

Notice of Funding Opportunity

State Agency Name: Iowa Workforce Development

Funding Opportunity Title: 2022 Future Ready Iowa Employer Innovation Fund

Announcement Type: Initial

CFDA Number (if applicable): Not applicable

Important Dates:

- **Deadline:** Applications for the funds are due by Friday, December 17 at 5:00pm Central Time. Subsequent application deadlines will be determined depending on the availability of funds after the second round is awarded.
- **Application Notification:** A Notice of Intent to Award will be posted on the Future Ready Iowa website <https://www.futurereadyiowa.gov/innovation>.
- IWD will host a webinar to provide information and an opportunity for a live Q&A. Check back on this posting for details and registration link.

Program Description

1. Purpose

The purpose of the fund is to:

The purpose of the fund is expanding opportunities for more lowans to earn for-credit and non-credit postsecondary credentials leading to high-demand jobs and encouraging Iowa employers, community leaders and others to collaborate to support regional workforce talent development. Future Ready Iowa establishes the goal of 70 percent of lowans in the workforce having education or training beyond high school by the year 2025, but also seeks to strengthen the talent pipeline long term.

The fund will award competitive grants to support regional initiatives that accelerate credential attainment. Iowa Workforce Development is seeking collaborative applications that propose new, cutting-edge ideas as well as proven strategies.

The purpose of this Notice of Funding Opportunity is to solicit applications that will enable Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) to award grant funding to match local investment and support the goals of the Employer Innovation Fund and Future Ready Iowa.

2. Funding Priorities

IWD seeks to prioritize the investment of resources in the following areas:

- a) Innovative and creative initiatives lead by employers to address local needs and expand opportunities for credit and noncredit education and training leading to high-demand jobs.
- b) Earning of high-demand credentials by lowans from underrepresented populations (African-American, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaskan, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander).
- c) Strategies that increase the number of eligible students receiving financial assistance under the Future Ready Iowa Skilled Workforce Last-Dollar Scholarship.
- d) Proposals that include performance-based bonuses for high school students who earn national-industry-recognized credentials in high-demand fields.

- e) Proposals with connection to high-demand jobs from the State Workforce Board list, regional community college lists, locally identified high-demand jobs or non-credentialed programs supported by regional or statewide data, innovative measures, geographic diversity and equity.
- f) Proposals that expand internships leading to high-demand jobs.
- g) Proposals that include community engagement with community partners or incorporating existing community programs.
- h) The number of participants the project can serve and the cost per participant.

3. Performance Measures

All applications must include performance measures that logically connect a project's goal(s) with proposed activities and demonstrate an overall theory of change. Performance measures should include to the extent possible whether the expected results were achieved.

4. Program Authority

IWD's authority to award these grants is found at Iowa Code §84A.13.

5. Definitions

- *Internship*: Temporary employment of a student that focuses on providing the student with work experience in the student's field of study.
- *High-demand job*: A job identified by the workforce development board or a community college pursuant to Iowa Code §84A.1B, subsection 13A.
- *Outcome*: A type of performance measure that indicates progress toward achieving the intended result of a program and usually represents a change in the situation of beneficiaries of a service, such as completing a training program or securing employment upon completion of training provided.
- *Participant*: A reportable individual who has received grant-assisted services.

Award Information

1. Estimated Available Funds

The State of Iowa has appropriated \$1.2 million to support both the Future Ready Iowa Employer Innovation Fund. The source of funding is state-appropriated and subject to annual appropriations. Some funds available for award may be carried-over from the previous year's Employer Innovation Fund appropriation.

2. Estimated Award Amount

IWD anticipate awarding grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$50,000. Grant awards may vary in amount as determined by the scope of the project and the availability of funding (based on the number of applications received). Funding decisions are made as funding is available and IWD is not obligated to provide any requested amount or the maximum grant amount. The intent is to fund as many programs as possible, throughout the state, and funds will be awarded accordingly.

3. Project and Award Period

Successful applicants must provide proof to Iowa Workforce that privately raised funds have been expended in full, at which time, then matching funds may be drawn down. Awardees must be able to draw down state funds by June 30, 2022. All matching funds must be utilized within 12 months of receipt and any unexpended matching dollars must be returned to Iowa Workforce Development thereafter.

