



WHAT DO THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION FUND GRANTS HAVE TO OFFER?

The Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) grant program comes with financial support to promote innovation to improve the performance of the public workforce system, but the advantages to grantees go well beyond just funding. Consider the following benefits:

- **Comprehensive Support** – A team of technical assistance coaches provide an ongoing, direct relationship with each grantee to assist in navigating implementation challenges, problem solve issues as they arise, and foster linkages between grantees for peer learning and sharing.
- **Just-in-time Subject Matter Expertise** – The technical assistance team has a cadre of leading subject matter experts available to help grantees address specific challenges. Subject matter expertise covers a wide range of areas, including career pathways, communications and outreach, acceleration strategies, employer engagement, data/technology and cross-agency partnerships.
- **Cohort Topic Groups** – Grantees are invited to join topic-specific virtual communities focused on addressing common challenges experienced across the WIF network and elevating successful practices to replicate or adapt. These communities use a combination of peer-learning and subject matter expertise to explore topics of interest and expand knowledge.
- **Peer-to-Peer Collaboration** – The WIF network represents some of the most creative innovators within the workforce system, and grantees are given every opportunity to learn from and collaborate with their peers in the field.
- **Virtual Presentations and Resources** – The technical assistance team regularly solicits the input of WIF grantees to determine topics of interest, and builds customized virtual events, resource guides and online toolkits to provide promising practice examples addressing these topics that grantees can incorporate into their projects.
- **In-Person Grantee Meetings** - Grant budgets include funds to bring a team of project staff to Washington D.C. for an annual WIF institute. The institute incorporates workshops, peer-learning events, networking sessions and presentations by national leaders, all of which are collectively designed to strengthen the individual projects of every grantee.

- **Evaluated Results** – A rigorous evaluation can inform you whether your program produced positive results and how you were able to achieve the results. Evaluation results can demonstrate effectiveness and encourage new partnerships and investments that better serve customers.
- **A National Profile** – The WIF is a high-profile project with active support and interest from the President, members of Congress, the Department of Labor, and state and community leaders. Being selected to join the network means greater public and national attention paid to your work, ultimately resulting in opportunities for partnerships and other prospects.
- **Federal Support** – All WIF grants are managed through the Department of Labor's regional offices, and a Federal Project Officer (FPO) oversees the management of each WIF grant. FPOs bring a high level of experience and can provide assistance with grant and financial management questions that arise during the course of the grant.
- **Sustainability Assistance** – Although the WIF requires grantees to do in-depth planning for sustainability of their projects, we know it is a challenging goal and difficult to do without assistance. Therefore, special resources, tools and subject matter experts are available to assist with this process.

IN HINDSIGHT: LESSONS LEARNED FROM ROUND 1 WIF GRANTEES

Planning

- Get your project infrastructure in place before service delivery begins.
- Budget adequately for implementation and maintenance of intervention.
- Allow adequate time for planning and achieving buy-in from partners.
- Plan for data gathering, management and analysis.

Partnership Development

- Spend time on stakeholder engagement before submitting your proposal and don't stop after receiving the grant award.

Staffing

- Hire and empower a strong project manager that can truly connect with people and get things done.
- Hire project staff with navigator skill sets that can carry out the project's vision and leverage WIF efforts with the assets of the entire workforce system.
- Consider the training and professional development needs of front-line staff, and include the costs in your budget initially, and for ongoing training over the life of your grant.
- Plan in advance for staff turnover and succession.

Communications and Marketing

- Develop a communications and outreach strategy that will allow you to widely share project highlights with customers, stakeholders, community leaders, and potential funders.
- Promote the project broadly to achieve additional buy-in and maintain momentum.

Continuous Improvement

- Create a plan for continuous improvement and quality assurance.
- Use data and customer satisfaction input to support continuous improvement and decision making.

Evaluation

- Budget adequately for evaluation activities.
- Allow adequate time for evaluation activities, including analysis.
- Understand fully the evidence base for your program.
- Select an evaluator with experience and expertise relevant to your planned evaluation.

To find out more about the Workforce Innovation Fund, and how you can apply to become a grantee, please visit http://www.doleta.gov/workforce_innovation

This information sheet is designed to assist prospective applicants. If there is any inconsistency between items in this information sheet and the Workforce Innovation Fund Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA/DFA PY-13-06), and/or any Department of Labor (DOL) regulation or guidance, the SGA or DOL regulation or guidance will prevail.