

This project narrative is what was submitted by the applicant. The final EDA-approved scope of work may differ.

ARPA Good Jobs Challenge 2022
Southwestern Oregon Workforce Investment Board (SOWIB)

Project Narrative (15-page total MAX)

A Note to the Reviewers: This application addresses the selection criteria identified in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. The table below indicates which section addresses each specific Merit Review criterion. This table is provided for reviewer convenience given that merit criteria may be addressed across multiple sections.

Table 1. Merit Review Criteria and Where it is Addressed in the Narrative	
Merit Review Criteria	Where it is Addressed
Development of Key Plans to Support Regional Workforce Training System or Sectoral Partnership	Section 1a, 2a, 2b, 4a, 4b, and 4c
Backbone Organization’s Capacity	Section 1b
Workers Served and Job Placements Expected	Sections 1a, 2a, and 2b
Employer Partnerships	Section 2a and 2b
Identification of Regional Needs	Sections 2a and 3
Regional Investment and Sustainability	Sections 2a, 2b, and 3
Feasibility	Section 4d
Equity	Section 3 and 4e

SECTION 1: Project Description and Overview

Section 1a: *Executive summary that includes project title, identifies the relevant regional workforce training system and/or sectoral partnership, and 250-word summary.*

Project Title. The project, *Driving Prosperity*, will produce 325 new licensed truck drivers in two years across six counties in southwestern Oregon.

Relevant Regional Workforce Training System and Sectoral Partnership. *Driving Prosperity* is led by the Southwestern Oregon Workforce Investment Board (SOWIB) in partnership with a strategic alliance of transportation sector partners committed to ensuring program success. Partners include regional workforce training organizations, employers, associations, and educational entities outlined further in the narrative.

Project Summary. At the beginning of the pandemic, there was much love to be found for truckdrivers. Often described as heroes in the early lockdown months of 2020, the public realized that they have always been essential. These drivers deliver face masks and hand sanitizer—not to mention the food we cook and the gas we pump. In fact, most (72 percent) goods nationwide are transported by truck (The White House, 2021). Truckdrivers were—and continue to be—on the front lines when the country needed them most.

With this recognition, the public also became aware of something experts have been warning about: a truckdriver shortage.

Before COVID-19, the impending shortage looked like a slow-rolling problem. But with the pandemic came surges in demand and supply-chain disruptions. Add an aging workforce and infrastructure problems and you have a perfect storm for the logistics problems, shipping delays, and high prices we see today.

Right now, there are more trucking jobs than qualified drivers. Trucking is a high-wage, high-demand sector with a current shortfall of 80,000 drivers nationwide (Olsen, 2021). Despite the labor demand, significant barriers impede job entry. Truckdriver training programs are expensive and do not qualify for federal financial aid.

Driving Prosperity will increase the number of licensed drivers through: outreach to nontraditional candidates such as women, veterans, and BIPOC and marginalized communities; tuition for student truckdrivers; and wraparound services to ensure licensure. Long-term goals will strengthen the sector partnership to ensure sustainability and growth in the southwestern Oregon transportation industry.

Section 1b: Description of System Lead Entity or Backbone Organization for the regional workforce training system or sectoral partnership.

System Lead Entity. The System Lead Entity for *Driving Prosperity* is the Southwestern Oregon Workforce Investment Board (SOWIB). SOWIB is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to maximize regional collaboration, effective innovation, and coordinated investment of public and private resources, and to optimize equitable access to family-sustaining employment.

SOWIB is the designated Local Workforce Development Board for Coos, Curry, and Douglas Counties, as prescribed in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Formed in 2015 as part of former Oregon Governor Kitzhaber’s overhaul of the state’s public workforce system, SOWIB is tasked with ensuring local WIOA compliance and with overseeing all workforce development activities for the region. The organization’s primary goal is to create and maintain a talent pipeline to meet the current and future workforce needs of local business.

Current programs funded through SOWIB include career exploration and paid work experience opportunities for young adults and development of strong work readiness habits among the labor force. SOWIB also pays training costs for individuals in need of upgrading skills to obtain employment at a family-sustaining wage.

SOWIB’s vision is that “A wide range of employment opportunities provide stable, family wage jobs and lifelong education and workforce training opportunities contribute to a strong and diversified economy in Coos, Curry and Douglas Counties.” In accordance with this vision, SOWIB upholds four key goals. These goals are (1) to manage the One-Stop system to optimize understandable, accessible, and effective services; (2) develop partnerships with other organizations to leverage funding and generate additional education and training opportunities that support living wage job opportunities; (3) coordinate business sector strategy development with government and private sector partners to address infrastructure and other business needs; and (4) to work with local business and economic development organizations to develop customized workforce solutions to address timely business needs. SOWIB serves a population of nearly 200,000 people in Coos, Curry, and Douglas Counties. This rural area has few incorporated towns with populations greater than 10,000. SOWIB serves residents of this region who need additional educational and training programs to boost their employability and to put an end to generational poverty endemic to the region.