The recipients must provide a detailed report by December 31 of each year.

4. Type of Award

IWD may award matching grants to successful applicants. The 2022 Employer Innovation Grant will provide a one for one match of private dollars up to \$50,000.

5. Use of Funds

The Employer Innovation Fund can be used to support credit and non-credit programs, along with wrap-around support programs such as childcare, transportation, books, equipment, fees or other innovative ideas and proposals that can assist Iowa residents in completing training and education. It cannot be used for administrative expenses of operating the program or implementing the project.

6. Cost Sharing or Matching

The Employer Innovation Fund is a matching grant. What this means is that the grant is intended to serve as a match to funds raised privately by the applicant. Applicants may request an Employer Innovation Fund matching grant for an amount up to twice the amount of the private funds raised.

Applicants must prove the existence of and security of the original funds in order to qualify for a match from the Employer Innovation Fund. Documentation must be included in the application submission as an attachment. Proof may be provided by an official statement from an FDIC-insured financial institution holding the funds. In the absence of a statement from a financial institution, an affidavit from a certified public accountant can be used to certify the existence and security of the funds to be matched. Applicants need to plan to expend all private funds first.

Housing expenses, such as rent, do not qualify for consideration for matching funds, nor do administrative or personnel costs for overseeing a project or implementation of a plan.

7. Reporting Requirements

Successful applicants will be required to submit vouchers, receipts, expenditures and reports to document how the funds were spent and certify the funds were used in accordance with the grant application and grant program. All grantees must provide a detailed report of the use of funds by December 31st of each project year to the Director of Iowa Workforce Development. The report must include, but is not necessarily limited to:

- a. Date funds received;
- b. Amount of funds received;

- c. A description of the activities paid for by the funds.
- d. Number of program participants.
- e. Number of participants completing the program.
- f. Number of participants earning a credential.
- g. Credentials earned.
- h. Number of participants still participating in the program.
- i. Number of total certifications earned by participants.
- j. Partner organizations
- k. Employment and wage outcomes after completion
- l. First and last name of each student/employee who received assistance/support
- m. Date of birth of each student/employee who received assistance/support
- n. Home address of each student/employee who received assistance/support

8. Payment Schedule

The executed grant agreement will specify conditions for payment and payment schedule.

Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include employers, employer consortiums, community organizations or other entities that are in good standing with the State of Iowa. IWD encourages applicants to cultivate partnerships to enhance project activities and outcomes. If an employer is not the lead applicant, applicants are required to include a letter of commitment from an employer as a key project partner with the application submission. Grantees must comply with all applicable provisions of state and federal laws pertaining to nondiscrimination, sexual harassment, and equal employment opportunity.

2. Additional Consideration

Additional consideration will be given to organizations that demonstrate the administrative capacity and a history of successfully implementing innovative projects and successfully implementing and reporting on prior IWD grants. Additional consideration will also be given to organizations and projects in local workforce areas and regions throughout the State of Iowa that document how the project will impact workforce, education, and economic development.

Application and Submission Information

Electronic Submission Instructions

Applicants must submit applications electronically via IowaGrants.gov. IWD recommends that applicants create an account and begin the application in advance of the deadline. For registration guidance, refer to "IowaGrants.gov New User Registration Instructions" ([see Appendix D](#))

The applicant's authorized representative must be the person who submits the application. The authorized representative must be using his or her own IowaGrants.gov account in order to sign and submit the application.

Official email communication from IWD regarding this application will be issued from iowa.grants@webgrantsmail.com. Applicants are required to assure these communications are received and responded to accordingly.

