under Mayor Woodfin’s leadership, the City has launched several public-private partnerships to advance economic inclusion in the region. To ensure the longevity of these partnerships, the City and its partners have established independent 501(c)(3)

² As Lead Applicant, the City is ultimately responsible for convening the BRHP, administering grant funding, and ensuring the overall success of the BRHP.

organizations to ensure program delivery is both politically neutral and sustainable. Example past partnerships include:

<i>Partnership</i>	<i>Description</i>
<u>Birmingham Promise (2019)</u>	Provides earn-and-learn apprenticeships with employers and last-dollar scholarships to attend any Alabama two- or four-year college; employers commit to hiring graduates
<u>Bham Strong (2020)</u>	Supports small businesses, redeploys displaced workers, and rebuilds the community in the wake of the early economic shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic; 90 businesses and 1,100 workers supported
<u>Prosper Birmingham (2021)</u>	Created to drive job creation, job preparation, and job access in Birmingham and Jefferson County; operates four initiatives: Birmingham Promise, Health Tech Industry Cluster, Black-Owned Business Acceleration, and Business Advisory Services

Equity Focus: Birmingham is the fourth Blackest city in the country, where around 25 percent of residents live in poverty. The City’s top priority is advancing economic opportunities for minority residents and entrepreneurs within the city and the region. The City has taken a leadership role in this grant specifically to ensure that the regional healthcare and digital health economy grows through the employment of jobseekers with historical barriers to the workforce.

The Building Opportunities for Lasting Development (BOLD) grant program is a strong example of how the City accelerates creative, evidence-based approaches to advancing economic resilience and mobility for its residents. Now in its fourth year, BOLD funds projects that:

- Identify and deliver resources for small business owners to grow
- Address barriers for women-, minority-, and disadvantaged business enterprises
- Use data-driven approaches to identify and assist companies with inclusive growth
- Close the gap between the skills employers need and the skills trainers produce
- Create access to education, training, or employment opportunities through innovations in transportation, healthy food access, childcare, and the elimination of other critical barriers

Fundraising Plan and Track Record of Success: The City has an extensive track record of securing and distributing federal, state, and private grant funds. As of this writing, the City’s Grants Division oversees over 50 federal, state, and private grants totaling over \$190 million, not including ARPA State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF). The City is currently distributing ARPA Emergency Rental Assistance I & II funds from the U.S. Department of Treasury, with nearly \$9 million distributed since April 2021. Beyond grant sources, public-private partnerships are central to how the City advances its agenda, especially in neighborhood revitalization and economic advancement. Examples:

- *National Community Reinvestment Coalition* - GROWTH Fund has committed \$25 million to developing affordable housing across the city

- *Birmingham Promise* - \$10M up-front from the City; secured matches from Vulcan Value Partners (\$5M), Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama (\$1M), Protective Life Co. (\$1M), Alabama Power Company (\$2M) and Bloomberg Philanthropies (\$2M)

Staffing Plan Outline: The City will leverage two existing positions and one new position to serve as the Backbone Organization:

- *Sarah McMillan* - Manager of Talent and Workforce Development (25% FTE)
- *Amelia Muller* - Civic Design Principal (5% FTE)
- *To be hired* - Workforce Development Project Manager (100% FTE)
- Partner organizations Central Six AlabamaWorks! (Central Six) and Innovate will also leverage and/or hire additional staff to support each organization’s critical role in the operation of the BRHP (see budget for staffing details).

Section 2: Partner Roles and Responsibilities

Section 2a: Employer Leadership and Commitments

Employer Leadership: Employers have committed to lead the BRHP in two ways:

- 1) The Health Sector Leadership Council:** This council, described above, was formed to provide employers with an oversight and advisory role in the BRHP. Membership is composed of regional employers, and the council is charged with holding the BRHP accountable for the placement of targeted jobseekers in high-demand roles.
- 2) The Healthcare Employer Roundtable:** This is one of two roundtables that form the working structure of the partnership. Central Six and UAB currently convene Chief Human Resource Officers from regional healthcare employers to understand their retention and hiring challenges. This convening will be reconstituted as the Healthcare Employer Roundtable under the BRHP to identify system-wide employer skill needs and co-design solutions to meet these needs, with the Workforce Success Roundtable (Section 2b). Staffed by Innovate and Central Six, these two Roundtables will meet at defined points throughout the year to intentionally bring together employer, provider, and jobseeker perspectives as they create/revise training and support services for jobseekers.

