

Iowa Language Learners Job Training Frequently Asked Questions

1. Please provide additional clarification regarding the “dual language” requirement listed in the program description section of the NOFO.

Answer: Applicants will be able to offer the instruction to be taught in English only or dual language. That way there’s flexibility in how each employer chooses to implement a program to suit the needs of their business.

2. Who are you getting the 50/50 match from?

Answer: The 50/50 match is coming from the applicant or consortium. The grant is funded by the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds which are awarded to States in Section 9901 of the American Rescue Plan Act. Governor Reynolds has allocated a portion of these funds to provide for this program.

3. Are public employers (e.g., school districts, city/county/etc.) eligible?

Answer: Yes, as long as they meet the definition of an employer in the NOFO.

4. If the employer is paying the worker their seat time, and it’s part of their scheduled work day, couldn’t they require the worker to participate in the training?

Answer: The NOFO states the employee participation in the program shall be voluntary.

5. How do you define dual language?

Answer: Dual language refers to academic programs that are taught in two languages designed to simultaneously develop English fluency, content knowledge and academic language.

6. Will this be applicable to online language learning solutions as well as in-person?

Answer: Yes.

7. Could the training be more than 4 hours if the IWD money only reimburses for up to 4 hours per week and the company match is used for the other hours of instruction per week?

Answer: IWD will reimburse for up to 4 hours of instruction per week, up to 32 weeks per cohort. The company match may be used for additional training.

8. What kind of information about employees will need to be sent in at the end of the grant, if any?

Answer: See reporting requirements in NOFO (Section 7).

9. Does the incumbent worker training for native English speakers (language/culture training) training hours count in the cap of 4 hours per week? Or can this be in addition to the training hours set up for non-native English speakers?

Answer: Each cohort has a maximum of 4 hours per week, up to 32 weeks per cohort.

10. Please clarify the class/training time per week allowed. Is that flexible? We are partnering with a community college and the classes are 10 hours per week.

Answer: Hours of instruction can be more but only up to 4 hours per week are reimbursable.

11. Are farms and restaurants eligible to apply?

Answer: As long as they meet the definition of an employer in the NOFO.

12. Do recipients of services have to be Iowa residents? Some of our plants are on the Nebraska/Iowa border.

Answer: The business/applicant/consortium has to be located in the state of Iowa.

13. Does it have to be in person or can it be a zoom meeting?

Answer: Either.

14. Can part-time employees get 4 hours of language training per week?

Answer: The eligible participants of these programs are for full-time employees only but may be hourly or salaried employees.

15. Our community college partners with many businesses/industries. If we wanted to partner with local businesses to help with the training-identify training needs, hire/provide instructors, develop curriculum, could we do that? Could we apply and manage the funds on their behalf or do the businesses need to apply directly? We would have a consortium of employers but we would not be providing ELL training to our community college employees.

Answer: One of the employers would be the applicant and the community college would be a partner.

16. Can an applicant be an association that represents a collection of smaller employers who don't individually meet the 25 person FTE requirement?

Answer: Yes, consortiums are encouraged. The consortium needs to have a minimum of 25 full-time employees.

17. Would we need to provide information on the minimum of 25 employees? If so, what information would need to be provided?

Answer: There is a question listed within the application regarding the 25-employee requirement. Answering this question falsely would disqualify your application. Verification of eligibility may be requested.

18. Under the definition of on-site, does that mean live instruction or can we provide virtual instruction?

Answer: Either. Classes may be offered onsite with live instruction, provided virtually, or a combination of the two.

19. Do we have to offer English language instruction, or can it be only for employees to learn another language (i.e., Spanish)?

Answer: You can offer non-English speaking in addition to English language, but you cannot offer non-English only.

20. To confirm - employers can pay employees for their time in the English classes? So long as they use 50/50 funding (half paid through employer, half through grant funding)?

Answer: Employee wages are not eligible for award funds; however, employers may pay their employees for instruction and that goes toward the employer's 50% match, up to 4 hours per week.

21. Can you give a specific monetary example of how the 50% reimbursement will work?

Answer: Approved awardees will first submit proof that their private match has been expended on eligible items. After review and approval of the private spend, awardee may submit other eligible expenses related to the project and these will be reimbursed.

