

## Minnesota Job Skills Partnership Grant Request for Proposal

### Overview

The Minnesota Job Skills Partnership (MJSP) Board, through the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), is soliciting grant applications for grant funding for new and incumbent worker training programs. MJSP will accept applications for the Partnership and Pathways Programs. In addition, applications for Pre-Development grants for the Partnership Program will be considered. DEED is committed to empowering the growth of the Minnesota economy for everyone. DEED facilitates an economic environment to produce jobs and improve the quality of the state's workforce.

### Funding Availability

Approximately \$6.6 million is available for distribution for SFY 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025). To provide for multiple funding cycles, the board may authorize less than the available funds at any board meeting.

The maximum grant award for the Partnership and Pathways programs is \$400,000. A Short-Form application is available for Partnership or Pathways grant requests of up to \$50,000. The maximum grant award for Pre-Development grants is \$50,000.

### Program Descriptions

Partnership Program: The purpose of the Partnership Program is to act as a catalyst between business and education in developing cooperative training projects that provide training for new or incumbent workers. Funds are used to develop and deliver training that is specific to business needs.

Pathways Program: The purpose of the Pathways Program is to act as a catalyst between business and education in developing cooperative training projects that provide training, new jobs and career paths for individuals who are at or below 200% of federal poverty guidelines or those who are making the transition from public assistance to the workforce.

Pre-Development Grants: Pre-Development grants assist in covering costs associated with planning a specific, large-scale Partnership project. A pre-development grant must demonstrate that the project will address education and skills training for high-wage, high-growth, and high-skill occupations, businesses, and industries. In addition, a pre-development grant should demonstrate that the training institution will develop a significant amount of new capacity.

### Priorities

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to ensure fairness, precision, equity and consistency in competitive grant awards. This includes implementing diversity and inclusion in grant-making. Policy 08-02: Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally identify how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities and/or disparities. MJSP recognizes the importance of reducing disparities and is committed to encouraging diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. For both the Partnership and Pathways programs, preference will be given to institutions that serve economically disadvantaged people, people of color, people with disabilities, or those who are victims of economic dislocation, and to businesses located in rural areas. Additionally, MJSP strongly encourages and prioritizes proposals that include training related to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

In addition, further preference will be given to Pathways projects that:

- Provide employment with paid benefits for employees.
- Provide employment where there are defined career paths for trainees.
- Pilot the development of an educational pathway that can be used on a continuing basis, which helps people make the transition from public assistance directly to work.
- Demonstrate the active participation of Department of Employment and Economic Development CareerForce centers, community-based organizations that serve Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, and local human service agencies. It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to ensure fairness, precision, equity and consistency in competitive grant awards. This includes implementing diversity and inclusion in grant-making.

### **Eligibility**

MJSP may provide Partnership and Pathways grants to post-secondary educational institutions/training providers within the state that are accredited through institutional or specialized accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Eligible Pathways applicants also include workforce development intermediaries partnering with an accredited provider of training. Workforce development intermediaries are defined as public, private, or nonprofit entities that provide employment services to low-income individuals and have a demonstrated track record bringing together employers and workers, private and public funding streams, and other stakeholders to implement pathways to career advancement for low-income individuals. Entities may include, but are not limited to, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, or the administrative entity of a local workforce service area.

Pathways funds may only be used to train individuals who are making a transition from public assistance to work or individuals at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

All eligible Partnership and Pathways projects must also include the active participation of one or more Minnesota businesses. The project must involve training that is an area of employment need. Training must consist primarily of new or customized curriculum that is specific to participating business needs and must be provided by accredited Minnesota training institutions. A participating business is limited to one active grant in each grant program at any given time, with the exception of businesses that have multiple locations or businesses engaged in projects that involve a consortium of businesses.

