



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity

OFFICE OF EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING
Bruce Rauner, Governor

Illinois Disability Employment Initiative Local Innovation Projects

**Request for Application
October, 2015**

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
Illinois Disability Employment Initiative
Request for Application

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. PROJECT GOALS: Through the Disability Employment Initiative, Illinois will create innovative employment preparation opportunities for individuals with disabilities, ages 14-24, through participation in career pathways. A career pathway is a series of articulated educational and training programs and services that enable adults and youth, often while they are working, to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in a given industry or occupational sector. An Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is a road map along the participant's career pathway designed to prepare students to progress to the next level of education and employment. Career pathways target jobs in high-demand industries in the local economies. They are designed to create both an avenue of advancement for workers, jobseekers, and new labor market entrants, as well as a supply of qualified workers for local and regional businesses.

Career Pathway Programs include one or more of the following components:

- Rigorous, sequential, connected, and efficient curricula that integrates basic education and occupational skills training;
- Multiple entry and exit points;
- Comprehensive support services, including career counseling, child care, and transportation;
- Financial supports or flexibility to accommodate the demands of the labor market in order to allow individuals to meet their ongoing financial needs and obligations;
- Specific focus on local workforce needs, aligned with the skill needs of targeted industry sectors important to local, regional, or state economies and reflective of the active engagement of businesses;
- Curricula and instructional strategies appropriate for youth and adults that make work a central context for learning and work readiness skills; and
- Offer credit for prior learning and other strategies that accelerate the educational and career advancement of the participant.

B. GRANTOR AGENCY: The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (The Department), as the state agency responsible for the administration of the Disability Employment Initiative awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor, is the entity issuing this Request for Application (RFA).

C. FUNDING: The funding amounts for proposals will be commensurate with the project anticipated outcomes and deliverables which will focus on services to individuals with disabilities. A typical grant will range from \$50,000 – \$100,000. Matching funds are not required; however, blending and braiding of funds is encouraged, and projects leveraging multiple funding sources will be given priority consideration. Grantees will be required to report leveraged resources from partners over the life of the project, including WIOA formula funds and other federal, state, local, and private resources.

D. TARGETED COMMUNITIES: The Department will consider projects that are targeted to Local Workforce Area #6 (DuPage County) and/or North/Northwest Suburban Cook County.

E. ELIGIBLE RESPONDENTS: Organizations with the administrative capacity and a track record of serving individuals with disabilities are eligible to apply for funding.

F. ELIGIBLE PROJECT PARTICIPANTS: Individuals with disabilities that meet the eligibility requirements under the Workforce Investment Act may be recruited and served through this grant. The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity is committed to providing preference to all United States veterans, their spouses and family members who are eligible in regard to all services needed for education and employment acquisition.

- G. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE:** The project period of performance will be negotiated based on the scope of the project. The typical grant term will be for 12-18 months.
- H. SCHEDULE:** Proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis followed by negotiations, as necessary. The Department anticipates making the first awards in December, but proposals will be accepted as long as funding remains.
- I. POSTING OF PROJECT INFORMATION:** Project information will be posted at www.IllinoisworkNet.com.
- J. AGENCY CONTACT:** Applications or any questions regarding this RFA, may be submitted via email to Matthew.Hillen@illinois.gov.

II. PROGRAM BACKGROUND & DESCRIPTION

A. Background

The goal of the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) is to help states implement strategic approaches for exemplary employment services to individuals with disabilities in the public workforce system. Through partnerships, the states will address the following goals: 1) Improve employment outcomes of youth and adults with disabilities and maximize their economic self-sufficiency through existing career pathways approaches implemented in the public workforce system; 2) Build on available career and training services provided in the Illinois workNet Center™ system and existing successful career pathways programs to add flexible and innovative strategies that increase the participation of individuals with disabilities in these programs; and 3) Create systemic change by expanding the capacity of the public workforce system to increase the participation of individuals with disabilities in existing career pathways programs, including the necessary partnerships, policies, and practices to sustain this capacity, and replicate these strategies throughout the public workforce system.

