



Mississippi Valley Workforce Development Board

RETRAIN & RETAIN GRANT PROGRAM POLICY, GUIDELINES, AND PROCEDURES

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PURPOSE

The Mississippi Valley Workforce Development Board (MVWDB) establishes this local policy, guidance, and procedures for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) Program as outlined in WIOA Section 134 et.al. [29 U.S.C. 3174]. This program will be referred to as the Retrain & Retain (R&R) Grant Program in the Mississippi Valley Workforce Area (MVWA).

BACKGROUND

Incumbent Worker Definition - An Incumbent Worker is a person who is currently employed and could benefit themselves and their employer by upgrading their skills through training. The training should give the employee the opportunity for advancement and wage gains within their company. Incumbent Workers will be referred to in the R&R Grant Program as “employees.”

R&R Grants are designed to meet the special requirement of an employer to retain a skilled workforce or avert the need to lay off employees by assisting the workers in obtaining the skills necessary to retain employment. Grants provide both workers and employers with the opportunity to build and maintain a quality workforce. Mississippi Valley R&R Grant Program is a business-driven program designed to meet the needs of an employer or group of employers. There is an expectation that the employee will be promoted or retained by the company after they receive training. Ideally, this would also create additional back-fill opportunities for other workers.

The program is intended to offset a portion, via reimbursement, of the business’s cost to train and upgrade the skills of its employees. Eligible businesses must demonstrate that by receiving funding assistance through the program, their business will not only improve the skills of their workers but also improve their business processes and competitiveness and decrease the risk of permanent layoffs.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Grant funds are limited and therefore will be awarded through an application process. The maximum award per grant, per year, is \$10,000 and the initial training agreement duration may not exceed 12 months. The maximum award may be adjusted based on funding availability, each program year. A notification will be posted on www.mississippivalleyworkforce.org when funds are no longer available.

When workers lack necessary training and businesses experience skill gaps, the company's ability to compete, expand and retain workers can be compromised. Mississippi Valley R&R Grant Program addresses such needs. The Grant Program is to provide funding for continuing education and training of employees at existing Iowa businesses with physical locations in the MVWA. The program will provide reimbursement grants to businesses that pay for preapproved direct training-related costs.

The program helps established MVWA businesses to upgrade the skills of current employees, which provides enormous benefits including:

For employers:

- Increased Competitiveness
- Skilled Workforce
- Increased Productivity
- Increased Profits
- Company Growth
- Reduced Turnover

For employees:

- Advancement Opportunities
- Increased Job Opportunities
- Industry Recognized Credentials
- Job Retention
- Transportable/Transferrable Skills
- Improved Morale and Work Culture

ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES

An eligible employee is one who is directly employed by the company at a facility located within the MVWA and meets these requirements:

1. Employee must be at least 18 years of age.
2. A citizen of the United States or a non-citizen whose status permits employment in the United States
3. Employee must work at least 32 hours per week
4. Employee must have an established employment history with the employer for six months or more and receives a W-2.
5. Employee must be committed to attending all trainings.
6. Employee must earn an hourly wage above the state minimum wage.
7. Employee must agree to cooperate with data collection requirements.

*An employee does not have to meet the eligibility requirements for participation in career and

training services for Adults and Dislocated Workers under WIOA unless they are also enrolled as a participant in the WIOA Adult or Dislocated Worker program.

**There is an exception to the six-month requirement: In the event, R&R funding is being provided to a cohort of employees, not every employee in the cohort must have an established employment history with the employer for six months or more, as long as a majority (at least 51%) of those employees being trained meet the employment history requirement.

***R&R funding can also be used for underemployed if workers if the use of the funding focuses on increasing skills for underemployed frontline workers in an effort to advance these workers to more skilled positions with the same employer; or workers who would prefer full-time work but are working part-time for economic reasons.

INELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES

- Anyone who receives a 1099 Form: or
- Those who are placed through a temporary agency.

EMPLOYER ELIGIBILITY

Employers applying for an R&R Grant must meet the following criteria:

- Financially viable, private sector employers and certain nonprofit and local government entities (e.g., a nonprofit or county hospital) are eligible to receive R&R funds.
- The business or businesses must have been in operation for 12 months, not currently or recently experiencing bankruptcy, be current on all local, state, and federal tax obligations, and not appear on any federal suspensions or debarment lists.
- An eligible business must be located in Iowa and registered with the Iowa Secretary of State Office and have a physical location in the Mississippi Valley Workforce Area (MVWA).
- Businesses are encouraged to provide training to a group of employees and not individual training, although the number of employees in the company will be taken into consideration.
- Businesses should also demonstrate a commitment to retain or avert the layoff of employees receiving training.

