

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

1. What is the purpose of the Coronavirus Relief Fund Employer Innovation Fund?

The purpose of the Corona Virus Relief Employer Innovation Fund is expanding opportunities for lowans whose employment has been affected by or eliminated because of the coronavirus pandemic including low skilled workers who are veterans, returning citizens, members of underrepresented communities, minorities, women, lowans with disabilities, or low-income lowans. The programs will provide lowans the opportunity to earn for-credit and non- credit postsecondary credentials leading to high-demand jobs. Applicants include employers, community leaders and others who will collaborate to address local workforce needs. 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, and seeks to strengthen and expand the talent pipeline longer term. The Coronavirus Relief Fund provides funding to states to address issues caused by the pandemic including recovery efforts. This fund will award competitive grants to support local initiatives that accelerate credential attainment. Iowa Workforce Development is seeking collaborative applications that propose new, cutting-edge ideas as well as proven strategies that will help return affected lowans to the workforce as quickly as possible in high demand careers.

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

Qualifying credentials include post-secondary certificates, diplomas 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 and priority will be given to short-term programs that enable lowans to earn a credential as quickly as possible.

3. Who will decide which applications receive funding?

Iowa Workforce Development will identify application panels 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.

- a. 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.
- b. The proposal's target participants, priority will be given to successful proposals engaging with Iowans whose jobs have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic.
- c. Whether the proposal increases the number of Iowans receiving support for related expenses such as books, equipment, transportation, child care, internet access for the duration of the grant and other wrap-around assistance to help new high school graduates and adult learners complete education or training for high-demand jobs.
- d. 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.
- e. Whether the proposal expands internships leading to high-demand jobs.
- f. 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.

- g. Whether the proposal addresses areas of workforce need throughout the region.
- h. Whether the plan includes community engagement by including community partners or incorporating existing community programs.

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

It depends. The funds awarded under this grant must be fully expended by December 31, 2020 so any program that is created must be capable of completion by the end of the calendar year. The purpose of the Coronavirus Relief Fund 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 including Iowans whose employment has been affected by or eliminated because of the coronavirus pandemic including low skilled workers who are veterans, returning citizens, members of underrepresented communities, minorities, women, Iowans with disabilities, or low-income Iowans. If the initiative 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 Coronavirus Relief Fund Employer Innovation Fund, if funding is available after the first application round. Submitted applications that are not selected will not be automatically considered during future rounds. Iowa

Workforce Development encourages applicants to re-apply if future rounds are announced. We will also provide feedback regarding why an application was not approved and what can be done to improve it in the next round if available.

8. How will Iowa Workforce Development ensure Coronavirus Relief Fund 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. All successful applicants will be required to produce any requested documentation IWD believes is relevant to determine funds have been expended appropriately.

9. 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 childcare, transportation, books, equipment, internet access during the grant period and fees or other innovative ideas and proposals that help lowans complete education or training beyond high school leading to high-demand jobs. A maximum allowance of 10% can be used for administrative expenses of operating the program or implementing the project.

10. Who can apply?

Eligible applicants include employers, employer consortiums, community organizations, nonprofits 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.

11. Are Registered Apprenticeships eligible to receive Coronavirus Relief Fund Employer Innovation Funds?

Yes. Registered Apprenticeship Programs may submit proposals to address barriers created by the pandemic and assuming apprentices are recruited specifically from the above referenced target populations.

12. When is the application due?

Wednesday, September 16, 2020, by 11:59 pm central time.

13. When will awardees be notified?

Not later than Wednesday, September 23, 2020.

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

Successful applicants must expend awarded funds by December 31, 2020 and all funds not expended by the grantee must be returned to IWD by January 5, 2021.

15. Is there a maximum award?

\$100,000 per applicant (not per project).

16. Will all applications be awarded?

Submission of an application does not guarantee an award.