State statistics support the need for these solutions. Illinois has a large working age population of individuals with disabilities with low employment rates. According to the American Community Survey of 2011, of the 8,014,095 working-age people (ages 18 to 64) in Illinois, 659,300 (about 8.2 %) reported one or more disabilities. There are more than 433,436 (34.9%) working-age adult Illinoisans with disabilities who are not employed. Additional statistics indicate that 8.7% of individuals with disabilities in Illinois are seeking employment, while 57% are currently not in the labor force nor actively looking for work. That translates to almost 57,537 individuals with disabilities in Illinois (ages 18 to 64) who want to work, but are unable to find employment. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity received a 3-year grant to continue its efforts as a Disability Employment Initiative state and develop supports and services for individuals with disabilities to be successful in career pathways and careers.

DEI projects are intended to support extensive partnerships, collaboration, service coordination, alignment of curriculum and career planning across multiple education, workforce and disability systems in each state. These involve Illinois workNet Centers, state and local secondary and postsecondary school systems, state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies, mental health (MH), intellectual/developmental disability (I/DD) agencies, Medicaid, Medicaid Buy-In, and non-profit organizations.

B. Program Location

The Illinois DEI will serve individuals with disabilities, ages 14-24, and focus on their successful completion of existing career pathways culminating in the attainment of certificates and credentials and eventual employment. In collaboration with their education, vocational rehabilitation, and business partners, Local

Workforce Areas participating in the project include Local Area #6 (DuPage County) and a portion of Local Area #7 (North and Northwest Suburban Cook County).

C. Program Purpose

Through the DEI, the Illinois vision is to improve participation and employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities who are 14-24 years of age through the development of a job-driven, full inclusion career pathway model. Existing career pathways will be enhanced to include comprehensive supports, services and work-based learning opportunities through partnerships for individuals with disabilities. Illinois will accomplish this through two goals:

- By increasing the participation of in-school and out-of-school youth and adults in career pathways in participating high schools, community colleges, and local public workforce systems.
- By increasing the number of in-school and out-of-school youth and adults with disabilities (ages 14-24) attaining academic and technical skills, high school diplomas, career – related certificates/credentials/degrees and entering further postsecondary education and/or industry related employment with earnings comparable to all participants in career pathway programs.

D. Program Components/Strategies

Illinois and the local partners in Local Workforce Area 6 including College of DuPage, Downer’s Grove District #99, and Local Workforce Area 7 including Harper College, and District #214, working with their representatives from the Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services will implement the following DEI components as ways to increase education and employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities. These strategies are not mutually exclusive and complement each other in the context of Illinois’ overall implementation approach to providing individuals with disabilities with employment opportunities.

1) Partnerships

The Grantee shall coordinate with a variety of partners that impact the ability of in-school youth and out-of school youth and adults with disabilities to participate in education, training, and employment opportunities. Activities to meet this strategy include but are not limited to:

- Providing education and outreach for businesses and employers on the establishment of an in-business mentor and coaching program for individuals with disabilities and the value of hiring individuals with disabilities to the employer and job seeker.
- Developing relationships with business in the Information Technology sector to increase work-based learning and job placement opportunities.
- Developing relationships with parent and family organizations and student leadership/youth organizations to educate on career pathways and the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in these pathways and related organizations.