As an example, if a business is awarded \$10,000 for their project, the awardee would be required to spend and submit \$10,000 of their own funds on eligible items first. Then the awardee would provide related eligible expenses and these expenses would be reimbursed to the awardee. Essentially, in this example, the awardee would need to provide documentation/proof of spend for \$20,000 total (\$10k private spend + \$10k reimbursed).

22. Under reporting requirements #3: # of new language learning programs established for employees. Can you please define this more. Does this mean the number of cohorts run, or the number of specific courses developed. Would it also include the training for incumbent, native English-speaking workers who may be trained through this program? When it lists “participant” through those reporting requirements (4-7), who are the participants? The English language learners or the native English speakers who are taking language/culture training or both?

Answer: The number of new language learning programs established means the number of new programs created, not the number of cohorts. As an example, if there is a new English language program established and offered between four different cohorts, this is 1 program established. Participants are defined in the NOFO as a reportable individual who has received grant-assisted services.

23. Are there any concerns or issues we should be aware of for companies who are already doing this type of program (typically more than 4 hours per week though) through a partnership with their local community college using Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program (IELCE)? Can they use the IELCE funds to cover hours above the 4-hour cap?

Answer: The purpose of this opportunity is to support the expansion or creation of new dual-language programs for employees within the workplace. IWD does not administer funds related to the IELCE program mentioned above nor do they provide guidance on how to use those funds. SLFRF guidelines do allow for braided funding provided the costs are eligible expenses under each source program and are compliant with all other requirements.

24. Can employers contract with trainers rather than employing them themselves?

Answer: Yes – this would be considered a partnership and they would explain the partnership in their application.

25. Can you please clarify the employee wage component. For example, if we pay our employees while they are taking a language class, is that reimbursed at 50/50?

Answer: Employee wages are not eligible for award funds; however, Employers may pay their employees for instruction and that goes toward the Employer’s 50% match, up to 4 hours per week.

26. Can grant funds be used for program development/planning time? Or just instruction time?

Answer: Grant funds may be used for instructor wages for up to four hours per week, up to 32 weeks per cohort.

27. Is there a resource for businesses to learn about how to select an appropriate pre and post screening assessment, as well as how to appropriately level students for the training program the business develops? Is the Iowa Dept of Education available to support with some of this technical assistance or to connect with local English language learner programs available through community colleges?

Answer: This pre/post assessment and evaluation metrics is part of the application process provided by the employer.

28. Can fringe be a portion of match?

Answer: No. Fringe benefits are listed as an ineligible expense. Only net pay for employees may be considered toward the 50% employer match.

29. Will the grant cover the cost of having an interpreter in orientation each week?

Answer: An instructor providing the dual-language instruction is an eligible expense for up to four hours per week, up to 32 weeks per cohort. The instructor should be proficient to also serve as the interpreter.

30. Would translation software be reimbursed at 50/50. For example, if we ran our policies through a translation program, is this covered?

Answer: The use of translation software for the purpose of curriculum instruction, as well as policy translation, would be an eligible expense.

31. Does Iowa Workforce intend on providing resources or partnering with community colleges (DMACC, etc.) for services? We have had difficulty finding resources and teachers for smaller groups.

Answer: IWD will not be partnering with community colleges but we would encourage applicants to reach out to community colleges for partnership opportunities.

32. A) If our college wanted to apply for funding for our employees, to provide them training in a second language that will assist in their ability to communicate with non-English speaking students and families that visit the campus, is that a possibility? The funding is not necessarily to support communication among employee groups.

B) Can this grant be used to teach employees Spanish to better work with customers?

Answer: No. The purpose of this award is to reduce language related barriers within the workplace as it relates to work-related tasks, policies and procedures. This purpose does not include customer service as a direct outcome.

33. What are the measures of language proficiency or evaluation tools that would be required for reporting purposes?

Answer: The applicant should include this information in their application as a performance measure. Applicants should work directly with the instructor/partner to obtain this information and develop the evaluation tool.

34. Does the lead employer of the consortium have to provide proof of match for the entire consortium?

Answer: Consortium support letters will specify how much each employer of the consortium is providing and each employer will have to provide proof of their piece of the financial match.

