Pictou County Partnership
Request for Proposals (RFP)

Website Design and Development Services

Date Issued: July 28, 2025

Submission Deadline: August 12, 2025 at 4:00 p.m. ADT

Purpose

The Pictou County Partnership is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) to invite qualified firms to design and develop a standalone website focused on attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) to Pictou County, Nova Scotia. This new website will be separate from our main organizational site and will serve as a dedicated platform to promote the region's economic advantages to potential investors, site selectors, and business decision-makers.

The selected firm will collaborate closely with the Partnership to deliver a strategic, user-friendly website that supports our FDI strategy and aligns with our broader economic development goals. The site will showcase Pictou County's priority sectors, competitive business environment, and exceptional quality of life.

Located within a growing trade and energy corridor connecting Halifax, Moncton, and Cape Breton, Pictou County offers a compelling value proposition for investors. Key advantages include access to industrial lands, a skilled and growing workforce, lower operating costs, a strong manufacturing legacy, and emerging opportunities in the green and blue economies.

About the Pictou County Partnership

The Pictou County Partnership initiates, leads, and contributes to sustainable economic growth in Pictou County by fostering a culture of collaboration, navigating organizations to the resources they need, and engaging in meaningful economic development projects.

In 2024, the Partnership engaged a consulting group to develop an investment attraction strategy. A summary of that report is included with this RFP as background material. Phase 2 of this work focuses on creating the marketing assets needed to support investment attraction efforts, including videos and the proposed website.

Administrative Requirements

For tendering, legal and billing purposes, the client is Pictou County Partnership. Submissions in response to this request for proposals assume acceptance of all terms described herein.

Eligibility

Vendors must be registered companies, with the legal authority to conduct business in the Province of Nova Scotia. Any vendor proposed for this project must be legally entitled to work in Canada.

RFP Guidelines and Schedule

Schedule:

- Questions can be submitted to Pictou County Partnership until 12 p.m. (noon) ADT on August 12, 2025.
- Proposals will be accepted until 4 p.m. ADT on August 12, 2025.
- Pictou County Partnership to notify the successful candidate and start contract negotiation by August 28, 2025.
- The selected vendor is required to attend a Project Launch meeting in the week of September 8, 2025, and then submit a detailed Project Plan by September 19, 2025.
- Website development begins by October 6, 2025.
- Project Completion date is December 5, 2025.

All proposals must be signed by an authorized representative of the submitting company. If any portion of the work will be outsourced or subcontracted, this must be clearly identified within the proposal, including the name and a brief description of the partner organization(s). All proposed costs must be all-inclusive and account for any outsourced work. Proposals must be submitted in PDF format.

Project Scope and Deliverables

The selected firm will be responsible for the end-to-end design, development, and delivery of a standalone investment attraction website for the Pictou County Partnership. The website will serve as a modern, accessible, and content-rich platform tailored to an international audience of investors, site selectors, and business leaders.

Core Objectives

The website will:

- Promote Pictou County's investment value proposition
- Showcase priority sectors, success stories, and regional data
- Incorporate multimedia content including videos, maps, and Localintel-powered infographics (see: www.ecdev.org)
- Enable easy updates through a user-friendly CMS
- Include a contact or inquiry form
- Provide a seamless user experience integrated with the main site (www.pictoucountypartnership.com)

Design Requirements

- Clean, modern layout aligned with Partnership branding

- Fully mobile-responsive and WCAG 2.1 compliant
- Visual storytelling using high-quality images and video
- Sitemap and wireframe development with the input of the Partnership
- Iterative design process with feedback and revisions
- Optimized for international audiences with fast load times and intuitive navigation

Development Requirements

- Secure, scalable, and user-friendly architecture
- Multilingual support for international accessibility
- Embedded video functionality (e.g., YouTube)
- CMS for internal content management
- Contact/inquiry form with spam protection
- SEO-optimized structure and metadata
- Basic analytics setup (e.g., Google Analytics)
- Hosting guidance, including support for global delivery and CDN integration if needed

Deliverables

- Final design files (Figma, Adobe XD, or similar)
- Fully functional website deployed to the selected domain
- CMS training for staff
- Technical and CMS documentation
- Full administrative access and control

All intellectual property, source files, digital assets, domains, and associated licenses must be fully transferred to the Pictou County Partnership upon project completion, granting the Partnership full ownership and control.

