



WORKPLACE ACCESSIBILITY GRANT PROGRAM GUIDE



Governor's Workforce Board

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Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training
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An equal opportunity employer. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.



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OVERVIEW

The Workplace Accessibility Grant Program was established by the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB) to promote employment and economic opportunity for individuals with disabilities through investment in accessible workplaces. It provides a 100% reimbursement for eligible costs up to \$5,000 per calendar year.

All Rhode Island employers with fewer than twenty-five (25) employees and who meet the eligibility requirements outlined in this guide may apply.

KEY TERMS

For the purposes of this program the following definitions apply:

- **Employer** — An entity, company or organization entering into agreement with the Governor's Workforce Board to identify and/or implement workplace accessibility solutions.
- **Individual with a disability** – The Governor's Workforce Board utilizes the definition provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA defines a person with a disability as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. This includes people who have a record of such an impairment, even if they do not currently have a disability. It also includes individuals who do not have a disability but are regarded as having a disability.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Employers must meet five (5) eligibility requirements to participate in the program:

- 1) Classified as a for-profit or private non-profit entity doing business in Rhode Island (public/government entities are not eligible).
- 2) Has fewer than twenty-five (25) total employees.
- 3) Pays into the Rhode Island Job Development Fund via Unemployment Insurance taxes.
- 4) In good standing with the Rhode Island Division of Taxation, all divisions of the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, and not prohibited from contracting with an agency that administers federal funds.
 - **NOTE:** To verify that the organization pays into the Job Development Fund and is current on all tax obligations, please contact the Division of Taxation at (401) 574-8710.
- 5) Registered in the Ocean State Procures system (OSP). **If the employer is not currently registered with OSP, full registration must be completed and approved prior to applying for Workplace Accessibility Grants.**
 - **NOTE:** Ocean State Procures is a NEW supplier management system. Accounts did not automatically transfer from the previous RIFANS system so applicants must register with Ocean State Procures even if they had a previous RIFANS registration.

Please visit the [Vendor Self Registration Guide](#) or [click here](#) to be directed to the OSP application. For assistance, please contact WebProcure.Support@perfect.com or call 1(866) 889-8533.

REIMBURSEMENT RATES & PROGRAM CAPS

Employers who meet the eligibility criteria outlined above may be reimbursed up to 100% of eligible costs on eligible activities. The annual award cap is \$5,000 per calendar year. Multiple grants may be awarded to an employer until the \$5,000 cap is reached.

Note: If cost reimbursement is a barrier to program participation, the GWB may be able to arrange an advance payment. To discuss the feasibility of providing an advance payment, please contact the GWB prior to submitting a program application at (401) 462-8860 or by e-mailing dlt.gwbinfo@dlt.ri.gov.

Employers with more than one location in Rhode Island may be treated as either one employer or separate employers depending on the Federal Employer Identification Number(s) (FEINs). Employers with locations operating under different FEINs will be considered separate entities and each location may submit its own application(s). Employers with more than one location operating under a single FEIN are considered one entity.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

Employers may utilize this program to both identify and address barriers to workplace accessibility.

Eligible costs include reasonable expenses related to any physical, procedural, or programmatic modifications, alterations, accommodations, or adjustments made to a job, work environment, or business practice that would enable the employer to employ one or more individual(s) with a disability.

The following are examples of the types of Environmental/Physical, Attitudinal, Communication, Technology and Hiring Practice barriers that may be addressed through this program:

Environmental/Physical

- Accessible Counters/Shelving/Sinks
- Adjusted Materials/Signage
- Automatic Doors
- Disability-Friendly Parking
- Doorway Widening
- Ergonomic Equipment
- Handrails/Grab Bars
- Height Appropriate Desks/Tables
- Improved Lighting
- Lifts/Ramps
- Office Design Consultant
- Quiet Break Space

Attitudinal

- Inclusive Workplace Training

Communication

- American Sign Language (ASL) Training
- Braille, Large Print, or Picture Materials/Signage
- Management Training on Accessible Communication
- Website Accessibility

Technology

- Color-Coded Keyboards
- Computer Screen Magnifier
- Enlarged Keyboards
- Other Disability-Friendly Software
- Remote Work Equipment
- Screen Reader
- Teletypewriter (TTY)
- Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)
- Visual Assistive Software
- Voice Recognition Software

Hiring Practice

- Consultation on Accessible Hiring/Employer Coaching
- Career Page Accessibility Reviews and Recommendations
- Development of Behavior-Based Interview Questions (for interviewing applicants who are neurodiverse, including people with cognitive disabilities and people with high anxiety)
- Progressive Career Development Plans for People with Disabilities Within the Workplace
- Job Descriptions for Plain Language and Reasonable Requirements Reviews
- Recruitment Support (specific to hiring candidates with disabilities into W2 employment)

NOTE: Purchases and/or enhancements should be made in a cost-effective manner using local vendors whenever possible. Employers may not hire vendors with whom they have a familial relationship. Employers in need of assistance identifying vendors may find resources at Rhode Island Commerce at www.supplyrhodeisland.com or by e-mail to supplyri@commerceri.com

The following costs are **NOT** eligible for reimbursement:

- Enhancements not related to increasing accessibility
- Equipment (including hardware and software) not related to increased accessibility
- Employee wages
- Employee mileage (or other travel costs)
- Grant preparation or administration costs
- Food and beverage

APPLICATION PROCESS

Before project can begin, an application must be submitted by the employer and approved by GWB staff. The Workplace Accessibility Grant application is available online at www.gwb.ri.gov and can be submitted at any time (please apply at least three weeks prior to the start of a desired project or activity to allow sufficient processing time). Applications are currently accepted online only. Paper-based applications are not presently available.

