



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Human Services

Office of the Director

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March 25, 2021



The Honorable Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair

The Honorable Senator Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair

The Honorable Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair

Joint Committee on Ways and Means

900 Court Street NE

Salem, OR 97301

Re: Request to apply for the Disability Innovation Fund—Career Advancement Initiative Model Demonstration Project, Assistance Listing Number 84.421C grant

Dear Co-Chairs:

Nature of the Request

The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), Vocational Rehabilitation requests permission to apply for the Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) Program - Career Advancement Initiative Model Demonstration Project. The funds sought for this program will be up to \$18,000,000 over a five-year period.

The Department intends to fund a multi-site model demonstration project designed to assist the state's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, in partnership with other entities, to develop career pathways focused on career advancement for people with disabilities. The due date for this application is April 8, 2021. This grant requires no state matching funds nor is there a maintenance of effort requirement. ODHS may, as authorized by the grant, hire limited duration employees to support and implement the grant.

Agency Action

The mission of VR is to assist Oregonians with disabilities to achieve, maintain, and advance in employment and independence. VR currently accomplishes this goal by providing person-centered services that assist individuals overcome barriers to

employment. If funded, the VR program within the Department of Human Services will use the funds to:

- Help VR-eligible individuals with disabilities, including previously served VR participants re-enter the VR program, to advance in high-demand, high-quality careers, such as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), including computer science. These careers are tied to career pathways identified by local sector strategies;
- Work with the 17 community colleges throughout the state to develop holistic, wraparound supports for students with disabilities to ensure their retention, graduation and placement into competitive integrated employment;
- Hire three Limited Duration employees to manage the grant, collect data and process reporting requirements for the Rehabilitation Services Administration (granting organization);
- Improve and maximize competitive integrated employment outcomes, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion in society for VR-eligible individuals;
- Reduce reliance on public benefits (e.g., Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), and/or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and State or local benefits).

The purpose of the Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) Program, as provided by the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (Pub. L. 116-94), is to support innovative activities aimed at improving the outcomes of individuals with disabilities, as defined in section 7(20)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, including activities aimed at improving the education and post-school outcomes of children receiving SSI and their families that may result in long-term improvement in the SSI child recipient's economic status and self-sufficiency.

Action Requested

The Oregon Department of Human Services request authority to accept the Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration if the state's application is successful.

Legislation Affected

None.

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If you have any questions, please call Keith Ozols at 503-602-4055 or contact via email at keith.s.ozols@dhsosha.state.or.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ELM', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Eric Luther Moore
DHS Chief Financial Officer

cc: Laurie Byerly, Legislative Fiscal Office
Gregory Jolivette, Legislative Fiscal Office
George Naughton, Department of Administrative Services
Alisa Webb, Department of Administrative Services
Mike Streepey, Department of Administrative Services

Department of Human Services Webb

Request: The Oregon Department of Human Services requests authorization to apply for the Disability Innovation Fund—Career Advancement Initiative Model Demonstration Project, Assistance Listing Number 84.421C grant of up to \$18,000,000 over five-years, for the purpose of developing career pathways focused on career advancement, from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services within the U.S. Department of Education.

Recommendation: Approve the request.

Discussion: The Vocational Rehabilitation program within the Department assists people with disabilities to attain career advancement and independence. The proposed grant will provide funding to assist people with disabilities in securing high-quality jobs in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) careers; collaborate with community colleges to develop comprehensive wraparound services to students with disabilities to foster retention, graduation and job placement; and pay for three limited duration positions (2.33 FTE in the 2021-23 biennium) responsible for managing the grant, collecting data, and processing reporting requirements in compliance with federal guidelines.

The grant application deadline is April 8, 2021 and the Department expects to receive the award on October 1, 2021. The Department will subcontract with 17 Oregon community colleges to develop career pathway services to people with disabilities. It will also work with Cornell University to assist with program evaluation. The grant does not require a state funds match and it does not have a maintenance of effort requirement.

Analysis

Oregon Department of Human Services

Federal Grant Application for Disability Innovation Fund Program

Analyst: Gregory Jolivette

Request: Approve the submission of a federal grant application in the amount of up to \$18,000,000 by the Oregon Department of Human Services, to the U.S. Department of Education's Disability Innovation Fund Program - Career Advancement Initiative Model Demonstration Project.

Analysis: The Disability Innovation Fund Program supports innovative activities aimed at improving outcomes -- such as economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion in society -- for Vocational Rehabilitation-eligible individuals with disabilities. To this end, the Career Advancement Initiative Model Demonstration Project seeks to identify strategies to advance individuals with disabilities in high demand, high quality careers that provide a true living wage and freedom from public support, such as careers in science, technology, engineering, and math.

The Department of Human Services, Vocational Rehabilitation Program intends to use the grant, if awarded, to fund a multi-site demonstration project, in partnership with other entities, to develop career pathways focused on career advancement for people with disabilities. Specifically, the grant award will be used to (1) contract with the consortium of community colleges, (2) provide direct supports to students, (3) fund an independent evaluation of the project, and (4) fund three limited-duration positions.

The application is due April 8, 2021. The grant does not require a state match. Grant awards will be made on October 1, 2021.

Legislative Fiscal Office Recommendation: The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends approval of the request.