

Mental Health Support in Construction Grant Webinar 10.22.2025

Lyndy Logan – Host

You may begin, and I am recording this webinar. Good afternoon, everyone.

[Kelly Cooper, Grant Administrator]

Thank you for joining us for this webinar on the Mental Health Support and Construction Grant. We have really been excited about all the interest in this new grant that we're about to embark on. So, I will introduce myself.

My name is Kelly Cooper. I work at the Department of Labor and Industry in the Construction Codes and Licensing Division. I oversee our Division Operations, the Permitting units, the Contractor Recovery Fund, and Education.

We are currently in the process of hiring someone to help administer this grant within our Education unit. They will eventually be the point of contact for the grant. But until then, I will be working with all of you. I will let Annie introduce herself really quickly.

[Annie Welch, Director - Projects & Planning]

Sure thing. Good afternoon. Thank you so much, everyone, for joining us this afternoon.

My name is Annie Welch. I have the privilege of supporting Kelly in the launch of this grant program. I direct the Projects and Planning Unit at Labor and Industry, so really enjoy getting to support with grant-related items.

[Kelly Cooper, Grant Administrator]

So, we will start with our first slide. This grant, the funding and how this came about was we received \$1 million, a one-time funding over two years from the Minnesota Legislature to promote mental health in the construction industry. The grant is aimed to implement mental health initiatives specifically targeted towards the construction industry.

The goal is to build a safer, healthier job site by supporting mental health wellness for Minnesota's construction workforce. Having better health for the construction workers will improve job sites in multiple different ways. And so we're looking at it will improve focus and decision making, reduce substance abuse potentially, as well as will create stronger teams, lower absentee rates, and create a culture of caring.

So those are all things that are at the forefront of us supporting this grant work and addressing the issues within the construction industry. This grant exists to address the critical need in construction. I wasn't aware of it until last year that the construction industry faces higher rates of suicide than the general population.

Workers often experience chronic stress due to long hours and a culture that discourages kind of seeking help. Mental health challenges are significantly underreported and undertreated in this field. So, this grant is aimed at reducing the stigma around mental health, promoting access, supporting organizations that serve the construction industry, and helping foster a safer, healthier job site.

Next slide, Lyndy. What the grant supports is we're looking for RFPs that suggest outreach and engagement programs to raise awareness and reduce stigma. We're hoping that we have some applicants who speak to multilingual resources tailored to the needs of a diverse construction workforce and address worksite-based strategies that promote mental well-being and prevent crisis.

Additionally, we would be interested in some peer-led programs and training in suicide prevention and intervention. Next slide, Lyndy. Our intended outcomes are measurable improvements in mental health to support across Minnesota's construction workforce.

We're looking at reducing the stigma around seeking help and talking about mental health within the industry. We're looking for improved access to culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health resources, as well as stronger peer support networks and suicide prevention capacity on the job site. To give you a little bit of a cap on what the funding looks like, so as I stated earlier, the department got a million dollars.

We are putting \$750,000 of that available for the grants. The minimum request per applicant is \$150,000. We're looking at awarding between one to four grants.

And as I stated before, the funding came from the legislature. So, \$250,000 is being held back by the department to, one, pay for the person that we are hiring to administer the grant and help support our grantees, as well as potentially some agency-led mental health support initiatives. So, the available funding, the distribution timeline are listed above.

I'm not going to read it for you. But the period begins February 1st, barring any issues with contract execution, and will end December 31st of 2027. There is a continuation option of up to 30 additional months based on performance and funding availability.

It's important to note that funds may be distributed in installments based on fiscal year allocations. Partial awards may be offered. Applicants will have the opportunity to revise work plans accordingly.

These are key dates and timelines for this project. So, as you know, the RFP was posted on October 10th. Questions are due by November 7th.

Applications are due by November 14th. We will begin the review of the applications on November 21st. The pre-award risk assessment will happen on December 7th.

Awards will be announced by December 31st. And the grant start dates, again, would be February 1st of 2026. And the end date would be December 31st, 2027.

We've had a lot of questions about who can apply for the grant. Some eligibility factors. Organizations must be registered and in good standing with the IRS and the Minnesota Secretary of State.

Organizations must demonstrate the ability to implement programming to support mental health in Minnesota's construction industry. We wanted to clarify that both nonprofit and for-profit organizations are eligible to apply. A wide range of organizations, including trade

associations, unions, mental health providers, and construction-related businesses, are highly encouraged to submit proposals, provided they meet the eligibility criteria.

[Kelly Cooper, Grant Administrator]

Some priority activities. This grant program seeks to support mental health and prevent suicide in the construction industry through the development and implementation of outreach and engagement programs. Applicants can achieve desired outcomes through a variety of activities. Eligible activities may include, but are not limited to, creating and distributing resources in multiple languages, such as brochures and website content, to support mental health and reduce stigma and enhance mental well-being.

