

DEI Allowable Use of Grant Funds

Examples from the Field

The Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) cooperative agreement includes guidance around allowable uses of grant funds to implement grant requirements. Throughout the period of the grant, a project may need to identify ways to expend funds. The purpose of this DEI Strategy Toolkit is to provide some examples from the field to consider in these circumstances.

The Toolkit includes examples from the field of how grantees are supporting grant provisions in the areas of project staff, accommodations, curricula revisions, project activities, training costs, work experiences, and other services.

Projects should work directly with their designated Federal Project Officer (FPO) to determine the course of action.

FOA Uses of Grant Funds with Examples from the Field
PROJECT STAFF: (Including subject matter experts or consultants, if reasonable and necessary to the design of the project) required to implement project design.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Alaska) Charging of time of supervisors and leadership when assisting with grant related activities. • (Alaska) Identifying other areas of crossover where staff could charge time to the grant (e.g., Title 1 staff participating in an IRT prior to enrollment when they would need to use the Title 1 funds). • (Alaska) Providing DRCs with national training opportunities/professional development in areas such as Motivational Interviewing, and strategies for working with youth. • (Maine) Covered roles of full-time DEI staff positions to include Rehabilitation Counselor-1, position that bridges VR and Workforce, and a Labor Program Specialist for the Employment Network (state level Workforce EN Administrator). The state-level Workforce EN Administrator position became fully funded through EN generated revenue. <p>(Georgia) Funded a position within the state VR agency that created a DEI specific VR Counselor whose caseload is composed entirely of shared DEI.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Massachusetts) Support from the Institute for Community Inclusion and the University of Massachusetts for additional state and local level technical assistance around partnership and collaboration; disability and employment expertise; training around physical, programmatic and communication access within the local pilot site’s job centers; and benefits planning and assistance. <p>(Hawaii) Subject matter experts from the University of Hawaii Center on Disability Studies to provide training to DRCs and AJC staff.</p> <p>(Minnesota) PACER Center to support youth focused project to provide technical assistance//training to both the state and local DEI service providers. Provides materials, technical resources, webinars, and one on-one and group sessions assisting service providers in better serving youth with disabilities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (South Dakota) Support from Black Hills Special Services Co-Op (BHSSC) providing training and technical assistance to DRCs and training and support to AJC staff around accommodation strategies.

FOA Uses of Grant Funds with Examples from the Field

BHSSC plays an integral role with DEI business engagement and intersections with other state level disability and employment work in South Dakota.

- Several DEI projects implementing Workforce ENs have recognized the importance of providing SSA disability benefits and Work Incentive counseling to facilitate successful employment outcomes and have used grant funds to certify some or all DRCs or other local/state project staff.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Including software upgrades and other assistive technology/equipment, to promote the participation of individuals with disabilities in career pathways programs.

- (Alaska) Purchased iPads and an annual subscription to Purple VRS as a more effective way to communicate with deaf and hard of hearing customers. They were also used for individuals to participate in Skype interviews with employers and other service providers from the DRC's offices.
- (Alaska) Braided funds to purchase Smart TVs and cameras to provide distance delivered Ticket WISE events, and used video conferencing for trainings and team meetings and to bring members together for IRTs who couldn't be in the same room at the same time.
- (Alaska) Braided funds to fill accommodation requests of internal staff for ergonomic and adaptive office equipment and furniture needed due to a disability.
- (Iowa) Used funds in coordination with VR Blind Agency to provide needed equipment for the workplace for individuals who are blind.
- (Maine) Braided funds with WIOA and Wagner-Peyser to provide AT in the DEI pilot AJCs.
- (New York) A Notice of Obligational Authority (NOA), which is in effect for DEI local pilot site for DRCs in purchasing AT. This process includes access to and information around Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (TRAID), a federally funded program administered by the NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs. Twelve Regional TRAIID Centers are located throughout the state. It also includes a DOL approved Assistive Technology Recommendation List.