Pricing

All proposals must include a detailed cost breakdown for the full scope of services. Vendors are encouraged to provide scalable pricing models that reflect potential economies of scale based on project size and complexity. Proposals must also include the following cost components:

- Ongoing maintenance and technical support
- Hosting setup and associated fees

If applicable, optional or add-on services should be listed and priced separately. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Premium plugins, third-party tools, or platform integrations

Please clearly indicate whether prices are fixed, hourly, or based on milestones, and identify any recurring or one-time costs.

Value Add

Respondents are encouraged to include any services or components that add value or offer unique benefits beyond the requirements outlined in this RFP. These should be clearly described, along with associated costs (if not already included in the fee breakdown). Value-added items should be listed separately with estimated values provided.

Bidder Qualification

We ask bidders to follow the following format for their proposal:

- Business Name and Contact Information
- Company Background and Relevant Experience
- Portfolio of Similar Work (links or embedded files preferred)
- Qualifications and Experience of Key Staff
- Team Composition and Roles
- Project Approach and Methodology
    - Description of how the project will be planned, built, and deployed
    - Outline of dispute resolution and management processes
- Proposed Schedule and Timeline
- Detailed Budget and Pricing Breakdown
- References (three references from previous clients)

Proposal Evaluations Criteria

To be considered for this RFP, your proposal must be complete and will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Criteria	**Weight**
Organizational Experience & Portfolio: Bidders will be evaluated based on their relevant experience in relation to the project scope, as well as their demonstrated ability to complete the project on time and within budget.	35%
Quality of Proposal & Creativity: Proposals will be evaluated on the clarity, organization, and overall quality of the submission, as well as the creativity and thoughtfulness of the proposed solutions in addressing the project scope.	15%
Awareness and understanding of the project goals and objectives	30%
Pricing and Value Add: Bidders will be evaluated based on the cost of their proposed solution in relation to the project scope, as well as any additional value-added components they choose to include in their proposal.	20%

Notification of Proponents

Note that while pricing is an important factor, the lowest price bid will not necessarily determine the winning proposal. Pictou County Partnership may contact individual respondents during this process for clarification or elaboration of proposal elements. Selected proponents may also be expected to meet with the Pictou County Partnership team to present their proposals.
Pictou County Partnership reserves the right to negotiate the final scope and price of the project with the selected proponent.

Inquiries and Proposal Submissions

All inquiries and proposals are to be directed to:

Lynne Jamieson, Manager, Strategic Initiatives
Email: opportunities@pictoucountypartnership.com

Inquiries and responses may be recorded and distributed to all proponents at the option of the Pictou County Partnership.

Summary of the Foreign Direct Investment Strategy for the Pictou County Region

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Study Purpose

ATN Strategies was engaged by the Pictou County Partnership (PCP) to develop a Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) strategy for Pictou County in May 2024. The resulting report provides a comprehensive assessment of Pictou County's industry landscape and socio-economic characteristics, identifying the sectors with the greatest investment potential.

This document serves as an executive summary of the full report, designed to provide stakeholders with a concise overview of the key target sectors for investment. It highlights the region's opportunities, strengths, and competitive advantages. The summary also features a brief jurisdictional scan, offering insights from other regions to inform the county's sector development efforts.

Key Findings

Strategically located within a growing economic nexus and trade corridor connecting Moncton, Halifax, and Cape Breton – with central access to both international and central Canadian markets through the Northumberland straight and Gulf of St. Lawrence – Pictou County features many natural assets that position the region well for investment.

This appeal is augmented by favourable demographic trends, including a growing population driven by high net intra and interprovincial migration and a labour force that is becoming younger on average.

