

Innovative Employment Opportunity

Frequently Asked Questions

- **We see that there are several funding options: \$10,000, \$25,000, and \$50,000. Are we able to apply for any amount? Or are there stipulations when applying for a specific amount?**

You can apply for any amount. The application should justify the reason for the request of the desired funds (i.e. itemized projections of expenditures) and how they tie to the objective of individuals with intellectual disability gaining competitive employment.

- **Can we submit supplemental information with our application (photos, spreadsheets, etc.)?**

Yes, supplemental information will be accepted.

- **For the 12 months of quarterly reporting to DDS, is there a specific format that is used, or can we create our own report format?**

As of right now, there is no specific rubric for reporting. However, standard reporting practices are recommended. Use of spreadsheets for quantitative data and narratives for reports on overall functioning and viability of the business are acceptable.

- **Is this type of reporting formative, summative, or both?**

Both. As DDS will maintain ongoing communication and support for each awardee, much of this will be process driven. However, quarterly reports will be required to deliver a snapshot of the business at scheduled intervals.

- **Is the data submitted in the reports qualitative, quantitative, or both?**

Both. DDS will be requesting quantitative data regarding budget, expenses, revenue, individuals hired, and total hours worked, among other things. Additionally, DDS will also be seeking qualitative data.

- **Is an Employer Identification Number (EIN) required prior to the submission of the application for the Innovative Employment Opportunity grant?**

No, the EIN is not required prior to submitting an application, however based on the application an EIN may need to be obtained prior to receiving the grant. The Small Business Administration has agreed to help any applicant that may need support in this area.

- **If an applicant is considering pursuing multiple opportunities, is it possible to submit applications for both the Exploratory and Implementation Phase at the same time?**

Yes, an applicant can submit multiple applications, including to both the Exploratory and Implementation Phases.

- **We are a 501 (3) (c) non-profit organization. We are not sure which of the options noted in the application best meet our organization description. Can we write “other” or is an option in the application best suited for a non-profit?**

As a 501 (3) (c) your organization description would be “other”.

- **We are currently drafting our business proposal and were wondering how grant funds are provided to award recipients? Is the money provided as a lump sum payment, provided over time, or are funds reimbursed after spending?**

The funds will be issued as a lump sum payment to the awarded recipients.

- **Can an application be submitted to assist in meeting a grant award match?**

The Innovative Employment Opportunity grant is a one-year program. Applicant’s proposals and business plans are required to adhere to the specifications of the Notice of Opportunity. The Department has not restricted matching as a use of these funds for the purposes of another grant. However, the spirit and intent of the Innovative and Employment Opportunity grant must be adhered to.

- **What items should be included in the business plan, as outlined in the Notice of Opportunity?**

- o **How to obtain an Employer Identification Number**
- o **How benefits received by the individual(s) will be affected**
- o **How to enter contracts for retail spaces**
- o **How to report taxes from the business**
- o **Worker's Compensation for potential employees**
- o **Legal counseling, etc.**

The Notice of Opportunity indicates that the services provided through the CT Small Business Development, Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), University of Hartford Entrepreneurial Center are to help build and improve business knowledge for eligible grantees in the following areas:

- 1.Guidance on writing a business plan.**
- 2.One-on -one business technical support.**
- 3.Follow-up and ongoing support.**
- 4.Business management mentoring.**
- 5.Market research mentoring.**
- 6.Financial projections mentoring.**
- 7.Financial benchmarking support.**
- 8.Entrepreneurial style development.**

In particular to the above question, these areas include assisting the awardee with information on obtaining an EIN, helping with identifying and securing retail space as well as linking to information pertaining to Worker's Compensation. The experts may also offer tips regarding tax preparation or connect to tax professionals. The experts would also be able to refer awardees to legal experts, as needed.

The question of how an individual's involvement in the Innovative Employment Opportunity grant would affect their benefits would be a question best answered by the individual's DDS support team and/or benefit's counselor.

- My question is administrative in nature. I wanted to know if we are to download the application into a word document and complete or is there a way to fill out the application electronically.**

There is not a way to fill out the application electronically. Applications must be completed and received via Word Document or PDF format.

Please email your application, proposal or business plan, and relevant attachments to Amber Burke (dds.employment-dayservices@ct.gov). Please include your business name and "2020 Innovative Employment Opportunity Grant Application" in the subject line of your message. Please email any questions you may have about the process to the contact above.

- **As long we intended to employ individuals who are disabled once the product is truly ready to be consumed by the public, would you still consider us good candidates?**

Employment of individuals with intellectual disabilities is at the core of the Innovative Employment Opportunity. Awardees will need to demonstrate through the submitted application and business plan how employing our individuals is integral to their venture in both short- and long-term planning. DDS will monitor each awardee's progress with their venture over the year, including overall viability and efficacy in generating employment for our individuals. This will include quarterly reports as well as ongoing communication.

- **It was not clear if this grant money could be used for salaries of individuals with special needs. I am applying for the Exploratory Grant.**

It is not permissible to use the grant funds awarded for salaries.