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DHS Employment First offers \$800,000 in new innovation grants

Department of Human Services' Employment First initiative is offering the opportunity for local providers and agencies to apply for grants to fund new, creative and innovative ideas to increase collaboration and build capacity for employment services to people with developmental disabilities.

The purpose of these "mini-grants" is to expand the efforts to increase competitive integrated employment opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Oregon Legislature awarded funding in the 2015-17 session in a Policy Option Package to fund innovative Employment First projects to increase capacity for employment services throughout the state. A total of \$800,000 is available, which will be awarded in various amounts depending on the scope of the proposals.

Local Employment First teams, Vocational Rehabilitation branches, Community Developmental Disabilities Programs (CDDPs) and developmental disabilities brokerages, local education agencies, family groups or networks, or employers are encouraged to apply as partnering agencies. While a variety of agencies or entities may apply, it is required that more than one entity must apply to demonstrate local collaboration.

Employment First is seeking local agencies and entities with innovative ideas and projects for building employment capacity and collaboration. While these grants are not limited to the following examples, some ideas include: training for teachers who want to become job developers; innovative ideas on helping with transportation barriers for people with disabilities; and employer or family networking events in local communities aimed at promoting employment for people with developmental disabilities.

Many more examples are listed in the full Request for Grant Proposals (RFGP) under RFGP titled "DHS-4281-16 Innovative Employment First Services" at: <http://orpin.oregon.gov>

The minimum requirement for proposals is that the project includes clear deliverables, is not already funded through state or local resources, improves employment services for individuals with I/DD, and must be sustainable if it is intended to continue.

Grant proposals are due by 3 p.m. March 2, 2017. Any questions about this Request for Grant Proposals (RFGP) must be directed to Lesley Erickson at: lesley.g.erickson@state.or.us or 503-945-6698.