35. Can the grant be used to buy every one of my ESL learners a laptop and a subscription to Duolingo?

Answer: Yes, eligible expenses include program supplies such as computers, software, or headsets; and curriculum such as textbooks, workbooks, and curriculum software.

36. We have a current program that is company-wide, including employees that are part of a division located in Texas. Would we still be eligible for the grant even though some of our employees are Texas residents? The Texas students are by far the minority, but we would like to continue giving them that opportunity if possible. Could the supplies and other costs associated with the Texas students potentially fall under the company's part of the contribution?

Answer: Your business is eligible to apply as a business located in Iowa but the expenses incurred for your employees located outside of the state of Iowa would not be eligible for reimbursement or considered part of the business' match requirement. If the class make-up has employees from both Iowa and Texas, the expenses for that class (i.e. instructor salaries) would be reimbursable; however, only the expenses related to the Iowa employees would be eligible under the grant funds.

37. Is there a per-employer limit?

Answer: Funding decisions are made as funding is available. The minimum award is set at \$5,000. There is no maximum award set. IWD is not obligated to provide the maximum amount requested and may award multiple projects. Please be aware there are no guarantees of funding your full request.

38. Is there a minimum number of participants:

Answer: There is not a required minimum number of participants listed in the NOFO; however, this does need to be included in the application and will be used to determine funding levels for applicants.

39. Would this use the I-BEST model (Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training?)

Answer: The NOFO does not indicate what training model should be utilized. This is up to the employer and training instructor. The application does ask to provide language training program details and this will also be used to determine funding levels for applicants.

40. We are a Regents institution of higher education. Would we be eligible to apply to the Iowa Language Learners Job Training Program? Our Facilities Management department is interested in developing a program to increase English proficiency amongst the university's custodial staff.

Answer: Yes, as long as the applicant is applying to give their employees instruction/training to increase English proficiency.

41. Is it allowable for a county to use its ARPA dollars to provide the local match for this grant program?

Answer: Yes, a county may use City/County SLFRF distributions available under revenue loss for match (confirmed with IGOV).

42. Typically, when we cannot recover indirect costs at our federally negotiated rate (35.4% of modified total direct costs), sponsors allow us to include the "unrecovered" indirect costs as cost share, especially when the funds are federal. For example, if we requested \$10,000 in direct project costs, normally we would be able to request \$3,540 of indirect costs on top of that. If in this case we could only request \$500 of administrative/indirect costs, can we then put \$3,040 of unrecovered indirect costs on the budget as cost share? Our instructors would likely be university employees. Can we include their fringe benefits as cost share, since we cannot request that the fringe benefits be paid by the grant?

Answer: Fringe benefits would not be included. As an example, if the university's job services indirect rate is 22.37%, the base of this is program staff salary and benefits. If the university was seeking a cost share based on the indirect, they would be required to provide proof of payments for the percentages and staff salary and benefits, including timesheets that worked on the grant to support the indirect rate that is assessed.

43. In order to apply for the grant, I know you have to have a minimum of 25 full-time employees. Would that mean we would need 25 employees for each type of training? For example, would we need 25 wanting to learn Spanish and 25 wanting to learn English or is it combined between the two?

Answer: Applicants will be evaluated based on the employer business size compared to the size of workforce not proficient in the English language when awarding funds. The NOFO does not indicate a set number of participants in the training, rather we are looking at the ratio of employees served.

44. Can funding be used for linguistic employees to translate and write training material? Or would they need to maybe meet the instructor definition as provided by IWD?

Answer: The grant will not cover funding for employees to translate and write materials unless they meet the criteria of an instructor.

45. Can we use a customized evaluation/testing based on the curriculum we are teaching, or does it need to be a credentialed evaluation/test?

Answer: You can create your own evaluation but you will need to describe this and the measures you will be evaluating in the application.

46. Is there a specific level of proficiency that needs to be achieved or do we just need to show improvement each quarter?

Answer: Your application needs to outline the measurements for proficiency and what the goals are.

47. The grant indicates that you need to use sustainable programs. Does this mean you need to continue to test your workforce for proficiency levels during the entire time of the grant or how do you validate this?

