



**STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**NOTICE OF GRANT OPPORTUNITY
Fiscal Year 2024**

**BRIDGES TO EMPLOYING YOUTH (BRIDGES)
CONTINUATION**

Announcement Date: January 8, 2024

Technical Assistance Workshop: January 18, 2024

Application Due Date: February 12, 2024

**Robert Asaro-Angelo
Commissioner**

**Bridges to Employing Youth
Notice of Grant Opportunity – FY 2024**

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Take Notice that, in compliance with N.J.S.A. 52:14-34.4 et seq., the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (hereinafter “the Department” or “NJDOL”) regularly publishes on its website all notices of fund availability pertaining to federal or state grant funds, which may be awarded by the Department. The notices of fund availability may be found on the Department’s website under the heading “Research & Information” and the subheading “Grant Opportunities” - <https://www.nj.gov/labor/research-info/grants.shtml>.

A. NAME OF GRANT PROGRAM

Bridges to Employing Youth (Bridges)

B. PURPOSE FOR WHICH THE FUNDS WILL BE USED

The NJDOL Office of Youth Programs recognizes that unique challenges and increased barriers experienced by certain special youth populations require proportionate responses of specialized services and supports to resolve. This Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) seeks to expand the capacity of NJDOL’s workforce system, through an influx of specialized providers, to adequately address the career development needs of the following special populations:

1. Youth with disabilities;
2. Justice-involved youth;
3. Youth who are or have aged out of Foster Care; and
4. Pregnant or parenting youth.

Youth who belong to each of these special populations experience higher rates of unemployment and poverty, lower educational opportunities and attainments, a deficit of work experience opportunities, and hardships of a unique nature and higher degree than the broader youth population.

The NJDOL Office of Youth Programs will administer the Bridges program to provide specialized workforce development services to these populations in an effort to enhance the current practices and systems intended to serve their needs. NJDOL expects that this program will focus on partnerships and collaboration between state and local agencies and systems to create a coordinated process in ensuring the healthy career development of these populations.

Programs are required to serve one of the four targeted populations outlined above per application submission.

C. AVAILABLE FUNDING

The Bridges program is expected to be funded by WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ) and Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) Set-Aside funds. This NGO serves as the second year of a three-year grant cycle. The amount of year two funding expected to be available for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 (April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025) is \$3,600,000. All funds must be fully expended by March 31, 2025. For each successive year of the grant cycle, the approved applicant will be required to apply for continuation funding.

Final awards are contingent upon State allocation of funds. The applicant’s budget must be well considered, necessary for the implementation of the program, and within the funding

parameters. Final amounts will be determined at the time of pre-contract revisions. Ineligible, inappropriate or undocumented costs will be removed from the funding request.

Failure to meet performance goals and expend funds may impact current, continuation, and future grant funding opportunities. NJDOL reserves the right to rescind any unspent funds and use this solicitation and competition to extend contracts of successful applicants, contingent upon available funding.

D. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Organizations receiving Bridges funding in FY2023, who have met both program and fiscal requirements, are eligible to apply.

All applications must establish a lead agency. The lead agency serves as the applicant agency of record, the legally recognized fiscal agent for the grant project, and the single point of contact for NJDOL. The lead agency will be expected to coordinate all aspects of the grant, i.e., outreach and recruitment; program services; project and spending plan; grant project monitoring and reporting; and fiscal management.

Applicants must demonstrate their experience serving the identified target population and their capacity to provide youth workforce development services as outlined in the FY24 Bridges Program Requirements attachment.

Applicants must have the capacity to operate this program for the full duration of the three-year cycle, and must be in good standing with NJDOL's Division of Employer Accounts. Any organization that has an outstanding liability to NJDOL will not be able to have its contract executed by NJDOL until the liability is resolved.

E. TARGETED POPULATIONS

Applications must target eligible youth, defined as out-of-school* youth (with or without a high school diploma), ages 16-24 in one of the following four targeted populations:

1. Youth with disabilities;
 - a. Defined as a youth who indicates that s/he has any "disability", as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
2. Justice-involved youth;
 - a. Defined as a youth who either (i) has been subject to any stage of the criminal justice process for committing a status offense or delinquent/criminal act, or (ii) requires assistance in overcoming artificial barriers to employment resulting from a record of arrest or conviction for committing delinquent acts, such as crimes against persons, crimes against property, status offenses, or other crimes.
3. Youth who are/have aged out of Foster Care; and
4. Pregnant or parenting youth.
 - a. Defined as youth who are expecting and/or parenting moms and dads.