Currently, the Healthcare Employer Roundtable represents the following employers:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. UAB Health System* ³ | 6. Encompass Health* | 12. Alabama Hospital Association* |
| 2. Ascension St. Vincent's* | 7. Pack Health | 13. American Family Care |
| 3. Grandview | 8. Cooper Green | 14. Urgent Care for Children |
| 4. Brookwood Baptist | 9. Shelby Baptist | 15. Med West |
| 5. Children’s of Alabama* | 10. BlueCross BlueShield of Alabama* | |
| | 11. Viva | |

Through the Healthcare Employer Roundtable, the following job roles have already been prioritized for recruiting, training, and retention:

- *Patient Care:* Certified Medical Assistant, Licensed Practical Nurse, Registered Nurse
- *Science and Research:* Clinical Research Coordinator, Research Program Manager
- *Health Technology:* Data Analyst, Diagnostic/Therapeutic Technologist⁴

³ *Largest regional healthcare employers that will also be represented on the Leadership Council

⁴ See Attachment C for documented employer needs from this Roundtable.

The Healthcare Employer Roundtable is developing a two-fold strategy, focusing on both (1) recruitment into healthcare careers through entry level programs like the Health Equity Adviser program (Section 2b) and (2) career mobility programs designed to funnel skilled, entry-level employees to advanced roles in their career pathway. This strategy will also create a direct link between jobseekers and HR directors. Innovate and Central Six will recruit additional employers to the Roundtable, including mid-size and small employers, to ensure the BRHP is meeting a broad range of needs.

Employer Commitments: The Healthcare Employer Roundtable members commit to identifying workforce pipeline pain points, helping to craft training and support solutions, and hiring directly from the programs supported by the BRHP. The UAB/Ascension St. Vincent’s Alliance alone accounts for the majority of healthcare workers in the region; **these organizations have the current demand to hire all of the jobseekers proposed through Good Jobs Challenge training programs, and they have committed to hire jobseekers directly from these programs.** During the Design phase of this grant, UAB/Ascension St. Vincent’s Alliance, as well as other employers who have committed to hiring, will outline their specific numeric commitments to each program. As a result, employers of all sizes will have access to jobseeker pipelines, and UAB has committed to be a signature hiring partner given the scope and scale of current workforce shortages.⁵ Even with additional resources, the BRHP anticipates that the projected 1,000 skilled healthcare job placements will not be enough to satisfy the overall hiring commitments from regional healthcare employers.

In short, when jobseekers are trained and supported through the hiring process, employers will hire them. Because of this, employers have made commitments to co-design training programs and hire the jobseekers that complete these programs. Examples include:

- Southern Research expects to hire 125 research scientists, medical lab technicians, and data scientists over the next 5 years.
- St. Vincent’s is currently collaborating with Jefferson State Community College, the Women’s Foundation of Alabama (WFA), and Childcare Resources to provide tuition, childcare, and transportation for women completing a fast-track Patient Care Technician training program.
- UAB contributes financial support to Birmingham Promise healthcare students, hiring these graduates directly upon completion of their programs.

Employers currently committed to BRHP⁶:

<i>UAB Health System</i>	<i>Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama</i>	<i>Viva Health</i>
<i>Ascension St. Vincent’s</i>	<i>Cooper Green Mercy Health Services</i>	<i>Southern Research</i>
<i>Children’s of Alabama</i>	<i>Grandview Medical Center</i>	<i>American Family Care</i>
<i>Encompass Health</i>	<i>Medical West Hospital Authority</i>	<i>Brookwood Baptist</i>

⁵ See letter of support in Attachment D outlining this commitment.