Content:

Applicants will enter or attach the following components of a complete application in IowaGrants.gov:

- **General Information:**
 - General Information - Cover Sheet
 - Project Information
- **Project Description**
 - Brief summary of the project (see Appendix A)
- **Populations to be Served**
- **Project Design**
 - Project Activities
 - Connection to Future Ready Iowa Goal
 - Project Need
 - Credential Attainment
 - High Demand Occupation/Job
 - Barriers and Supportive Services
 - Partnerships
 - Innovative Ideas
- **Performance Measures**
 - Performance Measures
 - Performance Tracking
 - Number of Participants
 - Cost per Participant
- **Organization Capability Narrative**
- **Budget Summary & Budget Narrative**
- **Application Attachments**
- **Minority Impact Statement**
- **Authorization, Assurances, and Certification**

[See Appendix A](#) for further instructions and application guidance.

Submission Dates and Times

Please see the Important Dates section at the beginning of this announcement for the submission

deadline. IWD reserves the right to extend the submission deadline and any notice of such extension will be posted on IWD’s website and/or IowaGrants.gov.

Attempted submission of a completed application after the stated due date and time will not be allowed by the system. If a submission is attempted after the published date and time, the applicant will receive a notice stating “The Funding Opportunity is closed.”

Application Review Information

1. Criteria

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Population to be served | 15 Points |
| Project Design | 40 Points |
| Performance Measures | 10 Points |
| Organizational Capacity | 5 Points |
| Number of Participants/Cost per Participant | 20 Points |
| Budget | 10 Points |
| Total | 100 Points |

[See Appendix C](#) for a full description of criteria and a scoring rubric.

2. Review and Selection Process

A review team will use the criteria listed in this section to review applications under this funding announcement.

3. Applicant Clarification

Some applicants may receive requests to provide clarifying information and/or make changes to their application including changes to the budget. This information is used by IWD staff in making funding recommendations. Applications may be recommended for funding even if they are not asked clarification questions. A request for clarification does not guarantee a grant award. Failure to respond to requests adequately and in a timely manner may result in the removal of applications from consideration.

4. Selection for Funding

Decisions to award grants and the funding levels will be determined per application based upon compliance with the requirements of this funding announcement. Applicants may be selected to enter into a grant agreement, finalizing grant terms, budget, scope-of-work provisions, at which time the final decision to make a grant award will be made. Submission of an application is not a guarantee of an award.

Awarding Agency Contact(s)

Please direct any questions regarding this NOFO to:

Kathy Leggett, Future Ready Iowa Policy Advisor
Iowa Workforce Development
Kathy.leggett@iwd.iowa.gov

Technical Assistance

Technical Assistance (TA) will be provided throughout the application process, in the form of webinars and direct support. A TA schedule will be available on the Future Ready Iowa website and regularly updated.

Other Information

1. If an applicant fails to meet any eligibility criterion at the time of an application deadline, the application may still be reviewed but the State will not make an award until all eligibility criteria are met.
2. IWD reserves the right to request additional information from applicants to evaluate applications.
3. IWD, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to reject all applications; to reject individual applications for failure to meet any requirement; to award in part or total, and to waive minor defects and non-compliance. Such a waiver will not modify the program requirements or excuse the applicant from full compliance with program specifications or grant agreement requirements if the grant is awarded. Submission of an application confers no right to an award or to a subsequent grant agreement.
4. All application submissions become the property of IWD. If funds are awarded, the contents of all applications will be in the public domain at the conclusion of the selection process and will be open to inspection by interested parties subject to exceptions provided in Iowa Code Chapter 22 or other provision of law.
5. IWD is not obligated to award any grants under this program, to pay any costs incurred by the applicant in the preparation and submission of an application or pay any grant-related costs incurred prior to the grant beginning date.
6. All decisions by IWD are final.
7. Upon IWD approval, the successful applicant will receive a grant agreement via email from IWD. The applicant has 10 working days to sign the grant agreement. If the agreement is not executed within 10 working days, IWD reserves the right to cancel the award. IWD, at its sole discretion, may extend the time period for executing the grant agreement.
8. Any grant agreement awarded by IWD shall include specific provisions, terms, and conditions.

APPENDIX A: Employer Innovation Fund

Please review the following guidance when preparing your grant application in IowaGrants.gov. The application gathers general information, narratives, budget information, and attachments. Each section includes prompts that must be addressed.