Value Proposition:

Room to breathe, opportunities to grow

In Pictou County, we enjoy the best of both worlds: the quiet of small towns and plentiful industrial lands. Businesses here benefit from a skilled labour force, lower cost of operations, access to cutting-edge research at adjacent academic institutions, and centrality both within an emerging green energy corridor and a trade nexus connecting Halifax, Moncton, and Cape Breton. Workers benefit from a strong quality of life, lower cost of living, and short commutes, all with the benefits of the largest urban area in Atlantic Canada less than two hours away.

Economically, three broad sectors in the region show the strongest growth potential in Pictou County.

- **Manufacturing:** A historic strength in the region and a vital link to the forestry and rail sectors in Atlantic Canada, manufacturing is the third largest employer in Pictou County (comprising 9.2% of total employment, according to the 2021 census). It is one of the largest employers in Pictou County. The county's natural assets, proximity to trade routes, the Port of Pictou, educational institutions like Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), and lower operating costs compared to urban centers make this sector highly attractive for investment.

  Current Strengths

  - Rubber Products
  - Modular Homes
  - Mass Timber
  - Marine Vessels

  New Opportunities

  - Green Steel
  - Hydrogen Electrolysers
  - Aquaculture Supplies and Equipment (e.g. plastic netting, packing solutions, safety equipment)
  - Marine Electrification

- **Green Economy:** The Green Economy is becoming a major investment focus in Atlantic Canada, with clean energy and green technology sectors experiencing significant growth in exports and employment. Centrally located within the emerging Atlantic Green Hydrogen Corridor, Pictou County is well-positioned to serve as a hub for the region's green economy.

  The county's resources including critical minerals, geothermal energy, the Port of Pictou, and a skilled workforce supported by institutions like NSCC make it an ideal location to drive renewable energy, cleantech, and sustainable manufacturing. This strong foundation enables Pictou County to meet the increasing supply chain and workforce demands of these industries.

  Current Strengths

  - Wind Energy and Turbine Fields
  - Critical Minerals Extraction
  - Biofuels (heating)
  - Transportation (e.g. trucking and logistics)

  New Opportunities

  - Geothermal Energy Production
  - New Education, Training Courses and Instruction
  - Biofuels (transportation)
  - Critical Minerals (especially supplying extraction operators with finished manufactured goods and equipment)
  - Manufacturing Renewable Energy Components (hydrogen electrolysers)

- **Blue Economy:** Among the most significant global growth opportunities in the next decade is the Blue Economy. Pictou County's proximity to the Northumberland Strait and to COVE, a major Ocean Technology hub in Dartmouth, make it optimally situated to take advantage of the emerging blue industries.

  Current Strengths

  - Harvesting and Processing Aquaculture Facilities
  - Technical Innovations within the Aquaculture Sector

