

Proposal Summary: U.S. Department of Labor ApprenticeshipUSA Expansion Grant

The U.S. Department of Labor recently announced the availability of funding to help States expand and diversify Registered Apprenticeship and to strengthen the integration of Registered Apprenticeships into State economic, workforce, and education talent development systems.

Illinois is seeking \$3.0 million under this competition to increase the number of active Registered Apprentices by 606 within 18 months, which is the minimum 5% increase in participants as required by DOL. Additional funding is available for states to expand apprenticeships to non-traditional industry sectors and to individuals who historically have been underrepresented in Registered Apprenticeships. Illinois will be requesting funds in both of these categories.

In June 2016, the Illinois Workforce Investment Board designated a new Illinois Apprenticeship Standing Committee to recommend a comprehensive statewide apprenticeship system and oversee State-level planning and implementation projects. This 32-member Committee represents all key apprenticeship stakeholders and is are moving quickly to design an apprenticeship system for Illinois. This system, Illinois Apprenticeship Plus, offers multiple pathways to Registered Apprenticeships for employers and trainees: pre-apprenticeships, youth apprenticeships, and customized employer-based training. Taken together, these pathways represent an “apprenticeship scaffolding” that supports entry and progression toward Registered Apprenticeships.

Illinois’ proposal for ApprenticeshipUSA State Expansion funds seeks support for two major activities. First, to introduce the Illinois Apprenticeship Plus System statewide to all 10 economic development regions through a series of Apprenticeship Roundtables to which all key regional partners will be invited, including business and industry, economic development, workforce development and education. Feedback from these roundtables will be shared with the Illinois Apprenticeship Committee and used to refine the State’s Apprenticeship Plus System, develop a Request for Proposal for pilot initiatives under this expansion grant, and help frame the branding and promotion of Registered Apprenticeships in Illinois’ regions.

The second major activity is to support the funding of up to 40 pilot apprenticeship initiatives around Illinois, based on each of the 10 economic development regions identifying up to four initiatives addressing Registered Apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, youth apprenticeship, and customized employer-based training. This network of pilots will help connect apprenticeship initiatives to growth sectors identified in the State and regional unified WIOA plans; assist in raising awareness of apprenticeship pathways; create new opportunities for Registered Apprenticeships; and, with the Assistance of the Illinois Apprenticeship Committee, assist the State in building capacity and identifying ongoing technical assistance needs. The launch of the Apprenticeship Plus System will also help businesses use apprenticeships and other work-based learning models as they and local workforce partners seek to establish and implement regional sector-based approaches emerging from the recent WIOA regional planning processes around the state.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) will be responsible for data collection under this program and will manage this grant to put in place needed linkages and communication among the core WIOA agencies, the IWIB, and other stakeholders are robust.