

DK CAPITAL GROUP

Technical Workforce Development Funding Resources & Strategy Review

A working reference for building school, employer, public, industry, foundation, and private funding around an identified technical workforce need.

RESEARCH REVIEW | AUGUST 2026

1. Purpose of This Review

This review pulls the funding research for the Technical Workforce Development Initiative into one place. The Business Concept Plan only needs a concise explanation of the funding landscape. The Financial & Funding Manager, Trustee, participating schools, and professional advisors need a more useful working reference.

The purpose is not to build the program around grants. It is to know what resources already exist, what each source can realistically pay for, who must apply, what restrictions matter, and where private capital can remove the remaining constraint.

Funding programs change. Application dates, appropriations, eligibility, award amounts, and allowable costs should be checked again when a specific project is ready. The current-status notes in this review were checked in August 2026.

The Governing Principle

The funding follows the workforce need.

The workforce need does not follow the grant.

Private capital is the flexible layer. It can fill a gap, provide the startup piece another program will not cover, solve a transportation or instructor problem, support employer training, or fund the entire justified project when waiting on another source would defeat the purpose.

2. How Funding Should Be Built Around a Project

The initiative should begin with a workforce and training review, not an open grant application. Once a real shortage and a specific training constraint are identified, the Program Director and participating school can define the response. The Financial & Funding Manager then builds the best funding package around that response.

Step	Question
1. Workforce need	Which technical jobs or skills are employers actually struggling to fill?
2. Existing capacity	What training already exists, and can people realistically access it?
3. Constraint	What is keeping the school or employer system from producing enough qualified workers?
4. Response	What specific investment would remove that constraint?
5. Outside resources	Which public, school, foundation, industry, or employer resources fit without distorting the project?
6. Private capital	What remains uncovered, too slow, too restricted, or not eligible elsewhere?
7. Expected result	What additional workforce capacity should exist after the investment?

The Trust should generally not become the applicant simply because a grant exists. Where the school, college, foundation, employer, workforce board, or other qualified entity is the natural applicant, that entity should apply and administer the award. Trust funding can be coordinated alongside it under a separate restricted agreement.

3. Funding Landscape at a Glance

Source	Best fit	Likely applicant / recipient	Current planning note
Oklahoma CareerTech Lottery Grants	Technology-center equipment and program improvements	Approved CareerTech K-12 programs and technology centers	FY27 application period closed March 6, 2026; monitor the next cycle.
Perkins V / Oklahoma Innovative Grants	High-growth technology, new CTE programs, industry partnerships, instructor recruitment/retention	Eligible school, technology center, college, or consortium	FY28 Innovative Grant applications are scheduled for March-May 2027.
WIOA OJT / Incumbent Worker Training	Employer-based training, supervision cost, worker upskilling	Local workforce board working with eligible employer/participant	Ongoing; eligibility is participant-, employer-, and local-board-specific.
Apprenticeship Oklahoma	Structured paid apprenticeship and employer incentive	Registered apprenticeship sponsor / employer	Current employer incentive advertised at \$3,500 per apprentice, subject to program rules.
Workforce Pell	Student aid for approved short-term workforce programs	Eligible institution; aid goes through federal student-aid system	Effective July 1, 2026; each program needs state and federal approval.
USDA-NIFA AWT	Agricultural workforce programs at community, junior, and technical colleges	Eligible lead institution under AFRI rules	FY2026 AWT deadline closed March 19, 2026; monitor future rounds.
USDA-NIFA SPECA	Agricultural curriculum, faculty capability, pathways, partnerships	Eligible secondary school, nonprofit college, IHE, or nonprofit	FY2026 closed July 27, 2026; awards were \$10,000-\$150,000 with no match required.
NSF ATE	Advanced technician education led by two-year colleges	Two-year IHE should have a significant leadership role	Next regular full-proposal deadline: October 1, 2026.
Private foundations / industry	Specific trades, student support, equipment, curriculum, instructor development	Usually the school, college, foundation, or invited partner	Strong project-specific opportunities; not all are open or broad grant programs.
CareerTech Training for Industry Growth (TIG)	Regional short-term training for multiple employers facing the same critical skilled-worker shortage	Technology center under CareerTech WED/BIS structure	State-appropriated, project-by-project; intended for critical shortages and generally three years or less.
CareerTech Training for Industry Program (TIP)	Customized startup training for new or expanding Oklahoma companies creating jobs	Technology center working with qualifying employer	Current CareerTech economic-development service; training can be provided at little or no cost to the employer.
Oklahoma Talent Accelerator (OKTA)	Employer training and upskilling in targeted high-demand industries	Eligible Oklahoma employer through OESC/Guild	Live in 2026; can reimburse up to 80% of approved training. Healthcare was added in July 2026.
DOL Strengthening Community Colleges (SCC)	Community-college capacity for short-term training and Workforce Pell implementation	Community college-led consortium	Round 6 offered \$65 million and closed May 20, 2026; monitor future rounds.
USDA Rural Business Development Grants (RBDG)	Rural job training, equipment, facilities, distance learning, transportation, and business-development capacity	Public body, tribe, or nonprofit serving a rural area	2026 cycle closed June 30; no cost share required and smaller requests receive priority.
Home Depot Foundation - Path to Pro	Construction skilled-trades tools, equipment, materials, and program upgrades	Accredited K-12/postsecondary program or nonprofit	Education grants up to \$10,000; applications reviewed on a rolling basis.
NSF ExLENT	Experiential learning and reskilling/upskilling in emerging technologies	Eligible education/workforce/industry partnership under NSF rules	Currently waiting for a new solicitation; monitor rather than budget as available funding.