While SOWIB serves Coos, Curry, and Douglas Counties, they have banded together with neighboring workforce boards to tackle the truck driver shortage for all of southwestern Oregon, including the Rogue Valley Workforce Partnership (serving Jackson and Josephine Counties, including the Medford MSA) and the Lane Workforce Partnership (serving Lane County, including the Eugene MSA).

Section 2a: Employer Leadership and Commitments

Sectoral Partnership. In 2018, SOWIB, regional industry, education, and economic groups came together using an innovative collaboration model to solve the acute need for truck drivers. Using the NextGen Sector Partnership strategy, businesses gathered with community partners to design a solution. NextGen Sector Partnership strategies are business-led initiatives intended to support growth and health of regional industries (Next Generation Sector Partnerships, 2022).

Two regional collaboratives, led by truck driving industry leaders, then formed within the six-county area served by this project: the Umpqua Valley Transportation Sector Partnership and the Rogue Transportation and Logistics Partnership. Their top identified needs were tuition assistance for nontraditional students, upgrades to trucks used to train drivers at Umpqua Community College (UCC), and an outreach campaign to attract more women, veterans, and other nontraditional students into truck driving (The Ford Family Foundation, 2020).

Using this collaborative model, these partnerships have delivered results. Through fundraising efforts, grants, and in-kind donations, the UCC truck driving program trained 73 drivers in 2019 and was able to leverage funds to purchase two Daimler/Freightliner trucks.

In fall 2021 the Lane Workforce Partnership launched its own NextGen Sector Partnership strategy working with local transportation partners such as Tyree Oil and the Oregon Trucking Associations.

The employers represented in these collaboratives have continued their partnerships with SOWIB and each local workforce board to create the foundation for *Driving Prosperity* and to ensure its success by building upon its prior successful initiatives.

Driving Prosperity will be actively managed by a project director with input and direction from all related program partners, including: sectoral partnerships, employers, and training facilities. This continuous input and guidance will ensure equitable practices in outreach, recruitment and hiring of project participants.

Number of Quality Jobs that Training Participants will Obtain with Employer Partners, Wages, and Wage Growth Information. There is no shortage of trucking jobs available in Oregon and throughout the nation right now. In fact, Indeed lists almost 7,000 current commercial trucking job listings just in Oregon. Many of these jobs include sign-on bonuses, high wages, benefits, and opportunities to progress.

The State of Oregon considers an occupation to be “high-wage” and “high-demand” as outlined by economic region in table 2. Average wages and demand for truck drivers in each specific region are also identified.¹

Table 2. Region-Specific Definitions of High-Wage and High-Demand Occupations, with Average Salary for Truck Drivers in Each Region				
Region	Regional Definition of “High Wage”	Truck Driving 2021 Median Annual Wage	Regional Definition of “High Demand”	Truck Driving Demand
Southwestern Oregon (Coos, Curry, Douglas Counties)	\$38,210	\$45,219	30+ openings, 2020-2030	92 (5.8% growth)

¹ Definitions of “high-wage” and “high-demand” are developed by the Oregon Employment Department in collaboration with the Oregon Workforce and Talent Development Board (OWTDB), Oregon Department of Education, and other partners.

Rogue Valley (Jackson and Josephine Counties)	\$39,062	\$48,755	47+ openings, 2020-2030	129 (6.8% growth)
Lane County	\$40,768	\$49,005	66+ openings, 2020-2030	192 (8.8% growth)
(Rooney & Tauer, 2021); (Tauer, 2021); (Rooney, 2021)				

Eleven employers in the transportation sector in the six-county region have committed to ensuring the success of *Driving Prosperity* in several ways. Most notably, seven employers have provided commitments to hire specific numbers of truck drivers once they are trained and have obtained licensure (outlined further in table 3). Employers also have committed to assisting SOWIB with outreach to local residents and providing ongoing input on program administration. Table 3 below demonstrates the commitments of employer partners to hire job training participants, their expected wages, and additional wage information such as benefits and incentives. When available, expected wage growth information is also included in the table.