⁶ Final hiring commitment numbers to be determined in the Program Design phase

Finally, employers recognize the need to contribute financially to the on-going success of the workforce system. Exact contribution structures will be determined, but employers will actually lead the formation of the financial sustainability plan (Section 5b).

Section 2b: Other Stakeholders Roles

Designing Training & Support: The BRHP will also convene a Workforce Success Roundtable to understand the needs and interests of jobseekers and incumbent workers. This committee will include curriculum delivery partners and training providers, community organizations serving marginalized workers and jobseekers, and workers participating in existing and new pathways to be identified through the grant. Membership includes:

1. Bevill State Community College
2. Jefferson State Community College
3. Lawson State Community College (HBCU)
4. Women’s Foundation of Alabama^{7*}
5. STRIVE*
6. Childcare Resources
7. Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers
8. Dannon Project
9. Community Care Development Network
10. East Lake Initiative
11. City of Birmingham
12. Innovate Birmingham*
13. Central Six AlabamaWorks!*

The City will work with these partners to recruit additional workforce-serving organizations and worker representation. As stated above, Innovate and Central Six will be responsible for convening co-design sessions between the Workforce Success Roundtable and Healthcare Workforce Roundtable to ensure that programs are co-design to intentionally meet the needs of employers.

Proposed Training Opportunities: These Roundtables will strengthen existing training options while introducing alternative pathways for healthcare and digital health workforce development. Training will result in workers obtaining valuable credentials, real-time job experience, and job-placement in high-demand roles. Training pathways and supportive services are always subject to changing employer need; the following structures are initially proposed and endorsed by employers, though they will require addition design by employers and training providers during the Program Design phase of the grant:

1. *“A to Z” Career Support and Occupational Skills Training* – Offered through STRIVE and partnerships between the WFA and community colleges, this option provides job readiness training, student success coaching, and occupational skills training customized to employer demand.
2. *Community and Digital Health Training* – Offered in partnership with Prosper Birmingham (Prosper), this option builds new training pathways for community health and digital health workers to support these in-demand roles in the Birmingham region.
3. *Incumbent Worker Upskilling* – Offered by Innovate, this provides career advancement support to incumbent workers at local healthcare employers, helping them identify upskilling opportunities to attain better jobs and higher wages.

⁷ *Would receive direct funding through the GJC

4. *UAB “Last Mile” Support* – Employer-driven by UAB, the BRHP will enhance the on-campus support for Birmingham Promise students enrolled in healthcare and digital health programs to increase student retention and successful healthcare job placements.
5. *Digital Skill Building & Custom Digital Health Certificates* – Working with an online training provider,⁸ the BRHP will grow the funnel of job-ready workers through entry level online certifications in digital skills such as data analysis, data science, and IT support. Healthcare and digital health pathways will also be custom-designed by employers to meet existing and emerging skills demands.

These programs were selected and designed to be both (1) flexible in response to dynamic employer needs and (2) accessible to jobseekers who require different levels of support. Taken together, these training provider and employer co-designed programs are projected to result in the training of 1,200 jobseekers and successful job placements of 1,000 jobseekers.

Section 3: Regional Description

The BRHP will serve the seven-county Birmingham region, home to over 1.1 million residents and 560,000-plus workforce participants (see Attachment A for a project area map). Centrally located in the Southeast United States, the Birmingham region is the largest population center in Alabama, representing one out of three dollars generated and one out of four jobs within the state. The proposed investments are focused within the region’s core – the City of Birmingham and Jefferson County – given the scope of training providers, employers, and underserved jobseekers in these geographies. However, the regional partnership will also serve residents of Shelby, St. Clair, Bibb, Blount, Chilton, and Walker Counties, recognizing both job seeker needs and commuting patterns to employment within the region.