4. Oklahoma CareerTech Lottery Grants

Lottery funding is one of the most natural sources for an Oklahoma technology-center equipment or program-capacity project. CareerTech reported more than \$3.14 million in FY2026 lottery grants to K-12 schools and technology centers. The funded equipment included HVAC, welding, construction, mechanical trades, electrical trades, agricultural education, robotics, aviation simulators, and other hands-on training resources.

This is a school-led funding source. The Trust should help the technology center identify the project and, if useful, supply the piece the lottery grant does not cover rather than trying to receive the lottery money itself.

CURRENT STATUS: CareerTech's FY27 lottery application period for technology centers closed March 6, 2026. The next cycle should be monitored as projects are developed.

Best Uses in This Initiative

- Equipment and training systems that expand an existing high-demand program.
- Modernization where outdated equipment is limiting the number or quality of students trained.
- A defined piece of a larger lab or capacity project that can be combined with private funding.
- Projects already aligned with an approved CareerTech program and a documented workforce need.

Private Capital Role

Lottery funding may be only one piece. Private capital could cover installation, facility changes, instructor training, transportation, tools, employer participation, or other project costs that are not funded or are needed on a different timeline.

Official source: [Oklahoma CareerTech - Funding and Grants](#)

Official source: [CareerTech awards \\$3.14 million in lottery grants](#)

5. Perkins V and Oklahoma CareerTech Innovative Grants

Perkins is broader than equipment. Oklahoma uses Perkins funds for career and technical education and sets aside reserve funding for Innovative Grants. The current Oklahoma grant areas include high growth and emerging technology, career pathways and workforce/industry partnerships, CTE new programs, support for special populations, and strategies to recruit and retain CTE instructors.

That makes Perkins a good fit when the workforce problem is not just a machine purchase. A project might need a new technical pathway, stronger employer involvement, instructor capability, curriculum alignment, or a new program that can become sustainable after startup.

CURRENT STATUS: Oklahoma CareerTech says FY28 Innovative Grant applications will open in March 2027 and close in May 2027. The CTE New Program grant is scheduled to reopen for new applicants in that cycle.

Important Eligibility and Administration Points

- The participating school or consortium is the applicant. The Trust is not the natural Perkins recipient.
- A Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment is part of the Perkins framework and should support the workforce case.
- Allocation and consortium rules matter. Eligibility should be confirmed with CareerTech before a project is built around Perkins.

- Allowable-cost rules and reporting requirements apply. A private companion grant can fund legitimate project costs that Perkins cannot.

Strong Fit Examples

- Industrial controls or automation capability tied to regional employer demand.
- Instructor recruitment, retention, or professional development for a hard-to-staff technical program.
- CareerTech-to-two-year-college alignment for a technical pathway.
- Workforce and industry partnership activity tied to a real hiring shortage.
- A new or expanded technical specialty with a credible path to continue after grant support.

Official source: [Oklahoma CareerTech - Perkins Innovative Grants](#)

Official source: [Oklahoma CareerTech - Perkins Administration](#)

6. WIOA On-the-Job Training and Incumbent Worker Training

WIOA is most useful when the project involves a specific eligible worker or employer rather than a general school-capacity purchase. On-the-Job Training can reimburse an employer for a portion of the extraordinary cost of training and supervision while the participant is a paid employee. Oklahoma's current fiscal requirements state that reimbursement may be up to 50% of the participant's wage rate and may rise to 75% when required factors are documented.

Oklahoma Works also identifies Incumbent Worker Training as a resource for businesses that need to retrain current employees for new technology, process improvements, credentials, or advancement. That can be particularly useful for existing diesel, electrical, electronics, automation, or industrial workers who need higher-level skills.