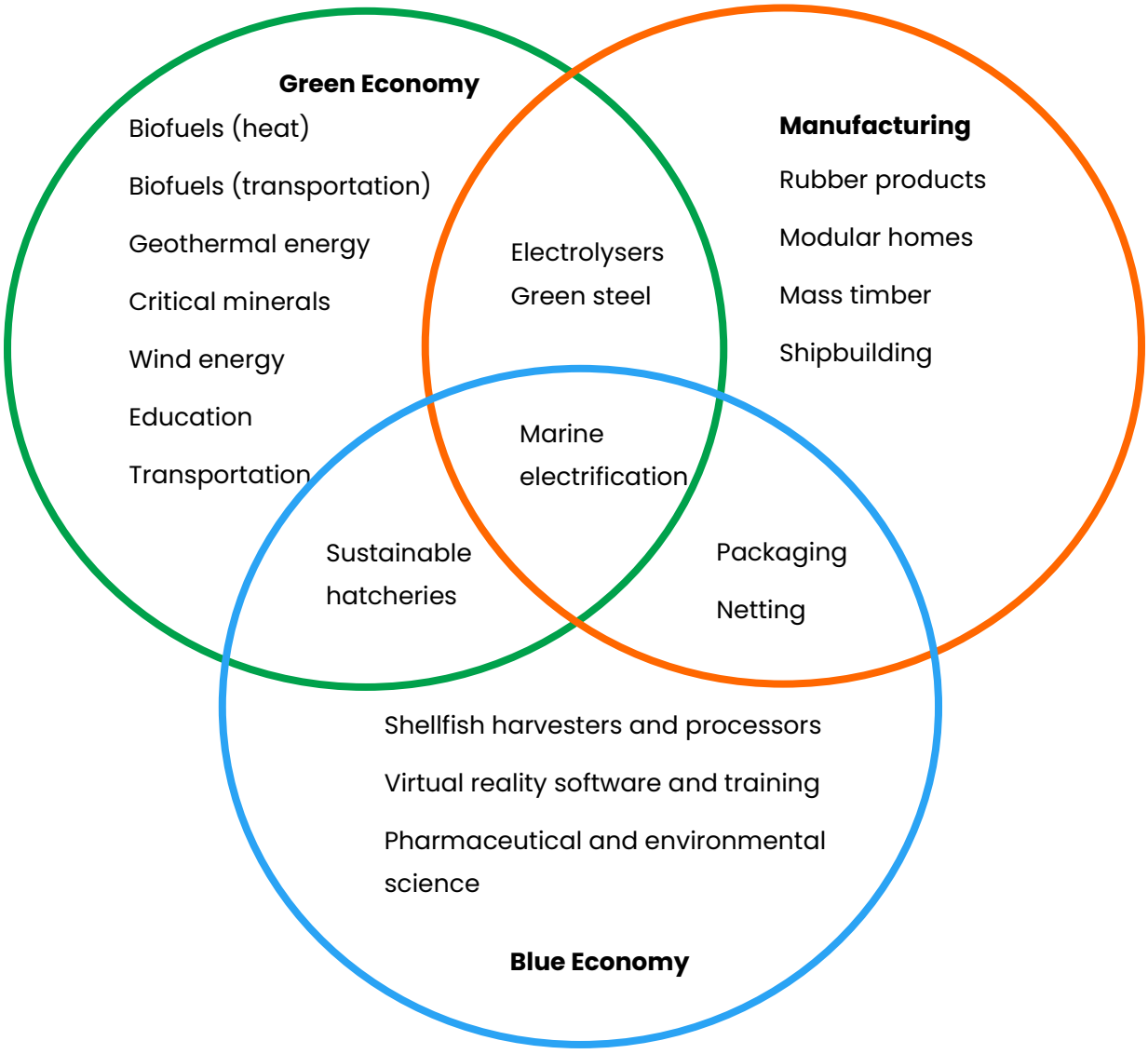
  New Opportunities

  - Cultivation of an Ocean Technology Hub (e.g. pharmaceutical and scientific innovations in aquaculture)
  - Virtual Reality and Safety Training Modules
  - Establishment of Aquaculture Development Areas
  - Sustainable Hatcheries
  - Aquaculture Supplies and Equipment (e.g. plastic netting, packing solutions, safety equipment)

Visualization of Target Industries

Overall, this report paints a promising picture for Pictou County and provides critical insights for finalizing a value proposition for the region and for setting the context for strategy development moving forward.

The following Venn Diagram offers a summary visualization of key business opportunities and the overlap between the three principal industries identified and explicated in this report:



Pictou County SWOT Analysis

The graphic below illustrates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) identified for Pictou County.

Strengths

- Abundant natural resources
- Ocean access
- Historical presence of manufacturing industry with the skilled workforce
- Proximity to trade routes
- Strong transportation infrastructure
- Short commutes
- "Boardroom to Beach"

Weaknesses

- Lack of sites suitable for major industrial developments
- Few zoning regulations or requirements
- Pessimistic view of regional potential among residents
- Lack of common narrative or value proposition for investors

Opportunities

- Aquaculture and Blue Economy
- Bio Economy - Bio Fuel
- Advanced Manufacturing in housing and ship building
- Exploring potential of supporting critical minerals with manufactured goods
- Being the supply chain centre for developments in neighbouring counties
- Industry-academic collaboration with NSCC and other schools
- Collabration with neighboring counties to attract larger investments, share expertise, and create strategies together

Threats

- Rising temperatures in the Northumberland Strait
- Fish diseases and parasites
- Public resistance to change or development
- Lack of awareness of Pictou County's unique value proposition among investors
- Competition from other green energy centres

Jurisdictional Scan

The following jurisdictional scan examines the target sectors in regions with similar economic and geographic characteristics to Pictou County, identifying best practices and key lessons learned.