General Information

Complete Cover Sheet-General Information. On this form, applicants will enter basic information about their organization including:

- Contact information of your organization's Authorized Representative
- Contact information of your organization's Fiscal Officer/Agent
- Identification of County(ies) participating, involved or affected by the proposal
- Identification of Congressional District(s), Iowa Senate District(s), and Iowa House District(s) involved or affected by the proposal.

Complete Project Information. On this form, applicants will enter basic information about their application including:

- Legal Organization Name
- Organization type (Government, Nonprofit, Institute of Higher Education, Business, etc.)
- Business Address
- Contact information of person for program matters
- A descriptive project title
- Your project's proposed start and end dates
- Amount requested

Project Description

Provide a brief summary (no more than 5 sentences) that tells us what you are proposing, the project goal and anticipated outcomes.

Example:

"ABC Business is proposing to increase skilled workforce individuals by offering a certificate program in ABC high-demand occupation. ABC Business will seek underrepresented populations to serve, and ultimately will have # individuals participate in this program. The anticipated outcome is for participants to complete the training, obtain a certificate and eventually obtain employment. Funding for this project is needed to purchase tuition, training materials, and wrap around support services for the participants."

Population to be served

- Describe the target population for the project.
- Identify the number and percentage goal for engagement of students or learners from underrepresented populations (Veterans, ex-offenders, members of underrepresented communities including minorities, women, disabled or low-income lowans, lowans with no post-secondary education or training).

Project Design

Project Activities

- Describe the project goal and project activities. Include an outline of a proposed project timeline with key milestones. Ensure proposed project goals align with funding purpose and priorities.
-

Connection to Future Ready Iowa goal

- Describe how the projects goals tie to the larger Future Ready Iowa goal.

Project Need

- Describe the need for the project and how it will lead to increased skilled workers to fill high-demand job(s).
- Describe how your project will expand opportunities for credit and/or noncredit postsecondary education and training leading to high-demand jobs for Iowans.

Credential Attainment

- Describe if the proposed project will result in the opportunity for participants to participate in or obtain non-credit or for-credit education and training programs. If yes, what type of credential and/or industry recognized credential will participants be able to earn?

High Demand Occupation/Job

- Identify which high-demand job(s) the project intends to support. Describe your justification for determining the job(s) as high-demand (State Workforce Board high-demand job list, regional community college list, linked to locally identified high-demand jobs as demonstrated by statewide or regional data, etc.).

Barriers and Supportive Services

- Include a description of local barriers participants face in obtaining education and training and how you plan to implement innovative strategies to meet the needs and help address the barriers.
- Describe if applicable, does the project increase available funding to pay for wrap around support, such as books, equipment, transportation and childcare to increase program completion rates of participants.
- Describe if the project increases funding available for tuition to enroll in for-credit or non-credit education or training programs.

Partnerships

- Describe key partners, roles, responsibilities and how they will contribute to the success of the project.

Innovative Ideas

- Describe the innovative ideas that are part of your proposed project and how these innovative ideas increase the number of participants from the target population, and their likelihood of success.

Performance Measures

- The following performance measures are required as part of the grant. **Clearly identify any additional outcomes relevant to the project.**
 - Number of participants enrolled.
 - Number of participants from an underrepresented population enrolled.
 - Number of participants persisting in the program.
 - Number of participants completing program
 - Number of participants earning a credential.
 - Total number of credentials earned.
 - Number of participants with secured employment in a high-demand job.

Tracking performance measures

- Describe your plan and ability to track and measure the performance measures.

APPENDIX B: Employer Innovation Fund Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. What is the purpose of the Iowa Employer Innovation Fund?

The purpose of the fund is expanding opportunities for more Iowans to earn for-credit and non-credit postsecondary credentials leading to high-demand jobs and encouraging Iowa employers, community leaders and others to collaborate to support regional workforce talent development. Future Ready Iowa establishes the goal of 70 percent of Iowans in the workforce having education or training beyond high school by the year 2025, but also seeks to strengthen the talent pipeline longer term. Iowa's current attainment level is around 60 percent. To help change this, the fund will award competitive grants to support regional initiatives that accelerate credential attainment. Iowa Workforce Development is seeking collaborative applications that propose new, cutting-edge ideas as well as proven strategies.