Why WIOA Will Not Fit Every Earn-and-Learn Placement

- The participant must qualify under the applicable workforce program.
- The employer must meet WIOA contracting and training requirements.
- OJT requires a defined training plan and written employer commitment to hire or retain successful trainees.
- The reimbursement structure and documentation are controlled by WIOA, not by the Trust.
- A private Earn-and-Learn arrangement can be more flexible when the WIOA requirements do not fit the placement.

Pilot-Area Coordination

The current eight-county planning area crosses two local workforce boards. Hughes and Seminole counties are served by Oklahoma's Workforce Board; Coal, Garvin, Johnston, Murray, Pittsburg, and Pontotoc counties are served by the Southern Board. The Funding Manager should coordinate with the board responsible for the employer and participant rather than assume one WIOA arrangement covers the full region.

Private Capital Role

Private funds can support employer training arrangements that do not meet WIOA eligibility, cover a portion not reimbursed by WIOA where legally permissible, or support school-side costs such as tools, transportation, instructor coordination, and training equipment.

Official source: [Oklahoma Works - Training Opportunities](#)

Official source: [Oklahoma Works - Local Workforce Development Boards](#)

Official source: [Oklahoma WIOA Fiscal Requirements - OJT provisions](#)

7. Apprenticeship Oklahoma

Apprenticeship Oklahoma gives employers and schools a structured paid-work pathway when the occupation and employer are a good fit for apprenticeship. It can complement the initiative's Earn-and-Learn concept, but the public apprenticeship structure brings its own standards, training requirements, and documentation.

CareerTech currently advertises an incentive for registered apprenticeship sponsors of \$3,500 per apprentice: \$2,500 after the apprentice successfully completes 90 days and another \$1,000 after nine months, subject to program eligibility and current rules.

When It Is a Strong Fit

- An employer has a continuing need for a defined occupation rather than a short one-time placement.
- The work naturally supports structured progression, mentoring, and related instruction.
- The employer is willing to take on apprenticeship responsibilities and documentation.
- The school and employer want a recognized pathway rather than a purely private training arrangement.

Private Capital Role

The Trust can still be useful around an apprenticeship: equipment, instructor capacity, related technical training, tools, transportation, or other approved costs may sit outside the employer incentive. The existence of an apprenticeship incentive should not cause the project to be redesigned simply to qualify for it.

Official source: [Apprenticeship Oklahoma - Employers](#)

8. Additional Oklahoma Workforce Programs

Three additional Oklahoma programs deserve to be treated as core resources rather than secondary grant possibilities. They can reduce what the Trust needs to fund and, in the case of TIG, closely match the regional employer-shortage model being developed for this initiative.

Training for Industry Growth (TIG)

TIG is one of the strongest fits found in the final funding review. CareerTech allows technology centers to establish training agreements with multiple businesses that share a critical skilled-workforce shortage within a defined Oklahoma region. The program is intended as a short-term response, generally three years or less, and is aimed at job attainment or advancement.

- The shortage should be immediate and critical, not simply a desirable program expansion.
- Projects are considered case by case and depend on available state appropriations.
- Eligible industry ecosystems include aerospace and defense, agriculture and biosciences, energy, health, information and financial services, manufacturing, and transportation and distribution.
- TIG is intended to supplement, not replace, the technology center's normal Workforce and Economic Development / Business and Industry Services budget.

For the pilot, TIG should be discussed early whenever several employers are describing the same shortage. The Trust could then fund the pieces TIG does not cover, help the school move before the state funding cycle, or support transportation, tools, equipment, or other complementary costs.

Official source: [Oklahoma CareerTech - Workforce & Economic Development Guidelines \(TIG\)](#)

Training for Industry Program (TIP)

TIP is different from TIG. It is designed for new or expanding companies that are creating jobs in Oklahoma. CareerTech works with the employer to design customized startup training, including job analysis, preemployment and preproduction training, instructional materials, and assessment of training needs. CareerTech describes the training as free to the qualifying company.

TIP is not a Trust grant opportunity, but it belongs in the funding review because it can remove a large employer-training cost from a project. When a participating employer is expanding, the Funding Manager should check TIP before private money is committed to the same training need.

Official source: [Oklahoma CareerTech - Business and Industry Training / TIP](#)

Oklahoma Talent Accelerator (OKTA)

OESC launched the Oklahoma Talent Accelerator in 2026 with approximately \$6 million in federal support. Eligible employers can receive reimbursement for up to 80% of approved training costs. The original target industries were aerospace and defense, advanced manufacturing, and AI infrastructure; healthcare was added in July 2026.

OKTA should be treated as an employer-side resource. It is particularly useful when an existing employer needs to upskill workers or build a stronger internal talent pipeline. The Trust should avoid duplicating training expense that the employer can reasonably obtain through OKTA, but private funding can still support school capacity, equipment, transportation, or workers and occupations outside the program's eligibility.

