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# Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund

Legislative Report  
2023 Minn. Laws, Chap. 53, Art. 15, Sec. 31, Subd. 9  
01/15/2024

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# Background

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During the 2023 Legislative Session, the legislature created the Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund (ERAF) at the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). The ERAF creates a central fund where small to mid-sized Minnesota employers can request reimbursement for expenses related to providing reasonable accommodations for job applicants and employees with disabilities. The ERAF's purpose is to encourage employment of people with disabilities by reducing any perceived or real financial barriers.

An employer is eligible to apply for accommodation reimbursement under this program if the following conditions are met:

- The employer's business is domiciled within the legal boundaries of Minnesota and has its principal place of business as identified in its certificate of incorporation in the state of Minnesota;
- The business employs not more than 500 employees on any business day during the preceding calendar year; and
- The business generates \$5,000,000 or less in gross annual revenue.

Only reasonable accommodations made for an individual with a disability, either a job applicant or employee, will be considered for reimbursement. Employers must certify on the application form that the reasonable accommodations were made for a qualifying job applicant or employee. No personal identifiable information will be collected about the individual with a disability, outside of general demographic information for tracking and reporting purposes.

The types of accommodations are:

- Auditory or Communicative Aids (e.g. amplified telephones, captioning, sign language interpreters, communication boards)
- Cognitive Aids (e.g. job coaching, task boards)
- Mobility Aids (e.g. ramps, standing devices, walkers, assist rails)
- Motor Aids (e.g. doorknob latch extenders, adapted writing utensils, dictation software, page turners)
- Visual Aids (e.g. Braille printers, screen reading software, magnifiers)
- Other

The maximum total reimbursement per eligible employer in a state fiscal year (July 1-June 30) is \$30,000. This amount includes both one-time and ongoing reasonable accommodation expenses. Submissions for one-time reasonable accommodation expenses must be no less than \$250 and no more than \$15,000 per individual with a disability. If an employer submits a reimbursement for more than the maximum amount, ERAF will only reimburse up the \$15,000 limit. One-time expenses are those expenses that are only made one time, such as a purchase of an item or device.

ERAF is a two-year pilot program from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2025. This program is appropriated \$4,000,000. The commissioner may use up to 20 percent of the biennial appropriation for administration, marketing, and providing technical assistance to employers.

# Eligible Applications

Fifteen applications were approved for three employers in the amount of \$27,406.54.

**Table - Eligible Applications**

<b>Employer</b>	<b>Amount Approved</b>
Oleb Media LLC	\$16,551.73
Stevens County Economic Improvement Commission	\$4,147.39
North Star Law Group PLCC	\$6,707.42
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$27,406.54</b>

**Table - Eligible Accommodations**

<b>Number of approved applications</b>	15
<b>Number of approved employers (some employers submitted multiple applications)</b>	3
<b>Type of approved accommodations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cognitive aids: 4</li><li>• Mobility aids: 3</li><li>• Motor aids: 2</li><li>• Visual aids: 3</li><li>• Other: 3</li></ul>	

## Ineligible Applications

Nine applications in the amount of \$179,722.43 were denied. Applications were denied from the following employers: Minnesota Freedom Fund, Asian Media Access, Building Black Legacy, HempNfibers, Alexandria Motels Inc. dba Quality Inn and Suites, Realief Neuropathy Centers of MN PA, and Aspen Healthcare Services.

**Table - Ineligible Applications and Accommodations**

<b>Number of denied applications</b>	9
<b>Number of denied employers (some employers submitted multiple applications)</b>	7
<b>Denial reasons:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Amount requested is under the \$250 minimum: 1</li><li>• Invoice dated prior to the fiscal year: 2</li><li>• Missing or insufficient documentation for proof of purchase or cost: 3</li><li>• Not a reasonable accommodation under the definition of state law: 3</li></ul>	
<b>Type of denied accommodations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Auditory or Communicative Aids: 1</li><li>• Cognitive aids: 2</li><li>• Mobility aids: 2</li><li>• Other: 4</li></ul>	

## Remaining Balance

As of 1/1/2024 there is a remaining balance of \$1,939,139 for fiscal year 2024. Of that amount \$366,546 is available for administrative expenses and \$1,572,593 is available for employer reimbursements.