



Memorandum

TO: Sue O’Connell, Legislative Services Division
 FROM: Scott Eychner, Workforce Services Division - DLI
 DATE: November 5, 2021
 SUBJECT: HELP Link & HELP Link Employer Grants update

Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to impact the HELP Link program through the first half of SFY’22. Successful training and employment outcomes remain low while duration of service engagement and case management activities remain high. However, DPHHS and DLI also continue to see increases in the overall number of eligible customers and anticipates a return to normal levels by the end of SFY’22.

The 67th Regular Session of the Montana Legislature brought a significant change to the HELP Link program. HB 614 directed a change regarding eligible program operators, moving it from a state-operated program to a private-contracted operator model.

The first round of RFP’s seeking program operators concluded in September 2021 and two of 12 possible program operation contracts were awarded. A second round of RFP’s will go out in mid-November 2021 with expectations to award the additional 10 operator contracts by January 2022.

It is important to note that HB 614 did not change the program operation structure, only who operates it. Program eligibility, available services, available supporting employer grants, and expected program outcomes all remain the same.

Expenditures

Year	Total	Admin	Case Mgmt	Training & Related	Emp Grants	Financial Literacy
SFY’17	\$ 1,214,633	\$ 565,058	\$ 291,169	\$ 358,406		
SFY’18	\$ 975,679	\$ 158,006	\$ 297,491	\$ 520,182		
SFY’19	\$ 939,151	\$ 147,399	\$ 297,621	\$ 494,131		
SFY’20	\$ 1,191,109	\$ 261,040	\$ 266,466	\$ 649,408	\$ 14,195	
SFY’21	\$ 1,498,863	\$ 251,708	\$ 568,794	\$ 509,522	\$ 16,565	\$ 152,274
SFY’22 (thru Oct)	\$ 401,782	\$ 56,893	\$ 139,251	\$ 178,437	\$ 2,632	\$ 24,569

As noted above, as employment and training opportunities decreased during the pandemic, individuals remained in and received more case management services than in traditional years, thus the significant cost increase reflected in that category in SFY’21.

Employer Grants

HELP Link Employer Grants continue to be promoted and awarded via local Job Service Offices in conjunction with serving HELP Link eligible individuals. As the HELP Link program transitions to private providers, promotion of these grants will be expanded to include those contracted program operators.

Since the inception of the Employer Grant program in SFY'21, DLI seen the following HELP Link employer grant activity.

- 18 grants awarded for a total of approximately \$33,000
- 6 of those were awarded in Calendar Year 2021
 - 3 were for direct training (2 in health care occupations, 1 in childcare)
 - 3 were for support services (purchasing required work-related equipment)