

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

### **Minnesota Job Skills Partnership**

**Date of Issuance: June 26, 2018**

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.

Short Form applications are available for grants of up to \$50,000. In addition, applications for Pre-Development grants for the Partnership Program will be considered.

#### Funding Availability

Approximately \$6 million is available for distribution for the remainder of FY 2019 (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019). In order 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 October 29, 2018 MJSP board meeting.

#### Submission Deadlines and Minimum Requirements

The deadline for the submission of regular applications is 4:30 p.m. on Monday, September 17, 2018. Short Form applications must be submitted by 4:30 p.m. on Monday, October 8, 2018. No late proposals will be considered.

Proposals must be submitted to Department of Employment and Economic Development, Business and Community Development Division, Minnesota Job Skills Partnership via email at [Brenda.buckles@state.mn.us](mailto:Brenda.buckles@state.mn.us). Only proposals received by the deadlines above will be eligible for consideration at the October 29, 2018 MJSP Board meeting. No exceptions will be made in the event of technical issues or delays.

## 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 non-profit 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.

## Eligibility Requirements

MJSP may provide Partnership and Pathways grants to 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

### Priorities

For both the Partnership and Pathways programs, preference will be given to institutions that serve economically disadvantaged people, minorities, or those who are victims of economic dislocation and to businesses located in rural areas.

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

- Provide employment with benefits paid to 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; and
- Demonstrate the active participation of Department of Employment and Economic Development workforce centers and local human service agencies.

### 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

Partnership and Pathways grant applications are scored based on the following criteria. Please note that the following list is offered as a guide and is not all-inclusive or in priority order.

- Project Design (25 points) – Points are given for cash contributions from business, grantee contributions, a concise training plan, reasonable costs and reasonable project timeframe.
- Economic Development (25 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 and strong indication that training will result in the retention of jobs at risk.
- Capacity Building (25 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, and evidence that curriculum will be utilized beyond the grant period.
- Economic Opportunity (25 points) – Points are given for wage rates, minorities in training population, training that provides durable skills, recruitment of economically disadvantaged individuals, increased wages as a result of training, and meaningful/transferrable certification.

### Financial Review Process

All Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) applying for grant in the state of Minnesota must undergo a financial review prior to a grant award made of \$25,000 or higher. In order to comply with [State Policy on the Financial Review of Nongovernmental Organizations](#), please submit one of the following with your application based on the following criteria:

- Grant applicants 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.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of \$50,000 or more and less than \$750,000 should submit their most recent IRS Form 990.

Grant applicants with total annual revenue of over \$750,000 should submit their most recent certified financial audit.

### Grant Application Content, Instructions and Forms

All organizations and institutions interested in submitting a proposal must adhere to the following conditions:

- Proposals must be typewritten, have numbered pages and a table of contents.
- Proposals may be no more than 20 pages. Appropriate attachments such as the budget, private sector commitment letters or letters of support may be submitted in addition to the 20-page limit.
- One original with authorized signatures and six copies of each proposal must be submitted.
- Proposals must be submitted using the format outlined in the grant proposal instructions.

Detailed application instructions and forms are available on our [website](#).

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

- [Partnership/Pathways Grant Application Guide](#)
- [Partnership/Pathways Grant Application Forms](#)
- [Partnership/Pathways Budget Forms](#)

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

- [Partnership/Pathways Short Application Instructions and Forms](#)
- [Partnership/Pathways Budget Forms](#)

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

- [Pre-Development Grant Application Instructions and Forms](#)

## Review and Award Process

Grant applications are reviewed and evaluated by the MJSP Director and staff. Final scores and recommended award amounts are reached by staff concurrence. Staff recommendations are made to the board according to the review criteria. Grant applicants will be informed of staff's funding recommendation prior to the board meeting. Final approval is made by the Board, at the scheduled MJSP board meetings. With the exception of Short Form applications, applicants and their business partners will be encouraged to attend the board meeting and will be given a time to present information on their proposal and answer board questions, 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.

## Conflicts of Interest

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

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- a grantee or grant applicant organization is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to DEED due to competing duties or loyalties
- a grantee's or grant applicant organization's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties
- a grantee or grant applicant organization has an unfair competitive advantage through being furnished unauthorized proprietary information or source selection information that is not available to all competitors.

Organizational conflicts include any individual part of the grantee or grant applicant organization.

Individual conflicts of interest occur when:

- a state employee, grantee, grant applicant organization, or grant reviewer uses his/her status or position to obtain special advantage, benefit, or access to the grantee or grant applicant organization's time, services, facilities, equipment, supplies, badge, uniform, prestige, or influence.

- a state employee or grant reviewer receives or accepts money or anything else of value from a grantee or grant applicant organization or has equity or a financial interest in or partial or whole ownership of an applicant organization.
- a state employee or a grant reviewer is an employee or board member of a grantee or grant applicant organization is an immediate family member of an owner, employee or board member of the grantee or applicant.