When an application is successfully submitted, the applicant will receive an email confirmation. This is the employer's receipt and counts as proof that the application was submitted. If you do not receive an e-mail confirmation after applying, please contact the GWB within 24 hours for assistance.

Applications are typically processed within seven (7) days of receipt. Each submission is reviewed by GWB staff for accuracy and to determine eligibility. If any issues are identified in the application, the point of contact listed on the application will be notified.

Employers should submit one (1) application for each unique project, activity, or solution. For

example, an employer may initially apply for funding for workplace accessibility consultation, and subsequently apply for funding to implement specific workplace accessibility solutions recommended by the consultant. Within each application, employers must describe how the proposed activities will improve workplace accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

AWARD PROCESS

After an application is reviewed and approved, the employer will receive a contract for review and signature. Once signed by both the employer and the GWB, the employer will receive a copy of the contract. The GWB cannot provide reimbursement for any costs incurred prior to the start date on the contract.

APPLICATION DENIALS

Applications will be denied if the information provided by the employer is deemed to be inaccurate or if the request does not meet the eligibility criteria outlined in this guide. Employers will be notified via e-mail if their application is denied. The e-mail will contain the reason for the denial and instructions for filing an appeal.

APPEAL PROCESS FOR DENIED APPLICATIONS

Denied applications may be appealed by writing to the Executive Director of the Governor's Workforce Board within two weeks (10 business days) of the notification of denial. Appeals may be sent via mail or via e-mail to dlt.gwbinfo@dlt.ri.gov and addressed to:

Executive Director
Governor's Workforce Board
Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training
1511 Pontiac Avenue, Building 73-1
Cranston, RI 02920

The appeal must include the name and contact information for the employer representative (please include a mailing address and phone number) and a description of the issue. The Executive Director will issue a decision within ten (10) business days of receiving the appeal.

REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

In the Workplace Accessibility Grant Program, payments are made on a reimbursement basis in which the employer pays the costs up front and requests reimbursement at the conclusion of the contract performance period. If cost reimbursement is a barrier to program participation, the GWB may be able to arrange an advance payment. To discuss the feasibility of providing an advance payment, please contact the GWB prior to submitting a program application.

At the conclusion of the contract performance period, the employer is required to submit the Workplace Accessibility Grant Request for Reimbursement Form and evidence of completed work and costs incurred to dlt.invoice@dlt.ri.gov within sixty (60) days.

If proper documentation is not received within sixty (60) days of the conclusion of the contract performance period, the reimbursement will not be processed, and the contract will be closed.

The following items are required to request reimbursement:

- 1. Workplace Accessibility Grant Request for Reimbursement Form**

At the time of award, employers will receive a copy of the Workplace Accessibility Grant Request for Reimbursement Form. It may also be downloaded from the GWB website www.gwb.ri.gov. The form must be completed with the following information:

- Contract Number
- Employer Name
- Activity Name (as indicated on the contract)
- Total Funding Utilized
- Employer Signature

2. Supporting Documentation (Evidence of Completed Work and Costs Incurred)

The following types of documents may be submitted as verification of completed work:

- Completed Workplace Accessibility Assessment or Report
- Photos of Completed Renovations, Enhancements, or Installed Equipment
- Training Certificate(s) of Completion
- Training Sign-In Sheets
- Post-Training Vendor E-mails
- Copies of Revised/Completed Procedures, Processes, or Policies (redacted as needed)

The following types of documents may be submitted as verification of costs incurred:

- Itemized invoices from vendors accompanied by copies of processed checks
- Itemized receipts with dates (date cannot be prior to contract execution)

Note: Supporting documents must identify the dates that work occurred/costs were incurred.

If any of the above items are not present or are incorrect, the Governor's Workforce Board will deny the request for payment and outline the reason for denial. The Employer will have ten (10) business days to rectify any issues and resubmit for payment.

CHECKING REIMBURSEMENT STATUS

Payments will be issued within 30 days of receipt of the Workplace Accessibility Grant Request for Reimbursement Form and supporting documentation. Employers may check [RIPAY](#) for detailed payment information.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Staff is available to provide technical assistance through the entire grant process. For assistance, please call (401) 462-8860 or e-mail dlt.gwbinfo@dlt.ri.gov.



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