*For the purposes of this NGO, out-of-school youth is defined as any youth not attending nor committed to return to any school.

F. REQUIREMENTS TO APPLY

Applicants must be able to demonstrate the ability to effectively implement the Bridges program services by recruiting, retaining and operating according to the attached Bridges Program Requirements.

Successful providers must be prepared to have systems in place to track, document and report all outcomes. Performance measures for successful providers will include:

- Enroll the contracted number of participants to serve;
 - 33 percent of the contracted enrollment number must be met by the mid-point of the grant period;
- For participants without a high school diploma at time of enrollment*:
 - 70 percent must obtain a measurable skill gain (MSG).
 - A measurable skill gain is defined as a.) Growth of one grade level in either subject of reading or math, based on CASAS GOALS pre- and post-test; or b.) Successful passing of a high school equivalency exam, resulting in a high school diploma.

*In the case of a youth with a disability, if a High School diploma is deemed unattainable by way of standardized academic testing, that youth will be exempt from the MSG requirement. Therefore, that youth is not expected to receive pre- and post-testing nor are they expected to attain a High School diploma.

- At least 70 percent of ALL participants will achieve a placement into one or more of the following:
 - Continued Education Program;
 - Occupational Training Program/Vocational School;
 - WIOA (Youth or Adult) Program;
 - Military;
 - Pre-Apprenticeship or Apprenticeship Program;
 - DVRS Supported Employment (only for youth with disabilities); or
 - Qualified Unsubsidized Employment.

Grantees will be required to collect and report specific data regarding demographics and services provided to each participant. The process for reporting the completed data will be provided to the grantee upon awarding of funds.

Grantees must submit monthly fiscal reports and will be paid on a monthly reimbursement method, after the financial report has been submitted to and approved by NJDOL. The process for reporting will be provided to the grantee upon awarding of funds.

G. APPLICATION PROCESS

Beginning with the FY24 continuation grant year, NJDOL will accept, review, approve and manage all Bridges grants electronically using the System for Administering Grants Electronically (SAGE). Applicants must first submit a letter of intent to apply. The letter of

intent should be submitted via e-mail to YouthPrograms@dol.nj.gov and by 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 17, 2024 and must include:

- Applicant agency name,
- Business name (if different from agency name),
- Name of person responsible for submitting application (Agency Official),
- Federal Employee Identification Number (FEIN),
- Unique Entity Identifiers (UEIs), and
- Names, titles, and e-mails of the mandatory technical assistance workshop attendees.

To receive access to SAGE, applicants must register at: <https://njdol.intelligrants.com>. It is imperative that registration be submitted at the time the letter of intent is completed. You will receive an e-mail message confirming that your account has been validated. NJDOL will then provide access to the application. After receiving the confirmation, eligible entities will have access to complete and submit their grant application online. Technical requirements for SAGE can be viewed at <https://njdol.intelligrants.com>.

Applicants must agree to the terms and conditions as outlined in the Standard Assurances and Certifications and General Provisions in order to begin completing the application.

The application must consist of the following components:

Required	Component
✓	Applicant Information
✓	Project Location
✓	Previous Funding
✓	Performance Deliverables
✓ (upload to Required Attachments)	Statement of Need
✓ (upload to Required Attachments)	Organizational Commitment and Capacity
✓ (upload to Required Attachments)	Program Narrative
✓	Budget Forms (Schedules A-C) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule A Personnel Justification Page(s)
✓	Cost Summary
✓ (upload to Required Attachments)	Planned Partnership Form(s)
	Miscellaneous Attachments to be Uploaded <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lease/Rental Agreement (if applicable per Cost Guidelines)

If any of the above required components are not completed, submitted, signed and dated, your proposal may be considered incomplete and, therefore, may not be reviewed by the selection committee.

The forms described below must be accessed and submitted through the “Forms” menu in SAGE:

1. Applicant Information

Applicants must complete all the required information for the primary contact, chief executive officer, application organization, project director and business manager.

