

BACKGROUND

Innovative Employment Opportunity (IEO)

IEO grants were established to provide support and resources for the creation or expansion of business ventures that integrate individuals with intellectual disabilities 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 that aligns with DDS' commitment to Competitive Integrated Employment for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

What Awardees must commit to:



- 12 months of quarterly reporting to DDS, as well as targeted program evaluation, data sharing, and routine quality monitoring and improvement practices
- Completion of yearly reporting for two fiscal years
- Connection to a small business assistance program for 1 year



Important: IEO grants may be offered annually if funds are available.

SMALL BUSINESS MENTORING

Make Connections!



The Innovative Employment Opportunity offers connections to a network of small business assistance services such as: CT Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) to help build and improve business knowledge for eligible grantees in the following areas:

- Guidance on writing a business plan
- One-on-one business technical support
- Follow-up and ongoing support
- Business management mentoring
- Market research mentoring
- Financial projections mentoring and financial benchmarking support
- Entrepreneurial style development

Small Business Mentoring Websites:
CT Small Business Development Center
SCORE



State of Connecticut
Department of
Developmental Services



SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Would you like to explore self-employment, start a small business, or expand an existing business? If so, a small business venture might be right for you. Options to achieve self-employment may include:

- ❖ **INNOVATIVE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY (IEO)**
- ❖ **EMPLOYMENT SERVICES:** Individual Supported Employment, Customized Employment, Individualized Day Vocational

IMPORTANT: DDS services are voluntary. Unlike the school years that are mandated by law, services and supports available through DDS are neither mandated nor entitlements, therefore, subject to appropriations from the state legislature every year.

State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental
Services (DDS)

EXPLORATORY GRANT



Explore the Possibilities

This grant will provide funding for business ideas that need an opportunity to explore the development of a viable business plan.

Funding amount:



'Seed Money' to get started

Who can apply for this grant?

- Individuals/families of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Entrepreneurs interested in opening a business dedicated to employment for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Note: The creation of competitive integrated employment opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities must be an integral component of the business concept for all IEO grants.



Important: IEO grants may be offered annually **if funds are available.**

IMPLEMENTATION / EXPANSION GRANT

Expand and Grow



This grant is for applicants who have a business, product or service, targeted market, and/or business goals; and are already in development and ready to implement or expand.

Funding amount:



Larger amounts to grow and expand

Examples of appropriate requests include, but are not limited to:

- marketing funds; consulting fees
- equipment
- assistive technology
- development of technology systems

Who can apply for this grant?

- Individuals/families of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Businesses dedicated to creating competitive integrated employment opportunities for individuals with IDD.



Note: Provider agencies are precluded from applying for Exploratory and Implementation / Expansion Grants.

SELF-EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS

Additional Options



Self-employment can also be explored by using a DDS Employment Service such as Individual Supported Employment (ISE), Customized Employment (CE), or Individualized Day Vocational (IDV).

Goals

Based on the goals in your Individual Plan, you may be able to receive support from a provider or self-directed staff to identify potential career interests, create a business plan, or start your own business.

Assistive Technology (AT)

To learn how AT can be used to support self-employment, visit the AT website:

[Assistive Technology](#)

[STEP Assistive Technology Fact Sheet](#)

More information

For more detailed information about Employment Services, check out the [Employment and Day Services Pathways brochure](#).



Questions?
[DDS Employment and Day Services](#)