DEED or grant reviewers must act immediately upon any suggestion, inquiry, or intimation that a conflict of interest exists at any point in the grant process and steps must be taken to identify and avoid or mitigate any potential conflicts. The conflict of interest guidelines continue throughout the life of the grant agreement.

As part of the Request for Proposal process and to make the conflict of interest process fully transparent, the grant applicant must submit the attached conflict of interest disclosure form (attached.) If an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest has been identified on the form by the grant applicant organization, the applicant organization must submit a conflict of interest avoidance or mitigation plan. DEED will review the form and the grant applicant organization's conflict of interest avoidance or mitigation plan and other relevant facts, if needed, and then pursue actions to mitigate or neutralize the potential, perceived or actual organizational conflicts of interest. These may include, but not be limited to, disqualification from eligibility for the grant award; disqualification from future state grant awards; revising the grantee's duties so that the conflict is mitigated; allowing the grantee to propose the exclusion of task areas that create a conflict, if appropriate.

In cases where a perceived, potential, or actual conflict of interest is suspected, disclosed, or discovered by DEED after the grant award process has been completed, the grantee will be notified and the grantee allowed a reasonable opportunity to respond. If it is determined that an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest exists, as defined by policy or other relevant law, DEED will take appropriate steps to avoid the conflict of interest which may include termination of the grant agreement and/or disqualification from future state grant awards if it is determined that it improperly failed to disclose a known organizational conflict of interest or misrepresented information regarding such conflict. In cases where a perceived, potential, or actual conflict of interest is suspected, disclosed, or discovered by the grantee or grantee applicant, they must immediately notify DEED.

### Public Data

Per Minn.Stat.§ [13.599](#)

- Names and addresses of grant applicants 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.
- All data created or maintained by the DEED 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).

### Reporting Requirements

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, a Request for Payment 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 can be found in the [Guide to Program Operations](#) (under Info for Grantees) and [Contributing Business Handbook](#) (under Info for Businesses) available on our website. It is recommended that all applicants review these requirements with the participating businesses prior to submitting a grant proposal.

### Grant Payments

Per [State Policy 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.

### Grant Monitoring

Minnesota Statutes §[16B.97](#) and [State Policy on 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
- Conducting a financial reconciliation of grantee's expenditures at least once during the grant period 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 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 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.

### Contact Information

For more information about this RFP, contact:

Brenda Buckles  
Minnesota Job Skills Partnership  
MN Department of Employment and Economic Development  
1st National Bank Building  
332 Minnesota Street, Suite E200  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1351  
[Brenda.buckles@state.mn.us](mailto:Brenda.buckles@state.mn.us)  
651-259-7514

## **Conflict of Interest Disclosure for Grant Application**

Grant applicants must be familiar with the Office of Grants Management (OGM) [Policy 08-01. Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making](#) and must disclose any conflicts of interest that may exist during a grant review process. All applicants must complete and sign this conflict of interest disclosure form.

### **Definitions**

Please read the definitions of conflict of interest below and mark the appropriate boxes on the next page that pertain to you and your status.

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- An applicant is or will be unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to the Department due to competing duties or loyalties.
- An applicant's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties.
- A grantee or applicant has an unfair competitive advantage through obtaining unauthorized proprietary information or source selection information that is not available to all competitors.

Organizational conflicts include acts of any individual or group within the applicant organization.

Individual conflicts of interest occur when:

- A state employee or grant reviewer receives or accepts money or anything else of value from a grant applicant or has equity or a financial interest in, or partial or whole ownership of, an applicant organization.
- A state employee or a grant reviewer is an employee or board member of a grant applicant, or is an immediate family member of an owner, employee or board member of the applicant.
- A grant applicant offers or gives a state employee or grant reviewer special advantage, benefit, or access to time, services, facilities, equipment, supplies, badge, uniform, prestige, or influence.

Conflicts of interest should be reported even if they are only potential or perceived. A potential conflict of interest may exist if a relationship, affiliation, or other interest exists between an applicant and member of the selection committee, whether state employee or external reviewer, that could create an inappropriate influence if the person is called on to make a decision or recommendation. A perceived conflict of interest exists when a reasonable third party would conclude that conflicting duties or loyalties exist.

**As the authorized representative of my organization, I certify that I have read and understand the description of conflict of interests explained above and in OGM Policy\_08-01 and (check one of the two boxes below):**

- To the best of my knowledge, neither I nor my grant organization has an ACTUAL, POTENTIAL, or PERCEIVED conflict of interest with anyone involved in review or management of this grant.
  
- My grant organization does have an ACTUAL, POTENTIAL, or PERCEIVED conflict of interest. *(Please describe below):*

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If at any time after submission of this form, I or anyone in my organization discovers any conflict of interest(s) not reported here, we will disclose that conflict immediately to the appropriate agency or grant program personnel by updating this form and submitting it to **INSERT STATE'S AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE.**

Authorized representative's printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_