2. Project Location

Applicants must enter the address of the Bridges site location and select the counties and municipalities the proposed Bridges program will serve.

3. Previous Funding

Applicants previously funded by NJDOL within the last three years must complete the required information.

4. Performance Deliverables

Applicants must select the target population they are applying to serve from the available dropdown options.

Applicants must also enter their proposed enrollment numbers on this page in SAGE, which will automatically calculate the expected performance metrics in accordance with the Bridges Program Requirements. The enrollment number may be negotiated during pre-contract revisions.

5. Statement of Need (Uploaded to Required Attachments)

A need is defined as the difference between the current status and the outcomes and/or standard(s) that the applicant would like to achieve. Demonstrate the need for a project, in relation to the NGO, and provide documentation that substantiates the need.

Documentation must include demographics, description of target population(s), student data, personnel data and research.

Note: The Statement of Need document should include page numbers and must not exceed 2 pages.

6. Organizational Commitment and Capacity (Uploaded to Required Attachments)

Applicants should describe the extent of their organizational commitment to the program. The applicant should include their experience(s) and successes working with the targeted population and implementing services similar to the program services described within this NGO. Applicants should make the connection to how their capacities will support enrolling the proposed number of participants.

Note: The Organizational Commitment and Capacity document should include page numbers and must not exceed 2 pages.

7. Program Narrative (Uploaded to Required Attachments)

Applicants must submit a program narrative which outlines a comprehensive plan of recruitment, activities, services, and strategies to implement each component of the Bridges Program Requirements and to successfully meet or exceed the performance measures listed in section F. Successful applications will clearly address each service component in separate sections within the narrative.

Applicants should additionally address the following questions when crafting their program narrative:

- a. Include a list of recruitment sources/partners to ensure diverse entry points to the program.
- b. Provide a participant pathway/service-flow from recruitment through placement? (Notate the sequence of services and potential timeframes, if applicable.)

Note: *The Program Narrative document should include page numbers and must not exceed 15 pages.*

8. Planned Partnership Form(s) (Uploaded to Required Attachments, if applicable)

Applicants who plan to partner with other entities to provide any of the services listed in the Bridges Program Requirements must submit partnership agreements as part of their application. The roles of each partnership must also be addressed within the program narrative. At minimum, partnership forms must be included for each recruitment/referral partner.

Recommended Partnerships per Population:

Youth with Disabilities

Successful proposals should partner with their local School District(s) in order to aid in identifying and recruiting eligible youth, and with their local county Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) in order to make appropriate referrals for DVRS services as needed.

Justice-Involved Youth

Successful proposals should partner with legal services organizations and the Juvenile Justice Commission to aid in identifying and recruiting eligible youth. Proposals should also demonstrate a partnership with legal services organizations to connect this target population with legal services and other program elements utilized to eliminate structural barriers to employment (including, but not limited to, access to and understanding their record, assistance with sealing or expunging their record, accessing Federal Bonding, and supporting youth and employer education about state background terminology as well as employment laws).

Youth who are Aging or have Aged Out of Foster Care

Successful proposals should partner with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and/or DHS-funded programs to aid in identifying and recruiting eligible youth.

Youth who are Pregnant and/or Parenting

Successful proposals should partner with the Department of Human Services and the Department of Children and Families to aid in identifying and recruiting eligible both male and female youth.

9. Budget Forms (Schedules A-C)

Following the attached Cost Guidelines, complete Budget Schedules A through C to identify personnel costs, non-personnel costs and direct student services costs.

NJDOL has limited the cost categories to the following areas:

➤ **Schedule A - Personnel Costs**

This budget category includes salaries for program staff and fringe benefits. For personnel who are administrative staff only, you must check the administrative box to the left of the position title. All personnel designated as administrative staff will count towards your administrative cap which is 10% of your total grant funds requested.

- **Justification Page-** Each page of Schedule A has a Justification Page attached. A justification for all personnel/positions listed on Schedule A must include a designation as an administrative role (if applicable), number of work hours per week, programmatic roles and responsibilities, and relevant education and experience.

➤ **Schedule B – Non-Personnel Costs (Indirect/Administrative)**

This budget category includes cost categories that are NOT considered direct participant services or expenses and are further detailed in the Cost Guidelines. Each non-personnel cost category selected must have a clear justification or description of the selection. All costs included on Schedule B will count towards your administrative cap which is 10% of your total grant funds requested.