2. What for-credit and non-credit post-secondary credentials qualify?

Qualifying credentials include post-secondary certificates, diplomas or two- and four-year degrees leading to high-demand jobs. Education or training programs do not have to be Pell Grant eligible to qualify for the Employer Innovation Fund. They can be shorter than 15 weeks.

3. Who will decide which applications receive funding?

Iowa Workforce Development will identify an application panel to review and score proposals.

4. What will Iowa Workforce Development take into account when determining grant awards?

- Iowa Workforce Development will evaluate applications based on a number of criteria including but not limited to the scoring guidance referenced in the scoring rubric.
- The proposal's connection to high-demand jobs from the State Workforce Board list, regional community college lists, locally identified high-demand jobs supported by regional or statewide data, innovative measures, geographic diversity and equity.
- Whether the proposal increases the number of Iowans receiving financial aid to earn for-credit credentials from the Future Ready Iowa Last-dollar Scholarship program; or support for related expenses such as books, equipment, transportation, child care, and other wrap-around assistance to help new high school graduates and adult learners complete education or training for high-demand jobs.
- Whether the proposal includes performance-based bonuses paid when high school students earn national industry-recognized credentials aligned with high-demand jobs that meet regional workforce needs.
- Whether the proposal expands internships leading to high-demand jobs.
- Whether the proposal offers innovative ways of expanding opportunities to earn for-credit and non-credit credentials for education or training leading to high-demand jobs.
- Whether the proposal addresses areas of workforce need throughout the region.
- Whether the plan includes community engagement by including community partners or incorporating existing community programs.
- The number of participants the project will serve and the cost per participant.

5. Will work-based learning be an allowable use of the Iowa Employer Innovation Fund?

The purpose of the Employer Innovation Fund is to expand opportunities for Iowans to earn for-credit and non-credit post-secondary credentials preparing them for high-demand jobs. If a work-based learning initiative including a Quality Pre-Apprenticeship and is part of an innovative, creative proposal that directly impacts the goal of earning credentials of value, among other factors, it may be considered.

6. Are applicants required to identify specific project goal(s), such as how many participants, employers, etc.?

Yes, all applications must include performance measures that logically connect a project's goal(s) with proposed activities and demonstrate an overall theory of change. Performance measures should include to the extent possible whether the expected results were achieved.

7. If an application is not selected in the first round, will it automatically be considered in the next round or must it be resubmitted?

Iowa Workforce Development plans to announce additional application rounds for the Employer Innovation Fund, if funding is available after the first review process. Submitted applications that are not selected will not be automatically considered during future rounds. Iowa Workforce Development encourages applicants to re-apply once future rounds are announced.

8. How will Iowa Workforce Development ensure Employer Innovation Funds are used as intended?

IWD will review programmatic and financial reports to evaluate grant progress. In addition, IWD may provide ongoing technical assistance to grantees, may schedule site visits and may coordinate in-person or desk reviews as needed.

9. How does the match work?

The Employer Innovation Fund provides a state match for regional investments of private dollars. What this means is that the fund is intended to serve as a match for money raised privately as part of the application process. Applicants can request approval for an amount up to one times the amount of money they have secured for the project. The private funds must be expensed first, matching state dollars may be drawn down once all private funds are expended. Applicants need to plan to expend all private funds first. If more funds are requested than are available, funds will be awarded proportionately to eligible proposals to provide the greatest amount of support across all eligible applicants.

10. What are allowable expenses?

The fund can be used to support for-credit and non-credit credential attainment, along with wrap-around support, such as child care, transportation, books, equipment, fees or other innovative ideas and proposals that help lowans complete education or training beyond high school leading to high- demand jobs. It cannot be used for administrative expenses of operating the program or implementing the project.

11. Who can apply?

Eligible applicants include employers, employer consortiums, community organizations and other entities. If the applicant is not an employer, the organization(s) must be aligned with one or more employers and demonstrate this via an employer commitment letter in the proposal.