Overview of Jurisdiction	Key Takeaways for Pictou County
Jurisdiction Prince Edward Island **Priority Sector** Shellfish Aquaculture Prince Edward Island (PEI) has a robust aquaculture sector focused on mussels, oysters, and salmonids. Since the late 1970s, its value has risen from under $5 million in 1980 to approximately $50 million in 2022, with 90% from shellfish. In 2022, PEI's shellfish aquaculture represented 53% of Canada's total tonnage and 36% of its total value.	Pictou County shares key assets with PEI, including proximity to the Northumberland Strait and research institutions, enhancing its aquaculture potential. PEI's streamlined aquaculture lease process has boosted growth, while Nova Scotia's lack of a similar system has hindered development. Pictou County could advocate for improved leasing with neighbouring counties. Aquaculture businesses on PEI benefit from an active industry organization that offers workforce and funding support and shares best practices. In Nova Scotia, the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia (AANS) serves a similar role, but it should enhance its outreach efforts to address skepticism surrounding aquaculture in the province. PEI demonstrates that the development of a large base of shellfish growers and processors can yield wider economic growth and investment appeal in ancillary or support sectors. These businesses support sea farmers by offering scientific services like gene sequencing, modernized hatcheries, and manufactured goods such as netting and safety equipment. Additionally, the expansion of the sector has created demand for businesses specializing in on-site servicing, installation, oversight, and repair of farms and equipment.

Overview of Jurisdiction	Key Takeaways for Pictou County
Jurisdiction Stephenville, Newfoundland **Priority Sector** Renewable Energy Stephenville has experienced cycles of decline and revitalization, previously reliant on a paper mill operated by Abitibi-Consolidated. After the mill closed in 2006, the town's population fell from 7,109 in 2001 to 6,623 in 2016. Recently, the town has seen growing interest and investment in green technology. This is illustrated by "Project Nujio'qonik GH2," launched in 2022 by World Energy GHS Ltd., which will create a 164-turbine wind farm and a hydrogen/ammonia production facility powered by wind energy.	Stephenville shares many regional assets with Pictou County: national resource advantage, a private port, and infrastructure/facilities from a decommissioned pulp and paper site. Each of these distinguished Stephenville from surrounding areas and were vital for attracting large companies such as World Energy and its partner FDI contributors (e.g. SK Ecoplant). The Stephenville case highlights the importance of proactive federal and provincial support for emerging wind and hydrogen industries. This includes streamlining regulatory processes and fostering demand by enhancing diplomatic ties with potential international buyers. For Pictou County, the focus is on securing long-term demand for hydrogen from the Point Tupper site and potential local production. World Energy gained support for its project by linking it to local community development and addressing public concerns through several key initiatives. These included collaborating with Indigenous communities to ensure long-term benefits, such as capacity-building and sustainable involvement throughout the project's lifecycle; creating a fund to support affected communities and secure federal and provincial matching funds; emphasizing local job opportunities; donating over $400,000 to non-profits; and partnering with educational institutions to provide training and employment opportunities. These strategies could be shared by PCP with potential investors or stored in a "strategy bank" to enhance public support for large projects. Project Nujio'qonik GH2 highlights potential offtake and spin-off opportunities in decarbonization. Pictou County is well-suited for green steel manufacturing due to its more robust infrastructure. The project sourced electrolysers, which split water into hydrogen and oxygen, from SK Ecoplant in South Korea. This highlights the potential to attract similar companies to establish local production and collaborate with regional academic institutions to develop a skilled workforce, following Newfoundland's model with the College of the North Atlantic (CAN) for training Hydrogen Technicians.