Official source: [Oklahoma Employment Security Commission - Oklahoma Talent Accelerator](#)

Official source: [OESC - Healthcare added to Oklahoma Talent Accelerator](#)

9. Workforce Pell

Workforce Pell became effective July 1, 2026 and creates Pell eligibility for approved short-term workforce programs. The federal program is important because it can move part of the tuition burden away from private aid and make short, intensive technical training more accessible.

Workforce Pell is not automatic for every short course. The program must satisfy federal standards and be certified through the state process before the institution can seek U.S. Department of Education approval. Federal guidance describes eligible workforce programs as short-term, performance-based programs aligned with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations.

CURRENT STATUS: Workforce Pell is live federally. Program-by-program approval is still developing nationally, so each Oklahoma institution must confirm whether a particular workforce program has completed the required state and federal approval process.

Important Interaction With Private Aid

Private tuition grants and scholarships should be coordinated through the school's financial-aid office. Federal rules now include Pell ineligibility provisions when nonfederal grant or scholarship assistance equals or exceeds the student's cost of attendance. The initiative should avoid unintentionally replacing Pell with private money.

Best Use in the Initiative

- Let Workforce Pell handle eligible student aid where it applies.
- Use private capital for costs Pell does not solve: equipment, instructor capacity, transportation, tools, employer training, certification, or a remaining documented student gap.
- Avoid creating a general private scholarship program when an approved federal aid path is already available.

Official source: [U.S. Department of Education - Workforce Pell final rule announcement](#)

Official source: [Federal Student Aid - Workforce Pell effective dates](#)

10. USDA-NIFA Agricultural Workforce Training at Community Colleges

The Agricultural Workforce Training at Community Colleges program is one of the strongest federal fits when a qualifying two-year or technical institution is building a real agricultural workforce program. It is specifically intended to develop, expand, improve, or renew workforce training that leads to field and industry jobs in food and agriculture.

The FY2026 program offered two useful scales: Design projects of up to \$250,000 and Implementation projects of up to \$650,000. The FY2026 application deadline was March 19, 2026. Future rounds should be monitored rather than assumed.

Why It Fits This Concept

- It supports community, junior, and technical college workforce training rather than requiring a four-year-degree model.
- It emphasizes experiential learning, industry-accepted credentials, and occupational competency.
- It can support new programs as well as expansion or improvement of existing ones.
- It aligns with technical agriculture areas such as equipment technology, diagnostics, precision systems, controls, and other workforce needs when the proposal fits NIFA's current priorities.

Private Capital Role

NIFA funding can carry a large share of a well-developed agricultural workforce project, but the Trust should be prepared to fund excluded or timing-sensitive costs, transportation, employer participation, complementary equipment, or a project that should move before the next federal cycle.

Official source: [USDA-NIFA - AFRI Education and Workforce Development](#)

Official source: [FY2026 AWT Notice of Funding Opportunity](#)

11. USDA-NIFA SPECA

The Secondary Education, Two-Year Postsecondary Education, and Agriculture in the K-12 Classroom Challenge Grants program can support agricultural curriculum, faculty capability, partnerships, and secondary-to-two-year pathways. It is smaller than the AWT program but may be useful for a focused technical agriculture project.

The FY2026 round offered awards from \$10,000 to \$150,000, required no match, and closed July 27, 2026. Eligible applicants included public secondary schools, public or private nonprofit junior and community colleges, institutions of higher education, and nonprofit organizations.

Best Fit

- Curriculum or pathway work linking secondary technical education with two-year agricultural technology.
- Faculty capability and instructional improvement.
- Partnership projects that strengthen agricultural technical education.
- A smaller project where a large federal proposal would be disproportionate.

SPECA should be treated as a periodic opportunity, not a permanent operating revenue source. The school should own the proposal and the long-term educational capability.

Official source: [USDA-NIFA - SPECA Funding Opportunity](#)

12. NSF Advanced Technological Education (ATE)

NSF ATE is the strongest national program in this review for advanced technician education led by two-year institutions. It supports technician education in high-technology fields and expects meaningful two-year-college leadership and industry involvement.

The program is broader than manufacturing. It can fit advanced manufacturing, electronics, automation, cybersecurity, energy, geospatial technology, agricultural technology, transportation technology, and other advanced technician fields when the proposal meets NSF requirements.

CURRENT STATUS: The next regular full-proposal deadline is October 1, 2026. A project should not be rushed into that deadline unless the institution is genuinely ready.

Current ATE Scale

Track	Typical maximum / scale
Track 1 - Small Scale Projects	Up to \$475,000 over three years.
Track 2 - ATE Projects	Up to \$1,000,000 over three years.
Track 3 - Consortia	\$1.2 million to \$3.0 million, generally over 3-4 years.
Track 4 - ATE Center	\$7.5 million over five years; specialized center requirements apply.