The seven-county Birmingham metro is also home to 3,500 healthcare employers with over 80,000 workers, representing the fastest growing industry cluster with the highest wage level in the region. Birmingham’s economy is heavily reliant on healthcare and life sciences, with UAB performing over \$700M in funded research per year, operating the country’s third largest public hospital, and employing 23,000 employees in the UAB Health System as the state’s largest single employer. Additional leading healthcare employers include Children’s Hospital of Alabama, Ascension St. Vincent’s Health System, and Brookwood Medical Center. Other healthcare adjacent sectors, like biotech and health technology, are growing rapidly alongside the healthcare sector. This has created demand for talent in fields like digital health, health analytics, bench science, and patient support roles.

While there are many assets in the system, there are still too few qualified jobseekers for the growing number of open jobs. Birmingham ranks in the bottom quartile for labor participation rate among the nation’s top 100 metros, with only 61 percent of the population participating in the labor force.⁹ Deep inequities persist within the region’s labor market, undermining job growth and excluding specific populations from the workforce. White men without a four-year degree are nearly as likely to hold a good job as Black women with a four-year degree.¹⁰ The

⁸ Anticipated partnership with Coursera as sole source provider.

⁹ [JobsEQ](#), based on American Community Survey 2015-2019.

¹⁰ Parilla, Joseph, Ryan Donahue, Sifan Liu, “Birmingham’s Tipping Point: Achieving inclusive prosperity in the post-pandemic economy,” *Brookings Institution* (June 2021).

median household income for those with a female head is \$42,378 compared to \$62,582 for households headed by men (48% difference). In addition, Black workers in the region are three times more likely to be unemployed than their white counterparts (2.5% versus 0.8%).¹¹

The City is deeply motivated by these disparities, given that 70 percent of its residents are Black, 25 percent of its residents live in poverty, and nearly 60 percent of households with children are helmed by single women. Similar pockets of deep need also exist within nearby cities like Bessemer and Fairfield in Jefferson County. The BRHP is specifically designed to recruit populations that are most impacted by these disparities, such as low-income single women of color, as described in Section 4e.

The region has struggled to systemically tackle barriers for jobseekers and get jobseekers connected to jobs. The situation is most dire in the healthcare sector given its size, growth, and significant role during the pandemic. Four of the roles proposed in this grant – Certified Medical Assistant, Registered Nurse, Health Systems Database Analyst, and Pharmacy Technician – had over 12,000 unique job vacancy postings from 2017-2021. Letters of commitment to the BRHP from employers describe thousands of current vacancies in healthcare roles as well; these anecdotal numbers represent only a portion of the overall need. To address this shortage, employers and training providers will need to co-create pathways to viable employment, which will require more investments in skills training and system coordination.

The Birmingham region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) provides a blueprint for the region to tackle these challenges. The Partnership aligns with the CEDS in both industry focus and workforce development strategy by:

- Promoting public-private partnerships
- Supporting the Central Six workforce development council and enhancing interagency collaboration for the creation of dynamic solutions
- Filling resource gaps for jobseekers through improved marketing and communication
- Maximizing resources by combining projects and creating partnerships
- Developing a qualified workforce for business and industry needs through partnerships

Section 4: Impacts of the Regional Workforce Training System

Section 4a: Funding Phases

The BRHP requests funding for all three phases of the grant.

System Development: The Birmingham region is well-positioned to develop a new healthcare workforce partnership, which will build on and address four strengths and opportunities:

- 1) **Quality Social Programs:** The Birmingham region has strong and individually successful healthcare training programs for jobseekers.
- 2) **Committed CEO-level Engagement:** The leaders of the major employers are committed to developing a unified healthcare talent pipeline. This system will provide a mechanism by which these organizations can shape workforce pathways.
- 3) **Success in the Tech Industry:** Partners have previously developed a tech sector partnership and have “muscle memory” around how to use a sectoral partnership to promote economic inclusion and advance industry growth.