They can create industry-specific materials to complement existing prevention and crisis intervention resources. They could potentially establish a peer-led program and prevention and crisis response training that is tailored to the construction industry. These strategies directly support the grant's goal of promoting mental health and preventing suicide.

And next up, I will move over to Annie, and she will continue the presentation.

[Annie Welch, Director - Projects & Planning]

Brilliant. Thank you so much for the key overview, Kelly. We are really just inspired that so many of you were able to join us today and even more have signed up to join us.

We know that this is a pretty critical area in the construction industry, and just the variety of folks who applied or intended to join us just speaks to that, that there is a growing movement to ensure we're supporting people really holistically with mental health at the forefront. So, my goal at this point is to help walk through some of the nitty-gritty of how we make grants. For any of you who have experience with grants that are administered by the state, we do have some various requirements and protocols.

You all, as taxpayers, may appreciate that we're very cautious and diligent about how we administer grant funding. So, once we receive applications, and again, we want to note that this is a relatively new territory for our agency, we will convene a committee to review those applications. We will provide scores for those applications with the breakdown that you can see on this slide.

A developed work plan will be eligible for up to 20 points. And what we're looking for is a really clear, realistic timeline of those major activities, any roles that partners will play, and kind of an overarching what you anticipate the outcomes of your project being. In tandem with that, we will award up to 20 points related to measuring the success and outcomes that are listed in that proposal.

How do you plan to collect any data so we can measure impact? And the challenge that we had with writing the request for proposals is that we wanted to provide some ideas of what we thought would be appropriate but also wanted to leave it open and available for ideas that may be out in the industry, in the community, so that we could do a nice job of allowing for some creativity and kind of create too many boxes or too many barriers. We will also offer 15 points for the organizational capacity.

We really just want to see that the organizations to whom we award funding can sufficiently staff the project. That's a really tricky thing to land on, so that's pretty important for any grant, especially one with a mission that's this critical. We would ideally like to see that your organization has some experience with grant-making or grant administration, and that you have some kind of infrastructure to manage a grant.

Things like the ability to perform accounting or keep your accounts, kind of specific to this fund, that's the type of thing we're looking for. And then I think what many attendees today will be interested in is program collaboration. So, if any proposed partnerships are eligible for up to 15 points as well.

There's always a component of equity, diversity, and inclusion that we want to be sure we're recognizing how these funds could be used to serve diverse populations and how we can really embed equity in any outreach we're doing, if that means having translators or translations available. So, we have 10 points available for that item. And then again, getting into some of the nitty-gritty, the budget and budget narrative is a small portion of the grant points available, because at this phase, we're really just looking for the concept of the program.

Looking for an anticipated budget, and we can get into some details, as well as ideas of allowable or ineligible costs that we'd have for these funds. We'd like to understand how your organization would plan to spend funding if awarded. And then just a summary, we just have five points for a summary, and then five points available for how the work may continue after the grant funding ends.

In creating a strong application, and just want to back up and thank everybody who has submitted questions to date, which indicates that there is a wide variety out there already of the types of projects that different organizations are considering right now. But really, what will make an application especially strong would be the evidence that the project aligns with the grant goals. Taking a peek at the request for proposals itself, we lay all of that out in pages four and five of the request for proposals, that the priorities really are that we're looking to create and distribute resources, we're looking for industry-specific materials, and potentially establishing peer-led programs.

Those types of goals are the types of things we're looking to award funding to support. Be really specific about who you plan to serve and how, and then of course the why. We're all here because of the why.

We want to ensure that workers in our construction industries in Minnesota are getting the support they need because we're recognizing more and more just how critical mental health support and suicide prevention are for these workers. A strong application will also show that your organization or your team is ready and capable of administering the grant and your application. What would make an application particularly strong would be including measurable goals and, again, those realistic timelines. Noting that February 26 through December 27 is a relatively brief timeline, we do anticipate that the period of performance could be continued.

This is again where we're really looking for sort of a co-led process. We've created what we hope is a good framework for this grant, and we're hoping for proposals that will help really

fill in those key details. And then finally, strong applications will demonstrate the ability to collaborate, and that will have a strong impact in the construction industry.

The materials that are required are laid out in our request for proposals and in the exhibits on our website, but the application form is kind of that key thing that is the proposal that outlines your entire program. So that's really fundamentally and programmatically probably the most important component, but then we do need a series of exhibits. I often don't care for the word exhibit in this context, but we'll go with what we've got.

