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Gov Reynolds announces \$5 million for Employer Innovation Fund grants to upskill Iowa's workforce

DES MOINES - Today Gov. Kim Reynolds announced \$5 million in funding from the Corona Virus Relief Fund to support the Future Ready Iowa Employer Innovation Fund. Grant applications open today and will provide funding opportunities for employers, employer consortiums, community organizations and nonprofits, to provide training, books, tools and wrap around support for Iowans engaged in training programs in high-demand careers. The grant program will focus on Iowans whose jobs have been affected or eliminated because of the pandemic. The application process opens on Wednesday, August 26th and will be open until September 16th. Recipients will be notified of awards by September 23rd, 2020. No matching funds will be required from applicants and the maximum available award will be \$100,000 per applicant.

"The Employer Innovation Fund empowers employers and communities to find creative ways to help workers most affected by the pandemic by identifying local workforce needs and then creating programs that will quickly get people into and out of training to meet those needs," said Director Beth Townsend, Iowa Workforce Development. "As Iowa's businesses reopen, the grants will help Iowans gain credentials in high-demand jobs that support a good quality of life for themselves and their families. It is a tremendous investment in our workers and our recovery."

The \$5 million investment from the CARES act Coronavirus Relief Fund will jump-start the creation of training opportunities for lowans most affected by the pandemic. Grants can be used to cover the cost of training and supplies as well as provide much needed wrap around support that addresses the other barriers some lowans face when trying to obtain skilled training. Support services can be used to cover expenses related to childcare, transportation and provide stipends to meet basic necessities while in training. The competitive grants will expand opportunities for more lowans to earn for-credit and non-credit postsecondary credentials, including short-term certificates, that lead to high-demand jobs.

Additional information:

- Employers, employer consortiums, community organizations, nonprofits and other entities can apply.
- Applicants must be aligned with at least one employer.
- Qualifying initiatives must be tied to outcomes related to obtaining credentials in high-demand jobs.
- Projects must be able to spend granted funds by Dec. 31, 2020.

The Future Ready Iowa goal is to have 70 percent of lowans in the workforce with education and training beyond high school by 2025. Approximately 60 percent of Iowa's current workforce meets this education and training criteria. The Employer Innovation Fund will award grants to support initiatives that use innovative and creative ways to accelerate postsecondary credential attainment for lowans.

Potential applicants can find more information and apply for the Employer Innovation Fund at www.futurereadyiowa.gov/innovation and can apply at <https://iowagrants.gov/index.do>

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