Career Initiatives Project

2019–2020

These grants have been made possible by grants through the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health and United Way of Franklin County

Overview: The Career Initiatives Project is intended to create opportunities for people who have ideas for small businesses or independent projects and have limited or no access to seed money to get their ideas rolling into reality. It can also be used to fund education toward a certificate or degree. Funds for this project are very limited, and successful candidates will be those who:

- Live in Western Massachusetts
- Have been personally impacted by psychiatric diagnosis, extreme states, trauma and other challenges **that have gotten in the way of their ability to explore and achieve their dreams**
- Have a clear vision for your business, independent project, or educational pursuits
- Are self-driven and motivated to reach project goals
- Are not an employee of the Western Mass Recovery Learning Community or the Western Mass Training Consortium and are not an immediate relative of an employee

Your own creativity is the limit on the type of project or small business you might propose. **Some examples of past projects that have been funded include:**

- Writing and marketing a personal memoir
- creating, recording and distributing a music album
- Producing and marketing visual art pieces and building up a photography business
- Making and selling handmade soaps
- Developing and implementing a karaoke business
- Developing a service animal training business
- Attending a trade certification program

Some Important Notes:

- Grant awards are generally around $2,000
- Applicants may be asked to participate in a phone or in-person interview during selection process
- At least monthly communication (phone, e-mail or in person) with the Career Initiatives Project Coordinator and periodic face-to-face group or individual meetings throughout the 8-month grant period will be required. A final report on the grant year will also be required.
- You will be assigned an RLC team member to support you throughout the process of your grant. This person might help you brainstorm how to overcome barriers, where to reach out to build relevant skills, and so on. When available, someone may be assigned as your grant mentor specifically because they have experience in your area of interest. Please note that this individual will have limited time available, and should be seen as an added support and not someone who will be able to take on responsibility for actual tasks of your project.
- **Funds will NOT be available in one lump sum.** Most expenses will be paid directly. For example, if you are paying a consultant for work they did on your project, you would submit the bill to us and we would pay them directly. Similarly, if you are ordering supplies, you would work with the Career Initiatives Project Coordinator to place your order so that we can pay directly and have the supplies delivered to you.
- Although you may apply for more than one year in a row for the same project or business, the expectation is that you are working toward other funding or self-sustainability. If awarded a grant for a second year, the amount may be reduced. The same project will not be funded for more than three years in a row.

Timeline:

- **Monday, April 1st, 2019**: Applications available
- **Late April/May**: Technical Assistance Workshops (see page 3) will take place
- **Friday, June 28th, 2019**: Completed applications will be due by 5pm
- **Monday, July 29th, 2019:** Grant award announcements made
- **Monday, September 2nd, 2019:** Funds become available for use
- **Friday, June 5th, 2020:** All funds must be spent
- **Tuesday, June 30th, 2020:** All grant tasks completed
- **Friday, July 17th, 2020:** Final grant report submitted

Technical Assistance Workshops: Attendance at a Technical Assistance Workshops is NOT required in order to apply for a grant. However, it may be helpful if you're feeling stuck or have specific questions. Each workshop will be about an hour long and is attended to address questions about applications and the project overall. **SIGN UP IS REQUIRED TO ATTEND. If we receive no sign ups we may cancel a workshop.**

Workshop dates and times are as follows:

Wednesday, April 24th, 4:00pm @
Forbes Library (Bak Study Room), 20 West St, Northampton, MA

Monday, May 6th, 11:00am @
RLC's Pittsfield Center, 361 North St, Pittsfield, MA

Wednesday, May 8th, 11:00am @
RLC's Greenfield Center, 20 Chapman St, Greenfield, MA 01301

Thursday, May 9rd, 11:00am @
RLC's Springfield (Bowen) Center, 235 Chestnut Street Springfield MA 01103

Wednesday, May 22nd, 1:00pm @
RLC's Holyoke Center, 199 High Street, Holyoke, MA 01040

Tuesday, May 28th, 1pm @
Forum House, 55 Broad St, Westfield, MA

SIGN UP FOR WORKSHOPS IS REQURED. If we receive no sign-ups for a particular date, it may be cancelled. If you would like to sign up for a workshop or if you have any other questions, please contact Sean at sean@westernmassrlc.org

Frequently Asked Questions:

I'm not the best writer or English is not my first language. Can someone help me write up my plan? If writing (or English) is not core to your small business or project plan, then it may be reasonable for you to get some support in putting together your application. However, we ask that you be honest about any assistance that you received on the application and talk openly about how that may or may not impact your actual project.

