

DK CAPITAL GROUP

Regional Technical Workforce Development Initiative Business Concept Plan

A privately funded framework for strengthening Oklahoma's technical workforce through existing schools, employer partnerships, and locally driven training.

CONCEPT STAGE | AUGUST 2026

Purpose and Intent

The Regional Technical Workforce Development Initiative is a DK Capital Group concept for using private capital to strengthen the technical workforce of Oklahoma communities. It would work through existing technology centers, qualifying two-year colleges, and participating employers rather than create a separate school or training organization.

The concept is broader than scholarships. It starts with a real workforce need, identifies what is preventing the existing training system from meeting that need, and funds the missing capacity. Depending on the situation, that may be equipment, instructors, laboratory space, transportation, student tools, employer-based training, upskilling for existing workers, or another practical barrier.

The initial planning area includes Pontotoc, Seminole, Hughes, Coal, Johnston, Murray, Garvin, and Pittsburg counties. The regional pilot would be used to test and refine the model before broader expansion.

How the Model Works

Element	Working Concept
Need first	Start with occupations and technical skills that local employers genuinely need.
Develop opportunities	Use a lean regional development function to identify needs, connect schools and employers, and help turn a workforce gap into a sound project for consideration.
Use what already exists	Strengthen technology centers, qualifying two-year colleges, and employer training rather than build a parallel system.
Fund the constraint	Identify what is limiting workforce production and direct private capital toward that problem.
Connect training to work	Use employer partnerships, paid work experience, apprenticeships where appropriate, and direct feedback from industry.
Measure capacity	Judge success by additional skilled workers and durable training capability, not by dollars distributed.

Local Needs and Technical Scope

Oklahoma communities do not all have the same workforce needs. One area may need more industrial maintenance, automation, transportation, or healthcare technicians; another may need agricultural equipment technicians, diesel mechanics, welders, truck drivers, utility workers, or equipment operators. The framework should be consistent, but the training priorities should follow the local economy.

Funding would be limited to identifiable technical skills or technical career pathways tied to a practical workforce need. General academic programs and vocational programs that do not meet that technical-workforce standard would be outside the initiative.

New Entrants and Existing Workers

The initiative would not be limited to first-time students. Depending on the program and applicable school and employment rules, it could serve high-school or CareerTech students, adults entering or changing careers, and people already working in a technical field who need additional skills to remain effective or move into higher-level work.

Existing-worker training may be especially valuable when the workforce shortage is not a lack of employees but a lack of current skills. Examples could include advanced diagnostics, electronics, automation, new equipment systems, manufacturer certification, or another technical capability that can be taught through short-term, evening, compressed, or employer-site training.

Program decisions should consider employer demand, industry concentration, expected retirements or expansion, available training capacity, geographic access, and the number of workers the local economy can realistically absorb.

Shared Technical Skills and Local Specialization

Many of the same technical skills are used in several industries. The initiative should build around those transferable skills first, then add industry-specific application where it is needed. This makes better use of instructors and equipment and gives students more employment options.

Core Skill Family	Examples of Application
Diesel, mechanical systems & hydraulics	Agricultural equipment, commercial trucks, construction equipment, generators, fleet vehicles, and industrial machinery.
Welding & fabrication	Agriculture, manufacturing, pipelines, structural work, trailers, heavy equipment, and industrial maintenance.
Electrical systems	Residential, commercial, agricultural, manufacturing, utility, and industrial applications.
Electronics, controls & instrumentation	Industrial automation, precision agriculture, pipelines, utilities, telecommunications, water systems, and manufacturing.
Heavy equipment & transportation	Construction, agriculture, trucking, utilities, energy, infrastructure, and material handling.
Digital technical systems	Networking, cybersecurity, diagnostics, GIS/GPS, equipment communications, and other applied technical systems.

The normal progression would be core technical training, industry-specific application, and employer-based experience. A specialty program would be added when a local industry has enough continuing need to justify separate equipment, instructors, or curriculum. Precision agriculture, irrigation controls, advanced robotics, process controls, telecommunications, and similar specialties are examples that may make sense in some communities but not others.

Tiered Training Structure

Tier 1 — Local Core Training

Frequently needed technical skills should be reasonably close to the people and employers who use them. Depending on the community, this may include welding, electrical, HVAC, diesel, CDL, industrial maintenance, automotive, basic electronics, equipment operation, technical IT, and selected technical healthcare programs.