Table 3. Employer Partners, Commitment to Hire Participants, Expected Wages, and Additional Wage Information			
Employer Partner	# to Hire	Wages	Additional Wage Information
A&M Transport	50 per year (100 total)	Avg. for entry level driver: \$54,000-\$65,000	Up to \$1,000 sign-on bonus; driver compensation package with bonuses for safety, performance, and fuel incentive, health insurance, paid vacation time, cell phone stipend, 401(k) with company match, group life insurance.
Bettendorf Trucking	20	Wage info not available	Paid vacation, profit sharing, 401(k) plan, medical and life insurance, paid holidays.
Combined Transport, Inc.	50	Wage info not available	Drivers receive up to \$4,800 sign-on bonus, per-mile pay or up to \$7,000/mo. salary, safety bonuses of \$2,000/mo., annual pay increases, health insurance, 401(k), paid time off.
Ireland Trucking, Inc.	20	\$23/hour	Incentive pay for years of service; wage increases, low-cost health insurance, 401(k) with profit sharing, paid time off, paid holidays, and more.
Professional Transportation Services, Inc.	4	\$60,000-\$65,000	Driver signing bonus, late-model equipment, 100% employer-paid health benefits, short- and long-term disability, life insurance, 401(k) with company match, and more
Siskiyou Transportation	2	\$20/hour	Driver signing bonus of \$500, health insurance benefits, HSA membership
Terrain Tamers Chip Hauling, Inc.	20	\$53,000-\$75,000+	Up to \$2,000 sign-on bonus; tenure bonus at 2 years; paid time off, paid holidays, health insurance, life insurance, 401(k) with company match.
	216	Total # of participants that partners have committed to hire	

Additional employers committed to supporting *Driving Prosperity* include Rayonier, Southport Forest Products, TEC Equipment, and Umpqua Dairy (letters of support attached).

Method for Ensuring Employment for Participants. *Driving Prosperity* project staff will connect program participants with employer human resource staff to ensure participants have the option to meet with stakeholder employers, apply for positions, and ensure timely job entry upon completion of certification and licensure. All participants will be tracked in a customized participant tracking system. To ensure that participants attain soft skills to be job-ready, *Driving Prosperity* also will provide wraparound support such as assistance with job applications, resumes, and interview preparation. Additional assistance will be available to participants through Worksource Oregon, Oregon Employment Department, Oregon Department of Health and Human Services, Veterans' Administration Offices, WIOA, and Vocational Rehabilitation.

Employer Leadership and Commitments in Place or Anticipated. Employer leadership commitments are outlined in table 3 above, including the number of project participants they will hire. Additional information on employer leadership commitments can be found in the attached letters of support. Employer partners are involved in *Driving Prosperity* at every level, from project development, program advisory capacities, program evaluation, and recruitment and hiring of program participants.

How Employers were Involved in Creation of Training Programs. A&M Transport, Ireland Trucking, and Terrain Tamers were all integrally involved in the expansion of the UCC truck driving program through the Umpqua Valley Transportation Sector Partnership, which included program development, fundraising, and advisory support to recruiting nontraditional students into the program. Rayonier, Coos Transport, and Ireland Trucking were all involved in the creation of Coast Trucking School (CTS) to add more workers to the truck driving pipeline.

How Employers will Participate in Implementation, Evaluation, and Ongoing Improvement of Training Programs. *Driving Prosperity* program staff will participate in regular ongoing regional sector partnership meetings. Program staff will gather feedback from employers, partners, program participants, and project alumni through surveys and qualitative evaluation. Program staff will use data, feedback from surveys, and evaluations to measure success and, as appropriate, make biannual program improvements based on feedback.

How Employers Will Be Active in Creation of Recruitment Requirements. The *Driving Prosperity* program staff will work together with employers as part of sector partnerships to ensure accuracy, appropriateness, and consistency in participant recruitment. In an effort to expand recruitment and attract all types of nontraditional candidates, employers favor fewer restrictions as long as candidates have earned CDL licensure and can demonstrate safety, integrity, and reliability. Recruitment and selection will be available to interested and eligible program participants on a first-come, first-serve basis. Eligibility will be determined on passage of the required physical and drug test, as well as obtaining the required CDL permit.

Strategy for Recruitment and Selection of Training Participants. One main goal of *Driving Prosperity* is to recruit and retain historically underrepresented populations to the truck driving industry. This includes not just women and BIPOC communities, but also individuals in recovery, persons with disabilities, individuals with past criminal records, persons participating in SNAP, TANF, and WIC assistance programs, veterans, and military spouses. SOWIB will achieve this by marketing, recruiting, retaining, and evaluating its DEI strategy and outcomes.