Pre-Development grant applications must include the active participation of private employers within the state and must demonstrate that the grant will be used to increase the applicant's knowledge in the areas of employment need, skills training, and education for the purpose of developing a Partnership grant proposal for a project that will address education and skills training for high wage, high growth, and high skill occupations, businesses and industries. In addition, a pre-development grant application should demonstrate that the training institution will develop a significant amount of new capacity. Eligible applicants are post-secondary educational institutions/training providers within the state that are accredited through institutional or specialized accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Very few projects qualify for pre-development funds. As such, any potential pre-development grant applications should be discussed with MJSP staff prior to the submission of a proposal.

### **Match Requirements**

Partnership grant funds must be matched by contributions from one or more participating businesses on at least a one-to-one ratio. Pathways grant funds must be matched by contributions from one or more participating businesses on at least a one-half-to-one ratio. The match may be in the form of cash or in-

kind contributions directly related to the training project. An in-kind contribution is a donation of goods, services, or time.

### **Collaboration**

Collaborations between multiple training institutions and/or businesses are welcome. For Pathways grants, collaboration with public, private, or nonprofit entities that provide employment services to low-income individuals and have a demonstrated track record bringing together employers and workers, private and public funding streams, and other stakeholders to implement pathways to career advancement for low-income individuals is encouraged.

### **Selection Criteria and Weight**

Grant applications are reviewed, evaluated, and scored by MJSP staff based on the following criteria. MJSP staff provides final scores and funding recommendations to the MJSP Board. The MJSP Board reviews all staff recommendations and is responsible for award decisions. The 12-member board of directors represent Minnesota businesses, labor, government, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions. The award decisions of the MJSP Board are final and not subject to appeal.

#### Regular Partnership and Pathways grant applications (grants over \$50,000):

- Project Design (20 points) – Points are given for cash contributions from business; grantee/linkage contributions; a training plan that is consistent with stated objectives; and reasonable costs.
- Equity and Economic Opportunity (90 points) – Points are given for percent of people of color in trainee population; gender equity in the trainee population; BIPOC, woman or veteran-owned businesses; businesses with formal diversity, equity, and inclusion plans; diversity, equity, and inclusion training included; wage rates; training that provides durable skills; recruitment of economically-disadvantaged people or people with disabilities; increased wages as a result of training; and meaningful/stackable credentials or certifications.
- Economic Development (65 points) – Points are given for creation of new jobs; projects assisting new or expanding businesses; projects assisting base or emerging industries; businesses located in rural areas; projects assisting innovative businesses; training that assists in the implementation of new technology; projects that identify measurable outcomes for the business; and strong indication that training will result in the retention of jobs at risk.
- Capacity Building (40 points) – Points are given for development of new curriculum; collaboration between educational institutions; development of new credit-based certificate program; educational institution acquiring training specific equipment/technology; projects that utilize innovative training approaches; projects that provide the educational institution with exposure to a new industry or important business partnerships; and evidence that curriculum will be utilized beyond the grant period.

#### Short Form Partnership and Pathways grant applications (grants of \$50,000 or less):

- Project Design (15 points) – Points are given for demonstration of need for training; a training plan that is consistent with stated objectives; and reasonable costs.
- Equity and Economic Opportunity (75 points) – Points are given for percent of people of color in trainee population; gender equity in the trainee population; BIPOC, woman or veteran-owned businesses; diversity, equity, and inclusion training included; wage rates; training that provides durable skills; increased wages as a result of training; and meaningful/stackable credentials or certifications.

- Economic Development (50 points) – Points are given for creation of new jobs; projects assisting small businesses; projects assisting new or expanding businesses; projects assisting base or emerging industries; businesses located in rural areas; projects assisting innovative businesses; training that assists in the implementation of new technology; and strong indication that training will result in the retention of jobs at risk.
- Capacity Building (20 points) – Points are given for development of new curriculum; educational institution acquiring training specific equipment/technology; and projects that utilize innovative training approaches.

