



# Nebraska Workforce Retraining Initiative Frequently Asked Questions

## **Scholarship Recipient FAQs**

### **Am I eligible to receive a scholarship?**

Individuals who are unemployed or underemployed and have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 are eligible. Specifically, if you meet any of the following employment situations you may be eligible:

- Unemployed on or after March 13, 2020, as a result of COVID-19;
- Unemployed starting between January 1, 2020, and March 13, 2020, and now unable to find employment as a result of COVID-19;
- Employed for less than 40 hours a week at a job which provides the majority of your income (Primary Job) because of COVID-19, and wish to be employed full-time;
- Employed temporarily at a Primary Job because of COVID-19 but wish to be employed permanently; or
- Furloughed or laid off from a Primary Job on or after March 13, 2020, because of COVID-19 (or had to close your own business which provided the majority of your income because of COVID-19) and are now employed at a new Primary Job with lower wages than your previous employment.

Each participating Nebraska Community College (College) will clarify additional eligibility requirements. If you are currently in a training program using Workforce Retraining Initiative funds, have been negatively impacted by COVID-19, and meet the requirements outlined above, you may be considered eligible for a scholarship.

### **How much money could I receive through the scholarship?**

Each College will determine how much to award per scholarship, depending on the training program. However, on average each scholarship will be around \$1,100.

### **How many scholarships will be awarded?**

The total number of available scholarships in Nebraska under this grant program is 12,363. The exact number that are available through each College will vary.

### **What can the scholarship money be used for?**

The scholarship may be used to cover the cost of the training. The College awarding the scholarship will define the exact terms of what the scholarship funds will cover.

The Nebraska Department of Labor (NDOL) will engage with each scholarship recipient to determine potential eligibility for NDOL programs. Common examples of individual supportive services include allowances for school supplies, related equipment, and transportation as authorized by local area workforce development policy(s).

### **What classes may I take with the scholarship?**

Approved training programs will be different for each participating community college. All programs will provide a recognizable credential at the completion of the program that frequently leads to a high-demand job. Please check with the community college you plan on attending, as they will have a full list of eligible training programs approved for the scholarship.

**Where can I apply for a scholarship?**

You may apply online at one of the following Nebraska community colleges: Central Community College, Metropolitan Community College, Mid-Plains Community College, Northeast Community College, Southeast Community College and Western Nebraska Community College.

Links will be added to this document as applications become available.

**When should I apply for a scholarship?**

Online scholarship applications will be available by July 10 and throughout the months of July and August. The Colleges will create a waiting list if applicants outnumber allocated scholarships, and may accept applications beyond August. Please refer to the college application for more specific deadline information.

**How long do I have to complete the training program with the scholarship?**

The training programs provided by the community college must be completed no later than March 31, 2021. Many programs will be complete by December 30, 2020.

**What happens if I do not complete the training program?**

Students who drop, withdraw or change their plans and do not complete the training program are no longer eligible students for the scholarship. The College may recover the cost of the scholarship from you if you do not successfully complete the program.

**What else will I receive in addition to the scholarship?**

Colleges will ensure that each scholarship recipient enters into a work-based learning experience that may lead to employment with a Nebraska-based employer during the training program (e.g., an internship, beginning a registered apprenticeship, clinical hours, on-the-job training program, etc.).

All scholarship recipients will receive comprehensive career coaching services with the College and in partnership with NDOL. Career coaching may include coaching around goal setting, training plans, job search preparation and job searching. If referred to NDOL for additional services, those will include employment readiness assistance and career matching services such as on-the-job training, work experiences, registered apprenticeships, traditional employment opportunities and co-enrollment into various workforce services and programs. These services are customized according to the individual's preference and need. Some of the potential services may cover some of the cost of required tools and materials of the training program.

Scholarship recipients who are receiving unemployment insurance (UI) benefits will be considered for continued UI benefits on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Commissioner of Labor.

**What is expected of me if I accept a scholarship?**

Broadly speaking, each scholarship recipient has the responsibility to:

- Successfully complete the training program.
- Truthfully attest to their current employment situation and how it was impacted by COVID-19 in their application.
- Provide sufficient documentation of how their employment situation was impacted by COVID-19 if requested by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) or the College.
- Engage in career coaching.
- Engage in a work-based learning experience with a Nebraska-based employer.
- Provide an accurate and timely response to an employment outcomes survey when prompted by DED or the College.

## ***Grant Process and College Recipients FAQ's***

### **Who is eligible for a grant?**

DED will grant funds to the Nebraska community colleges; specifically, Central Community College, Metropolitan Community College, Mid-Plains Community College, Northeast Community College, Southeast Community College and Western Nebraska Community College.