Important Funding Point

NSF prohibits voluntary committed cost sharing in the ATE proposal. Private capital should therefore be coordinated carefully. The Trust can support complementary needs outside the NSF award or help the institution build capacity before or after the grant, but should not casually be presented as a required match when NSF rules prohibit it.

Best Initial Use

For this initiative, a Track 1 or Track 2 proposal led by a participating two-year college is more realistic than starting with a regional center. A strong proposal would grow out of a proven employer need and an existing school relationship, not from the desire to pursue a large NSF award.

Official source: [National Science Foundation - Advanced Technological Education](#)

Official source: [NSF 24-584 ATE Solicitation](#)

13. Additional Federal and Rural Capacity Programs

The final review also identified three broader programs worth monitoring. These are not everyday pilot funding sources, but each could become important when a participating two-year college or rural partnership develops a sufficiently mature project.

DOL Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grants

The U.S. Department of Labor Strengthening Community Colleges program is a major capacity-building source for community colleges. Round 6 made \$65 million available nationally and focused specifically on helping community colleges build and scale short-term programs that can qualify for Workforce Pell while integrating with employers and the public workforce system. The 2026 round closed May 20.

This is best viewed as a future large-project opportunity for the participating two-year college, not a source the Trust should wait on during startup. The college must lead a qualifying consortium, and a proposal should grow out of a proven workforce project rather than be created just to chase the federal award.

Official source: [U.S. Department of Labor - Strengthening Community Colleges](#)

USDA Rural Business Development Grants (RBDG)

RBDG is relevant because much of the initial planning region is rural. Eligible public bodies, tribes, and nonprofit organizations can seek funding for projects that benefit rural areas. Enterprise grants can support training and technical assistance, facilities, machinery and equipment, rural distance learning for job training, rural transportation, and technology-based economic development.

- For-profit businesses and individuals cannot receive the grant directly.
- There is no stated maximum grant amount, although smaller requests receive higher priority.
- No cost sharing is required, but evidence of nonfederal funding is one of the evaluation factors.
- The 2026 regular application deadline was June 30; future cycles should be monitored through USDA Rural Development in Oklahoma.

A school foundation, local public body, or qualifying nonprofit could be a better applicant than the Trust. RBDG may be especially useful when the workforce project includes shared equipment, rural transportation, distance training, or a broader rural-business benefit.

Official source: [USDA Rural Development - Rural Business Development Grants](#)

NSF Experiential Learning for Emerging and Novel Technologies (ExLENT)

ExLENT supports hands-on learning, reskilling, and upskilling in emerging technologies such as advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, advanced wireless, biotechnology, semiconductors, and microelectronics. It is built around cross-sector partnerships and regional emerging-technology workforce needs.

The program is currently waiting for a new solicitation and has no upcoming due date. It should therefore stay on the Funding Manager's watch list rather than appear in a committed project budget. When it reopens, it could complement NSF ATE for advanced technical pathways that need substantial employer-based experiential learning.

Official source: [National Science Foundation - ExLENT](#)

14. Private Foundation and Industry Opportunities

Private and industry programs are useful, but they are not interchangeable. Some are true open grant programs. Some support only one trade. Some fund students rather than equipment. Others are partnership models rather than grants at all. The Funding Manager should understand the difference before counting any of them in a project budget.

Lowe's Foundation - Gable Grants

Gable Grants directly support public community and technical colleges and certain nonprofits. For colleges, the strongest fit is construction-related skilled trades: facilities/property maintenance, carpentry/construction/masonry, electrical/emerging technologies, HVAC, and plumbing. The 2026 community and technical college application period ran March 1-31.

This is a strong fit for the homes-and-communities side of the technical workforce initiative, but it should not be treated as a general diesel, welding, agriculture, or manufacturing grant.

Official source: [Lowe's Foundation - Gable Grants FAQs](#)

Home Depot Foundation - Path to Pro Education Grants

Path to Pro Education Grants provide up to \$10,000 to accredited K-12 programs, community and technical colleges, and nonprofits with existing construction skilled-trades training. The grants can support tools, equipment, materials, and other critical program upgrades, and applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. This is a strong fit for electrical, HVAC, plumbing, carpentry, construction, and related community trades. The award size is modest, so it is best used as one piece of a larger project rather than allowed to define the project.

Official source: [Home Depot Foundation - Path to Pro](#)

American Welding Society Foundation - Welding Workforce Grant

AWS offers up to \$50,000 per eligible institution for welding equipment, training systems, lab materials, and certain testing-facility upgrades. U.S. secondary schools, technical schools, and community colleges can apply if they meet the AWS educational-membership requirement.