12. Are Registered Apprenticeships eligible to receive Employer Innovation Funds?

Registered apprenticeships are a critical part of Future Ready Iowa and funding to support development and ongoing costs for these programs is available through 15b, 15c and other available funding sources. Registered Apprenticeship Programs may submit proposals to address barriers that prevent individuals from participating in and completing Registered Apprenticeship Programs. Examples include, transportation, childcare, equipment and books.

13. When is the application due?

Friday, December 17 no later than 5:00 pm Central Time.

14. What is the project timeline for expending the funds?

Successful applicants must provide proof to Iowa Workforce that privately raised funds have been expended in full, at which time, then matching funds may be drawn down. Awardees must be able to draw down state funds by June 30, 2022. All matching funds must be utilized within 12 months of receipt and any unexpended matching dollars must be returned to Iowa Workforce Development thereafter.

15. Is there a maximum award?

\$50,000.

16. Is a project coordination expense eligible?

Applicants can request up to 20% of the project cost for project coordination expense. This is not a flat rate administrative expense and does not include marketing. This option is to provide support for the time it takes to coordinate a project if that funding is absolutely necessary. An explanation must be provided in the budget narrative that demonstrates the direct need for including this request and estimate of the hours to be covered and wages paid.

17. Will all applications be awarded?

Submission of an application does not guarantee an award.

APPENDIX C: Employer Innovation Fund Application Rubric

Population to be Served 15 Points

Target population: Identify the number and percentage goal for engagement of students or learners from underrepresented populations (Veterans, ex-offenders, members of underrepresented communities including minorities, women, disabled or low-income Iowans, Iowans with no post-secondary education or training).

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Plan sets a goal of less than 50% of participants being from the target population (see above). | 0-5 points |
| Plan sets a goal of 50%-to 75% of the participants being from the target population (see above). | 6-10 points |
| Plan sets a goal of 76% or more of the participants being from the target populations (see above). | 11-15 points |

Project Design 40 points

| | |
|--|-----|
| Project activities presented with a reasonable timeline | 0-5 |
| Clear identification of need/ project will increase skilled workers within area of grant focus | 0-5 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Credential and/or credit attainment as part of the project | 0-5 |
| High demand occupation identified and justified | 0-5 |
| Identification and addressing of participant barriers | 0-5 |
| Key partnerships are defined | 0-5 |
| Project includes and describes Innovative strategies | 0-5 |
| Proposed project goals align with funding purpose and intent. | 0-5 |

Performance Measures 10 points

| | |
|---|-----|
| Additional performance measures are described. | 0-5 |
| Plan and ability to track outcomes is described and reliable. | 0-5 |

Organizational Capacity 5 points

| | |
|---|-----|
| Organizational capacity described demonstrates applicants ability to successfully carry out proposed project. | 0-5 |
|---|-----|

Number of Participants/Cost per Participant 20 points

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| Number of participants to be served. | 0-10 |
| Cost per participant. | 0-10 |

Budget 10 points

| | |
|---|-----|
| Budget narrative and spreadsheet are complete. | 0-5 |
| Participant support and administrative expenses are reasonable and relevant | 0-5 |

APPENDIX D: IowaGrants.gov New User Registration Instructions

Are you new to IowaGrants.gov? Follow these basic instructions to create an account and begin your grant application.

1. Go to www.iowagrants.gov

2. Click “New Users Register Here”
3. Enter your first and last name.
4. Choose an Account ID name. Please note, this will be your user ID in the system.
5. Click “Save Account Details.” You may receive a pop-up message that asks if you want to continue with your registration. Click “OK.”
6. Next you’ll receive a confirmation email.
7. Open the confirmation email and follow the instructions. You will;
 - a. Click a confirmation link;
 - b. Choose security questions; and
 - c. Confirm a password.
8. Go to www.iowagrants.gov and into your account with your new username and password to finish activation.
9. Enter your basic information and select your Program Area of Interest (Future Ready Iowa).
10. Click Register.
11. Your registration is now pending final system approval. You will receive a confirmation email once approval is complete.

If you have any questions regarding these instructions or want additional assistance, please contact Brian Dennis, Brian.Dennis@iwd.iowa.gov or 515-725-3666.