Overview of Jurisdiction	Key Takeaways for Pictou County
Jurisdiction Holyrood, Newfoundland and Labrador **Priority Sector** Ocean Technology Holyrood benefits from strong transport links via the Trans-Canada Highway and Conception Bay Highway, enhancing access to St. John's, the capital, and beyond. Its proximity to the Labrador Current supports essential maritime research. By prioritizing the oceans sector, Holyrood fosters collaboration between academia and industry, driving global innovations with practical applications.	The Oceans Holyrood Initiative (OHI) leveraged geographic and academic assets to attract businesses and promote growth in the ocean technology sector, aiming to transform the area into a hub for ocean-related activities aligned with strategic economic goals. Partnerships between the Marine Institute of Memorial University and industry stakeholders have enhanced Holyrood's reputation as an innovation center, aligning research and education initiatives with market needs. Federal and provincial government support through funding, tax incentives, and policy facilitation is essential for the ocean technology sector. This assistance has helped small businesses thrive and attracted larger enterprises, fostering innovation, and expanding the local economy, highlighting the impact of targeted policies on sector growth. Investments in facilities like the Blue Ocean Business Park, The Launch, and the expanded Holyrood Marine Base (HMB) provide state-of-the-art resources for research, development, and testing. These infrastructures support the ocean tech community and attract new enterprises to the region.

Overview of Jurisdiction	Key Takeaways for Pictou County
Jurisdiction Woodstock, Ontario **Priority Sector** Advanced Manufacturing Woodstock, Ontario, has a population of 40,902 (2021 Census), projected to reach 52,300 by 2031, benefiting from access via Highways 401 and 403 for manufacturing. The city has transitioned to advanced manufacturing, using digital controls, automation, and innovations like 3D printing and robotics. Ontario's manufacturing sector grew significantly from 2019 to 2022, reflecting Woodstock's thriving environment. Home to Toyota's assembly plant, Woodstock supports the local economy and aligns with provincial trends.	Woodstock has capitalized on its strategic location in southwestern Ontario, near major automotive companies and suppliers, to boost collaboration and access to advanced manufacturing technologies. By focusing on automotive manufacturing, Woodstock has strengthened its position in global manufacturing networks, with Toyota's assembly plant and local auto parts manufacturers driving this development. Pictou County could similarly expand its modular home manufacturing by adopting advanced techniques and sustainable practices, positioning itself as a leader in energy-efficient construction. Woodstock's proactive economic development, backed by government funding and policies like the Regional Development Program and Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit, has attracted significant private investment and driven technological upgrades. Pictou County could benefit from similar incentives to boost local investment and modernize its manufacturing sector. Woodstock has strengthened its manufacturing by emphasizing workforce upskilling through partnerships for training in CNC programming and robotics maintenance, keeping its workforce adaptable to modern technologies. Pictou County can implement similar training programs to align with its industrial goals, ensuring a skilled workforce ready for advanced manufacturing and transitioning traditional maritime skills to modern applications. Woodstock's access to clean electricity attracts environmentally conscious manufacturers. Similarly, clean energy developments in and around Pictou County could attract similar investments and eco-conscious producers.

Overview of Jurisdiction	Key Takeaways for Pictou County
Jurisdiction Maine, USA **Priority Sector** Biofuels and Pivoting of Forestry Industry Maine's economy relies on its forests, covering 89% of the state, supporting forestry and pulp and paper industries that provide 14,000 jobs and $5.7 billion in sales, with 79% exported. Following mill closures from 2014 to 2017, Maine is transitioning to renewable energy, particularly biofuels, with plans for biorefineries to convert wood into liquid fuels. However, federal legal restrictions limit the use of Maine wood as feedstock for projects participating in the Renewable Fuel Standard. As the oldest U.S. state by median age, Maine faces labor shortages; employers cite workforce availability as a barrier to growth, prompting calls for policies to attract new residents and workers.	Due to forestry's central role in Maine's economy, leaders have embraced forest-related activities by seeking new demand for wood products. Repurposing infrastructure from closed paper mills has been key to attracting investment. Hydrogen production has great potential but carries significant risks for businesses due to high capital investment and low mass demand. To address these challenges, Maine has partnered with neighboring states to strengthen a regional value proposition, share resources, and promote a global shift to sustainable fuels. Like Pictou County, Maine faces an aging workforce and labor scarcity. The state has launched new biofuels and bioplastics programs at the University of Maine and is funding worker relocation to attract talent.