¹¹ Analysis of public job data through Emsi software

- 4) **Disconnected Employers and Training Providers:** There are current inefficiencies in the market. Individual training providers seek input from individual healthcare employers, which leads to misaligned training and sluggish response times.

As a result of these assets, the BRHP requests System Development resources to develop:

- 1) A committee structure and process to surface employer labor demand and training provider capacity
- 2) A roadmap to connect workers to training opportunities and career pathways within the healthcare industry
- 3) A unified data system to track training and services, job placement and retention, and wages and wage gain for each jobseeker served

Enabling Program Design and Implementation (See Section 5b for specific outcomes): The Program Design and Implementation phases will utilize the outcomes from the Development phase to deploy resources that will:

- 1) Define the specific skill needs of employers in each industry and create common language and strategies to equip jobseekers with these skills
- 2) Expand successful work-and-learn and industry credentialing programs
- 3) Co-design and launch new programs with low barriers to entry that respond to specific employer needs
- 4) Evaluate program success in meeting need and placing jobseekers into high-wage jobs
- 5) For successful programs, develop collective plans for financial sustainability

Section 4b: Recovery and Resilience

Healthcare is critical to the recovery and resilience of both our society and our economy as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the development of the industry is closely aligned with this EDA investment priority. The pandemic has highlighted the need for a steady supply of qualified workers, and the need for equipping them with the resources to upskill and advance in their careers. Healthcare has also proven to be among the most economically resilient industries; the need for healthcare is steady, year after year.

Healthcare is the fastest growing industry in the Birmingham region, and the resilience of this industry ensured a quick economic recovery from the pandemic-induced recession. The region had 546,000 jobs as of December 2021, and the economy has almost completely recovered, with only 2,000 remaining jobs lost since December 2019.¹² BRHP has chosen to focus on the healthcare sector in large part because of the assurance that good jobs will be a vital part of the Birmingham region economy for decades to come.

The proposed investments also meet three other EDA priorities as outlined below:

1. **Equity** - Equity is central to this partnership. Jobs within the healthcare and digital health sector are inclusive, quality employment opportunities with higher than average wages. Overwhelmingly, women and people of color will be the target populations served by the proposed investments of the Partnership.
2. **Workforce Development** - The workforce system proposed in this application would serve as a network of communication between employers and training providers,

¹² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

connecting regional workers to the skills and training necessary to gain quality employment. The proposed system serves a need in the community and local economy.

3. **Technology-Based Economic Development** - Through Brookings’ work with the City and Prosper, digital health was identified as a growth industry for the Birmingham region. Investments in workforce development within the digital health sector will enable more startups to spin out of UAB and launch within area incubators, like Innovation Depot.

Section 4c: Jobseeker Impact and Wage Gain

The BRHP will recruit and serve a range of individuals who are in varying states of employment and job status. The City and Innovate will leverage and expand Innovate’s existing data system to track jobseeker engagement, training, placement, and wage growth (by demographics) during the course of this grant and beyond.

The chart below shows the anticipated impact of the partnership for the duration of the grant period. It includes careers with high employer demand, projected training numbers based on training provider capacity, and the anticipated three-year impact of the partnership. Wage growth is calculated as an average Year 1 increase from a previous entry-level role in that profession. These calculations assume previous entry-level employment and, as such, are conservative estimates of wage growth for the target population (many of whom are expected to have minimum/lower-wage jobs or be currently unemployed). In addition, the partnership is designed to articulate healthcare career pathways and provide access to stackable skills and credentials within those pathways; this mobility did not factor into the future wage growth listed below.

Healthcare and Digital Health Roles	Open Positions in the Region	Jobseekers Trained	Jobseekers Placed	Wage growth: Increase above current occupation ¹³
Medical Assistant	1,916	135	108	+\$16,330(avg)
Registered Nurse	6,756	45	36	+\$35,570(avg)
Health Systems Database Analyst	2,385	30	24	+\$50,450(avg)
Pharmacy Technician	1,716	120	96	+\$16,830(avg)
Other Health Careers	7,234	685	548	+\$22,237(avg)
TOTAL	20,007	1,015	812	+\$18,056,665(total)

Calculations:

- 1) **Open Positions in the Region:** Unique job postings in the MSA from 2017-2021
- 2) **Jobseekers Trained:** Projections based on newly designed and/or added capacity of workforce training programs
- 3) **Jobseekers Placed:** Based on an 80% placement rate, consistent with past program placement rates

¹³ Data from onetonline.com for job code wages in Birmingham, AL.