Driving Prosperity will make intentional efforts to include diverse representation in marketing materials and the website. *Driving Prosperity* will be advertised through social media, websites (SOWIB and partners), billboards and radio advertisements.

Program staff will advertise in diverse communities, partnering with culturally specific organizations to ensure community members are aware of opportunities to participate in *Driving Prosperity*. Advertisements and information will be distributed to community college veterans’ centers and career centers, Lane Community College’s Gender Equity Center, DHS offices, Worksource Oregon regional centers, and employment centers. One specialty campaign directed at recruiting women will capitalize on existing resources such as the Women In Trucking Association media kit available to aid organizations in folding gender diversity into its growth strategy. Another specialty campaign will advertise in Spanish to accommodate potential drivers for whom English is a second language.

There is often a gap between when people leave high school (age 18) and when they can legally drive truck across state lines (typically age 21), which means that those potential workers may have already found jobs and aren’t going to be wooed into trucking. SOWIB will ensure that its marketing and recruitment strategy also includes a career awareness campaign. This may include student outreach to high schools and community colleges to reach diverse student populations, possibly in career fairs and/or career-technical programs such as automotive and industrial technology. The goal is to promote truck driving as a high-wage, high-demand occupation, and to dispel myths about truck driving careers. Unlike in years past, truck driving includes highly technical equipment, automated transmissions, and collision mitigation software – all of which may make truck driving more desirable for some participants.

How Entities That Provide Worker Perspectives Will Be Included. SOWIB and the two other workforce development partners (Lane Workforce Partnership and Rogue Valley Workforce Investment Board) all have local labor union leaders on their boards who work with local employers to increase pay and benefits for workers in the community. This representation is crucial to providing sustained input from a diversity of perspectives of actual truck drivers in the field.

Additionally, the Oregon Trucking Associations (OTA) and the Associated Oregon Loggers, Inc. (AOL) are membership organizations representing and advocating for the trucking industry. OTA and AOL both have representation on advisory boards related to trucking and, in their advisory capacities, have been involved in program development, implementation, and evaluation of *Driving Prosperity*.

Section 2b: Other Stakeholders and Partnerships

Description of relevant stakeholders, including specific details on the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder. Include letters of support.

Multiple stakeholders were involved in development of this project and will continue to ensure the success of *Driving Prosperity* and its participants through participation in ongoing sector partnership meetings. Stakeholders are listed by type in table 4 below with their role and responsibility described. Letters of support are also included.

Table 4. <i>Driving Prosperity</i> Stakeholders and their Roles and Responsibilities	
Stakeholder Name	Project Role/Responsibility
Workforce Development Stakeholders	

Table 4. Driving Prosperity Stakeholders and their Roles and Responsibilities	
Stakeholder Name	Project Role/Responsibility
Southwestern Oregon Workforce Investment Board	System Lead Entity and Backbone Organization
Lane Workforce Partnership	Grant subrecipients to provide cross-regional training programs to meet trucking workforce shortages, recruitment strategies, and promotion of talent development for the transportation sector.
Rogue Valley Workforce Partnership	
Regional Sectoral Partnerships and Member Organizations	
Rogue Transportation and Logistics Partnership	Sector partnerships have gathered industry leaders to address worker shortage, identify priorities, put mechanisms in place to help pay tuition, and partner with workforce and educational entities. The partnerships provide valuable input and resources to the project's success.
Southern Willamette Valley Transportation Sector Partnership	
Umpqua Valley Transportation Sector Partnership	
Associated Oregon Loggers, Inc.	Project support and advisory capacity.
Oregon Trucking Associations	MOU with SOWIB to provide outreach to interested applicants, workforce development and training, and provide access to career experience, industry connections, and job openings.
Employer Stakeholders	
A&M Transport	CEO is a SOWIB board member and sector partnership founder. Will hire 100 participants upon licensure and provide community outreach and recruitment assistance.
Bettendorf Trucking	Will hire 20 participants upon licensure and provide outreach and recruitment assistance.
Combined Transport, Inc.	Will hire 50 participants upon licensure and provide community outreach and recruitment assistance.
Ireland Trucking	Will hire 20 participants upon licensure and provide community outreach and recruitment assistance.
Professional Transportation Services, Inc. (PTSI)	Committed to hiring 4 drivers upon licensure and assisting with community outreach and recruitment assistance.
Rayonier	Project support and advisory capacity.
Siskiyou Transportation	Committed to hiring 2 drivers upon licensure and assisting with community outreach and recruitment assistance.
Southport Forest Products, LLC	Project support and advisory capacity.
TEC Equipment, Inc.	Committed to outreach, workforce development and training, and providing access to career experience, industry connections, and job openings.
Terrain Tamers Chip Hauling, Inc.	Committed to hiring 20 drivers upon licensure and assisting with outreach and recruitment assistance.
Umpqua Dairy	Project support and advisory capacity.
Education Partners	
160 Driving Academy	Committed to accepting referrals into driving program, making referrals for eligibility, providing quality truck