Companies that are in the process of a layoff or have had a layoff in the last six months are not eligible for the R&R Grant Program (excludes temporary hires or contract workers.) If a layoff occurs in a company while they have an open R&R Grant, the current workers will be able to complete the training.

MULTIPLE BUSINESS APPLICATIONS

A group of employers who need the same training for their workers may submit a joint application. Multiple businesses can collaborate and apply for a collaborative training grant. The proposal for the common request must:

- Train employees of at least two different businesses, with one of those businesses designated as the Lead Applicant.
- Include employees of the Lead Applicant in the training.

- Include training descriptions and outcomes that address the employees from all businesses impacted by the proposed common training
- Include information on each business that will be part of the training.

A business may be treated as a single company or multiple companies depending on the number of locations and Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN). If each location operates under a different FEIN, each location will be considered a separate company and will need to submit separate applications to receive separate awards. If the locations operate under one FEIN, it will be considered one company and will therefore need to join its training efforts, submit one application, and receive one award.

INELIGIBLE EMPLOYERS

The following businesses are not eligible to apply for funds under this program:

- Not-for-profit agencies or organizations. [Note: This does not apply to hospitals operated by local government entities in the State of Iowa or nonprofit hospitals)
- Entities whose administrations only comprise volunteers.
- Local Workforce Development Boards and their administrative entities.
- Labor unions.
- Federal, state, county, or city governmental entities [Note: This does not apply to hospitals operated by local government entities in the State of Iowa or nonprofit hospitals)
- Businesses that received an R&R Grant award in the current program year.

FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

Funding considerations shall be given to the following:

- Businesses that provide employees with opportunities to acquire new or improved skills by earning a credential.
- Businesses whose grant proposals represent a significant upgrade in employee skills.
- The characteristics of the participants in the program, specifically the extent to which they historically represent individuals with barriers to employment as defined in WIOA sec. 3(24), and how they would benefit from retention or advancement.
- The employees' advancement opportunities along with wages and benefits (both pre-and post-training earnings).
- The existence of other training and advancement opportunities provided by the employer.
- Layoffs averted because of the training.
- Utilization as part of a larger sector and/or career pathway strategy; or
- Employer size

While these considerations do not include an increased reimbursement percentage, applications that meet one or more of these conditions will receive priority during

times of limited funding.

EMPLOYER'S COST-SHARING REQUIREMENT

Businesses will be required to provide a portion of the training costs dependent upon the size of the business and the number of employees either through direct cost contribution or in-kind contributions.

- At least 10% of the cost for employers with 50 or fewer employees.
- At least 25% of the cost for employers with 51 to 100 employees.
- At least 50% of the cost for employers with more than 100 employees.

The business must disclose cash and in-kind contributions. Examples of in-kind contributions, in addition to any direct costs, may include expenses associated with the use of space and equipment during the training project and trainee wages (including benefits) of employees during the training.

PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

The employer must agree to provide performance records and keep accurate records of the project's implementation process and certify that all information provided, to request reimbursements and report training activity, is accurate and true, including evidence that the business has paid the training expenses in accordance with the terms of the agreement prior to requesting reimbursement of allowable training costs. During the grant and/or the completion of the grant, businesses will be asked to provide the following:

- Employer will collect and supply all trainee documentation (e.g., proof of SSN, proof of citizenship/right to work, and proof of physical address, etc.) to MVWDB (before the start date of the training).
- All training sessions must have signed attendance sheets or digital confirmation of attendance. Trainee participation is required.
- Employee satisfaction surveys
- The business must submit to MVWDB copies of all credentials, certificates of completion, or other documentation of the employee's participation within 60 days of the end of training to be considered eligible for reimbursement.
- R&R Grant projects require monthly communication with a Business Services staff member on the status of the project.
- Upon training completion, each project requires one year of follow-up to track project outcomes (e.g., providing updated trainee wages and promotions).
- Employers submitting an R&R Grant application are agreeing to provide this information.

