

Targeted Populations- Diversity and Inclusion for Small Employers Competitive Grants

Request for Proposals

Important Dates

RFP Release: February 1, 2024

Informational Webinar or Meeting Information: Friday, February 9, 2024 10:30AM CST
<https://minnesota.webex.com/minnesota/j.php?MTID=m49616f25128ddaf97ccaf565bb32ee65>

All content will be made available online at <https://mn.gov/deed/about/contracts/open-rfp.jsp>.

Proposals Due: Applications will be accepted on a continual basis until all funds have been awarded. No more than \$1,425,000 will be awarded before July 1, 2024.

Proposals must be received via email. Proposals should be submitted in .pdf format to adultcompetitivegrants.deed@state.mn.us

Grant Decision Made: Applications will be reviewed, at minimum, on a quarterly basis. See timeline on page 10 of this document.

Grant Decision Communicated: Awards will be made, at minimum, on a quarterly basis. See timeline on page 10 of this document.

Contract End Date: 12/31/2025

Disclaimer: All costs incurred in responding to the Request for Proposal (RFP) will be borne by the responder. This RFP does not obligate the State to award a contract or complete the project. The State also receives the right to cancel the solicitation if it is considered to be in its best interests.

Alternative Format: Upon request, these materials will be made available in alternative formats.

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Grant Request for Proposal

INTRODUCTION

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (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.

Within DEED's Employment & Training Division, programs will be focused on awarding proposals that place an emphasis on the following:

Equity

DEED's Employment & Training Division programs seek to build an inclusive, skilled workforce and reduce disparities based on race, disability, and gender.

- Training participants with the most significant barriers to employment and ensuring participants have equal access to training and employment opportunities.
- Ensuring that organizations serving hardest to serve populations reflect the community accessing the services and incorporate human-centered design into their programs.
- Reducing and eliminating disparities by empowering all members of our workforce will result in a more equitable and prosperous Minnesota for individuals, families, businesses, and communities.

Innovation

DEED's Employment & Training Division recognizes that new solutions must be developed to respond to new and ongoing challenges in our workforce and communities.

- Programs that are mission-driven, utilizing best practices while having an innovation mindset to creatively imagine and apply new approaches to success.
- Clearly show the development of innovative approaches to outreach and recruitment, reaching those who have been disconnected and disenfranchised from the workforce.
- Designing and implementing new efficient and effective systems for workforce development programs that address skills shortages, remove barriers to lifelong learning, and help workers improve their employability.
- DEED will facilitate the growth of innovative programs by providing resources to ensure the programs ability to grow and expand.

Performance

DEED's Employment & Training Division programs are built on a foundation of partnerships, most significantly between program providers and employers to further develop opportunities for participants and increase provider performance.

- **Employment/Job Placement:** Employer partners that will offer livable wage jobs and job advancement to program participants.
- **Job Retention:** Programs that provide intentional support for participants to retain employment and advance in their chosen field.
- **Median Earnings:** Programs that pursue training and/or development that target industries and jobs with livable wages.
- **Credential Attainment Rate:** Programs that yield measurable results demonstrated by attainment of foundational skills and industry specific qualifications.

Objective of RFP

The Office of Adult Career Pathways, an office within the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, is soliciting applications for funding Diversity and Inclusion training to eligible Minnesota small businesses to increase their ability to engage, hire, and retain people of color in a variety of roles.

Funds Available

As authorized [in Minnesota Session Laws - 2023, Regular Session, Chapter 53, Article 20, Sec.2 Subd. 3 \(b2\)](#) up to \$1,500,000¹ per year for State Fiscal Years (SFY) 2024-2025 is available for grants under the Targeted Populations Diversity and Equity for Small Employers Competitive Grants.

Grant size and scope

- \$1,425,000 each State Fiscal Year is available for award.
- Applications are limited to a maximum of **\$30,000** total for the biennium.
- Businesses are limited to one award per biennium.
- Applications will be accepted on a continual basis according to the [timeline](#) until all funds have been awarded.
- No more than \$1,425,000 will be awarded before July 1, 2024.
- Sections [116J.993](#) to [116J.995](#) does not apply to assistance received under this grant program.

Technical Assistance

For technical assistance in interpreting instructions and to submit questions, contact: Vanessa Roman
Email: Vanessa.Roman@state.mn.us. Questions must be submitted in writing via e-mail. For additional resources please see [Adult Career Pathways](#) webpage.