Training cost per worker: At a high-level calculation, the total grant proposal of \$10,892,140 to produce 812 workers would equate to a total cost of ~\$13K per worker placed in a high-quality job (~\$21K if including leveraged funding). Factoring out fixed/start-up costs of ~\$2M, the ongoing per-worker cost of the partnership is estimated at \$11K per worker placed.

Section 4d: Examples of Similar Past Success

This proposal builds on existing relationships and expertise to drive inclusive economic growth in healthcare and digital health in the Birmingham region. Organizations that are currently part of the Partnership have all developed and led previously successful initiatives in equity-focused workforce development. Three of these examples are below:

- 1) **Innovate Birmingham** was established in 2017 through a \$6M America's Promise Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to help fill the growing tech talent gap in Central Alabama. It achieves its mission in two primary ways: (1) by serving as the tech ecosystem quarterback, connecting talent supply and talent demand pipelines and (2) by training under- and unemployed residents for high demand technology careers. Innovate has a strong track record of both ecosystem support and individual training:
 - Created an effective mechanism for connecting over 200 tech employers to education service providers and workers
 - Secured certification for the state's first registered IT apprenticeship
 - 70% of participants have been placed in tech jobs
 - \$20,000 average annual participant wage increase
 - Provides participants with wraparound services including professional development coaching, childcare, and transportation assistance
- 2) **Prosper Birmingham** was established in 2019 by leading CEOs, elected officials, university presidents, entrepreneurs, nonprofit leaders, and community change makers. This nonprofit funding collaborative works with the City to advance inclusive economic growth across four initiatives:
 - **Birmingham Promise:** A now-independent organization that focuses on scholarships, apprenticeships, and internships.
 - **Health Tech Industry Cluster:** A new initiative to promote health technology solutions through investments in entrepreneurship, talent, and community.
 - **Black-Owned Business Acceleration:** A hands-on development program that will connect Black entrepreneurs with the coaching, capital, and connections they need to build and grow their businesses.
 - **Business Advisory Services:** An intensive, customized business advisory service that enhances technology adoption, productivity, innovation, and job creation in small businesses, led by the Birmingham Business Alliance.
- 3) The **Women's Foundation of Alabama** ensures women jobseekers and their families are supported by using a two-generation approach designed to break generational cycles of poverty. Through the City's 2019-2020 BOLD grant cycle, WFA supported:
 - 40 women accessing workforce development classes and pathways
 - 28 women receiving utility and housing assistance
 - 15 women establishing relationships with financial institutions/banks
 - 17 women placed in new jobs

- 56 families using grant-funded wrap around services, including 136 children

Section 4e: Describe the Target Population

The BRHP exists to serve populations that have been historically excluded from the workforce and do not have the resources to navigate the current system on their own – especially underrepresented individuals like people of color and low-income women. BRHP is composed of partners and support organizations that have a long history of serving the target population. The WFA is committed to creating pathways to economic opportunity for all Alabama women, especially low-income women. STRIVE places special emphasis on recruiting and supporting disconnected youth, justice-involved, chronically under- and unemployed, homeless and under-housed people, the working poor, and those with histories of mental health issues and substance misuse. Innovate focuses on low-income individuals, people of color, and otherwise underserved populations. Birmingham Promise (via UAB) draws from the majority Black Birmingham City Schools. Prosper is focused on growing quality jobs for Black residents and women. Each organization is committed to the goal of serving 100% of jobseekers from the target population listed above.