CURRICULA REVISIONS: Need to revise curriculum (e.g., creating curricula that are contextualized to occupational pathways and individual learning styles, or seeding innovation of new delivery formats, such as dual enrollment of learning communities)

- (Maine) Working with VR at the state level and AJCs in the pilot areas to develop and implement a pilot workshop based on the VR model that provides a more intensive career exploration than what is currently on offer in the Centers. It incorporates the Basic Financial Assessment Tool that was piloted with NY DEI IV, which is a step beyond what VR is doing and incorporates this critical piece of the DEI work that also addresses WIOA Financial Capability. A summer intern was also paid by DEI to update the Disability Resource Guide and ADA 25 activities and improve the disability information on the Maine Department of Labor's Career Center website. A WIOA Work Experience Assistant has been shared by DEI, VR and the Augusta Career Center to serve as the program assistant for the Financial Freedom Forum. She also updated and revised other disability and employment materials.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES: Developing and implementing alternate assessment strategies (including but not limited to "discovery", Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), outreach and recruitment to individuals with disabilities, engagement with businesses, and customized employment strategies for adults with significant disabilities.

- (Alaska) Purchased new assessment tool for youth that aligns with one being used by the VR system in order to coordinate services.
- (Alaska) Used funds for programming to include the DEI project data into the WIOA Title 1 System.
- (California) Conduct resource mapping and develop a disability partner-focused resource guide for job seekers, staff and employers.
- (California) Provide Workshops for Ticket Holders to learn about many aspects of the Ticket Program, including benefits planning, financial education and literacy, and part-time vs. full-time employment.
- (South Dakota) Provided IRT training to SD DOL and partner agency staff across the state via state level trainings and webinar trainings. The six in-person trainings were conducted regionally, with the Rapid City DRC and Special Services of Black Hills Employment Specialist leading the trainings.

FOA Uses of Grant Funds with Examples from the Field

- (Several Projects) Braided funds with partners such as VR and other disability agencies to hold “Employment First” or “DiverseAbility” Job Fairs focused on business engagement. Some of these were focused solely on federal contractors hiring individuals with disabilities under Section 503 and others were broader based.

TRAINING COSTS: Tuition and other training costs, including financial literacy and financial capability training.

- (Several projects) Use of DEI training dollars (also known as Flexible Employment Funds (FEF) Strategy), which represents DEI funds that have been funneled to the local pilot areas for use in supporting individual job seekers with disabilities to achieve and maintain meaningful employment and economic self-sufficiency. These funds are managed and tracked by the DRC. Uses have included:
 - Offering flexibility and opportunities to fill service and funding “gaps” within IRTs assisting individuals with disabilities to meet their employment goals.
 - Incentivizing increases in Title 1 enrollments for individuals with disabilities, in particular increasing enrollment into WIOA where FEFs could compensate for scarce local training dollars.
- (Alaska) DRCs providing mini trainings on topic focused areas for disability awareness to other AJC staff who can then charge that time spent on the activity to the grant.
- (California) Conduct disability awareness and etiquette training (Legacy) for all AJC front-line staff, including online and in-person training. Participating staff received certificates of completion.

PAID AND UPDAID WORK EXPERIENCES: Paid internships, Registered Apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and summer youth employment programs.

- (Alaska) has a robust cross agency summer youth and work experience program in place that uses DEI funds braided with VR and others. Alaska has entered into an agreement with VR to braid funds to pilot a peer mentoring project that will place peer mentors into the AJCs, disability agencies and post-secondary education sites.
- (Massachusetts) Covered the cost of 6-8 week Work Based Learning Experience following WIOA Title 1 funds covering training costs for job seekers with disabilities in Career Pathways programs.

OTHER: Other services and program activities for individuals participating in career pathways programs (including, employment and supportive services, case management, or other training services).

- Working with partners to cover costs for joint events, e.g., event space and sign language interpreters,
- Providing additional direct supports to individuals in the form of transportation cost assistance, interview clothing, employer wage subsidies, training funds and other supports.

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