



# South Dakota Board of Technical Education

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**To:** South Dakota Board of Technical Education  
**From:** Nick Wendell, Executive Director, Board of Technical Education  
**Date:** 6/17/20  
**Re:** UpSkill Certificate Program

In April, the Office of the Governor received \$7.9 million in discretionary funding from the federal CARES Act. These dollars were to be allocated by the Governor as education stabilization funds to support initiatives related to COVID-19 and its impact on South Dakota.

The Board of Technical Education (BOTE), in collaboration with South Dakota's four technical colleges and the Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR), requested \$2.2 million to develop a dynamic new effort called **UpSkill**. **UpSkill** is a program designed to encourage "dislocated" South Dakota workers to pursue post-secondary credentials.

As part of the program, the four technical colleges have developed and will offer online-only certificates. These certificates will align with high-demand fields and enhance opportunities for employment and/or continued education.

The parameters of the program are outlined below.

## **Target Audience**

Workers who have filed for reemployment assistance through the DLR and are deemed "dislocated," thus making them eligible for tuition assistance through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

## **Certificates**

The four technical colleges have developed several primarily 18-credit, online-only certificate programs. All certificates were built using existing academic programs/curriculum and will be approved by the Higher Learning Commission and the Board of Technical Education. The certificates will be added to the Eligible Training Provider list (ETPL), in partnership with the DLR.

The proposed certificates are in a variety of academic program areas, including:

- Business
- Communications
- Healthcare
- Information Technology
- Precision Machining

## **Timeline**

The enrollment period will begin in mid-summer, with online course instruction beginning in August 2020. Students can expect to earn their certificates by May 2021.

## **Cost Structure**

The cost of each certificate is \$4,320 (\$240 per credit x 18 credits). The education stabilization funds awarded by the Governor will support tuition costs for students. WIOA funds may also be available to cover costs associated with tuition and a stipend (designed to cover the cost of books, supplies, and tools).

In many cases, participating students will earn a certificate free of cost. Given the economic realities of the COVID crisis and our target audience, affordability is a key element of the **UpSkill** program.

## **Additional Funding**

A portion of the \$2.2 million allocation will support marketing and administrative costs associated with implementing the program.