Can I submit additional materials? You are welcome to submit other materials relevant to your grant application. For example, you are welcome to submit sample images of your art, if you're submitting for a grant to produce artwork or a CD or link with a sample of your music and so on. However, please note that anything you submit should be in SAMPLE FORM ONLY, and NOT anything you expect us to return to you.

Will grants be spread out throughout Western Mass? Not necessarily. Although we are accepting applications from all four counties of Western Massachusetts, the reality is we only have a small amount of grant money to award. So, we really will be looking primarily at each individual proposal, and answers to all the questions on the application.

What if something comes up – like an illness or family emergency - in the middle of my grant cycle and I can't turn in a monthly update or need to take a break? Will I lose the money? Life happens! However, you will have primary responsibility for staying in touch with the Career Initiatives Project Coordinator. If something comes up and you need to take a break from your project and won't be submitting a monthly report or two or will be out of touch altogether, it will be on you talk with the Coordinator, let them know you're taking a leave from the project and set an anticipated timeline for your plan to return. If you do that, chances are, we'll be able to work with you. **However, if we just stop hearing from someone, we will not take responsibility for tracking them down and chances are the money will be taken back and spent on something else. In other words, ongoing communication really is critical to this whole process.** *Please note:* Even with great communication, we won't be able to hold money for you beyond June 1st, so please bear that in mind!

Do I need to be receiving DMH services in order to be eligible for this grant? No. However, you must identify as someone who has been impacted by psychiatric diagnosis, extreme states, trauma and other life challenges that have really gotten in the way of your hopes and dreams. We are really looking to award these grants to people for whom they will make a real difference in their lives.

Do I need to be sponsored by another agency? No. Although past grant applications have required a sponsor, we have eliminated that requirement. We do, however, request at least one written reference from someone who can speak to your potential to implement your plan.

Can I pay myself a stipend or hourly wage using grant funds? You can include compensation to yourself for specific expenses (for example, mileage and other travel costs, etc.), but your budget should NOT include hourly wages or stipends for your time.

Application Instructions:
Please review the following instructions in their entirety BEFORE completing the application.

STEP 1: Answer each question (Failure to complete any part of this application may result in your project not even being reviewed.)

STEP 2: Double check your answers and be sure they are legible, clear and concise (If we can't read it, we won't review it!)

STEP 3: Update or create a resume that focuses on relevant experience and training

STEP 4: Get at least one written reference from someone who can speak to your ability to implement your project. (We need at least one, and no more than three!)

STEP 5: Determine whether or not you want to submit any other supporting materials (A sample of your art or music, etc.) Any materials submitted MUST be in sample form only. THEY WILL NOT BE RETURNED TO YOU. Additional materials are NOT required, but are particularly recommended for any proposals that center upon the arts.

STEP 6: Submit one copy of your completed proposal to info@westernmassrlc.org or to Career Initiatives Project, 187 High Street, Suite 202, Holyoke, MA 01040 **by Friday, June 28th, 2019 at 5PM!**

Format:

- Use blue or black ink (typed applications appreciated but not required!)
- Use standard sized 8.5" x 11" paper
- All proposals should be printed on singled sided pages
- Please be sure that all pages (including any additional pages you might attach) include your name, and page number
- Please be sure to clearly mark the question number that you are answering, if attaching additional pages
- **Do not** exceed 8 pages (This includes the cover page through your response to question 12. The page limit does NOT include your references, resume or additional materials submitted)

Reference Details: You must submit at least one and no more than three references with your completed application. References should be written letters and MUST include:
- The reference's full name
- The reference's contact information (phone number, e-mail and address)
- How the reference knows you and for how long
- What skills, strengths and experiences the reference believes that you have that will help you to be successful with your small business or project plan

References must NOT be a family member. At least one reference should have known you for AT LEAST one year.