The exclusions make this a good example of blended funding. AWS does not fund construction, salaries, student tuition, PPE, textbooks, or travel. Private capital or another source can cover those legitimate project costs while AWS carries the welding-specific equipment piece.

Official source: [AWS Foundation - Welding Workforce Grant](#)

Gene Haas Foundation

Gene Haas Foundation funding is particularly relevant to CNC and manufacturing education. Post-secondary programs teaching CNC technology can apply for scholarship support, and the Foundation also supports instructor training and a limited number of higher-level program initiatives.

The important distinction is that normal scholarship-grant funds are for students and required supplies, not for buying machines or software. Foundation funds also cannot be used to purchase Haas Automation or Haas Factory Outlet products. The annual post-secondary application deadline is June 30.

Official source: [Gene Haas Foundation - Apply](#)

Official source: [Gene Haas Foundation - FAQ](#)

Metallica Scholars Initiative

The Metallica Scholars Initiative supports career and technical education through selected community colleges. In 2026 the program expanded to 93 U.S. community colleges with approximately \$3.3 million in that year's grant support. It is a meaningful partnership opportunity, but it should not be budgeted like a routine open annual grant unless the participating college confirms a current application or selection path.

Official source: [All Within My Hands - Metallica Scholars Initiative](#)

CHS Foundation

CHS Foundation is relevant where the project is agricultural and technology-oriented. Prior CHS funding has supported precision agriculture, sensors, irrigation, autonomous systems, simulation labs, and agriculture technology programs, including projects in Oklahoma. Because current grant structures can change, CHS should be approached as a targeted agriculture partnership opportunity rather than assumed recurring funding.

Official source: [CHS Foundation - Precision Agriculture Grants example](#)

SME Education Foundation / PRIME

SME PRIME is primarily a high-school manufacturing education model. It combines local-industry input with equipment, curriculum, teacher training, certifications, scholarships, and sustainability support. It is valuable

to this initiative as both a potential partnership and a model for how employer demand can shape technical education.

Because PRIME is high-school focused, it should not be treated as the main funding source for a technology-center or two-year-college project unless SME confirms a specific fit.

Official source: [SME Education Foundation - PRIME](#)

15. Secondary and Emerging Opportunities

The following resources are worth keeping in the funding directory but should not be treated as dependable program capital. They are more useful for student aid, specific high-school feeder programs, or opportunistic industry support.

DEWALT Grow the Trades

Stanley Black & Decker has committed \$60 million through 2030 to DEWALT Grow the Trades initiatives that skill, reskill, and upskill tradespeople. The initiative includes grants, partnerships, and an annual scholarship program; DEWALT awarded \$200,000 in skilled-trades scholarships in 2026.

This should be treated as an industry-partnership and student-support opportunity, not assumed annual project funding. It is most relevant to construction, electrical, HVAC, welding, and related trades when a current DEWALT program aligns with the school's need.

Official source: [Stanley Black & Decker - Grow the Trades investment](#)

Official source: [DEWALT - 2026 skilled-trades scholarships](#)

mikeroweWORKS Work Ethic Scholarships

mikeroweWORKS is awarding up to \$10 million in Work Ethic Scholarships in 2026 for people entering approved skilled-trade programs. This is student aid rather than institutional funding, but it can reduce the private tuition or training support otherwise needed for eligible participants.

The school should make students aware of the opportunity while the Trust continues to focus its own student support on documented gaps, tools, certifications, transportation, and costs other aid does not cover.

Official source: [mikeroweWORKS - Work Ethic Scholarships](#)

Harbor Freight Tools for Schools Prize

Harbor Freight Tools for Schools annually recognizes outstanding public high-school skilled-trades teachers and their programs. It is not a general technology-center grant, but it is relevant to feeder programs and local instructor recognition. In 2026, Robert Adams of Southern Oklahoma Technology Center was among the prize winners for carpentry.

The prize belongs in the resource directory, but it should not be built into the regular funding model because eligibility is teacher- and high-school-program-specific.

Official source: [Harbor Freight Tools for Schools - 2026 Prize](#)

16. Manufacturer and Dealer Partnerships

Manufacturer relationships can sometimes be more valuable than a grant. The strongest programs combine manufacturer curriculum, diagnostic systems, equipment access, instructor training, dealer sponsorship, paid work experience, and a clear hiring path.

The initiative should not create a closed preferred-vendor system around one manufacturer. A manufacturer partnership should be used when it solves a real training need and leaves the school with useful capability.

Example	What the model shows
John Deere technician-school partnerships	Manufacturer-specific curriculum and a network of partner schools tied to dealership technician careers.
Caterpillar ThinkBIG	Associate-degree education combined with paid dealer internships; Caterpillar also operates dealer education partnerships and training resources.
Kubota TECH	OEM curriculum, certification, industry-supported training, and participating technical schools, including Oklahoma.
AGCO technician programs	Dealer-sponsored work-based learning, agriculture service technology, precision-ag content, training aids, and major manufacturer investment in college capacity.

