

## 2020 Emergency Assistance Funding Pre-Application

**BACKGROUND:** On March 9, 2020 Governor JB Pritzker issued a Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation in response to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) situation. This proclamation will assist Illinois agencies in coordinating State and Federal resources to support local governments in preparation for any action that may be necessary related to the potential impact of COVID- 19 in the State of Illinois. This funding opportunity is part of the State of Illinois response to the National Health Emergency to help employers retain workers and prevent layoffs.

**COMPONENTS:** In order to support small businesses\* facing financial impacts from the COVID-19 emergency, the Illinois Department Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) has identified Statewide WIOA Rapid Response funds for layoff aversion activities. Rapid Response is a flexible activity designed to respond to the needs of businesses and affected workers. It includes the delivery of layoff aversion strategies intended to prevent or minimize the duration of unemployment.

### *Allowable Activities:*

Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIAs) must utilize funds in order to mitigate layoffs and adhere to “social distancing” provisions established by state and federal public health entities, including Illinois Executive Order 2020-10 (COVID-19 Stay-at-Home Order). Requests must be reasonable, necessary, and directly related to the purpose of the *COVID- 19 Layoff Aversion* project(s). In addition, non-essential businesses may not use this funding opportunity to operate in violation of the COVID-19 Stay-at-Home order during the duration of the Illinois Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation. Examples of layoff aversion projects that use innovative strategies to address COVID-19-related effects on employers and workers include:

- A small business needs their employees to be at work, on-site, but cannot afford frequent deep cleaning to help prevent potential exposure to COVID-19. **Layoff aversion funds could be used to pay for a cleaning/ sanitization service.**
- A small business whose employees use specific software or computer applications asks their employees to work from home/remotely in order to support social distancing and limit potential exposure to COVID-19. **Layoff aversion funding could be used to purchase the software programs and/or hardware (computers) that the employee would need to use from home to support their work.**
- A call center environment needs to have their employees work from home/remotely in order to support social distancing and limit potential exposure to COVID-19. **Layoff aversion funding could be used to purchase remote access supplies, including laptop computers and/or smart phones that the employee would need to use from home to support their work.**

- In order to support social distancing and limit potential exposure to COVID-19, a company that usually runs two shifts of workers adds a third shift, so that fewer employees are on on-site at any given time. **Layoff aversion funding could be used to offset related costs to the employer or workers, excluding wages and benefits.**
- Incumbent worker training to redirect and reassign existing employees on critical business needs. **Layoff aversion funding can help pay for projects to support the production of goods and services that are needed to address COVID-19 National Health Emergency and/or preserve critical business operations to stay in business.**
- Convene industry leaders in key sectors to identify the immediate needs, identify solutions from workforce education and economic development partners. Funding would be used to support industry sector partnership activities focused on COVID-19 recovery efforts. **Funding will be provided to support appropriate training and response activities based on the identified needs**

Please note that this list is not all inclusive. Additional allowable activities that support layoff aversion for small businesses may be considered.

*Prohibited Costs:*

Resources from the COVID-19 Layoff Aversion Fund may *not* be used for the following:

- Employee wages/benefits including Hazard Pay;
- Support services such as childcare, transportation costs, lodging expenses, or meals;
- Equipment with a per unit value over \$5,000;
- Political or religious activities;
- Branding and marketing projects;
- Fundraising, Fines, Penalties, Donations;
- Individual members subscriptions; or
- Costs that are not reasonable, necessary, and directly related to the purpose of the *COVID-19 Layoff Aversion* project.

*Program Funding:*

The funding range for COVID-19 Layoff Aversion funding is \$5,000 to \$50,000 per employer/physical location. DCEO may consider proposals that exceed this cap if extenuating circumstances warrant. The applicant (LWIAs) must document the impact of the *COVID-19 National Health Emergency* on the employers and the layoff risk factors for each project in the pre-application. LWIAs are encouraged to work with regional partners (including, but not limited to, other LWIAs) to streamline the management of projects that are located in multiple

local workforce areas. Consideration will be given to the geographic distributions of awards. Note that the funding will be provided on a reimbursement basis.

*Eligibility:*

Eligible applicants include Illinois' Local Workforce Innovation Areas for Layoff Aversion projects focused on employers that are:

- In good standing with the State of Illinois;
- Can demonstrate a need for layoff aversion support due to the impacts of COVID-19; and
- Can enter into an agreement with the LWIA that includes conditions outlined in the pre-application (Attachment A).

*Pre-Application Submission:*

Employers should submit completed pre-applications electronically to the BEST, Inc. Business Relations Manager, Dianna Schuler at **dianna\_schuler@best-inc.org** using the attached pre-application template (Attachment A). Pre-applications will be accepted and submitted to DCEO for reviewed on a rolling, first-come, first-served basis until funds are exhausted. At a minimum, a completed pre-application must provide:

- The number of employees affected;
- A brief profile of the business including industry, occupation, and physical location(s);
- A brief narrative describing the layoff aversion plan, timeline and need for funds;
- The amount of funds requested and brief budget description;
- A commitment to keep employees on staff through 45 calendar days from the date of the grant award;
- A commitment of the employer to adhere to the required certifications; and,
- Attestation that the business is included in the list of essential businesses according to the most recent declaration by the Governor of the State of Illinois.

**INQUIRIES:** Inquiries related to this pre-application should be directed to Dianna Schuler at **dianna\_schuler@best-inc.org** or 815-631-2990.