Resume Details: Resumes do not need to be lengthy, but should include all standard resume elements including:
- Your name and contact information
- Any relevant education or training
- Any relevant work experience (paid or unpaid)
- A summary of relevant skills and attributes

APPLICANT'S NAME: _____

Career Initiatives Project, 2019-20
Cover Page & Check List

Applicant's Name:	
Street Address:	

City/Town:		**Zip Code:**	
Home Phone:		**Cell Phone:**	
E-mail Address:			

Check One:	☐	**Applying for first time for ANY project**
	☐	**Previous Applicant**

If 'previous applicant,' are you (Check one):	☐	**A.** Someone who WAS NOT funded when you applied before
	☐	**B.** Someone who WAS funded before, and you're seeking re-funding for the same project
	☐	**C.** Someone who WAS funded before and you're seeking funding for a brand new project

If C, what was the name and year of your previously funded project:	

Current Project Name:		
Brief Mission Statement:		
Application Checklist (initial when you have completed all items)	☐	**Cover page & check list** *(required)*
	☐	**Application questions 1-** *(required)*
	☐	**Resume** *(required)*
	☐	**One to three reference letters** *(required)*
	☐	**Additional materials** *(NOT required)*

APPLICANT'S NAME:

Career Initiatives Project, 2010-20
Application Questions

1. **What are your project goals? As of June 30th, what do you hope to have accomplished?**

2. **What is your project description? What will you be doing throughout the year to build up to these goals?**

APPLICANT'S NAME: _____

Career Initiatives Project, 2019-20
Application Questions

3. **Please provide an overall timeline for your project:**

MONTH	*ACCOMPLISHMENTS*
SEPTEMBER	
OCTOBER	
NOVEMBER	
DECEMBER	
JANUARY	
FEBRUARY	
MARCH	
ARPIL	
MAY	
JUNE	
Miscellaneous Timeline Information (as applicable):	

APPLICANT'S NAME: _____

Career Initiatives Project, 2019-20
Application Questions

4. **What is your budget for this project? Please provide detailed information about how you will spend the funds.**

5. **Individuals who have limited access to other financial resources to bring their vision to life will be given priority. Please explain how this grant will create an opportunity for you to do something you otherwise would not be able to accomplish.**

APPLICANT'S NAME: _____

Career Initiatives Project, 2019-20
Application Questions

6. **People who have experienced being given psychiatric diagnoses, extreme states, trauma and other life challenges that have gotten in the way of their hopes and dreams will be given priority. Please describe how your personal experiences and journey have impacted you and how they have helped shape your goals for this project.**

7. **What skills, strengths and/or experience do you possess that will help you with this project?**

APPLICANT'S NAME: _____

Career Initiatives Project, 2019-20
Application Questions

8. **What other supports and resources do you have access to that might help you with this project? (For example, a friend who's really great with making flyers and will help you create one to promote your product or a family member with a truck who is willing to help you move larger items as needed for your project, etc.)**

9. **Did anyone else help you complete this application? If yes, please offer details about what support they offered and what that may mean for your own ability to complete your project moving forward.**

APPLICANT'S NAME: _____

Career Initiatives Project, 2019-20
Application Questions

10. **What is your vision for sustainability of your business plan, project, or educational program? What will you do when the grant money runs out to keep your business or project going, or complete your certification or degree?**

11. **What will you do to move your plan forward if you do not receive this grant?**

APPLICANT'S NAME: _____

Career Initiatives Project, 2019-20
Application Questions

12. **Is there anything else we should know about your vision for this grant or how it will impact your life?**