Pre-Development grant applications:

- Project includes financial commitments from other parties (1 point)
- Project will assist economically disadvantaged people or those who are victims of economic dislocation (1 point)
- Project will assist businesses located in rural areas (1 point)
- Project will address new technology or an emerging industry (1 point)
- The work plan and budget align with the stated objectives (1 point)

### **Required Financial and Grantee Capacity Review**

Minn. Stat. §16B.981/[Chapter 62 - MN Laws](#), Article 7, Section 11 requires that a pre-award risk assessment is conducted for grant awards of \$50,000 or more.

All grantees as defined in [Minn. Stat. §16B.981](#) Subd. 1 (c) applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must undergo a financial and capacity review prior to a grant award of \$50,000 and higher. This requirement does not apply to potential grantees that are State agencies.

In order to comply with this requirement, the following information and documents will need to be submitted before the grant contract agreement is fully executed for potential grantees that are not State agencies:

- I. **Certification: No current principals have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last ten years: All potential grantees**
- II. **Evidence of good standing: For-profit and nonprofit potential grantees**
  - For-profit and nonprofit grantees: Filed and up-to-date with the Secretary of State
- III. **Nonprofit grantee required documents, as applicable**
  - Most recent Form 990 or Form 990-EZ
  - Most recent audited financial statement of a charitable organization which has received total revenue in excess of \$750,000 for the 12 months of operations covered by the statement per [Minn. Stat. §309.53](#)
  - Most recent board-reviewed (or managing group if applicable) financial statements, description of internal controls over business expenditures and outcomes of grant funds, if awarded, and evidence of exemption
- IV. **For-profit certification disclosure and required documents, as applicable**
  - Most recent federal and state tax returns:
    - If not in business long enough to have a tax return, description of internal controls over business expenditures and outcomes of grant funds, if awarded

- Current financial statements
- Certification that business is not under bankruptcy proceedings
- Disclosure of any liens on assets

The submission of inaccurate or misleading information may be grounds for disqualification from the grant contract agreement award and may subject an organization to suspension or debarment proceedings, as well as other remedies available to the State, by law.

Based on Minn. Stat. §16B.981/[Chapter 62 - MN Laws](#), Article 7, Section 11, Subd. 3-5 establishes the authority for a granting agency to:

- Provide or require enhanced grant oversight
- Request additional information from a potential grantee to determine whether there is a substantial risk that the potential grantee cannot or would not perform the required duties of the grant agreement.
  - The potential grantee has 30 business days to respond
- Develop a plan to address the risk or concerns identified
- Not award the grant.
  - The granting agency must provide notice of this determination to not award the grant to the grantee and the Commissioner of Administration.
  - The notice must include the following:
    - The reason for postponing/not awarding the grant
    - The timeline for the process for contesting the agency's decision

## Questions

Questions may be submitted by email or phone to Fun Fun Cheng at [FunFun.Cheng@state.mn.us](mailto:FunFun.Cheng@state.mn.us), 651-259-7514.

## Application Content

Applicants must submit the following in order for the application to be considered complete:

- Grant application forms (see links below)
- Budget forms (see links below)
- If applicable, certification no current principals have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last ten years
- If applicable, Evidence of Good Standing
- If applicable, Nonprofit Grantee Required Documents
- If applicable, For-Profit Certification Disclosure and Required Documents

For Partnership and Pathways grant applications, download the following instructions and forms:

- [Partnership/Pathways Grant Application Guide](#) (Updated 6/24)
- [Partnership/Pathways Grant Application Forms](#) (Updated 6/24)
- [Partnership/Pathways Budget Forms](#) (Updated 11/20)

For Short Form grant applications, download the following instructions and forms:

- [Partnership/Pathways Short Form Application Guide](#) (Updated 6/24)
- [Partnership/Pathways Short Form Application Forms](#) (Updated 6/24)
- [Partnership/Pathways Budget Forms](#) (Updated 11/20)

For Pre-Development grant applications, download the following instructions and forms:

- [Pre-Development Grant Application Instructions and Forms](#) (Updated 6/24)

### Application Submission

The deadline for the submission of regular grant applications is **4:30 pm, Central Time, on Tuesday, January 21, 2025**. Short Form and Pre-Development applications must be submitted by **4:30 pm, Central Time, on Monday, February 10, 2025**. Late applications will not be considered. The applicant will incur all costs incurred in applying to this RFP.