2) Transition/Guideposts for Success

The Grantee shall actively collaborate to address the needs of participants within the service structure called Guideposts for Success. Guideposts for success includes 5 principle areas: 1) School-based Preparatory Experiences; 2) Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences; 3) Youth Development and Leadership; 4) Connecting Activities; and 5) Family Involvement and Supports. These Guideposts were identified and published by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD) and, as an overall grant requirement, shall be implemented. More information relating to the Guideposts can be found at www.ncwd-youth.info/guideposts

3) Alignment of Youth and Adult Strategies

The Grantee activities will address the alignment of curricula, support services, career planning and preparation for youth and adults with disabilities in the key industry sector addressed by the project. Activities to meet this strategy include but are not limited to:

- Developing articulated career pathway content that aligns from 14 – 24 years of age in the secondary and postsecondary systems with multiple entry and exit points.
- Developing multiple instructional strategies that lead to certificates, credentials and job placement.
- Developing innovative support service delivery strategies as an integral part of the chosen career pathway curricula.
- Developing alternative career assessment and planning strategies for individuals with disabilities.

E. Program Outcome Goals

The outcomes included in this grant include service to WIOA-eligible participants, regardless of their enrollment into the WIOA program. Outcomes should be proposed and will be negotiated. All grantees must work with the Department to establish DEI activity benchmarks and project outcome targets for each project that will contribute toward statewide success for the entire Initiative. Preference will be given to projects that address multiple goals/outcomes and in general include: 1) enrollment and retention in the career pathway; 2) employment; 3) successful engagement in work-based learning opportunities; 4) attainment of certificates, diplomas and/or credentials in the project’s chosen career pathway(s); 5) successful transitions from secondary to postsecondary education, employment and/or additional training with the involved LWAs, etc.

F. Program Website & Additional Information

Additional information regarding Illinois’ Disability Employment Initiative is posted at www.IllinoisWorkNet.com. Additional background information regarding the National DEI initiative, funded by the US Department of Labor is posted at www.doleta.gov/disability/DEI.cfm.

III. PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

A. Project Coordination

The Department will consider innovative projects that will create and support the employment of individuals with disabilities. Grantees must work with the local partners and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to implement the project in coordination with the Disability Employment Initiative. The Grantee shall coordinate activity with the following requirements:

- Implement case management protocols for customers receiving DEI services using State of Illinois online information systems, or implement a partnership that addresses these protocols.
- Track and analyze outcome data to meet performance requirements using State of Illinois online information systems, or implement a partnership that addresses these requirements.
- Submit required reports in an accurate and timely fashion, including those necessitating the use of State of Illinois online fiscal information systems.
- Participate in all State-level DEI meetings as requested by the DEI Project Lead, including ongoing technical assistance to improve the project’s performance.
- Work with the US Department of Labor’s technical assistance and evaluation contractors as applicable and will collect and provide relevant data or other information identified as critical to the evaluation.

B. WIOA Eligibility & Performance

Grantees must work with their designated Local Workforce Area to comply with eligibility, reporting and performance related requirements and demonstrate that a viable approach to meeting these requirements has been developed with the Local Workforce Area. In instances when the grantee is a Local Workforce Area, current negotiated performance measures will apply. Applicants proposing projects that provide services to WIOA clients must partner with a qualified WIOA provider unless the applicant is a recognized provider with an

established history of successfully serving WIOA clients. Non-LWA applicants that are not qualified WIOA providers must enter into a Memorandum of Understanding developed and signed by the applicant and a Local Workforce Area that details at a minimum the applicant's and LWA's roles and responsibilities related to recruitment, eligibility determination, enrollment, and performance requirements, and strategies. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) final regulations are currently under Development by the United States Department of Labor and are expected by January of 2016. Projects awarded prior to release of final regulations are subject to adjustments and modifications needed for compliance. More information about WIOA can be found at: <http://www.doleta.gov/wioa/> .

C. Allowable Costs

Costs that are necessary and reasonable and allocable based on the activity or activities contained in the scope of work. Funding for the activities outlined in this RFA will come from federal funds and is subject to State and federal legislative appropriation. Grantees are advised to contact the Department for technical assistance with questions or concerns prior to incurring costs.

D. Project Reporting

Successful bidders will be required to submit regular reports to document the progress of the project as part of the grant requirements. These reports include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Quarterly Progress Reports
- WIOA registrant information and reports for projects serving WIA registrants using the Illinois Workforce Development System, Illinois workNet™, or other reporting process as directed by the Department of Commerce
- Quarterly Trial Balance Report
- Other reporting deemed necessary by Illinois Department of Commerce or the United States Department of Labor.