These examples are not interchangeable grant programs. They show what may be negotiated when a regional dealer network has enough technician demand to justify a deeper school relationship.

Official source: [John Deere - Dealer Technician Training Schools](#)

Official source: [Caterpillar - ThinkBIG](#)

Official source: [Kubota TECH](#)

Official source: [AGCO - Technician Training Center example](#)

17. What Private Capital Should Pay For

The Trust's value is flexibility. It should not be reduced to a source of required matching dollars for other people's programs. Private capital should be used where it removes the practical barrier that is keeping an otherwise worthwhile workforce project from working.

Private funding role	Examples
Gap or complementary capital	Complete a project supported by CareerTech, Perkins, USDA, a foundation, manufacturer, employer, or other source.
Startup capital	Launch a program, instructor position, cohort, lab, or delivery model before normal enrollment or institutional funding can support it.
Instructor capacity	Temporary instructor support, specialized faculty, manufacturer certification, professional development, train-the-trainer.
Equipment and facilities	Machinery, diagnostics, simulators, labs, installation, or facility modifications not otherwise funded.
Employer participation	Approved training and supervision cost for paid trainees when a public reimbursement program does not fit or leaves a legitimate gap.
Student technical readiness	Tools, PPE, testing, credentials, or other legitimate transition-to-work costs administered through the school.
Access	Transportation, regional shuttles, evening/weekend delivery, mobile or satellite training, and other barriers to practical access.
Sole-source private support	Fund the full justified project when other funding is unavailable, too slow, or would distort the project.

A project should not be delayed simply to improve a leverage ratio. Outside funding is valuable when it makes the project stronger or frees private capital for another need. It is not valuable when the grant calendar becomes more important than the workforce problem.

18. Funding by Type of Workforce Project

Project need	First places to look	Likely private role
Technology-center equipment	CareerTech Lottery; Perkins; AWS for welding; manufacturer partnership	Installation, facility work, excluded equipment, instructor support, timing gap
New / expanded technical program	Perkins Innovative; NSF ATE for advanced two-year programs; USDA AWT for agriculture	Startup, planning, bridge funding, access, costs outside award
Instructor shortage	Perkins Innovative; manufacturer training; institutional resources	Temporary salary/support, certification, industry expert, train-the-trainer
Paid work-based learning	WIOA OJT; Apprenticeship Oklahoma; employer contribution	Private Earn-and-Learn incentive where public structure does not fit
Incumbent worker upskilling	WIOA Incumbent Worker Training; CareerTech business/industry training; employer funds	Advanced specialty cost, equipment, instructor, access
Short-term student tuition	Workforce Pell if approved; school aid	Only documented gaps after financial-aid coordination
Student tools / readiness	Gene Haas for qualifying CNC student support; school/foundation; employer	Tools, PPE, tests, certifications where other aid is insufficient
Agricultural technology	USDA AWT; SPECA; CHS; manufacturer/dealer partnerships; NSF ATE where technically appropriate	Flexible equipment, access, employer participation, gap or full project
Construction / HVAC / electrical / plumbing	Lowe's Gable; CareerTech; Perkins; employer	Gap, instructor, facilities, transport, Earn-and-Learn

19. Building a Blended Funding Package

A blended package should be understandable without a spreadsheet full of funding jargon. The Trustee should be able to see the full project cost, what each outside source is paying for, what restrictions come with it, what the school or employer is contributing, and exactly what the Trust is being asked to provide.

Illustrative Example - Advanced Diesel / Equipment Diagnostics

Need	Illustrative funding approach
Diagnostic equipment and training stations	CareerTech Lottery or Perkins if eligible, plus manufacturer/dealer equipment or training support.
Instructor manufacturer certification	Manufacturer support, Perkins professional development, or private funding.
Student paid work experience	Employer payroll; WIOA OJT or apprenticeship incentive when eligible; private Earn-and-Learn when a public program does not fit.
Student tools and PPE	School/foundation/student aid where available; private restricted support for the remaining readiness package.
Regional access	Private transportation or scheduling solution if normal education grants do not address the barrier.

Need	Illustrative funding approach
Unfunded balance / timing	Private Trust capital so the project can proceed on the workforce timetable rather than the slowest grant timetable.

Illustrative Example - Welding Capacity Expansion

A welding project could combine an AWS Workforce Grant for eligible equipment and lab materials, CareerTech or Perkins funds for other approved program needs, school resources for routine operations, and private capital for construction, instructor cost, PPE, transportation, or other legitimate items AWS specifically excludes. The funding package works because each source is used for what it does well rather than forcing one grant to carry the whole project.