Stakeholder Name	Project Role/Responsibility
	driver training, providing feedback to SOWIB on industry trends and student information when appropriate.
Coast Trucking School	Committed to accepting referrals into driving program, making referrals for eligibility, providing quality truck driver training, providing feedback to SOWIB on industry trends and student information when appropriate.
Umpqua Community College	
Rogue Community College	Committed to providing outreach to interested applicants and financial scholarships to support facilitation. Will provide workforce development and training in Commercial Truck Driving Program, and offer access to industry connections.

SECTION 3: Regional Description

Description of the project’s location and region, primary service area, and key industries.

The project area consists of a six-county region of southwestern Oregon, including Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, and Lane Counties. Timber has been the economic mainstay for generations of southwestern Oregonians. The decline of federal land logging in the 1980s and 1990s triggered a crushing blow to the economy that continues to resonate throughout the region. The Great Recession and the Covid-19 pandemic have only exacerbated these problems, furthering the economic crisis for this region’s workforce. The regional unemployment rate rose sharply as the pandemic ramped up, reaching highs of 14.8% in April 2020 (State of Oregon Employment Department, 2022). Although the unemployment rate has since shrunk to 4.8% for the region (November 2021), it is still roughly 15% higher than state and national averages (State of Oregon Employment Department, 2022).

As table 5 below suggests, southwestern Oregon struggles with low education levels, high unemployment, and low annual earnings. The region has tremendous room for improvement in many economic arenas. Southwestern Oregon’s strong need for truck drivers, paired with the profession’s high-wage status and short training time, has driven the long-range planning and extensive partnerships that have led to development of this project.

According to the Oregon Employment Department, the average annual salary of a truck driver in this six-county area is \$47,660, representing a 41% increase over average earnings in the region (Rooney & Tauer, 2021).

	Population	Education (Bachelor’s degree or >)	Unemployment rates (Nov. 2021)	Annual earnings per capita
Coos County	64,929	17.8%	5.3%	\$27,582
Curry County	23,446	24.6%	5.8%	\$30,021
Douglas County	111,201	17.3%	5.1%	\$26,478
Jackson County	223,259	27.8%	4.6%	\$30,250
Josephine County	88,090	17.5%	5.3%	\$25,167
Lane County	382,971	30.5%	4.6%	\$29,705
Six-county average	-	25.8%	4.8%	\$28,847

Table 5. Labor Market Data for Southwestern Oregon Counties				
State of Oregon	-	33.7%	4.2%	\$33,763
National (USA)	-	32.1%	4.2%	\$34,103
(U.S. Census Bureau, 2022); (State of Oregon Employment Department, 2022)				

Other key industries in each region are outlined in table 6 below. One crucial distinction of the trucking industry is that it directly intersects with every single major industry in the southwestern Oregon region and beyond. Therefore, when the trucking industry is successful, other industries can thrive. When trucker shortages occur, all are impacted.

Table 6. Major Industries for Each Region Served by <i>Driving Prosperity</i>	
Coos, Curry & Josephine Counties Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)	Restaurant and food services, general medical hospitals, and construction
Douglas County	Restaurant and food services, elementary and secondary schools, and construction
Jackson County	Healthcare, retail/manufacturing, tourism, and agriculture
Lane County	Healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, and educational services
(Deloitte, Datawheel, & MIT Media Lab, 2022)	

Include the most significant and difficult-to-meet skills needs in the region and target participants served. Truck driving skills are attained through Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) training. Even though the training is relatively short and almost always results in high-wage jobs, the difficulty lies in recruitment of students. Two major barriers challenge growth of the trucking industry and recruitment of more truck drivers as outlined below.

1) Expensive training. Although acquiring a CDL only requires a four-week training course, training costs range between \$3,000 and \$7,000. While funding is often available for certain populations to offset tuition, this funding may not account for lost wages during the training period, transportation, childcare, and living expenses. Unlike students in other postsecondary options, truck driving trainees do not qualify for federal financial aid.

Driving Prosperity aims to eliminate this barrier by providing full tuition to students accepted into the CDL training. Additional costs required to complete licensure will also be provided, such as the costs of a health physical, drug screen, third party tester fee, and more. Students also will have the ability to apply for emergency funding to assist with other cost obligations such as transportation and childcare.

