

**Illinois Disability Employment Initiative
Local Innovation Projects**

**Request for Application
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Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

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Illinois Disability Employment Initiative
Request for Application

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

- A. **PROJECT GOALS:** Through the Disability Employment Initiative, Illinois will work to create innovative employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
- B. **GRANTOR AGENCY:** The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), as the state agency responsible for the administration of the Disability Employment Initiative (under grant number MI-25168-13-75-A-17 awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor), is the entity issuing this Request for Application (RFA).
- C. **FUNDING:** Proposals should range between \$50,000 to \$100,000 and focus on services to individuals with disabilities. Matching funds are not required; however, grantees will be required to document and report leveraged resources from partners over the life of the project, including WIA formula funds and other federal, state, local, and private resources.
- D. **TARGETED COMMUNITIES:** The Department will consider projects that are targeted to Local Workforce Investment Area #1 (Lake County) and/or Local Workforce Investment Area #25 (Perry, Jackson, Jefferson, Franklin and Williamson Counties).
- 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.
- 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.
- 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. State statistics support the need for these solutions. There are only 34.9% of individuals with disabilities employed in Illinois, while this is slightly higher than the national average of 33.7%; there is still a great need for employment and training opportunities. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity received a 3-year grant (number MI-25168-13-75-A-17) to continue its efforts as a Disability Employment Initiative state and pilot solutions that remove barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities.

DEI projects are intended to support extensive partnerships, collaboration and service coordination across multiple workforce and disability systems in each state. These involve state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies, mental health (MH), intellectual/developmental disability (I/DD) agencies, Medicaid, Medicaid Buy-In, Home and Community-Based waivers, and other Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) supported activities, independent living centers (ILCs), business leadership networks (BLNs), and other community-based and nonprofit organizations.

B. Program Location

The Illinois DEI will serve individuals with disabilities, ages 18-64 and in addition to partnership strategies, will include integrating financial literacy and integrated resource teams into the service delivery model of the Illinois workNet® Center. These strategies will be used to implement a broader range of services from On-the-Job Training opportunities and self-employment to integrated employment strategies for individuals with disabilities. LWIAs eligible to participate in the project include LWIA 1 (Lake County), and LWIA 25 (Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Perry, and Williamson Counties).

C. Program Purpose

Through the DEI, the Illinois vision is to improve employer access to skilled workers with disabilities while expanding the skills of our Illinois workforce. Illinois will accomplish this through two goals:

- By creating innovative employment opportunities through partnerships which build a workforce development model that will become the new state standard for excellence, and
- By increasing the number of job seekers with disabilities being served, trained and employed through Illinois workNet Center and partner services.

D. Program Components

Illinois and the local partners in LWIA 1 and LWIA 25 will implement the following core DEI components identified by the US Department of Labor 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 adults and youth with disabilities to successfully participate in education, training, and employment opportunities. Activities to meet this strategy include but are not limited to:

- a. Conducting education and outreach to businesses, the disability community, and service organizations on workforce services, collaboration opportunities, and the benefits to both the organization and the jobseeker.
- b. Developing relationships with businesses in key sectors to increase work-based learning opportunities based on customer skills, such as self-employment, Customized Training, or On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunities. Key sectors include agriculture, health care, information technology, manufacturing, shipping/receiving, and transportation.
- c. Creating an implementation plan with local level partners.

- d. Directing resource coordination for individuals with disabilities who require a more intensive level of support through the following steps:
 - i. Identifying jobseeker customers with multiple resource needs and enrolling the jobseeker in WIA core/intensive/training services with a special emphasis on career exploration and resource planning.
 - ii. Providing active resource coordination for each individual customer to identify and respond to specific challenges impacting that individual’s ability to obtain and maintain meaningful employment.
 - iii. Engaging in ongoing communication with the customer and other service providers during plan implementation, with a minimum of 30 day contact to be recorded in the DEI implementation site
- 2) Asset Development /Financial Literacy
 The Grantee shall provide financial literacy information and services to assist customers in accessing beneficial programs and resources. These may include SSA Work Incentives and benefits, Medicaid Works, Earned Income Tax Credits and other programs which promote financial stability and self-sufficiency.
- 3) Employment & Training
 The Grantee shall focus on a broad range of services to meet the employment and training needs of individuals with disabilities, including:
- a. Expanding relationships with businesses in growth sectors by ensuring and expediting accessible application processes, and promoting access to education and training in demand occupations.
 - b. Revising WIA enrollment procedures to remove any procedural barriers to services for individuals with disabilities on a case-by-case basis.
 - c. Leveraging WIA funds to provide self-employment, customized, incumbent worker, and on-the-job training in growth sectors. Projects that focus on self-employment or customized employment are encouraged.
 - d. Developing training/career pathways opportunities in key sectors such as agriculture, health care, information technology, manufacturing, shipping/receiving, and transportation.
 - e. Augmenting the available resources of individual jobseekers by providing intensive services as appropriate, online services through Illinois workNet, assistance with transportation, assistive technology and accommodations. This includes incorporating Group Discovery as part of the assessment process.
 - f. Increasing the number of individuals with disabilities being served simultaneously by multiple stakeholder agencies to reach common goals.