Tier 2 — Regional Advanced Training

Advanced programs requiring expensive equipment or scarce instructors can be concentrated at selected regional centers. Examples may include advanced CNC, industrial automation, robotics, PLC systems, instrumentation, advanced diesel diagnostics, precision agriculture, commercial controls, or specialized welding. Participating schools could share these capabilities rather than duplicate them unnecessarily.

Regional sharing only works if students can realistically use the program. Transportation and scheduling should therefore be part of the design when distance would otherwise prevent participation.

Tier 3 — Highly Specialized Training

Training that is too specialized even for regional duplication could be supported through transportation, temporary lodging, intensive training blocks, certification costs, or employer release time instead of building an underused local facility.

Role of Training Institutions

Technology Centers

Technology centers would remain the primary providers of direct occupational and technical preparation, including skilled-trade instruction, industry certifications, equipment operation, apprenticeships, adult retraining, short-term credentials, employer-specific instruction, and selected advanced specialties.

Two-Year Colleges

Two-year colleges would participate where the program is centered on a defined technical capability. Examples may include engineering technology, industrial electronics, instrumentation, automation, advanced manufacturing, cybersecurity, networking, agricultural technology, precision agriculture, CAD/CAM, GIS, semiconductor technology, and selected technical healthcare fields.

They may also provide a bridge from direct technical training into higher-level technical education. A student could move from CareerTech training into employment, complete a technical associate degree, and later continue into engineering or another advanced technical bachelor's program when the occupation requires it. General associate-degree support without a technical workforce purpose would not qualify.

Regional Program Development

The initiative will also need someone looking across the region rather than waiting for schools or employers to approach the funding source. During the initial phase, that work could be handled by a

contracted technical workforce coordinator or similar development role rather than a permanent organization.

The role would be to identify workforce gaps, bring the right school and employers together, help define the training need, locate available funding and industry resources, and develop a practical proposal for consideration. The coordinator would not run the school program, select students, supervise employees, or replace the school's employer relationships.

School-Employer Partnership

The school should be the hub of the employer relationship. Participating institutions would stay in regular contact with the businesses and organizations that employ technically skilled workers and use that input to shape program capacity, curriculum, work-based learning, and specialty training.

Employer-School Feedback During Training

The relationship should continue after a student is placed with an employer. The employer and instructor should have a simple, regular way to discuss how the student is performing on the job—what the student can do well, where more instruction is needed, and whether the training is matching the skills the job actually requires. The school should also keep the employer informed about what the student has completed and what work the student is prepared to perform safely.

If a student is struggling because of a technical knowledge or skill gap, the employer should tell the instructor while there is still time to correct it. The instructor can reinforce the material or adjust the training. If several employers identify the same weakness, the school should consider whether the curriculum needs to change. Attendance, work habits, safety, and conduct should also be communicated, but kept separate from instructional gaps. This creates accountability in both directions without a burdensome reporting process.

Employer Responsibilities

An employer receiving an Earn-and-Learn incentive should provide more than a job opening. The student should be assigned meaningful work related to the training, have access to an experienced supervisor or mentor, work in an appropriate and safe environment, and receive enough instruction and feedback to develop real technical ability.

The employer should also communicate regularly with the school and participate honestly in evaluating progress. The incentive should be reduced or discontinued if the arrangement becomes primarily subsidized routine labor rather than genuine technical training.

A student should not be trapped in an unsuccessful placement. When the employer is not providing appropriate training, the work environment is unsuitable, or the match simply does not work, the school should be able to move the student to another approved employer when a reasonable alternative is available. Likewise, an employer that repeatedly fails to meet the training expectations should no longer participate in the incentive program.

Employer Question	Why It Matters
Which technical positions are difficult to fill?	Establishes whether a real shortage exists.
How many additional workers could you realistically hire?	Helps size the training investment.
What skills are applicants missing?	Identifies curriculum or equipment gaps.

Employer Question	Why It Matters
What prevents you from training inexperienced workers?	Identifies whether an employer incentive would make a difference.
Can you provide supervised work experience?	Creates a direct training-to-employment path.
What technology is changing your workforce needs?	Helps schools keep programs current.

