

Career Initiatives Project

2021-2022



Wildflower Alliance



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 Wildflower Alliance 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 a Wildflower Alliance 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:

- **March 2021:** Applications available
- **May 2021:** Information Sessions will take place (see below)
- **Friday, June 25th, 2021:** Completed applications are due by 5pm
- **Friday, July 30th, 2021:** Grant award announcements made
- **Wednesday, September 1st, 2021:** Funds become available for use
- **Friday, June 3, 2022:** All funds must be spent
- **Friday, July 1st, 2022:** All grant tasks completed
- **Friday July 15th, 2022:** Final grant report submitted

Information Sessions: Attendance at an Information Session is NOT required in order to apply for a grant. However, it may be helpful if you want to learn more, you're feeling stuck or have specific questions for filling out an application. Each session will be about an hour long, hosted via Zoom, and is intended to address questions about applications and the project overall.

If you would like to sign up for a workshop and receive the Zoom link or call-in option or if you have any other questions, please contact Sean at sean@westernmassrlc.org or call on weekdays at (413) 539-3285.

Information Session dates and times are as follows:

Monday, May 3rd @ 11:00am

Via Zoom and with options to join using computers our Pittsfield Center, 361 North St

Wednesday, May 5th @ 1:00pm

Via Zoom and with options to join using computers at our Bowen (Springfield) Center, 235 Chestnut St

Monday, May 10th @ 11:00am

Via Zoom and with options to join using computers at our Greenfield Center, 20 Chapman St

Wednesday, May 19th @ 11:00am

Via Zoom and with options to join using computers at our Holyoke Center, 199 High St

Thursday, May 20th @ 2:00pm

Via Zoom

Tuesday, May 25th @ 5:00pm

Via Zoom

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 to 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 3rd, 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 25th, 2021 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, 2021-22
Cover Page & Check List

Applicant's Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City/Town: _____

**Zip
Code:** _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Check One:

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

Applying for first time for ANY project

Previous Applicant

**If 'previous
applicant,' are you
(Check one):**

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

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:

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Current Project Name:

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**Brief Mission Statement
(one sentence):**

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**Application
Checklist (initial
when you have
completed all
items)**

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

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, 2021-22
Application Questions

3. Please provide an overall timeline for your project:

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

APPLICANT'S NAME: _____

Career Initiatives Project, 2021-22
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, 2021-22
Application Questions

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