ALLOWABILITY OF USE OF R&R FUNDS

With proper documentation allowable costs for R&R Grants include (but are not limited to):

- Training/Course Registration

- Instructors/Trainer Salaries
- Curriculum Development
- Textbooks and Manuals
- Materials and Supplies
- Tuition Expenses
- Off-site Training Space (e.g., classroom rental)

Non-reimbursable costs include (but are not limited to):

- Administrative Costs
- Trainee's Wages
- Purchases of Capital Equipment or Capital Improvement
- Purchases of items or services that will be used primarily outside of the R&R program
- Travel Expenses for Trainers or Trainees
- Assessment, Testing, or Certification Fees
- Advertisement or Recruitment
- Annual Membership for Online Courses

TRAINING SERVICES

The R&R Grant Program provides flexibility regarding the type(s) of training and the training provider(s). Based on the needs of the company and its overall workforce development needs, the company chooses its training and training provider that provides employees with opportunities to acquire new or improved skills.

Training can include, but is not limited to, industry or employer-specific work skills, basic job skills, technical computer skills, new manufacturing technologies, equipment operation training, changes in production processes, and skills such as leadership, teamwork, communication, conflict resolution, and management skills if the employer can document the need and effect on employee production and/or retention with the company.

Employers will determine and select the types of training and training provider(s) that meet their business and training requirements before submitting a grant application for consideration.

All proposals must show an end date that completes training within 12 months of the award date. All training should have specific start and end dates.

INELIGIBLE TRAINING

- New hire orientation
- Degree programs
- Training that takes place where food and/or beverages are included in the cost

- Training that includes the purchase of equipment (such as iPads or other equipment/ supplies/devices that can be used outside of training) in the cost of the training
- Self-paced learning
- Non skill related assessments
- Mandated safety training (such as OSHA)
- Regularly provided annual training
- English as a second language
- Basic skills or remedial education
- Non-job-related training

ELIGIBLE TRAINING PROVIDERS AND ACTIVITIES

Public or private educational institutions, trade associations, community-based organizations, economic development agencies, unions, government agencies, or subject matter experts may provide R&R, and training can be conducted at the business facility, at the training provider’s facility, online, or a combination of sites.

MVWDB CRITERIA

The MVWDB reserves the right to accept or reject any or all grant applications submitted.

MVWDB does not commit to pay for any cost incurred before any award notification or the execution of any contract. All grant applications and their accompanying attachments will become the property of the MVWDB after submission, and materials will not be returned. Costs incurred by a contracted entity in the delivery of services shall be reimbursed based on mutually agreed-upon conditions and delivery schedules with the submission of appropriate documentation.

EXCEPTIONS

Any exceptions to this policy must be approved by the MVWDB Executive Director in consultation with the Business Committee Chair and must be documented in the IWT file and a copy of the waiver form saved.

GRANT PROGRAM PROCEDURES

APPLICATION PROCESS

Eligible businesses can apply during the time periods listed above until funds are fully expended. The R&R Program Grant Interest Form should be completed, and a meeting scheduled to determine training needs and eligibility prior to completing the application. The application is the only document that may be used to apply for the R&R Grant. Applications should be submitted at least 30 business days before the start date of the training. However, submittal within this timeframe does not guarantee that the approval date will be on or before the training start date.

APPLICATION RECEIPT

The business will receive a notification email that the application has been submitted within 48

hours. If the business does not receive this, the application was not received. A holiday or a large influx of applications may cause a delay in the sending of this email. Incomplete applications will delay the approval process, and the application will return to the queue.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Upon receipt of a completed R&R Grant Application, the grant application will be reviewed to determine the employer's eligibility for R&R funding by board staff. More information may be requested from the employer to determine eligibility. The business committee will review all applications and make award decisions.

GRANT CONTRACT

Once the application has been finalized and signed it will be considered the contract due to it containing all assurances and needed information. Within two weeks of the grant approval, the required grant documents will be sent to the applicant. Required self-registration on Iowa*WORKS* must be completed prior to the start date of the R&R training. Funding cannot be provided for any costs for an R&R program that starts before the training has been completed. These forms will include:

- Trainee Data Submission Form
- Reimbursement Request Form
- Trainee Roster
- Training Expense Summary Report
- Final Training Evaluation Form

REIMBURSEMENTS

The first reimbursement can be requested once the has been executed by MVWDB. Businesses may request reimbursement as frequently as needed during the 12-month period. Reimbursements will be made in direct correlation with the business's training progress. The percentage of funds reimbursed must stay equal to or less than the percentage of trainees that have been trained to date. All reimbursements must be submitted within 60 days of the contract end date.