Each week, DEED staff will post responses to frequently asked questions on DEED's website by way of the Competitive Grants and Contracts page: <https://mn.gov/deed/about/contracts/open-rfp.jsp>.

Individuals with disabilities who need alternative formats can contact DEED at 651-259-7578 for assistance.

¹ DEED will use five (5) percent of the \$1,500,000 each year to administer and monitor this program.

SCOPE OF WORK

Overview

Eligibility

The Targeted Populations Workforce Grants are outlined within [Minnesota Statute 116L.43](#) and govern the eligibility of these grants. Per this legislation, **small businesses** are the only eligible applicants for this program.

As defined in [Minnesota Statute 645.445](#) a "small business" means a business entity organized for profit, including but not limited to any individual, partnership, corporation, joint venture, association or cooperative, which entity:

(1) is not an affiliate or subsidiary of a business dominant in its field of operation; and

(2) has 20 or fewer full-time employees; or

(3) in the preceding fiscal year has not had more than the equivalent of \$1,000,000 in annual gross revenues; or

(4) if the business is a technical or professional service, shall not have had more than the equivalent of \$2,500,000 in annual gross revenues in the preceding fiscal year.:

All applicants must be currently operating, have been in operation for at least one year at the time of application, have a business filing with the Minnesota Secretary of State in good standing, and have a physical business presence in the state of Minnesota at time of application.

Collaboration

Partnerships are encouraged. All partners receiving compensation from the grant must be listed within the application.

Tasks/Deliverables

- Submit a quarterly narrative that describes progress of the grant (due the 30th of the month following the end of the quarter). Complete all reports and data requests within a timely manner.
- Actively participate in evaluation and data collection efforts that assess the impact of this initiative.
- Submit a diversity and inclusion implementation plan after the training is completed, required before final invoice will be reimbursed.
- Submit monthly Reimbursement Payment Request Forms (RPRs) to designated contact within DEED. RPRs must accurately reflect actual grant expenditures and obligations consistent with rates of participation which grant administrators will be able to track.
- All RPR's must be accompanied by supporting documentation for the charges incurred.
- Comply with applicable state and Federal requirements/policies. Applicable policies may include but are not limited to: Federal Regulations, DEED policies, State Statutes, Uniform Guidance, and

the Office of Grants Management Policies.

Expectations

The expectation for all grants under this RFP is to provide small businesses the opportunity to obtain diversity and inclusion training, resulting in the ability to develop and implement a plan to actively engage, hire, and retain people of color for both entry-level and high-wage opportunities, including management and board of director positions.

PROPOSALS

Proposals must conform to all instructions, conditions, and requirements included in the RFP. Responders are expected to examine all documentation and other requirements. Failure to observe the terms and conditions in completion of the Proposal are at the Responder's risk and may, at the discretion of the State, result in disqualification of the Proposal. Acceptable Proposals must offer all services identified in [Scope of Work](#) and agree to the contract conditions specified throughout the RFP.

Application Submission

The application and all required forms must be filled out in entirety, or the submission will not be considered for funding.

Submission and Due Date

Applications will be accepted on a continual basis until all funds have been awarded. No more than \$1,425,000 will be awarded before July 1, 2024.

Applications must be submitted to AdultCompetitiveGrants.Deed@state.mn.us.

Incomplete applications will not be considered.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND SELECTION

Overview of Evaluation Methodology

The review committee will be reviewing each proposal on a 100-point scale. The scoring factors and weight that applications will be judged on are based on the responses to the application questions and required forms within the application packet.

[Application Packet](#)

1. *Cover Sheet*: 5 points
2. *Narrative Responses*: 90 points
3. *Budget*: 5 points

The review committee will consist of DEED staff and community members with expertise in Workforce Development, Education and Training, and/or program specific Business and Industry and will evaluate all eligible and complete applications received by the deadline.

The Commissioner of DEED will review all committee recommendations and is responsible for award decisions. The Commissioner of DEED reserves the right to prioritize resources to proposals that address racial equity and geographical location, and to increase or decrease the amount of the funding requested. The award decisions of DEED are final and not subject to appeal.

In accordance with Minnesota Department of Administration, Office of Grants Management (OGM) [Operating Policy and Procedure Number 08-13](#), past performance on awarded and closed Minnesota state grants will be considered when evaluating proposals for future grants. New Grantees will not be held to this policy, and former Grantees who have met outcomes as defined in the grant contract will be considered compliant.