The participating LWIAs will benefit from a variety of tools to enhance traditional WIA services for individuals with disabilities that include financial management, housing and transportation and providing a full suite of employment and training services. Participating LWIAs will receive support from an on-site Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) that will assist in the implementation of the project

E. Program Outcome Goals

The outcomes included in this grant include service to WIA-eligible participants, regardless of their enrollment into the WIA program. The following table outlines the statewide projected DEI outcomes as a combined result of this program in Local Workforce Investment Areas 1 and 25. 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.

Performance Goal	Projected 3-Year Increase of Individuals with disabilities accessing WIA Services
Entered employment rate	60%
Retention rate	80%
Six-months' average earnings	\$12,500
Average wages	\$12.00/hr
Increased wages	\$8.25/hr
Numbers of participants to receive core services	270
Numbers of participants to receive intensive services	220
Numbers of participants to receive training services	94
Education outcomes	92
Number earning an industry-recognized credential	79
Increase in the number of individuals with disabilities, including those receiving SSI and SSDI benefits, served through the Illinois workNet Center service delivery system in the state	1075
Number of Illinois workNet Centers customers with disabilities who are co-enrolled with Illinois workNet Center partners	170

Further information regarding the how targeted performance goals are defined under DEI can be found at our RFA Outreach page: <http://www.illinoisworknet.com/deirfa>.

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 or at <http://www.dei-ideas.org>.

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.
- Track and analyze outcome data to meet performance requirements using State of Illinois online information systems.
- Submit required program reports in an accurate and timely fashion using State of Illinois online information systems.
- Participate in all State-level DEI Project Lead meetings as requested including ongoing technical assistance to improve the projects 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. WIA Eligibility & Performance

These grantees must work with the LWIA 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 Investment Area. In instances when the grantee is an LWIA, current negotiated performance measures will apply. Applicants proposing projects that provide services to WIA clients must partner with a qualified WIA provider unless the applicant is a recognized provider with an established history of successfully serving WIA clients. Non-LWIA applicants that are not qualified WIA providers must enter into a Memorandum of Understanding developed and signed by the applicant and a Local Workforce Investment Area that details at a minimum the applicant's and LWIA's roles and responsibilities related to recruitment, eligibility determination, enrollment, and performance requirements, and strategies.

- WIA Eligibility for Title IB of the WIA Guide: http://www.illinoisworknet.com/Policies/00-PL-12/version_2/00-12Change2EligibilityforTitleIBoftheWIA-Guide.PDF
- Workforce Investment Act (WIA) regulations at 20 CFR Parts 667.200 and 667.410 <http://www.doleta.gov/regs/statutes/finalrule.htm>

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
- WIA registrant information and reports for projects serving WIA registrants using the Illinois Workforce Development System, Illinois workNet, or other reporting process as directed by DCEO
- Expenditure Reports
- Quarterly Trial Balance Report

E. Pre-Award Survey

Applicants that have not received a DCEO WIA grant prior to this RFA are subject to a Pre-Award Survey to be conducted by DCEO 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. The organization must have an open door policy to allow for periodic visits to evaluate the progress of the project, and provide documentation upon request of the monitor. DCEO's Office of Employment and Training will oversee the implementation of grants resulting from this RFA. Program staff will also maintain contact with the participating businesses and monitor progress and performance of the contracts. DCEO may modify grants based on performance.

G. Additional WIA Requirements

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 Investment Act
- Equal Employment Opportunity
- 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)
- Debarment and Suspension (E.O.s 12549 and 12689)
- Applicable State of Illinois Laws
- State WIA Policies
- 20 CFR Parts 667.200 and 667.410
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, as amended, and other relevant laws

IV. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

A. SUBMITTAL OF GRANT APPLICATION:

Proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis followed by negotiations, as necessary.

B. APPLICATION FORMAT:

Applications must be submitted using the attached DCEO Grant Application, 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” DCEO Application.

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.

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 WIA registrants and the applicant is not a LWIA, a Memorandum of Understanding must be developed and signed by the applicant and Local Workforce Investment Area that details at a minimum the LWIA'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.

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 DCEO 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 DCEO for a grant. The purpose of negotiations will be to arrive at acceptable grant terms, including budgetary and scope-of-work provisions. The final decision to make a grant award will be made by DCEO.

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 DEI 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
- The number of participants served, the participant recruitment plan, and the services provided to priority populations
- The quality of the training providers and training outcomes (employment opportunities, industry recognized skills, certifications, etc.)
- Coordination with key partners and strength of the partnership agreements / MOUs
- The overall feasibility and quality of the work plan
- Does the result of the project / training result in client placement in permanent employment

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

DCEO 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.

DCEO, 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 DCEO are final.