E. Pre-Award Survey

Applicants that have not received a state-issued WIOA grant prior to this RFA are subject to a Pre-Award Survey to be conducted by Department fiscal monitors. The survey will be completed prior to the grant being issued. The purpose of the review is to establish confidence the organization has the operational capacity to administer federal grant funds.

F. Monitoring

Organizations funded through this RFA are subject to fiscal and programmatic monitoring visits by the Illinois Department of Commerce. The organization must have an open door policy to allow for periodic visits by Department monitors to evaluate the progress of the project, and provide documentation upon request of the monitor. Program staff will also maintain contact with the participating businesses and monitor progress and performance of the contracts. The Department may modify grants based on performance.

G. Additional Requirement

All Respondents must be in compliance, or agree to comply, with the following federal and state laws and related regulations in order to be considered for an award:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Public Law 113-128) including but not limited to
- Equal Employment Opportunity / Nondiscrimination Provision and will comply with the physical, programmatic and accessibility requirements.
- Protection of Personally Identifiable Information
- Jobs for Veteran Act (Public Law 107-288)
- Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973 as amended (42 U.S.C 4001)

- Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 as amended (42 U.S.C. 4151)
- Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, (41 U.S.C. 702 et seq., and 2 C.F.R. § 182)
- Hotel Motel Fire Safety Act (15 U.S.C. 2225a)
- Buy American Act (41 U.S.C 10a)
- Copeland "Anti-Kickback" Act (18 U.S.C. 874 and 40 U.S.C. 276c)
- Davis-Bacon Act, as amended (40 U.S.C. 276a to a-7)
- Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act (40 U.S.C. 327-333)
- Rights to Inventions Made Under a Contract or Agreement
- Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.) and the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.), as amended
- Byrd Anti-Lobbying Amendment (31 U.S.C. 1352)
- Uniform Administrative Requirements found at 2 CFR Part 200 and the US Department of Labor Exceptions found at 2 CFR 2900
- Applicable State of Illinois Laws
- State Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Policies

IV. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

A. SUBMITTAL OF GRANT APPLICATION:

Proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis followed by negotiations, as necessary, beginning October 15, 2015.

B. APPLICATION FORMAT:

Applications must be submitted using the Department of Commerce Grant Application posted alongside this document on IllinoisworkNet.com, completing all applicable Sections. Each applicant must provide a technical proposal that responds to the following questions that pertain to the grant application. Please note that the Executive Summary, Technical Proposal and Implementation Plan are to be submitted as attachments to the "Standard" Department of Commerce Grant Application.

1. Executive Summary

Provide a one page summary that identifies the applicant, the amount of funding requested, describe the geographic region, identify members of the regional partnership including education and training agencies, regional employers, business and industry associations, economic development organizations, one-stop partners, organized labor, and others determined appropriate. Provide an overview of the services that will be provided and describes the anticipated goals and outcomes of this project.

2. Technical Proposal

Provide a technical proposal that responds to the following questions that pertain to the grant application.

Applicant Capacity

- Describe the related experience of the applicant and partners responding to the RFA. If any of the work is to be sub-contracted, describe the relevant experience of the sub-contractors.
- Provide information about the applicant's size and structure, as well as the length of time in business.
- Include a list of the applicant's staff, including sub-contractor personnel, to be assigned to the project. Describe the role each staff person will fulfill. Indicate the number of hours each staff will be assigned to the project. Provide resumes for all project staff. Indicate, at a minimum, their

positions in the organization, total years with the organization, education, and relevant work experience.

- Include references for projects recently completed or underway that required skills and experience similar to those required for this proposed project. Provide contact information for references.

Documentation of Need

- Provide a detailed explanation of how this organization meets the priorities specified in the Program Description of the RFA
- Describe your connection to the population (program participants) targeted in this proposal. How many program participants will be served and how will they be identified / recruited?