Exhibit A lays out capacity, basically what your capacity is as an organization. Exhibit B lays out that you have not been debarred, you have not been debarred. Yes, those are the words we're looking for. We want to ensure that organizations are not suspended or debarred by the Minnesota government or the federal government. We do need to see evidence of good standing, so proof of that registration with the IRS and the Minnesota Secretary of State. For exhibits D or E, this is an either-or, so we do need non-profit applicants to complete exhibit D and for-profit applicants to complete exhibit E.

We want to emphasize that both are eligible to apply for these funds. Then exhibit F has to do with ensuring no financial crimes, so confirming that principals have not been convicted of a felony financial crime in the past 10 years. So, unfortunate that we have to take care of many of these, but we do.

Additionally, we would require an affidavit of non-collusion, to make sure that your proposal was, and that your organization plans to operate independently. And then any partnership letters, or if there are matching funds, we would need to see a letter confirming that commitment as well.

And then finally, an equal employment opportunity policy. So, I know this is a list there. Once you get into them, they're not as lengthy as they might sound, but these are the types of things that we do need to grant taxpayer dollars responsibly.

Thanks, Lyndy. You're just, you're anticipating all of the changes here. So, I'll take a breath and just note, if you have questions along the way, please do put them in the chat.

We are working very hard to answer all of the questions that have come in already, and would like to give very careful consideration to questions as they come in. So please drop them in the chat. I'm seeing a few come in.

So, thank you. We will not answer those live, but we'll answer them in writing so that everyone can see the questions and answers at the same time. So just to note about eligible expenses, these are the six key cost categories we're looking at.

Personnel is usually that top line item because we do want to recognize that human power is required to run good programs, and we want that to be a portion of what is funded with these grant dollars. We can cover the cost of travel in the state. We can offer support for supplies and materials.

So that would include any officer training materials that are used in any outreach or education that may kind of overlap a bit with communications and outreach, because we

recognize that those activities are similar. So, we can talk about how to break those apart if we need to. Contractual services, it's very possible that an organization may need to subcontract with another organization or two.

Things like developing training or developing websites. Those are the types of activities that may need to be contracted out. And then finally, we do offer support for administrative costs for your organization, recognizing that we have to keep the lights on so we can award up to 10% of a grant budget to cover those types of costs.

Hopefully, these don't come as a surprise to anyone, but expenses that would be ineligible for these grant funds include any direct payments to program participants. That would be kind of contrary to developing a program that could benefit the whole. Any fundraising activities are not eligible.

Obviously, lobbying or political contributions are not eligible. Any out-of-state travel would not be eligible. We're not going to pay for parking or traffic violations.

I always feel funny saying that, but that should go without saying, but we do just need to put that up front. Any bad debt, late fees, or contingency funds, again, a little embarrassed to say it, but it has come up in the past. And then anything that is funded out of a different source.

We won't cover the same expense twice. So, our fearless leader in this project is really Kelly. She's our key contact, but know that we have a team working here over at Labor and Industry to support the launch of this funding program.

Kelly has been a real rock star with getting this program up and out the door. So, I'm a little self-conscious because I don't like hearing my own voice this much, but we do have a list of 16 questions that have come in already that we'd like to respond to; these will also be posted on the grant website.

1. Is a company eligible to apply if they are not registered with the Minnesota Secretary of State?

- No. Organizations must be registered and in good standing with both the IRS and the Minnesota Secretary of State. Question two.

2. Has this grant been previously awarded? No. This is a new grant.

- This is a new effort. No previous contracts were awarded. Must applicants be able to support workers statewide?

3. Must applicants be able to support workers statewide?

- Thank you for this question, because this was a correction that we made after the initial post of the request for proposals. No, your proposed program does not have to have a statewide impact. We do recognize that many effective programs would potentially be more locally operated programs, so those would certainly be eligible.

4. The original RFP requirements indicated that only non-profit entities were eligible, but that language was later revised. Can you confirm whether for-profit entities are eligible to apply?

- Yes, both for-profit and non-profit entities are eligible to apply for this grant. We do encourage a wide range of organizations to consider submitting proposals, and what we can see from the list of registrants for this webinar, we do have a very wide range of organizations. So, we're really just encouraged, and again, I think inspired is the word I'm using, that a lot of great work is going to come out of this grant program.

5. Can this grant be used to offset an applicant's overall cost of employee health insurance?

- We did actually receive this question in a couple of different formats, so the answer is no. Grant funds may not be used to cover general employee health insurance costs. So, the purpose of the grant, which we hope is clear in the request for proposals, the purpose is really to support the development of outreach and engagement programming. It's sort of above and outside of, you know, individual insurance programs. We would also like to see the development of resources and specific worksite strategies that promote mental health and prevent suicide, specifically in Minnesota's construction industry. And if I can provide one example of a worksite strategy, I recently heard about an organization in the construction industry that has a procedure, a seemingly very simple procedure, that if an individual does not show up at work and does not call into work, they have a practice of contacting that person. They reach out and they call that person, and what we've learned is that through that simple procedure, they were able to prevent five suicides last year. So, five people who were very close to taking their lives were essentially interrupted and supported so that they are still here today. That's a very promising practice that we'd like to see more of.