Earn-and-Learn Employer Partnership

Students should have opportunities to begin paid technical work before completing school. The participating employer would hire the student as a paid trainee or employee, place the student on its payroll, and pay the full agreed wage directly to the student. The school-administered incentive fund could then reimburse the employer for an approved portion of that wage and/or documented training and supervision costs.

The employer would always retain a meaningful share of the wage and employment cost. The incentive is intended to share the temporary cost of developing a worker who is not yet fully productive, not provide free labor or a permanent payroll subsidy. The reimbursement could decline as the trainee becomes more productive.

Under the privately funded model, permanent employment after graduation would be an opportunity rather than a requirement. If WIOA OJT, a registered apprenticeship, or another public program is used, the employer and school would have to follow that program's specific hiring, retention, wage, training, and documentation requirements.

Illustrative Wage Example

Example	Illustration
Agreed trainee wage	\$20.00 per hour paid in full by the employer through normal payroll.
Approved private training reimbursement	40% of the wage during an approved training period, or \$8.00 per hour.
Employer's remaining wage cost	\$12.00 per hour, plus the employer's normal payroll taxes, benefits, and other employment costs unless an approved program specifically covers another item.
After the incentive ends	The employer either continues the employment relationship at its own cost or the parties conclude the placement under the applicable agreement.

The percentages above are illustrative only. Actual reimbursement levels would be established later and would need to comply with the funding source and applicable employment rules.

Student Technical Readiness and Completion

A student who reaches a defined level of competency and is preparing to enter an approved employer placement could qualify for an occupation-specific tool or equipment package. The school and participating employers should determine what a beginning worker actually needs. Packages might include mechanic tools, meters, electrical tools, diagnostic equipment, welding gear, PPE, work boots, tool storage, or electronic test equipment.

Higher-value packages could vest over time. If a student voluntarily abandons both the school program and the approved work placement without an accepted reason, the student could be required to return unvested equipment or repay an appropriate declining portion of its value.

Reasonable exceptions should cover employer closure, involuntary job loss unrelated to misconduct, unsafe working conditions, an approved transfer to another employer, serious hardship, military obligations, or other circumstances approved by the institution. Employer wage or training reimbursements would not become student debt; future payments would simply stop.

Other Student Barriers

The initiative is not intended to become a general scholarship program, but smaller costs should not prevent an otherwise qualified person from completing needed technical training. When other aid is unavailable or insufficient, restricted support could cover a documented tuition gap, certification or testing fees, required books, PPE, or similar training costs. These expenses would support the workforce objective rather than become the primary purpose of the program.

Training Access and Capacity

Access

Training is not truly available if a student cannot reasonably reach it or fit it around work and family obligations. Distance, fuel costs, lack of a reliable vehicle, class schedules, childcare, and working hours should be considered when deciding whether an existing program serves a community.

Solutions may include school-operated or contracted transportation, regional shuttles, evening or weekend classes, compressed schedules, mobile labs, satellite instruction, employer-site training, and hybrid classroom instruction where hands-on requirements permit it. Structural solutions that help multiple students should generally be preferred over repeated individual assistance.

Capacity

Private funds could be used where a specific constraint prevents an existing institution from meeting an identified technical workforce need.

Capacity Area	Illustrative Uses
Equipment & laboratories	Machinery, simulators, diagnostic systems, training stations, laboratory equipment, technical software, and specialized systems.
Facilities	Lab expansion, equipment installation, and modifications required for an approved technical program.

Capacity Area	Illustrative Uses
Instructor capacity	Additional or specialized instructors, industry experts, manufacturer certification, professional development, and train-the-trainer programs.
Program expansion	Additional cohorts, evening or weekend delivery, advanced modules, employer-specific instruction, and new technical specialties.

The goal is durable capacity. Temporary startup support may make sense while enrollment develops, but a successful program should eventually be able to stand on its normal institutional funding when that is practical.

Institutional Responsibility for Private Investment

A school receiving a significant private investment should agree in advance on what the funding is intended to accomplish and provide reasonable follow-up on whether that capacity was actually created and used. The reporting should be proportionate to the size of the investment and useful to both the school and the funding source, not an administrative burden for its own sake.

When private funding purchases equipment, improves a lab, or helps launch a program that becomes part of the institution, the funding agreement should address ownership and long-term responsibility. The school would normally be expected to handle routine maintenance, insurance, consumables, operating costs, and eventual replacement once the funded capability is established, unless a different arrangement is specifically approved.

