



CAREER 500: Columbus Access to Resources for Expanding Employment Readiness

Goal

Aspyr, through funding granted by the Columbus City Council, expects to issue a transformative \$1,800,000 in grants supporting the Columbus workforce development ecosystem. The Columbus region is experiencing unprecedented economic growth. Major employers are struggling to connect with qualified candidates and underemployed residents have barriers to upskilling training, creating a gap in the workforce and in economic opportunities. From 2020 to 2030, the Columbus MSA is expected to add over 100,000 jobs, growing at over twice the rate of most of Ohio's MSAs.

CAREER 500 is designed to uplift 500 or more Columbus residents by providing training, wraparound support, and job placement services to unemployed and underemployed individuals by building capacity in existing programs with demonstrated success in achieving these goals.

Funds Available

\$1,800,000

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants will come from two pools:

1. Member Organizations of the Central Ohio Workforce Development Network
2. Workforce Programs delivered by community based organizations (CBOs) with an organizational budget of \$5M or less

It is an objective to make funds available to organizations in both categories, contingent on receiving applications that meet program goals from eligible entities. In either pool, **the organization must already be delivering a successful program for at least eighteen months** that is moving unemployed participants to self-sufficiency or serving participants living in an ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) household who are gaining skills that lead to employment at a higher wage. Organizations must show and explain how additional funding through this grant will increase their capacity to serve additional participants.

Eligible participants are those that reside in the City of Columbus.

Maximum Awards

- Central Ohio Workforce Development Network Members may apply for up to \$350,000.
- CBOs may apply for up to \$200,000.

Administrative funding may be up to 15% percent of the award amount, to include data reporting and evaluation activities.

Aspyr reserves the right to determine how many awards to make in each category.

Fundable Activities

Grant funding will be awarded to existing workforce development programs serving unemployed and underemployed Columbus residents that can demonstrate that the requested funding will provide sufficient additional organizational capacity to serve more participants at the same or improved rate of success of the current program. Eligible programs are those that can demonstrate one or more of the following:

- * A 75 percent success rate or higher in placing participants in full-time employment
- * *A 75 percent success rate or higher in placing participants in full time employment at or above the Columbus MSA housing wage of \$25.04*
- * A 75 percent success rate in placing participants in employment at wages that are 20% higher than their pre-program wages

These rates should be calculated using the measure in comparison with the total number of individuals served in the program.

Match Requirements

There is no match requirement for funds granted; however, each applicant will need to provide proof of funding for the current program's operations during the program period (i.e. funding must supplement, not supplant, existing program funding.) Applicants must also provide a statement on the projected sustainability of the program, describing their strategy for sustaining both the current program as well as the expanded capacity beyond the term of the grant period.

Threshold Requirements

NOTE: Applications that do not meet Threshold Requirements will not be reviewed.

- Organization must be a 501c3 in good standing with the IRS and registered with the Ohio Secretary of State
- Organization must provide the latest audit completed on the organization's financials

- Application must be complete and submitted by the deadline. **There will be no cure period where an organization is asked to submit or correct missed items after the deadline for submission.**

Rating Criterion

The following criterion will be used to rate applications:

- Program Characteristics: Description, length of time in operation, current funding, and staffing
- Evidence-based backing for program design
- Description of current program evaluation method(s) and citations for these methods, if applicable
- Current success rates: # participants, % employed, industry sectors, wage in first 12 months after exit, wage gain from entrance to exit
- Strategy for recruiting and supporting participants
- Projected capacity increase—With this requested funding, how many additional Columbus residents will be served?
- Specific, clear, and reasonable Budget for proposed program
- Applicant's track record of fiscal responsibility and stewardship.
- Applicant's strategy for engaging new and existing employers and employer groups for participant placement

Program Period

18 months from date of award

Key Application Dates

- **Aspyr will host an informational webinar on Thursday, December 19 at 2 p.m. Please email Jennifer Roy at jroy@aspyrworkforce.org with *Career 500 Webinar* in the subject line for a request to attend. You will be sent a link.**
- **FAQ document will be posted on aspyrworkforce.org and no further questions or communication with Aspyr Board or Staff regarding the NOFA shall occur after December 20th.**
- Applications will be submitted electronically to rfp-proposal@aspyrworkforce.org by 5:00 pm on Friday, January 17, 2025. No late submissions will be accepted.

Award Date

Awards will be announced on or about February 21, 2025

Reporting Requirements

Awardees will be required to work with Aspyr and The Ohio State University Center on Education and Training for Employment (CETE) to provide program and participant data.

A. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- Number of participants enrolled in skills training programs.
- Percentage of participants obtaining certifications and job placements.
- Reduction in reported barriers to employment (i.e., housing, childcare, transportation).
- Improvement in participants' financial literacy.

B. Outcome Measures

- 20% Increase in average income of participants. (Pre/Post)
- Percentage of participants achieving sustained employment (2 quarters after the end of the grant).
- Percentage of employed participants employed in **In-demand/Top Jobs**.
- Reduced reliance on social services (pre/post evaluation of many federally means-tested programs or proxy using family wages).
- Overall improvement in participants' quality of life and financial stability.
- Something here about meaningful employment for participants, as defined by each participant in terms of the type of work they want to do

Pay for Performance Contracts

Each contract will be paid based on Pay for Performance principles. Organizations will be able to draw the first 70% of the contract with quarterly reporting. An additional 30% will become available if the organization is on track to achieve negotiated performance. Aspyr reserves the right to terminate the contract if an organization is unable to meet 75% of the goal.

Helpful Resources

https://liveunitedcentralohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/23UFA_Report_Ohio_4.11.23_Final.pdf

<https://topjobs.ohio.gov/list/in-demand-jobs/in-demand-jobs-in-ohio>