20. Priorities for the Initial Pilot

The first pilot should not begin by applying for everything listed in this review. The practical order is to understand the first partner schools and the first two to four projects, then use the sources that actually fit those projects.

- CareerTech Lottery and Perkins should be part of the normal funding conversation with participating technology centers.
- The Financial & Funding Manager should establish early relationships with the two local workforce boards serving the planning region so WIOA OJT and incumbent-worker options are understood before employer placements begin.
- Workforce Pell should be checked program by program with the participating two-year college and its financial-aid office.
- AWS, Lowe's, Gene Haas, CHS, and similar sources should be pursued only where the specific trade and allowable costs line up with the project.
- NSF ATE and USDA AWT are potentially significant but should be school-led proposals built around mature projects, not startup paperwork exercises.
- Manufacturer and dealer partnerships should be developed directly where employers have enough recurring technician demand to justify equipment, curriculum, internships, or instructor support.

The Funding Manager should keep a live funding calendar, but the calendar should serve the project pipeline. It should not become the project pipeline.

- CareerTech TIG should be checked early when several employers report the same critical shortage; it may be one of the best public complements to the regional model.
- TIP and the Oklahoma Talent Accelerator should be checked before private funds are used for employer-side training that those programs could provide.
- The participating two-year college should keep DOL Strengthening Community Colleges and NSF ExLENT on its future capacity-funding watch list without allowing those grant cycles to delay the pilot.
- USDA Rural Business Development Grants should be considered where a project has a broader rural job-training, equipment, transportation, or economic-development benefit and an eligible public or nonprofit applicant is available.
- Home Depot Path to Pro, DEWALT, mikeroweWORKS, and Harbor Freight should be treated as targeted trade or student resources rather than core operating funding.

21. Funding Administration and Professional Review

Outside funding introduces obligations that are different from the Trust's own restricted private grants. Each project should be clear about who is the applicant, who receives the money, who is responsible for compliance, and what happens if one source is delayed or denied.

- The participating school or other eligible entity should normally own and administer grants for which it is the qualified applicant.
- The Trust should keep its own funding agreement separate enough that public-grant restrictions do not unintentionally become Trust-wide operating rules.
- The CPA should review the accounting treatment of multi-source projects and make sure restricted funds are tracked correctly.
- Counsel should review arrangements involving for-profit employer benefit, wage reimbursement, student tools, apprenticeship, privacy, equipment ownership, and any private-benefit or tax issue created by the chosen Trust structure.
- Schools receiving significant equipment, lab, or program investments should agree on ownership, maintenance, insurance, consumables, normal operating cost, and eventual replacement.
- The Financial & Funding Manager should track deadlines and restrictions, but should not become the school's compliance officer for grants the school receives.

22. Working Source Directory

The links below are the principal official or program sources used for this August 2026 review. They should be checked again before a project is submitted or a commitment is made.

- [Oklahoma CareerTech - Funding and Grants](#)
- [Oklahoma CareerTech - Perkins Innovative Grants](#)
- [Oklahoma Works - Training Opportunities](#)
- [Oklahoma Works - Local Workforce Development Boards](#)
- [Apprenticeship Oklahoma - Employers](#)
- [Federal Student Aid - Workforce Pell effective dates](#)
- [USDA-NIFA - AFRI Education and Workforce Development](#)
- [USDA-NIFA - SPECA](#)
- [NSF - Advanced Technological Education](#)
- [Lowe's Foundation - Gable Grants](#)
- [AWS Foundation - Welding Workforce Grant](#)
- [Gene Haas Foundation](#)
- [All Within My Hands - Metallica Scholars](#)
- [SME Education Foundation - PRIME](#)
- [John Deere - Technician Training Schools](#)
- [Caterpillar - ThinkBIG](#)
- [Kubota TECH](#)
- [AGCO - Technician Training Center example](#)
- [Oklahoma CareerTech - Workforce & Economic Development Guidelines \(TIG\)](#)
- [Oklahoma CareerTech - Business and Industry Training / TIP](#)
- [OESC - Oklahoma Talent Accelerator](#)
- [DOL - Strengthening Community Colleges](#)
- [USDA Rural Development - Rural Business Development Grants](#)

- [NSF - ExLENT](#)
- [Home Depot Foundation - Path to Pro](#)
- [Stanley Black & Decker / DEWALT - Grow the Trades](#)
- [mikeroweWORKS - Work Ethic Scholarships](#)
- [Harbor Freight Tools for Schools - 2026 Prize](#)

Concept-Stage Notice

This review is a planning and research reference. It does not establish grant eligibility, guarantee funding, authorize an application, or replace legal, tax, accounting, federal-aid, workforce-board, or grant-compliance advice. Funding rules and program availability should be verified for the actual applicant and project before money is committed.