Current Funding Landscape

Existing funding should be used when it helps a worthwhile project move forward. The sources below were identified during the August 2026 review; eligibility, deadlines, appropriations, and allowable costs should be checked again when a specific project is ready.

Oklahoma and Federal Programs

Funding Source	Potential Use or Current Note
Oklahoma CareerTech Lottery Grants	Technology-center equipment and program improvements. CareerTech awarded more than \$3.14 million in FY2026 lottery-funded grants; future grant cycles should be considered during project planning.
Perkins V	Emerging technology, new CTE programs, workforce/industry partnerships, and instructor recruitment or retention. Oklahoma's next innovative-grant application period is scheduled for March-May 2027 for FY2028 funding.
WIOA On-the-Job Training	Can reimburse employers for extraordinary training and supervision costs. Oklahoma policy allows up to 50% of wages and up to 75% when specified factors are met. WIOA OJT also requires an employer commitment to hire or retain successful trainees, so it will not fit every private Earn-and-Learn placement.

Funding Source	Potential Use or Current Note
Apprenticeship Oklahoma	Provides established paid-work and related-instruction pathways through Registered Apprenticeships and Oklahoma CareerTech Apprenticeships. Program-specific employment and training requirements apply.
Workforce Pell	Effective July 1, 2026, approved short-term workforce programs may qualify for Pell support. Private grants and scholarships must be coordinated with the institution because federal aid rules can affect Pell eligibility.
USDA-NIFA Agricultural Workforce Training at Community Colleges	Supports agricultural workforce programs at community, junior, and technical colleges. The FY2026 cycle closed March 19, 2026; future rounds should be monitored.
USDA-NIFA SPECA	Supports agricultural curriculum, faculty capability, partnerships, and two-year pathways. The FY2026 round offered \$10,000-\$150,000 awards with no match required and closed July 27, 2026.
NSF Advanced Technological Education (ATE)	Strong fit for advanced technician education led by two-year colleges, including automation, electronics, GIS, advanced manufacturing, and related technologies. The current solicitation lists October 1, 2026 as the next full-proposal deadline.

Private and Industry Programs

Funding Source	Potential Use or Current Note
Lowe's Foundation — Gable Grants	Capacity building at community and technical colleges in selected skilled trades. The 2026 college application period ran March 1-31; future rounds remain relevant.
American Welding Society Foundation	Welding Workforce Grants of up to \$50,000 for equipment, training systems, lab materials, and enrollment expansion. Construction, salaries, tuition, PPE, textbooks, and travel are excluded.
Gene Haas Foundation	CNC and manufacturing education, including student support, supplies, and instructor development.
Metallica Scholars Initiative	Career and technical education support at selected community colleges through the American Association of Community Colleges.
CHS Foundation	College agricultural education and technology projects, including prior support for precision-agriculture and Oklahoma community-college programs.
SME Education Foundation / PRIME	Useful model for employer-driven manufacturing education involving equipment, curriculum, credentials, and instructor training.

Funding Source	Potential Use or Current Note
Manufacturer and Dealer Partnerships	Programs associated with John Deere, Caterpillar, Kubota, AGCO, and other manufacturers can bring equipment, curriculum, diagnostics, instructor training, paid work experience, credentials, and hiring pathways.

Funding Structure and Private Capital

Private capital should be the flexible layer of the system, not merely a matching source. It may provide startup or gap funding, equipment, instructor support, facility modifications, transportation, student tools, employer training incentives, certification costs, or the portion another funding source will not cover. A strong project could also be funded entirely with private capital when other funding is unavailable or would cause unnecessary delay.

Where practical, the funding flow would be: privately controlled trust → technology center, qualifying two-year college, school foundation, or other appropriate qualified entity → restricted technical workforce program → approved training capacity, student support, and employer participation.

The participating institution would normally administer student selection, employer agreements, reimbursements, tool packages, transportation, training records, completion requirements, and reporting. The private funding source would establish the restricted purpose and appropriate oversight but generally would not select individual students or manage individual employment relationships.

Regional Development Process

The work should begin with a practical review of the local economy and the technical positions employers genuinely struggle to fill, not with an open grant application. From there, the school and funding partners can look at what training already exists, whether people can realistically access it, and what is keeping the system from producing more qualified workers.