2) Diversity, equity, and inclusion. To expand the truck driving workforce, the industry must be welcoming to all possible drivers. Diversifying this sector also will benefit from new perspectives, innovations, growth, and flexibility.

The truck driving workforce is, and has historically been, a male-dominated industry. Although numbers have risen slightly in the last few years, only 12.4% of women make up the truck driving workforce today (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). In addition to the general benefits of diversifying the trucking sector, a study by the American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI) has also found that women drivers are safer in most cases (Coker, 2019).

Numbers are also low for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that 17.1% of truck drivers identify as Black or African American, 3.6% Asian, and 22.6% Hispanic or Latino.

Driving Prosperity's recruitment and marketing plan, outlined in section 2a, details SOWIB's priorities for recruiting nontraditional candidates into the program and into the truck driving industry.

Address how the proposed development or strengthening of the partnership will be consistent with the regions' CEDS. This project encompasses three regional CEDS and addresses major components of each, as outlined in table 7.

Table 7. Driving Prosperity Alignment with Regional CEDS	
Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development Inc. (SOREDI) (Jackson & Josephine Counties)	One Rogue Valley CEDS (2020-2025)
<u>Strategy 3.1.</u> Strengthen partnerships between the region's public sector and private sector, including economic development organizations, workforce entities, and educational institutions, to ensure alignment of employer needs and training programs.	
<u>Strategy 3.5.</u> Build greater awareness of career opportunities in the region, especially middle skill positions, and in underserved and rural communities. This will build a resilient and adaptable workforce.	
<u>Strategy 3.5.1.</u> Support, and potentially expand, existing sector-specific workforce development initiatives, such as the Rogue Transportation & Logistics partnership.	
Coos, Curry, Douglas Business Development Corporation	CEDS 2019-2023
<u>Priority Goal #2: Transportation</u> – Continue to maintain and improve transportation infrastructure... this will help us compete for business and keep our communities safe.	
Cascades West Economic Development District (Lane County)	CEDS 2020-2025
<u>Priority Area 4: Workforce Support</u> – Support deliberate coordination between businesses, Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), and educational institutions to help identify and provide for current employer needs.	
(Drlik-Muehleck & Bruce, 2019); (TIP Strategies, Inc. , 2019); (CCD Business Development Corporation, 2018)	

SECTION 4: Impacts of the Regional Workforce Training System

Section 4a: Specify which one or more of the following components the project proposes:

Driving Prosperity is designed solely as a **Program Implementation** project to deliver workforce training and wraparound services that place workers into quality jobs through a new consortium of existing regional sectoral partnerships. Prior components have been built and completed as follows:

System Development – The regional workforce training system has long been established, built upon, and is a respected and relevant community asset.

Program Design – The regional transportation sector partnerships have arisen from regional industry and the urgent need for more truck drivers. Partnerships began their priority work in 2018 and have built upon collaborations throughout the region.

Describe the regional workforce training system that is already in place and how the proposed project will address local employers' workforce needs. The regional workforce training system

operates within the six-county region served by this project. *Driving Prosperity* will link together existing resources, focusing collectively on building up the truck driving industry worker pipeline.

The data in table 2 are clear – the regional workforce in southwestern Oregon needs more truck drivers. Needs in the truck driving industry are similar throughout the three workforce regions, with projected increases of six to nine percent in upcoming years. Because of existing barriers to entry, many potential truck drivers see training as unaffordable. Other potential workers in the region are unaware of truck driving as a viable option for a high-wage occupation.

The regional workforce training system has developed *Driving Prosperity* with employers to overcome these challenges, recruit, and retain more truck drivers.

Identify factors that contribute to the region’s workforce training strengths and challenges (workforce resources, existing and emerging industries, other regional assets).

Strengths – Historically, the region has had strong employer involvement with sector partnerships and robust interagency collaboration. These collaborative efforts have resulted in innovative programming, clear alignment of goals and priorities, and sound program administration.

Challenges – As described in Section 3, southwestern Oregon is challenged with issues of high poverty, high unemployment, low education levels, and low earnings. As a region larger than the state of Maryland, its many rural residents face geographic isolation that limits transportation and educational opportunities.

Section 4b: How the proposed project would meet EDA’s Recovery and Resilience investment priority, and any of EDA’s other investment priorities.

Driving Prosperity directly aligns with EDA’s first three investment priorities, including Recovery and Resilience, Equity, and Workforce Development.