Reimbursement requests received after the 60-day cutoff will not be processed. Before an invoice can be paid, the Reimbursement Request Form must be completed and submitted to the MVWDB. Before the final payment can be processed the Final Training Evaluation form must be completed.

CONTRACT TERMS

The contract will set forth all processes and expectations for administering, implementing, and completing the training. If the contract is not executed within a 45-day time frame, the grant award becomes null and void unless permission is granted by the MVWDB. In the contract, the employer will agree to and assure the following:

- The business will disclose whether they are currently receiving training funds, either directly or indirectly, from Iowa state government. (If an employer is receiving training funds from Iowa state government, they are not eligible to receive R&R funds as it would be a duplication of funding).

- Employer will assure they are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for disbarment, and declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in transactions by USDOL or the State of Iowa.
- Employer will assure they do not have any outstanding tax liability to the State of Iowa and will disclose outstanding tax liabilities with any other state(s).
- Employer will assure they will not make offers of gratuities or favors to any officer, employee, or board member, or to any subcontractor staff of the MVWDB.
- Employer will assure they have not relocated from any location in the U.S. until the date that is 120 days after the date on which business commences operations at a new location if the relocation of such business or part of a business results in a loss of employment for any employee of such business at the original location and such original location is within the United States.
- Employer will assure that all records relating to activities covered under the R&R (Incumbent Worker Training Program) will be available and accessible, upon request, during normal business hours and as often as deemed necessary by state and federal duly authorized representative(s), for the purposes to include monitoring, reviewing, verification, audit, and/or investigation. This shall include authorization to make excerpts or transcripts from all applicable records.
- The employer will agree to monitoring by the MVWDB, Iowa Workforce Development, U.S. Department of Labor, or other such related agencies of training records to ensure compliance with rules and regulations.
- The Employer must agree to not discriminate against any participant because of age, race, creed, color, religion, political belief or affiliation, sex, national origin, ancestry, or disability.
- The Employer must agree to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991, Public Law 101-336, or as amended and associated code of federal regulations published in the Federal Register as applicable to the Employer directly or indirectly as recipients of contracted funds for the State of Iowa.
- The employer will assure that all employees will receive a copy of the completion record for the training that each employee successfully completed.

LENGTH OF CONTRACT

Training must be completed within 12 months from the date of approval. From there, the company will have 60 days to submit final reimbursement requests for training completed during the contract period.

EXTENSIONS

There is no provision in the contract for extensions. A business is expected to have carefully assessed its training needs so that it will apply only for the funds needed for training that can be completed in a 12-month timeframe.

AMENDMENTS

If there is an extenuating circumstance that leads to a need to request a change to the approved training, the business must contact the MVWDB to discuss the best alternatives. Changes in the training(s) may not necessitate a new application, but the business will need to complete an amended training form and submit it to the MVWDB as soon as possible. If necessary, the MVWDB may convene the grant review committee to review these changes as it relates to the purpose of this grant. The training will still need to be completed within the one-year time frame.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The MVWDB staff is available to provide technical assistance throughout the process, from the application stage through contract execution, contract management, and fiscal closeout. An individual or organization may assist a business or group of businesses in the application process; however, that individual/organization may not be compensated with grant funds.

OTHER TRAINING RESOURCES

There are additional training programs at the local and state level designed to support Iowa businesses by providing training grants. A business can also apply for a State of Iowa grant through Future Ready Iowa's [Employer Innovation Fund](#)

The Iowa New Jobs Training Program (260E) was developed to assist businesses that are creating new positions or new jobs. If the company is expanding operations or relocating to a new facility in the state, the 260E program can provide flexible funding to meet a wide variety of training and employee development needs.

The Iowa Jobs Training Program (260F) provides job training services to current employees of eligible businesses.

- Helps companies train current employees with new skills.
- Eligible businesses collaborate with the local community college, which will assess training needs, determine funds available and provide training.
- Valuable employee training for little to no cost

Other local options for funding include customized training which is designed to meet the specific requirements of an employer or group of employers, with the commitment that the employer(s) will retain current employees or hire individuals who successfully complete the training or an On-the-Job Training grant (On-the-Job Training is training conducted by an employer that is provided to a paid participant while engaged in productive work in a job that provides knowledge or skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job) through the MVWDB. Contact MVWDB for more information about customized and On-the-Job Training options.

Equal Opportunity Programs/Employer

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request for individuals with disabilities.