Once the need and the constraint are clear, the school and participating employers can develop the right response and assemble the funding around it. Before money is committed, there should be a clear understanding of what the investment is expected to produce—more training positions, an advanced specialty, another instructor, better access, more employer placements, or another measurable gain in workforce capacity.

Choosing Among Projects

Not every worthwhile request will have the same priority. Projects should be judged on the strength of the workforce need, the number and quality of employers behind it, what training already exists, whether the proposed program can be realistically accessed, and whether the investment solves a defined constraint rather than simply adding something desirable.

Preference should generally go to projects that serve a sustained regional need, make good use of existing institutions, avoid unnecessary duplication, create useful skills that can serve more than one employer or industry when practical, have a reasonable cost relative to the capacity created, and have a credible path to continue after startup funding ends.

Initial Eight-County Pilot

The regional pilot should test several parts of the model rather than divide funding evenly among counties simply for the sake of geographic balance.

Pilot	What It Would Test
Local Capacity Expansion	Whether a targeted investment in an instructor, lab, equipment, or schedule can materially increase graduates in an existing high-demand program.
Regional Advanced Training	Whether several locations can share an expensive Tier 2 capability when transportation and scheduling are built into the program.
Earn-and-Learn	Whether partial employer reimbursement increases the number of businesses willing to hire and train students before graduation.
Student Technical Readiness	Whether milestone-based tool and equipment packages improve the transition from school into paid technical work.
CareerTech-to-College Bridge	Whether students can move from direct technical training into employment and then into a qualifying two-year technical program without losing the workforce focus.

Measures of Success

Success should be judged by the workforce capability the program leaves behind, not simply by the amount of money distributed.

- Additional training positions and graduates created.
- New or expanded technical specialties established.
- Instructors added, trained, or certified.
- Students entering paid employer placements before graduation.
- Employers participating in structured work-based training.
- Employer feedback used to correct individual training gaps and improve instruction where recurring needs are identified.
- Existing workers gaining new technical capability needed by current employers.
- Employer placements meeting the program's training and supervision expectations.
- Privately funded equipment and program capacity remaining in active use after startup support ends.
- Industry credentials and certifications completed.
- Graduates entering and remaining in technical employment.
- Existing workers advancing through higher-level technical training.
- Students gaining access because transportation or scheduling barriers were removed.
- CareerTech students progressing into qualifying two-year technical programs where appropriate.

- Outside funding, manufacturer support, or employer resources successfully leveraged.
- Durable workforce capacity created relative to the private capital invested.

Professional Review Required

The concept defines the desired operating model, but a privately controlled revocable trust, charitable trust, private foundation, and future Community Support Alliance 501(c)(3) should not be treated as interchangeable. Oklahoma trust counsel, tax counsel, and the CPA should determine the appropriate legal and tax structure before funds are committed.

Professional review should address grant authority and tax treatment; payments that ultimately benefit for-profit employers; wage reimbursements; student tool ownership and repayment provisions; employment classification; apprenticeship requirements; workers' compensation and insurance; student financial-aid interaction; reporting; and any private-benefit or charitable-purpose limitations that apply to the chosen funding vehicle.

Relationship to Future Community Support Alliance

The initiative can begin through the trust and institutional arrangements that counsel determines are appropriate for the initial phase. If Community Support Alliance is later established and is the better long-term home for the program, responsibility can transition gradually without disrupting active school or employer relationships. That decision should follow operating experience and professional review rather than be fixed in advance.

The Opportunity Ahead

The opportunity is to make Oklahoma's existing education and employer systems more capable, not replace them. Private capital can address the practical constraint that keeps a community from producing the technical workers it needs, while schools and employers remain responsible for education, training, and employment.

Because the model begins with the skill the local economy needs rather than a fixed statewide program list, it can adapt to industrial, agricultural, transportation, healthcare, utility, technology, and mixed regional economies without creating separate workforce silos for each industry.

Concept-Stage Notice

This document describes a planning concept for professional and institutional review. It does not constitute legal, tax, accounting, employment, educational, banking, insurance, or regulatory advice; does not establish final eligibility or grant rules; and does not authorize the distribution of funds. Funding programs described as current are based on an August 2026 review and should be verified with the sponsoring agency or organization before application or reliance.