Applications must be submitted via email to the Department of Employment and Economic Development, Minnesota Job Skills Partnership office at [deed.mjsp@state.mn.us](mailto:deed.mjsp@state.mn.us) as one file, including attachments, in a pdf format.

Only applications received by the deadlines posted above will be eligible for consideration at the March 3, 2025, MJSP Board meeting. If you do not receive an email confirming the receipt of your application within 24 hours of submission, contact MJSP immediately at 651-259-7514. In the event of technical issues or delays, an exception may be considered upon MJSP’s receipt of sufficient evidence that an attempt was made to submit the application to the correct email address by the application deadline and provided MJSP is notified within 24 hours of the application deadline that a confirmation email was not received.

### Review Process and Timeline

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process. MJSP staff will evaluate all eligible and complete applications received by the deadline. The MJSP board of directors will review staff recommendations and is responsible for funding decisions. The 12-member board of directors represent Minnesota businesses, labor, government, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions. Funding decisions will be made at the March 3, 2025, MJSP board meeting. All funding decisions are final. If selected, you may only incur eligible expenditures once the grant contract agreement is fully executed and the grant has reached its effective date.

RFP posted on the DEED website	December 13, 2024
Regular applications due by 4:30 pm central time	January 21, 2025
Short Form/Pre-Development applications due by 4:30 pm central time	February 10, 2025
Staff begins review of applications	January 22, 2025
Selected applicants undergo pre-award risk assessment	February 18, 2025
Applicants submitted to MJSP Board for review	February 21, 2025
Funding decisions made by MJSP board	March 3, 2025
Selected grantees notified; grant agreement negotiations begin	March 4, 2025
Contracts executed no later than	May 2, 2025

### Conflicts of Interest

State grant policy requires that steps and procedures are in place to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers per [Minn. Stat. §16B.98 Subd. 2-3](#) and [08-01 Conflict of Interest in State Grant-Making Policy](#).

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- a grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to the Department due to competing duties or loyalties
- a grantee’s or applicant’s objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties

In cases where a conflict of interest is in question or disclosed, the applicants or grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to, revising the grant work plan or grantee duties to mitigate the risk, requesting the grant applicant to submit an organizational conflict of interest mitigation plan, disqualification from eligibility for the grant award, amending the grant, or termination of the grant contract agreement.

### **Public Data**

Per [Minn. Stat. § 13.599](#)

- Names and addresses of grant applicants and amount requested will be public data once proposal responses are opened.
- All remaining data in proposal responses (except trade secret data as defined and classified in [§13.37](#)) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed. For the purposes of this grant, data will be considered public when all the grant contract agreements have been fully executed.
- All data created or maintained by [State agency] as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret data as defined and classified in [§13.37](#)) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed. For the purposes of this grant, Data will be considered public when all the grant contract agreements have been fully executed

### **Grant Provisions**

Grant contract agreement templates are available for review at: [Office of Grants Management Policies, Statutes, and Forms/Forms and FAQs tab](#)

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services and payroll taxes
- Lobbyists, political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds
- Parking violations and traffic violations
- Out of state transportation and travel expenses. Minnesota will be considered the home state for determining whether travel is out of state.

### **Accountability and Reporting**

In addition to providing the deliverables outlined and approved in the grant application, grant recipients will be required to submit reports on a trimestral basis. The reports include a Narrative Report indicating how the project is progressing, a Financial Report outlining the costs incurred during the report period per DEED policy, a Request for Reimbursement outlining the amount to be reimbursed by MJSP, and the Project Trainee Report outlining the training status of project participants.