Project Work Plan

- Identify the service or types of training and the method for delivery
- Provide detailed information about the service or training provider(s) selected for this project including but not limited to:
 - a. Where will the service or training take place?
 - b. Who will provide the service or training?
 - c. What is the duration of service or training?
- Describe in detail the tasks, deliverables and anticipated outcomes.
- If your project includes training services, explain how you will assure that the training provider is accredited and will successfully fulfill their duties.
- For projects that are serving WIOA registrants and the applicant is not a Local Workforce Area, a Memorandum of Understanding must be developed and signed by the applicant and Local Workforce Area that details at a minimum the Local Workforce Area's role and responsibilities related to recruitment, eligibility determination, enrollment, and performance requirements and strategies. Attach Partnership Agreements (as opposed to Letters of Support) with all key partners detailing entity information and contact information, responsibilities, functions, and coordination.

3. Implementation Plan

While the narrative requirements cited above are to describe each task in considerable detail, the implementation schedule is intended to describe project tasks in more general terms. In the grant application, list key project activities in the first column. In the second column, indicate the timelines for completion of the activities. Timelines may be specified by the week of the project (e.g., such as week 1, week 2, etc.) or by specific dates. In the third column, indicate the staff, either by name or by title, responsible for performing the activities. Indicate the organizational affiliation of each staff person listed. In the fourth column, indicate the "level of effort" (e.g., number of work hours) needed to complete the activities. And, in the fifth column, describe any deliverable associated with the project activity.

C. Required Attachments

- Standard DCEO Grant Application
- Executive Summary
- Technical Proposal
- Resumes of Program Staff
- Partnership Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding
- Grantee Information
 - For an LLC, classified as a corporation, and IRS letter CP277 must be submitted

- Copy of the organization's 501(c)3 approval letter (if applicable)
- W-9 Form

V. REVIEW & SELECTION PROCEDURES

The proposals will be reviewed by a team of Department of Commerce staff using the criteria listed below. Decisions to award grants and the funding levels will be determined per proposal based upon compliance with the requirements of this RFA. Based on the review, applicants may be selected to enter into negotiations with the Department for a grant. The purpose of negotiations will be to arrive at acceptable grant terms, including budgetary and scope-of-work provisions, at which time the final decision to make a grant award will be made.

A. Applicant Capacity (30%)

- The applicants' capacity to successfully complete the project tasks within the proposed grant period
- The related experience of the applicant, sub-contractors, and partners
- The applicants' previous performance in administering similar grants and projects
- The qualifications of the applicants' staff to be assigned to the project

B. Documentation of Need (10%)

- The proposed project is aligned with the State and local Disability Employment Initiative program
- Demonstrated historic connection to the population targeted in the proposal
- Alignment of expected outcomes to the RFA.

C. Project Quality / Coordination (40%)

- The types of services and the method of delivery that will be implemented by the grantee, including any partnerships implemented to deliver services.
- The number of participants, companies served, the participant recruitment plan, and the services provided to priority populations
- The quality of the education/training providers and education/training outcomes (industry recognized skills, certifications)
- Coordination with key partners and strength of the partnership agreements / MOUs
- The overall feasibility and quality of the work plan
- Does the project result in client placement in permanent employment and/or continuing education

D. Cost Effectiveness / Return on Investment (20%)

- The proposed project costs in relationship to planned outcomes including cost per participant
- The reasonableness of the costs in relation to the proposed activities
- The applicants' commitment to secure the required leveraged and matching costs
- Identified specific work placements for permanent employment

The Illinois Department of Commerce reserves the right to request additional information from applicants during the scoring process if the project or budget information provided is unclear to the review team. The Department, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to reject all applications; to reject individual applications for failure to meet any requirement; to award in part or total; and to waive minor defects and non-compliance. Submission of an application confers no right to an award or to a subsequent grant agreement. All decisions of the Department are final.