



State of Connecticut  
Department of Developmental Services

**DDS**

Jordan A. Scheff  
Commissioner

Elisa F. Velardo  
Deputy Commissioner

**Operations Memo 2024-19**

**TO:** DDS Qualified Providers

**FROM:** Sean Bannon, Director, Operations Center

**CC:** Jordan Scheff, Commissioner; Elisa Velardo, Deputy Commissioner; Katie Rock-Burns, Chief of Staff; Nicholas Jerard, CFO; Amber Carter, Director, Employment & Day Services Unit Regional Directors; Private ARDs; Resource Administrators; The Alliance, The ARC CT

**DATE:** May 2, 2024

**RE:** Micro-Enterprise Start-ups via One-Time Funding

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS), as an Employment First Agency, stands firm in its commitment to assisting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) actualize their employment goals. This includes supporting pathways to employment for individuals served by the Department, regardless of challenges and barriers. DDS also recognizes that employment encompasses a wide range of options, including self-employment.

Effective May 1, 2024, individuals served by the Department will have the opportunity to access small business startup funds through one-time funding. Providers may request funding of up to \$5,000 per identified individual to act on an entrepreneurial idea and establish a small business enterprise. Provider agencies not currently eligible to receive funds through the ID Partnership may be required to complete a contract amendment prior to disbursement of funds.

Awards will be subject to approval by the DDS Micro-Enterprise Review Team, an interdisciplinary committee made up of representatives from across DDS. This includes members of the Employment & Day Services team, Resource Management, Case Management, and regional representation. This team is tasked with reviewing applications for funds on a rolling basis to ensure funding is dispersed in a fair and equitable manner while also weighing the feasibility of business models and supporting competitive integrated employment. This opportunity is pursuant to the availability of funds. Awards will only be issued when funding is available and the Review Team has approved. As noted, this is subject to change.

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Under the conditions and guidelines specified below, PRAT and Resource Administrators can issue one-time funds up to \$5,000 toward the startup costs of a microenterprise per individual. Each request must have a summary and meet the following criteria:

## 1. Use Requirements:

- A. Funding shall align with DDS guidelines regarding competitive integrated employment and is limited to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities supported by the Department interested in opening a business based upon their interests and expertise.
- B. Providers may work with individuals and their planning and support team to submit their idea/plans for approval to the **DDS Micro-Enterprise Review Team** at [DDS.Microenterprise@ct.gov](mailto:DDS.Microenterprise@ct.gov) . Submissions will be accepted on an ongoing basis.
- C. Individuals who receive previous funding through this opportunity, and wish to seek funding for another Micro-enterprise in the future must meet the following criteria to apply again:
  - a. Justification for re-application and explanation of the previous use of funds
  - b. Approval from the **DDS Micro-Enterprise Review Team**

## 2. Submission summary criteria and review requirements

- A. All submissions must be complete and answer all questions in full to be applicable for review from the DDS Micro-Enterprise Review Team.
- B. Submissions will be reviewed and approved in accordance with the DDS Micro-Enterprise Funding Guidelines and Rubric housed in the Employment & Day Services Unit.
- C. Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. Individuals will receive an approval/denial letter within 60 days of their submission.
- D. Provider agencies may complete one-time funding requests in conjunction with documentation that the plan has been approved by the DDS Micro-Enterprise Review Team.

## 3. Acceptable Use of Funds

- A. Funds may be used toward costs associated with micro-enterprise start-up. This includes, but is not limited to, equipment procurement, training, research and/or marketing necessary to create the business model identified in the application.
- B. Funds are not permitted to be used toward wages of employees of the micro-enterprise.

## 4. Ongoing Commitments/Reporting Requirements

- A. Ongoing reporting to DDS, as well as targeted program evaluation, data sharing, and routine quality monitoring and improvement practices associated with the waiver service connected to the microenterprise.
- B. Provider agencies will assist identified businesses, once established, in meeting all legal requirements set forth by the State of Connecticut.

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