# **Logo for  Montana Department of Labor and Industry. The logo is several people hold hands around the center of a wheel.Division: Workforce Services Division**

**Category: Programs**

**Effective Date: 9/16/2016**

**Last Revised: 7/1/2022**

**Policy No.: 04-16**

Health and Economic Livelihood Partnership (HELP) Link

Policy – Workforce Development Grant Program

Background

The HELP-Link Workforce Development Grant Program helps employers defray costs of hiring or employing HELP-Link eligible clients and is intended to allow the client to obtain new or improved employment, obtain a job with healthcare coverage, earn a wage that allows them to purchase their own healthcare coverage, or improve their long-term financial security.

Scope

This policy applies to all MTDLI Job Service Staff and MTDLI Central Office staff. This policy is effective July 1, 2022.

# Policy

* Employers must apply using a Workforce Development Grant Application. Applications must be processed within 10 business days. If eligibility changes within the application month, a new application is not necessary.
* Service provider management must approve all applications.
* Only pre-approved applications will receive reimbursement for allowable expenses.
* Employees must be HELP-Link eligible or currently enrolled in HELP-Link during the application month.
* An employer is not eligible for the Workforce Development Grant on behalf of themselves, an immediate family member, or any other individual where a conflict of interest is present.
* The Workforce Development Grant Program period is 12 months (the application month plus 11 months).
* Grant total cannot exceed $5,000 per client.
* Payments for actual expenses (not to exceed maximum allowable) will be processed within five (5) business days.
* Employer must:
	+ Be willing and able to submit a W-9 form to receive payment
	+ Operate in Montana
	+ Be registered with the Montana Secretary of State (or be legally exempt)
	+ Not be state government, a temporary agency, or a HELP-Link contractor
* Grants may be awarded in one or more of the following categories:
	1. Employer provides permanent increased hourly wage for the purpose of employee retention.
		+ Client’s increased wage must exceed 150% federal poverty level for the client’s household size.
			- Household size is determined by the number of individuals financially supported by the client related by blood, marriage, or decree of court.
		+ Grants are available for the sum of the increased wage minus the previous wage.
		+ Grants are paid through a reimbursement process with appropriate documentation.
	2. Employer purchases training (or testing) for the purpose of upgrading employee skills.
		+ Training must demonstrate to be an integral part of an employer plan for employee retention, skill improvement, wage enhancement, or financial literacy/security.
		+ Training must be conducted by a legitimate and reputable entity.
		+ Total cost of training may be paid on behalf of the client.
		+ Training must be located in the United States.
		+ Training costs reimbursed to the employer:
			- Employer must receive pre-approval. Backdated requests for training completed and/or paid prior to the training request pre-approval cannot be reimbursed.
			- Employer must submit payment receipts for allowable expenses.
		+ Training costs paid to the trainer:
			- Employer must receive pre-approval, prior to enrollment in training.
			- Employer must submit training expense verification.
			- Payment will be made directly to the trainer. The training provider must be willing and able to submit a W-9 form to receive payment.
			- Training costs paid directly to the trainer count toward the client’s maximum allowable workforce development grant.
	3. Employer provides health care insurance sufficient to disenroll employee from Montana Medicaid.
		+ Grants are available for actual cost of providing health coverage during the first year of employment.
		+ Grants are paid through a reimbursement process with appropriate documentation.
	4. Employer provides the employee with work related tools, equipment, and/or attire normally a requirement of the employee to purchase/provide themselves.
		+ Items purchased must be permanently owned by the employee.
		+ Payment to employer:
			- The employee must sign the invoice as proof they received the item(s).
			- Grants are paid through a reimbursement process with appropriate documentation.
* Payment to vendor:
* The employer must submit a W-9 form for the vendor, a complete purchase order detailing the items and cost, and an invoice requesting direct vendor payment (signed by the employee acknowledging receipt of items) before any payment is made.

# Administrative Requirements

* Feedback to and from both DPHHS and MTDLI to communicate client involvement in HELP-Link and services provided.
* Provide data and information to legislative subcommittees regarding program participation, expenditures, and outcomes.
* Provide data and reports to DPHHS as needed.

# Oversight and Evaluation

* Oversight and evaluation will be conducted by the Program Manager and/or designee(s).

# References

* [2015 Montana Legislature Senate Bill 405](https://leg.mt.gov/bills/2015/billhtml/SB0405.htm)
* [2019 Montana Legislature House Bill 658](https://leg.mt.gov/bills/2019/billhtml/HB0658.htm)
* 2021 Montana Legislature House Bill 614
* [Montana Code Annotated (MCA), 39-12](https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0390/chapter_0120/part_0010/sections_index.html)