Applicants should strive to select from the existing cost categories provided within the schedule's dropdown list. Line items that fall within the same cost category should be entered as one row when possible, and should identify the specific items and their cost breakdowns within the justification

➤ **Schedule C – Direct Services**

This budget category includes cost categories that are considered to directly benefit program participants and are further detailed in the Cost Guidelines. Each direct service cost category selected must have a clear justification or description of the selection.

Applicants should strive to select from the existing cost categories provided within the schedule's dropdown list. Line items that fall within the same cost category should be entered as one row when possible, and should identify the specific items and their cost breakdowns within the justification

10. Cost Summary

Once all budget schedule costs have been entered in their respective schedules, the information will carry to the Cost Summary page.

11. Required Attachments

The below attachments must be uploaded:

- **Statement of Need** (referenced in section G.5.)
- **Organizational Commitment and Capacity** (referenced in section G.6.)
- **Program Narrative** (referenced in section G.7.)
- **Planned Partnership Form(s)** (referenced in section G.8.)

12. Miscellaneous Documents

The miscellaneous attachment page in SAGE is optional, and not required to be completed. In this section, you can upload any additional information or documents that will support your grant application, or are required by your organization or special circumstance, such as:

- **Lease/Rental Agreement**
If applicable, lease/rental agreements for the Bridges site must include the total square feet being used by the Bridges program and the cost per square foot.

Evaluation Criteria

All applications will be evaluated by a committee for selection on the basis of quality, comprehensiveness, completeness, accuracy and appropriateness of response to the NGO, and will use the standard evaluation criteria listed below:

Criteria	Total Points (100)
Statement of Need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaps in the current practices and systems serving the targeted population to be served are clearly identified. • Documentation and data substantiate the identified gaps. 	10
Organizational Commitment and Capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant's commitment to the project is well-documented and possesses the organizational capacity, including necessary resources and relevant experiences working with their selected target population, to support successful implementation of this program. 	10

<p>Program Narrative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program narrative is comprehensive and reasonable, addresses the identified needs and will contribute to the achievement of the intended benefits of the grant program. • The processes for recruitment, intake, and eligibility determination are clear and well planned. • Recruitment plan includes various referral sources/entry points into the program. • The program services are clearly addressed in separate sections and are in accordance with Bridge Program Requirements. • The participant pathway/service-flow from recruitment through placement is clearly laid out and the sequencing is easy to follow. 	60
<p>Planned Partnerships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes agreements with partners relevant to program implementation. • Partnerships have clearly defined roles. 	10
<p>Budget Details and Budget Narrative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project budget adheres to the described program services and the proposed expenditures are reasonably necessary for their effective implementation. 	10

**If any of the required documents are not submitted, signed and dated, your application will be considered incomplete and, therefore, may not be reviewed by the selection committee.*

Mandatory Technical Assistance

NJDOL will provide a virtual information session / technical assistance workshop on Thursday, January 18, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. via Microsoft TEAMS. Invites will be sent to the emails provided in the applicant’s letter of intent. Attendance is mandatory for applicants to be considered eligible to apply. Applicants planning to attend the workshop must submit letters of intent, as described in section G, to YouthPrograms@dol.nj.gov by 12:00 p.m. Wednesday, January 17, 2024.

H. APPLICATION SUBMITTAL PROCESS

Continuation applications must be received by NJDOL via SAGE **by 12:00 p.m. Monday, February 12, 2024**. NJDOL will not accept any application received after the submittal deadline. Responsibility for timely submission is the sole responsibility of the applicant.

All inquiries regarding the application process should be directed to the Office of Youth Programs via email to YouthPrograms@dol.nj.gov.

I. AWARD PROCESS

All applications are subject to panel review, pre-contract revisions, and approval by the NJDOL Commissioner. Final amounts will be determined at the time of pre-contract revisions and are subject to the availability of funds.

NJDOL reserves the right to reject any and all applications when circumstances indicate that it is in its best interest to do so. NJDOL's best interests in this context include, but are not limited to, loss of funding; inability of the applicant to provide adequate services and indication of misrepresentation of information.