6. Could we establish a supplemental fund to assist employees with their deductible or any out-of-pocket expenses that are specifically related to attending appointments for mental health support?

- That also is not really an intended use. No, grant funds may not be used to cover individual medical expenses, including deductibles or out-of-pocket costs. The grant is intended to support broader mental health initiatives, again, such as outreach, education, resource development, and worksite strategies that promote mental well-being and prevent suicide in Minnesota's construction industry.

7. Is it allowable to use the grant to offset the cost of paid time off for mental health days, covering both the employee's wages and the company's lost productivity from the employee's absence?

- Well, that seems like a pretty amazing thing to implement. Unfortunately, we cannot use this particular grant for that use. So no, the purpose of the grant is to fund outreach, engagement, and resource development efforts that promote mental health and prevent suicide in Minnesota's construction industry. It is not intended to reimburse wages, PTO, or productivity losses.

[Kelly Cooper, Grant Administrator]

8. Can this grant be used to pay employees' wages or compensation to the company for lost productivity while an employee is on FMLA, mental health-related, or parental leave?

- Again, unfortunately, the answer to this is no, a similar answer to the previous question. These answers will be posted on the grant's webpage.

9. We employed skilled trades professionals such as heavy equipment operators, painters, pipe fitters, machinists, mechanics, and electricians. While we currently offer an EAP, employee assistance program, and a general health and wellness program, we are interested in developing a mental health initiative specifically targeted at our employees in the trades. Would we be eligible to apply?

- Yes. You may apply. These are the types of things that we've kind of listed before that I think we're very interested in proposals for that type of work.

10. If a group of organizations applies with a single organization as a coordinator applicant slash fiscal agent, do all organizations need to meet all the basic qualifications to be an eligible participant?

- Applicants may apply as a collaboration of organizations. The single entity that intends to be the lead applicant must meet the eligibility requirements in the RFP. Partnering or collaborating organizations will be considered sub-recipients of the lead organization slash applicant and are not required to meet the eligibility requirements. We want to note that applicants must perform due diligence checks to verify the identity and the legitimacy of any entities or individuals they plan to fund as sub-recipients, which could include verifying business registrations with the Secretary of State to ensure the entity is actively registered and in good standing. Applicants must follow all state and grant requirements regarding contracting and sub-awarding funds, including that the applicant and the sub-recipients must not contract with entities that are suspended or debarred by the state of Minnesota or the federal government.

11. Do organizations need to be considered part of the construction industry that this grant is targeted at?

- No. Organizations do not need to be part of the construction industry, but they must demonstrate the capability to deliver programming that supports mental health in Minnesota's construction workforce.

12. How much do you anticipate the average RFP amount to be awarded?

- We're anticipating awards to be between one and four grantees, and each will be at a minimum of \$150,000.

13. Can a company utilize this mental health grant if they have a corporate chaplain?

- The answer to that is yes. The presence of a corporate chaplain does not affect the organization's ability to apply for or utilize a mental health grant. Applicants will be evaluated based on their proposed activities and how well they align with the grant's goals.

14. Is this grant opportunity open to small residential construction businesses, or is it primarily intended for large commercial firms? We're a small contractor with an existing mental health support program and are interested in applying for a modest amount of funding to sustain it.

- Yes, absolutely, small businesses may apply, but I want to reiterate and note that the minimum is \$150,000 for the awards. I just want to make sure that that is understood because they mentioned a nominal amount.

15. Are we eligible to apply if our business is physically located outside the state of Minnesota?

- The answer to that is yes, as long as you meet the requirement that your organization is a registered business and in good standing in the state of Minnesota. Eligibility is based on registration status and where the grant-funded activity will occur. All proposed activities must take place either within Minnesota or virtually in a way that serves Minnesota residents and aligns with the goals of this grant.

16. Could the grant funds be used to support production of daily mental health fitness safety videos for lines and field workers?

- And the answer to that is, of course, yes. If the video supports mental health in the construction industry and aligns with the grant's goals, activities must benefit Minnesota's construction workforce and be clearly described in the application.

We have come to an end of answering all the questions that were submitted before the webinar. We really appreciate your attendance and your interest in this grant opportunity. We will be reviewing the questions that have come in through the chat and also the ones that are still emailed in, and we will do our best to get those answers posted as quickly as we can.

Thank you everyone for your time. Have a nice day, everyone.