

Minnesota Job Skills Partnership

Request for Proposals

Important Dates

RFP Release: March 11, 2024

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

Proposals Due: Regular Partnership and Pathways grant applications must be received via email by **4:30 pm, Central Time, on Monday, May 6, 2024**. Short Form and Pre-Development applications must be received via email by **4:30 pm, Central Time, on Tuesday, May 28, 2024**. Proposals should be submitted to deed.mjsp@state.mn.us as one file, including attachments, in pdf format.

Grant Decision Made: June 17, 2024, at the MJSP board meeting.

Grant Decision Communicated: June 17, 2024, at the MJSP board meeting.

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.

Objective of RFP

The Minnesota Job Skills Partnership (MJSP) Board is soliciting 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.

Funds Available

Approximately \$6 million is available for distribution for the remainder of SFY 2024 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024). 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.

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process with review by staff and final funding decisions by the MJSP board of directors. All funding decisions are final. The 12-member board of directors represent Minnesota businesses, labor, government, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions. Funding decisions will be made at the June 17, 2024, MJSP board meeting.

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is available for interpreting instructions or preparing applications. Contact: Jodie Greising, 651-259-7517, Jodie.greising@state.mn.us.

MJSP Background

Created by the 1983 Legislature, the MJSP is a state agency administered by the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and governed by a 12-member board of directors who represent Minnesota businesses, labor, government, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions. The MJSP was created to act as a catalyst between Minnesota's post-secondary educational or other nonprofit training institutions and business/industry for the purpose of designing and implementing training programs that meet current and future employer needs and offer trainees long-term professional growth and economic opportunity.

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.

SCOPE OF WORK

Overview

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 grants 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 application should demonstrate that the training institution will develop a significant amount of new capacity. 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.

Tasks/Deliverables

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.

Target Population

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.

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.

Narrative Format

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

- [Partnership/Pathways Grant Application Guide](#) (Updated 3/22)
- [Partnership/Pathways Grant Application Forms](#) (Updated 3/22)
- [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 3/22)
- [Partnership/Pathways Short Form Application Forms](#) (Updated 3/22)
- [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 3/22)

Submission and Due Date

The deadline for the submission of regular grant applications is **4:30 pm, Central Time, on Monday, May 6, 2024**. Short Form and Pre-Development applications must be submitted by **4:30 pm, Central Time, on Tuesday, May 28, 2024**. Late applications will not be considered.

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 as one file, including attachments, in a pdf format. Only proposals received by the deadlines posted above will be eligible for consideration at the June 17, 2024 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 651-259-7517. 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.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND SELECTION

Overview of Evaluation Methodology

Grant applications are reviewed, evaluated, and scored by MJSP staff based on the following criteria. The evaluation form is available on our [website](#).

- **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.

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 award decisions of the MJSP Board are final and not subject to appeal.

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 a [Conflict of Interest Disclosure](#) and attach it to their proposal.

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)

Grant applicants will be informed of staff's funding recommendation prior to the board meeting. Final funding decisions are made by the Board at the scheduled MJSP board meetings. Applicants and their business partners are encouraged to attend the board meeting. For grant requests over \$50,000, applicants and their business partners will be given a time to present information on their proposal and answer questions from the board, immediately after which board members will make a funding decision.

Shortly after the board meeting, MJSP staff will send award letters with instructions and requirements for completing a legal grant agreement.

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](#).

Minnesota Department of Human Rights Workforce Certificates

Any business that employs 40 or more employees in a state and that seeks to enter into a contract with the State of Minnesota that is over \$100,000 or is likely to exceed \$100,000 needs to obtain a workforce certificate of compliance from the Minnesota Department of Human Rights. Please check the Minnesota Department of Human Rights website at <https://mn.gov/mdhr/certificates/> or contact them directly at compliance.mdhr@state.mn.us to determine if your organization needs to seek a workforce certificate of compliance.

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.

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 additional 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:** [Exhibit D](#)

- II. **Evidence of good standing: For-profit and nonprofit potential grantees: [Exhibit E](#)**
 - For-profit and nonprofit grantees: Filed and up-to-date with the Secretary of State

- III. **Nonprofit grantees as applicable: [DEED Pre-Award Risk Assessment for Non-Profit](#)**
 - 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: [Exhibit G](#)**
 - 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

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.

Grantees that are non-governmental organizations 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.

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.

Pathways grant recipients will also be required to complete applicant statement of income forms to verify participant eligibility.

Per [State Policy 08-08 on Grant Payments](#), 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 the state agency has given the grantee a written extension.

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 Monitoring

Minnesota Statutes [§16B.97](#) and State Policy on Grant Monitoring 08-10 require the following:

- One monitoring visit before final payment on all state grants of \$50,000 and higher
- Annual monitoring visits during the grant period on all grants of \$250,000 and higher
- Conducting a financial reconciliation of grantee's expenditures at least once before final payment on grants of \$50,000 and higher. For this purpose, the grantee must make expense receipts, employee timesheets, invoices, and any other supporting documents available upon request by the State.

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.

Checklist: Application Content and Instructions

MJSP Grant Application Forms

Complete the grant application forms provided by MJSP (see links provided on page 7). Be sure to include an authorized signature and date on the application.

MJSP Budget Forms

Complete the budget forms provided by MJSP (see links provided on page 7). A maximum of 10 percent of funding may be used for administrative overhead costs.

[Affidavit of non-collusion](#)

[Conflict of Interest Disclosure](#)