Participating businesses are required to complete the Receipt Voucher for In-Kind Contributions form on a regular basis outlining their contributions towards the project, a Contributing Business Status report due every other trimester outlining how the project is progressing, and a Contributing Business Program Evaluation Report at the conclusion of the project indicating their satisfaction with the project results and any measurable outcomes resulting from the project.

Grant recipients are required to provide for the dissemination of summary results of a grant-funded project, including information about curriculum and all supporting materials developed in conjunction with the grant.

Additional information regarding reporting requirements are available on our [website](#) in the [Guide to Program Operations](#) and [Contributing Business Handbook](#) (under Grant Management). It is recommended that all applicants review these requirements with the participating businesses prior to submitting a grant proposal.

### **Grant Payments**

Per [Policy 08-08](#) reimbursement is the preferred method for making grant payments. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. The State shall review each request for reimbursement against the approved grant budget, grant expenditures to-date and the latest grant progress report before approving payment. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless DEED has given the grantee a written extension.

### **Grant Monitoring**

[Minn. Stat. §16B.97](#) and [Policy 08-10](#) Grant Monitoring require the following:

- One monitoring visit during the grant period on all state grants of \$50,000 and higher
- Annual monitoring visits during the grant period on all grants of \$250,000 and higher

### **Grantee Bidding Requirements**

Per [Minn. Stat. §136F.58, Subd. 1](#), Minnesota State Colleges and Universities are subject to the provisions of section [471.345](#), and in addition to the contracting authority under chapter 136F, the board may utilize any contracting options available to the commissioner of administration under chapter 16A, 16B, or 16C.

For grantees that are non-governmental organizations or for-profit businesses, any grant-funded services and/or materials that are expected to cost:

- \$100,000 or more must undergo a formal notice and bidding process.
- Between \$25,000 and \$99,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of three (3) verbal quotes or bids.
- Between \$10,000 and \$24,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of two (2) verbal quotes or bids or awarded to a targeted vendor.

The grantee must take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that targeted vendors from businesses with active certifications through these entities are used when possible:

- [State Department of Administration's Certified Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Vendor List](#)
- Metropolitan Council's Targeted Vendor list: [Minnesota Unified Certification Program](#)
- Small Business Certification Program through Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and City of St. Paul: [Central Certification Program](#)

The grantee must maintain:

- Written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award and administration of contracts.
- Support documentation of the purchasing and/or bidding process utilized to contract services in their financial records, including support documentation of verbal quotes or bids and justifying a single/sole source bid, if applicable.

The grantee must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred in MN: [Suspended/Debarred Vendor Information](#)



For grant-funded projects that include construction work of \$25,000 or more, prevailing wage rules apply per; [Minn. Stat. §§177.41](#) through [177.44](#). These rules require that the wages of laborers and workers should be comparable to wages paid for similar work in the community as a whole.

### **Audits**

Per [Minn. Stat. §16B.98](#) Subdivision 8, the grantee's books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the grantee or other party that are relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the Commissioner of Administration, the state granting agency and either the legislative auditor or the state auditor, as appropriate. This requirement will last for a minimum of six years from the grant contract agreement end date, receipt, and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

### **Affirmative Action and Non-Discrimination Requirements for all Grantees**

- A. The grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. [Minn. Stat. §363A.02](#). The grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.
- B. The grantee must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The grantee agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and otherwise treat qualified disabled persons without discrimination based upon their physical or mental disability in all employment practices such as the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship. Minnesota Rules, part [5000.3500](#)
- C. The grantee agrees to comply with the rules and relevant orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued pursuant to the Minnesota Human Rights Act.

### **Voter Registration Requirement**

The grantee will comply with [Minn. Stat. §201.162](#) by providing voter registration services for its employees and for the public served by the grantee.

### **Contact Information: For more information about this RFP, contact:**

Department of Employment & Economic Development  
Fun Fun Cheng  
Program Administrator, MN Job Skills Partnership  
Great Northern Building  
180 E 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 1200  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
Email: [FunFun.Cheng@state.mn.us](mailto:FunFun.Cheng@state.mn.us)