Healthcare and Digital Health Jobseekers Trained	Jobseekers Placed	Target Population % ¹⁴	Target Population Placed
1,015	812	96%	780

While the below list is still not comprehensive, this grant is also expected to benefit:

- Disadvantaged communities through the entire seven-county region
- At least five non-profit and service-providing organizations¹⁵
- Healthcare and digital health employers in the Birmingham region who are in need of new talent pipelines (regional data indicates that over 3,500 will benefit)
- Communities and organizations that indirectly benefit from a comprehensive workforce system and the resulting economic development that will take place within the region

Section 5: Funding Request and Program Design and Implementation

Section 5a: Funding Request by Stage

System Development

Funding Request: \$423,000	Approximate Duration: 3 months
<p><i>Description:</i> During this phase, the City, RPC, Innovate, and Central Six will establish the overall structure and meeting cadence of the BRHP, as well as the process by which jobseeker data and outcomes will be collected. Costs include the development/expansion of this data system and staff time to organize and design the processes that need to be established before the Program Design phase.</p>	

¹⁴ Calculated based on current enrollment of training provider programs and number of jobseekers supported by training and community partners (STRIVE, WFA, Innovate)

¹⁵ See Letters of Support from community organizations in Attachment E for more details on how this system will benefit community members both directly and indirectly.

Program Design

Funding Request: \$1,780,558	Approximate Duration: 6 months
<p><i>Description:</i> The City, Central Six, and Innovate staff will lead a process to identify employer needs and map educational offerings. Training partners will co-design their programs with employers and recruit jobseekers from the target population. These costs include hiring staff with content expertise, purchasing new equipment, and setting up administrative support for new programs. The City will also execute an RFP for a comprehensive and targeted media plan to market the new partnership and programs within the partnership.</p>	

Program Implementation

Funding Request: \$8,688,558	Approximate Duration: 2 years
<p><i>Description:</i> The City’s staff will execute and oversee the media/recruitment plan and the collection of data. Innovate and Central Six staff will convene the BRHP and its committees, use resources to develop the career pathways tool, and work with incumbent workers to provide personalized upskilling opportunities and wraparound supports. WFA, STRIVE, Prosper, Innovate, Coursera, and UAB will recruit, train, and support jobseekers, in accordance with budget and capacity projections.</p>	

Section 5b: Projects and Outcomes

System Development (Approximately 3 Months)	
<i>Project Description</i>	<i>Project Outcomes (4)</i>
<p><i>Lead Partner: Innovate, with Central Six</i> Solidify the cadence and structure of the BRHP. Engage employer council, formalize an employer needs assessment process, and conduct in-depth analysis of employer “demand” and training provider “supply.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A joint goal, mission and meeting schedule for each Roundtable - signed by Roundtable members ● A documented formal process to regularly understand employers’ dynamic needs¹⁶
<p><i>Lead Partner: Innovate, with the City</i> Develop a unified data system to track training and services, job placement and retention, and wages and wage gain for each worker. All data will be tracked with demographic information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Data system developed to track: program participants, training received, supportive services, and employment outcomes ● A list of individuals/organizations to be trained on the data system

Program Design (Approximately 6 Months)	
<i>Project Description</i>	<i>Project Outcomes (9)</i>

¹⁶ Likely to use best practices from U.S. Chamber of Commerce Talent Pipeline Management

<p><i>Lead Partner: Innovate, with Central Six</i> Convene employers and training providers to map priority roles to existing training pathways and co-design new training pathways that meet employer demand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demand projections produced by all partnership employers ● Career map created to match employer demand with acceptable credentials and training pathways
<p><i>Lead Partner: Innovate</i> Design career navigation services, including career coaching tool(s), scholarships to support tuition, and wraparound supports like housing, utilities, and childcare.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ecosystem of hiring managers mapped and constituent relationship management program developed to maintain regular contact with managers ● Feature requirements and content mapped for a web-based career navigator tool
<p><i>Lead Partner: Innovate, with the City</i> Design recruitment strategies that are specific to underserved populations, including grassroots organizing/marketing campaign(s).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Preliminary marketing campaign planned, including media budget ● Outcomes defined for target population outreach
<p><i>Lead Partner: Training Providers</i> Co-design, with employers, new/expanded program offerings that are aligned with employer demand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Curriculum for each training program is endorsed by Employer Roundtable ● Employers issue specific job commitments from designed programs