Conflicts of Interest

DEED will take steps to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to organizations submitting proposals and reviewers, per Minn.Stat. [§16B.98](#) and Office of Grants Management Policy 08-01 Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making. When a conflict of interest concerning state grant making exists, transparency shall be the guiding principle in addressing it.

In cases where a conflict of interest is suspected, disclosed, or discovered by DEED, applicants or grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to disqualification from eligibility for the grant award, or termination of the grant agreement. In cases where a potential or actual conflict of interest is discovered by the applicant, they must notify the state.

Applicants must complete the Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure within the application packet.

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, when all grant agreements have been fully executed).
- All data created or maintained by the Department 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, when all grant agreements have been fully executed).

Selection and Notification of Successful Applicant(s)

Applications will be reviewed, at minimum, on a quarterly basis. The timeline below is given as an approximation.

Applications Received	Applications Reviewed	Awards Announced
February 1, 2024 -March 31, 2024	April 2024	April/May 2024
April 1, 2024-June 30, 2024	July 2024	July/August 2024
July 1, 2024-September 30, 2024	October 2024	October/November 2024
October 1, 2024-December 31, 2024	January 2025	January/February 2025
January 1, 2025-March 31, 2025	April 2025	April/May 2025

If selected, you may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant contract agreement is fully executed, and the grant has reached its effective date.

All grant awards will be on a reimbursement basis and all invoices must be substantiated with documentation of eligible expenditures.

POST-SELECTION REQUIREMENTS

Tax Identification and UEI Numbers

DEED grantees are required to have both state and federal tax identification numbers and a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number created in SAM.gov. A UEI number is a unique, twelve-digit identification number for each physical location of your business. UEI numbers are free for all state vendors and can be obtained via the SAM.gov website, linked [here](#).

Vendor Registration

Grant recipients new to DEED-funded grants must complete a grant agreement before DEED will disburse any funds. The State of Minnesota's accounting and procurement system is called State-Wide Integrated Financial Tools (SWIFT). Every organization or sub-grantee doing business with the state is considered a vendor. Vendors must be registered with the State of Minnesota. Vendors can interact with the state through the [Supplier Portal](#), which is part of SWIFT. The Supplier Portal allows vendors to login and view payment detail as well as maintain address and contact information related to their vendor record. For new prospective grantees (vendors), if you are awarded a grant, it will be necessary to register as vendor via the [Vendor Registration link](#).

Other State and Federal Requirements

DEED grantees must also comply with all state and federal requirements including, but not limited to:

- Worker's compensation;
- Affirmative action;
- Data privacy;
- Equal Employment Opportunity;
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA);
- Voter Registration;
- Unemployment Insurance*

*A grantee's Unemployment Insurance account must be current. Please complete the [Unemployment Insurance Account Waiver](#) as part of your application.

Financial Review

All Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must undergo a financial review prior to being offered a grant award of \$50,000 and higher. To comply with [State Policy 08-06](#) on the Financial Review of Nongovernmental Organizations please submit one of the following documents with your proposal, based on the following criteria:

- NGOs with annual income of under \$50,000, or who have not been in existence long enough to have a completed IRS Form 990 or audit should submit their most recent board-reviewed financial statements.
- NGOs with total annual revenue of \$50,000 or more and less than \$750,000 should submit their most recent IRS Form 990.
- NGOs with total annual revenue of over \$750,000 should submit their most recent certified financial audit.

Bidding Requirements

Grantees are subject to bidding requirements for goods and services purchased under this grant. Goods and services that 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:

- [Certified Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Vendor List](#) – State Department of Administration
- [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Directory](#) – Minnesota Unified Certification Program
- [CERT Business List](#) – 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 justifying a single/sole source bid, if applicable.

The grantee **must not** contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred in MN listed [here](#).

Nondiscrimination/EO Assurance

Grant recipients must comply with state and federal civil rights laws and ensure nondiscrimination in programs and services receiving federal and state financial assistance.

Accountability and Reporting

Accountability and reporting information will be used to monitor grantee service delivery, confirm grant reimbursement requests, and measure performance. Grantees are also required to submit quarterly grant reports, and monthly financial reports each year of the grant period. All grant payment requests will require substantiation of eligible expenditures before payment.

This information will be used to monitor grantees' service delivery, confirm grant reimbursement requests, and measure performance.

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.