Recovery and Resilience. A major economic risk factor facing the nation amid the pandemic is the supply chain crisis. Transportation of goods, including medical and vaccine supplies, food, gasoline, and everyday items that Americans use, are largely transported and delivered by trucks. The truck driver shortage throughout the U.S. impacts transportation delays and costs of goods, which has an overarching ripple effect on the economy overall.

Training and subsequently employing 325 truck drivers ameliorates this crisis, providing for a more resilient supply chain. On an individual participant level, this program provides a free four-week training program that results in a high-wage job with ample opportunities to retain that job and advance.

Equity. *Driving Prosperity* addresses EDA’s investment priority of advancing equity by focusing recruitment and retention efforts on traditionally underserved populations in the truck driving sector, such as women and minorities. This is expanded further in Sections 2a and 3 above.

Workforce Development. This project supports workforce education and skills training activities directly connected to the hiring and skills needed by the truck driving industry, which will result in high-wage, high-demand jobs.

Section 4c: Describe the number and type of jobs expected to be available to workers who successfully complete the training as well as the projected wages, wage growth, benefits, and/or union membership of those jobs. Discuss how you will leverage resources to support

efforts and implementation. Include data that validate estimates provided, or describe how you will collect data to validate estimates provided.

Driving Prosperity will provide paid commercial truck driver training and licensure for 325 individuals in southwestern Oregon. Job opportunities for graduates include over-the-road drivers, local delivery drivers, timber transport, sanitation, and more. Nearly 7,000 commercial trucking jobs are currently listed in Oregon, with roughly 2,000 of those in southwestern Oregon according to Indeed. Seven partners have committed to hiring 216 training graduates (66 percent of all training graduates). The strong need for truck drivers paired with the existing commitments to hire drivers is expected to result in at least 90% of program participants who receive their licensure attaining employment in the truck driving industry within six months of program completion.

Entry level wages vary slightly by company and driver type. Wages, wage information, and benefits for entry drivers at each of the employer partners are outlined further in table 3. The Teamsters Labor Union 962 represents freight workers in southwestern Oregon, including truck drivers. Average wages of truck drivers in this region are \$48,072, 21% higher than the average high wage occupation for the region of \$39,603, further outlined in table 2.

Table 8. Data to Validate Estimate Provided	
Data Set	Source of Data
Definition of “high-wage” occupations for the region	(Rooney, 2021); (Rooney & Tauer, 2021); (Tauer, 2021)
Projected occupation growth of truck drivers based on employment change plus expected replacement openings	(Rooney, 2021); (Rooney & Tauer, 2021); (Tauer, 2021)
Projected wages, wage growth, and benefits	Employer partners
Program participants, certifications, and employment (to be tracked throughout the grant) to be collected and distributed by the <i>Driving Prosperity</i> staff	SOWIB, LWP, and RWP

Section 4d: Explain why the proposed partnership or system is achievable. Do you have examples of where this or similar solutions have been implemented before? If the partnership is new, what research and groundwork have you done that leads you to believe your outcomes are achievable?

SOWIB has implemented a smaller-scale version of *Driving Prosperity* in its current service district. Since 2018, the partnership between SOWIB and Umpqua Valley Transportation Sector Partnership has raised \$464,000 to train 100 truck drivers, upgrade the aging fleet of trucks used to train at Umpqua Community College, and promote truck driving to nontraditional students such as women and minorities. This project will expand into two neighboring regions through adjacent workforce partnerships to serve the overall southwestern Oregon truck driving industry needs. The investments have been successful to date, and *Driving Prosperity* will scale up the project to meet the regional need to fill at least 325 new truck driver positions.

The need for *Driving Prosperity* has been identified in each region’s CEDS (see table 7), as well as identified by each region’s network of industry employers (see table 3). The missing link is the coordinated response to this need, which *Driving Prosperity* addresses through funding to program participants to earn their truck driving certification and through outreach to underserved communities to build up the workforce and provide high-wage opportunities.

Section 4e: Describe the target demographics of participants and specific stakeholder groups that will be impacted by the solution and explain the rationale for how participants are targeted.

Program participants will be recruited broadly throughout the six-county region. The project also will launch specific campaigns designed for underrepresented population recruitment for the trucking industry. Women make up roughly 50% of the population and overall regional workforce; however, they only account for 12.4% of truck drivers nationwide. Program staff and partners will actively seek to recruit women into this program.

While southwestern Oregon largely consists of white residents, a growing population of Latinx families reside in the area. Specifically designed outreach campaigns to reach communities of color, particularly Latinx communities, will be undertaken in English and Spanish to facilitate *Driving Prosperity*'s recruitment of communities of color and other historically underrepresented populations. Each county's racial demographics are listed below.