Answer: The intent of the grant is to create or expand a program that will continue to operate after the grant has ended and is sustainable. You will specify in your application how your program will be sustained.

48. We have a huge corporate need to start a program to teach our Spanish-speaking employees English to help them grow into other areas of our business that would require some proficiency in English. Some of these employees would be located within the state of Iowa, but many of our employees that would be the best fit for this program are located at our other warehouses Shiremanstown (Pennsylvania), Nashville, and Phoenix. However, the employer is headquartered in Waterloo, Iowa. Would this grant still apply to us knowing many of the employees that would voluntarily enroll in this language learners program would reside in other states?

Answer: The employer wage match would only be eligible for employees who are Iowa residents. Employee wages are not an eligible reimbursement expense; however, employers that pay their employees for their time spent in the language program may submit proof of wage payments. These wage payments can be considered toward the 50% employer match for the program (up to four (4) hours per week per participant.) These wage payments must be supported with signed timesheets and either paystubs or payroll reports showing the wages paid. Net pay only is reimbursable.

49. Most of what we are considering includes investing in translation services for our policies and other critical communications. Can you help me understand how the reporting requirements would be measured in a situation like this? The translated communications will significantly help remove barriers for non-English speaking employees, but we don't currently track who uses communications once published and I am concerned about our ability to track the impact of specific users let alone progress. The Q&A session confirmed that translation of documents/policies is eligible, but the NOFO and other documentation is very specific to hosting trainings for English language learners and doesn't seem to address translated materials much. Thoughts?

Answer: The intent of the grant is to create a program that will provide instruction to participants to increase their language proficiency. The use of translation software for the purpose of curriculum instruction and policy translation is an eligible expense for the purpose of reimbursement. In summary, the applicant would need to provide a program that delivers instruction to be eligible for the grant.

50. We have many employees that grow up speaking indigenous languages in countries like Guatemala and then learn to speak Spanish later in life. When they come to the US, they often are fluent speaking Spanish, but don't feel comfortable reading and writing in Spanish, because they didn't receive much education back home. In order to learn English, it is important to have a foundation of literacy in Spanish that we can build upon in the classroom. If I wanted to have a class focused on achieving literacy in Spanish in order to later "graduate" into the English class, would that be an option through the grant? I know that we are allowed to offer other language classes in addition to English through the grant, but I just wanted to verify that this would be acceptable.

Answer: The Notice of Funding Opportunity states the following: Programs will provide dual language instruction for current employees to increase English language proficiencies as it relates to duties, policies or procedures for work-related tasks to be performed. There is additional information regarding the "dual language" requirement listed in the program description section of the Notice of Funding Opportunity. Applicants will be able to offer the instruction to be taught in English only or dual language. This will allow flexibility in how each employer chooses to implement a program to suit the needs of their business. According to the reporting requirements, each applicant must describe the measure of language proficiency increase within the workplace as demonstrated via evaluation tools created by the applicant. How the applicant develops curriculum for the participants is open for the applicant to decide and must be described in the application. Please note that instructor's wages are reimbursed per cohort at 4 hours per week for 32 weeks.

51. Do you have any examples of what "translation of policy" would be eligible to clarify from the FAQ? Is it actually only curriculum or tools for training of English instead of corporate specific policies?

Answer: If the translation software is purchased for the purpose of the curriculum instruction, then it may also be used on the policy translation. However, it can't be purchased solely for the policy translations. The application needs to show how the translation software will be utilized in the curriculum instruction and then the policy side can be supported by the same.

52. We recognize that funding will support each cohort up to 32 weeks. Depending on the level of proficiency the participant starts at, it's possible a desired level of proficiency may take longer than 32 weeks. If an employee/employer has an employee retake the program a second time in hopes to improve proficiency, Would we allow employers to submit participants wages for repeated experience, which cumulative would be more than the 32 week period (more than one cohort period)?

Answer: Yes, employers are allowed to submit participant wages for repeated experience. Employers can have someone be in more than one cohort (32 weeks) if necessary for proficiency.

53. Are government agencies eligible to apply as consortiums of employers?

Answer: Yes, as long as they meet the definition of an employer in the NOFO.

54. Would the grant cover tuition for a person to take an online class?

Answer: Yes, tuition is an eligible expense.