The Colleges will grant funds to students in the form of scholarships.

### **How much money will the Colleges receive?**

DED will award \$16 million to Colleges; of this amount, about \$13.6 million will be awarded for scholarships and up to \$2.4 million may be used for program setup and administration costs. Each College will submit a proposal to DED outlining their plan. DED will award administration funds and allocate scholarships as 20% disbursed equally among the eligible applicants and 80% disbursed based on the College's share of first-time unemployment insurance claims (i.e., its share of the state's unemployed individuals).

### **How will funds be disbursed?**

Once administration funds are awarded to the Colleges, 50% will be disbursed up front and 50% will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis. Colleges will be required to submit evidence of all expenditures.

Scholarships will be allocated as the number of scholarships the College may award, and funding will not be disbursed up front. Instead, on a pre-determined schedule all Colleges will report the number of awarded scholarships, up to their allocated amount, to DED, and DED will disburse the scholarship funds. At this point, DED will also reallocate the number of remaining scholarships proportionally to Colleges with waiting lists of approved eligible students.

### **What can administration funds be used for?**

Administration funds should be used for enhancing or designing eligible training programs (e.g., personnel, technology and equipment, and classroom design or space needs) and providing proactive career coaching to student scholarship recipients. Administration funds may also be used to cover costs of interfacing NDOL's NEworks website (NEworks.Nebraska.Gov) with college career services.

All expenses need to be incurred or expended by December 30, 2020. Please note, if training, career coaching and other activities extend beyond December 30, 2020, the expenses incurred after December 30, 2020, are not eligible.

### **What training programs are eligible?**

Eligible programs are short-term trainings that are offered through classroom, virtual/online and on-the-job training, and which provide recognizable credentials after the training is complete. The training program must also provide a work-based learning experience with a Nebraska employer.

While evaluating proposals, the selection committee may preference training programs that:

- Provide skills and recognizable credentials that are in high demand in a post-COVID-19 economy;
- Will be ready to begin training scholarship recipients quickly;
- Are existing and have historically successful enrollment, completion and job placement rates; and
- Will be completed prior to December 30, 2020.

### **Who is eligible to receive a scholarship?**

Eligible students are unemployed or underemployed individuals who have been negatively impacted by COVID-19. Eligible students must be in at least one of the following employment situations:

- Unemployed on or after March 13, 2020, as a result of COVID-19;
- Unemployed starting between January 1, 2020, and March 13, 2020, and now unable to find employment as a result of COVID-19;
- Employed for less than 40 hours a week at a job which provides the majority of their income (Primary Job) because of COVID-19 and wish to be employed full time;
- Employed temporarily at their Primary Job because of COVID-19 but wish to be employed permanently; or
- Furloughed or laid off from a Primary Job on or after March 13, 2020, because of COVID-19 (or had to close their own business, which provided the majority of their income, because of COVID-19) and are now employed at a new Primary Job with lower wages than their previous employment.

Each College may clarify additional eligibility requirements. Students who are currently in a training program using Workforce Retraining Initiative funds and have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 and meet the requirements outlined above may be considered eligible for a scholarship.

### **How much money may be awarded for each scholarship?**

Each College will be allocated a number of scholarships, and the average scholarship should not be above \$1,100. Each College will determine how much to award per scholarship, depending on the training program.

### **What can the scholarship funds be used for?**

Scholarship funds may be used by Colleges to cover the cost of training (e.g., tuition) for eligible individuals.

### **What is required of the Colleges to participate?**

Broadly speaking, each College has the responsibility to:

- Provide training programs that will best meet the initiative's objectives.
- Engage regularly with area employers to understand employment needs and shape training programs to best meet those needs.
- Engage with area employers to ensure each scholarship recipient participates in a work-based learning experience that may lead to employment.
- Continuously track, to the best of their ability, employment outcomes for scholarship recipients; conduct a final survey on their employment outcomes.
- Ensure each scholarship recipient receives comprehensive career coaching.
- Register as a Provider on NDOL's NEworks website (NEworks.Nebraska.Gov) and submit training programs for the Eligible Training Provider List
- Partner with NDOL who will assist the College in connecting employers to hire trained students through on-the-job training, work experience, registered apprenticeship programs and traditional employment.
- If the College identifies students who could benefit from supportive services and/or additional training following the scholarship program and/or employment, the College should refer the student to NDOL to explore potential co-enrollment into additional workforce services and programs.
- Require scholarship recipients repay the scholarship funds to the College if the student becomes ineligible, and return any scholarship funds that were not used by eligible students.
- Track and submit evidence of all expenditures.
- Maintain continuous communication with DED and NDOL representatives.
- Report required information as requested, likely frequently.