



**PRESS RELEASE
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Land of Sky P20 Council Receives 1.4 Million from the Department of Labor

The Land of Sky P20 Council is proud to announce that they will receive \$1,441,125 Million from the U.S. Department of Labor Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities through “Project Collaborate: Addressing the Workforce Gap through Inclusive Training Opportunities”.

This three-year project will enable the Land of Sky P20 Council to partner with two community colleges, A-B Tech and Blue Ridge, to provide work-based learning and apprenticeship opportunities to historically marginalized individuals and communities, including formerly incarcerated individuals who are returning to the workforce. The partners will collaborate with employers in Buncombe, Madison, Henderson, and Transylvania Counties in North Carolina. Stipends to some of these training participants will be given each year on a first come first serve basis to help offset the opportunity costs of participation.

A-B Tech will offer electrical, solar, and manufacturing training programs to new entrants to the workforce, dislocated workers, and incumbent workers. Individuals will be served annually through a mix of embedded industry certifications, single semester short-term training curriculum certificate programs, as well as traditional certificate, diploma, and degree programs through the program.

Blue Ridge seeks to enroll students into one of several skilled trades pathways offered through Continuing Education. Pathways include, but are not limited to, General Construction, Electrical, HVAC, Masonry, Plumbing, and Tool and Die. Each pathway will take between 4 and 24 months to complete depending on the chosen pathway. Dr. Laura Leatherwood states that “being proactive in supplying a qualified labor force to continuously meet the needs of our region’s employers requires consistent collaboration, innovation, and persistence. Blue Ridge Community College is proud to partner with A-B Tech and the P20 Council.”

The Land of Sky P20 Council fosters collaboration among employers, educators, and community members in the spirit of enduring economic prosperity, through the alignment of innovative cradle-to-career skills and resources that lead to life-sustaining job opportunities in our four-county region of western North Carolina. The Council is one collaborative across the state that underscores the endeavors of myFutureNC which established a goal for NC to produce 2 million individuals possessing credentials that lead to gainful employment by the year 2030.

The P20 Council is grateful for the support it receives from the John M. Belk Endowment, which is responsible for building operational capacity of the Council and for the support received from the Dogwood Health Trust, which is responsible for supplying leverage funds to support a grant writer for this project. This grant is unique in that it involves both of the region’s community colleges leveraging the P20 Council as its convening and administrative entity. Dr. John Gossett states that “Having the P20 Council as a conduit between training providers and employers is an essential component of finding and securing opportunities like this that will open the doors for more members of our communities to climb their career ladders”. For more information, please visit:

<https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/eta/eta20220920>

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