



Innovative Employment Opportunity
*(Intellectual Disability Partnership
Innovative Employment Outcomes Pilot Program)*

Under the leadership of Commissioner Scheff, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and the Intellectual Disability Partnership (IDP) is launching the second year of the Innovative Employment Opportunity grant program. This opportunity was established to provide support and resources to the creation or expansion of business ventures that integrate individuals with intellectual disability into their communities through meaningful employment.

This grant program is intended to support innovative business ideas that will increase meaningful employment for people with intellectual disability. Nationally, individuals with developmental disabilities are disproportionately unemployed, underemployed, and living in poverty. DDS, an Employment First Agency, realizes that meaningful employment can be a cornerstone of any individual's successful participation in their community. The Innovative Employment Opportunity increases opportunities for people with disabilities to become self-employed or to engage with entrepreneurs in employment opportunities, thereby increasing their economic self-sufficiency.

The Innovative Employment Opportunity is offering in two types of grants:

Exploratory Grant

This grant will provide funding for business ideas that need an opportunity to explore and support to further develop a viable business plan. DDS will award up to \$4,000 for this type of grant.

Implementation/Expansion Grant

This grant is for applicants who have a business concept, product or service; targeted market; business goals; and are in development and ready to implement or expand. DDS will award grants in three brackets for this type of grant: \$10,000; \$25,000; or \$50,000.

The Innovative Employment Opportunity offers connections to a network of partner services like the CT Small Business Development, Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), University of Hartford Entrepreneurial Center to help build and improve business knowledge for eligible grantees in the following areas:

1. Guidance on writing a business plan.
2. One-on-one business technical support.
3. Follow-up and ongoing support.
4. Business management mentoring.
5. Market research mentoring.
6. Financial projections mentoring.
7. Financial benchmarking support.
8. Entrepreneurial style development.

Awardees must commit to:

1. An independent review of their business plan which will be forwarded by DDS to an accredited member of America's Small Business Development Center.
2. 12 months of quarterly reporting to DDS, as well as targeted program evaluation, data sharing, and routine quality monitoring and improvement practices.
3. Participation in quarterly business trainings offered by DDS' network of partners.

The Innovative Employment Opportunity application period begins in February. Applications, including business plans, must be submitted electronically to Amber Burke (dds.employment-dayservices@ct.gov) by March 16, 2020. All questions regarding the application must be received by Amber Burke in writing by March 2, 2020. Answers will be posted to the DDS website in a Frequently Asked Questions document by March 6, 2020. DDS will select grantees up to the total program funding cap.

Key Dates

Application Start Date: 2/14/20

Application Submission Deadline: *EXTENDED TO 3/30/20*

Anticipated Funding Selection Date: 4/15/20

Anticipated Award Date: 5/15/20