Table 9. Racial Demographics for Each County Served by <i>Driving Prosperity</i>						
Race (%)	Coos	Curry	Douglas	Jackson	Josephine	Lane
White alone	90.4	91.8	92.6	91.8	92.9	89.0
Black or African American	0.6	0.5	0.5	1.0	0.6	1.3
American Indian or Alaska Native	3.0	2.6	2.1	1.3	1.7	1.6
Asian alone	1.3	0.8	1.1	1.6	1.1	3.2
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3
Two or More Races	4.4	4.0	3.5	3.6	3.5	4.6
Hispanic or Latino	6.8	7.4	6.1	13.5	7.7	9.3

Driving Prosperity aims to serve a wide variety of other populations described in table 10 below.

Table 10. Demographics: Other Characteristics for Counties Served by <i>Driving Prosperity</i>						
Other Characteristics	Coos	Curry	Douglas	Jackson	Josephine	Lane
Veterans, 2015-2019	7,366	2,973	12,169	18,404	8,804	27,587
Persons with a disability, under age 65, 2015-2019	16.8%	16.2%	14.4%	10.8%	14.6%	12.4%
Persons in poverty	15.4%	14.5%	13.3%	11.9%	15.8%	14.5%
Persons receiving vocational rehabilitation services, 2017	272	101	452	666	416	1,898
Families receiving SNAP (% of caseloads to population)	26%	21%	25%	23%	28%	21%
Families receiving TANF benefits, December 2017	338	69	736	1,189	830	1,658

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2022); (Oregon DHS, 2018)

These specific populations, categorized by race and other characteristics, have been identified by industry partners as key communities to work with to build a new generation of truck drivers. The regional industry's existing goal is to be more inclusive and welcoming of all people, and it has begun its campaign in the Umpqua Valley by promoting more women truck drivers.

Provide an estimate of how many people, organizations, employers, and/or communities will be impacted either directly or indirectly.

The impacts of *Driving Prosperity* will have ripple effects throughout the region, state, and beyond. The project will serve 325 participants directly. Indirectly, their families will benefit from having a high-wage earner in the household. At least seven companies with truck driving operations in the region will be impacted, as they will be able to hire positions that have been challenging to fill during the worker shortage. When employers are fully staffed with enough drivers, they can meet customer needs, transport more goods, and provide needed commodities within their communities.

Section 5: Funding Request and Program Design and Implementation

Section 5a: Provide an estimated funding request for the proposed partnership or system.

SOWIB proposes a total project budget of \$3,869,180.54 over two years to implement *Driving Prosperity*. This includes a federal request of \$1,833,293.26 in year one and \$1,606,113.26 in year two. The nonfederal share of funds toward the project totals \$429,774.02, split in years one and two (\$215,437.01 and \$214,337.01, respectively).

Section 5b: Describe anticipated program implementation project. Anticipated program implementation projects should connect to the funding request under Section 5a. (See NOFO for possible ideas).

Program implementation projects include (1) The development of outreach and recruitment plans for truck drivers, including plans to reach diverse and underserved audiences; (2) workforce training costs to certify truck drivers, including tuition, fees, materials and supplies; and (3) wraparound services, including emergency funds, to ensure student success and completion.

Section 5c: Identify any anticipated barriers to worker participation and how you plan to mitigate the impacts of those barriers. Describe any wrap-around services that will be provided to workers to ensure they able to participate in employer-driven skills training programs (such as transportation, childcare, etc.) and how you will ensure the program is sustainable, including any support provided to workers after completion of the training (such as job placement support).

Two major barriers to entry into the trucking industry have been identified: (1) cost of tuition, fees, supplies, and certification, which can total \$3,000 to \$7,000; and (2) diversifying the sector to be more representative of women, communities of color, and other underrepresented communities. *Driving Prosperity* will address both barriers outlined in Sections 2a and 3.

Wraparound services for program participants will be multifaceted, with an intent to mitigate all possible barriers to entry, retention, and success. This program will pay for all students' tuition, fees, materials and supplies, and licensure costs. Students also will have the opportunity to apply for additional funding to assist with support services needed to complete the training and to become employed successfully. Applications to address individual students' needs will be assessed by the team on a case-by-case basis.

Other wraparound services include student assessments with career advisors, assistance with job attainment, including support with resumes and interview skills, job placement, and coordination with employers. Participants may also be referred to other community resources that SOWIB cannot directly assist with, such as vocational rehabilitation and veteran services.

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