<i>Program Implementation (Approximately 2 years)</i>	
<i>Project Description</i>	<i>Project Outcomes (5)</i>
<p><i>Lead Partner: Training Providers</i> Training providers, in partnership with employers, implement programs to train the target population in employer-demanded skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At least 1,200 new jobseekers complete training, with >90% from the target population
<p><i>Lead Partner: Healthcare Employer Roundtable</i> Employers, in partnership with providers, implement a hiring strategy to hire from target populations and support them through employment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At least 1,000 new jobseekers are hired; >90% from target population ● Jobseeker one year retention is >80%
<p><i>Lead Partner: Healthcare Employer Roundtable</i> Employers lead the formation of a sustainability plan that leverages placement fees and public funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A sustainability plan and fee structure that is endorsed by employers
<p><i>Lead Partner: Innovate</i> Develop and launch an online tool for expanded-reach career navigation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Over 500 jobseekers access this new tool in Year 1

Section 5c: Workforce Barriers and Sustainability

Childcare, transportation, rent, utilities, and access to healthcare and mental health services are major barriers preventing the region’s jobseekers and marginalized workers from accessing employment opportunities. Workers commuting by car can access nearly 100 times more jobs in the Birmingham region than those commuting by transportation.¹⁷ Along the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority (BJCTA) bus lines, residents frequently wait 45-60 minutes for the next bus. To increase accessibility of jobs and basic goods and services for car-less residents, the City has partnered with Via to offer an on-demand shared ride service that complements and extends public transportation for select areas of the city. The City and BJCTA are also nearing completion of a bus rapid transit line to connect neighborhoods to employment nodes, backed by a Federal Transit Administration grant and \$18 million in ARPA funding.

In addition to these mobility investments, the City is exploring new ways to support underserved working parents – especially single mothers, who lead 60 percent of families with children under 18 in Birmingham. Four out of the seven counties represented in this proposal are classified as childcare deserts according to research from the WFA.¹⁸ The City is collaborating with Childcare Resources and the WFA to develop a home-based childcare accelerator to address this issue. The City is also implementing a guaranteed income research pilot to test the impact of an income floor for residents who need additional support. The Embrace Mothers pilot will give \$375 per month for 12 months to 110 single women caring for children under 18. A California guaranteed income pilot demonstrated that recipients were twice as likely to find full-time employment.

BRHP training providers and community partners have deep experience in meeting jobseekers where they are and helping them to overcome personal barriers to the workforce and further success. WFA, STRIVE, UAB, and Innovate all have extensive track records of offering personalized support that meet a variety of needs. They were specifically recruited to join the partnership because of these track records. Employers will also play a critical role in ensuring workers’ success once they are placed in roles from training opportunities. They will also lead the formation of a sustainability plan that leverages placement fees and public funding (e.g. Medicare) to ensure the longevity of the system beyond the term of the grant.

Early and active engagement of key CEOs and board chairs will build buy-in for future funding commitments, much like the recent formation of Birmingham Promise. The City incubated Promise within City Hall, pledging \$10 million over five years to the effort. Birmingham’s corporate community was actively engaged from the beginning as host sites for Promise apprentices, committing to pay half of apprentices’ wages. Promise leveraged this funding to attract significant investments from local corporate philanthropy and national philanthropy. The BRHP views this sustainability success as a model for building long-term public-private connections that drive inclusive growth for the Birmingham region.

¹⁷ Parilla *et al* 10.

¹⁸ Women’s Fund of Greater Birmingham (now Women’s Foundation of Alabama), “Clearing the Path: Strengthening Child Care, Strengthening Alabama,” (2021), 7.