Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund (ERAF)

Ray McCoy| ERAF Program Coordinator

ERAF Program Origin and Administration

- Two-year pilot program that reimburses eligible employers for reasonable accommodation purchases made for job applicants and/or employees with disabilities

    - Reimburses purchases made from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2025

- Promotes hiring of people with disabilities by reducing any real or perceived financial hardships of providing accommodations

- Available to Minnesota small to medium sized employers

- Appropriated $2m per year, $400,000 of which is budgeted for administrative costs

- Organizationally housed within State Services for the Blind but marketed as a DEED program

- Official Launch Date: September 1, 2023

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What is the Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund?

- **Promotes Inclusion**: Helps employers create accessible workplaces by covering the cost of accommodations for employees or job applicants with disabilities.

- **Supports Employees**: Enables workers to perform at their best by addressing physical, technological, or communication barriers.

- **Simplified Process**: Designed to make it easy for employers to apply and receive reimbursement for approved accommodations.

- **Employer Benefits**: Boosts employee productivity, morale, and retention through inclusive workplace practices.

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- The employer is domiciled within the legal boundaries of Minnesota and has its principal place of business as identified in its certificate of incorporation in the state of Minnesota;

- The business employs not more than 500 employees on any business day during the preceding calendar year; and

- The business generates $5,000,000 or less in gross annual revenue.

Qualifying Reasonable Accommodations (Examples)

- Assistive technology

- Captioning services

- Ergonomic workstations or seating

- Job coaching

- Lifting aids

- Lighting and alarms

- Low vision aids and devices

- Noise-cancelling devices

- Readers

- Sign language interpreters

- Signage

- Specialized software

- Subscriptions for assistive technology

- Transcription of materials into Braille or audio formats

- Wheelchair ramp

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- The maximum total reimbursement per eligible employer in a state fiscal year (July 1-June 30) is $30,000. This amount encapsulates both onetime and ongoing reasonable accommodations expenses.

- Submissions for one-time reasonable accommodation expenses must be no less than $250 and no more than $15,000 per accommodation. If an employer submits a reimbursement request exceeding this amount for a single accommodation, ERAF will only reimburse up to the $15,000 limit.

- Submissions for ongoing reasonable accommodation expenses have no minimum or maximum requirements. Ongoing expenses are those expenses for ongoing services, such as sign language interpreting or captioning services.

1 Disclosure and Internal Processing ‖

2 Consultation ‖

3 Purchasing Accommodations ‖

4 ERAF Application Submission ‖

- When completing the application, the employer MUST attach proofs of purchase.

- ERAF Program Coordinator reviews application within 5 business days of receipt.

- If application is approved, ERAF technician contacts employer to complete a substitute W-9 form; employer may be asked to register in SWIFT if they anticipate future reimbursements.

  - Our ERAF Technician will help them through the entire process

- Reimbursement is processed in SWIFT, and the reimbursement check is sent to the employer within 30 days. If employer is set up as a supplier in SWIFT, funds can be instead direct deposited.

- Potential reasons for denials:

    - Not an eligible employer
    - Not a qualifying reasonable accommodation under the definition of the ADA
    - Not for a job applicant or employee with a disability
    - Eligible employer has met $30,000 fiscal year limit
    - Missing or insufficient documentation for proof of purchase or cost

- Employers are provided an appeal process.

- The reimbursement employers receive is not taxable. However, they are still advised to consult with a tax accountant.

- Employers do not need to submit proof of eligibility at time of application. The application process was intentionally made to be as easy to complete as possible.

- We will be conducting quarterly financial audits of the reimbursements.

- Employers may be required to return a portion or all of the funds they received if we find through our audits, they did not meet the requirements of the program.

- ERAF Program Coordinator is available for technical assistance (TA) and consultation at **no cost to employers**. TA is available for the following activities:

  - Understanding the Americans with Disabilities Act as it pertains to hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities and implementing reasonable accommodations;

  - Consulting on how to locate, purchase, and implement reasonable accommodations that meet the needs of individuals with disabilities;

  - Connecting employers to disability-related trainings and resources, including DEED-specific programs and initiatives; and

  - Answering any questions about the ERAF.

Employer Success Stories: The ERAF Impact

"Through the ERAF program, we were able to provide bariatric chairs and adjustable workstations for employees with disabilities. This made their workdays easier and increased their productivity, allowing us to meet their needs and celebrate their successes together."— **Aitkin County Developmental Achievement Center**

"The ERAF program helped fund ergonomic equipment for one of our employees, reducing workplace strain and creating a more inclusive environment. It takes pressure off employers and ensures employees' needs are met without financial strain." -- **Lanesboro Area Chamber of Commerce**

"The support I received through ERAF and its staff has been exceptional. With their help, I created a workspace that reduced symptoms from my physical condition, significantly improving my comfort and productivity." – ***JET LLC***

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Employer Success Stories: Inclusivity at the Coffee House

- **Improved Workplace Accessibility**: Dunn Bros used ERAF funds to purchase specialized espresso machines, enabling employees with disabilities to perform their duties effectively.
- **Increased Employment Opportunities**: ERAF supported the hiring of Ellie and others from the disabled community, fostering inclusivity and diversity at Dunn Bros.
- **Enhanced Employee Satisfaction**: Ellie shared how her job has given her a chance to grow and enjoy meaningful work in her community.
- **Community and Business Growth**: The program opened doors for Dunn Bros to expand its inclusive practices while creating stronger community support.

Maximize Your Business Potential with ERAF

- Access up to $30,000 in reimbursements for workplace accommodations

- Boost employee retention, morale and productivity

- Create a more diverse and inclusive team that drives innovation

- Position your company as a leader in inclusive employment

- **Return on Investment:** Inclusive workplaces see a strong ROI through improved employee performance, loyalty, and reduced turnover, directly boosting your bottom line

Call to Action: *Join the growing number of Minnesota employers benefiting from ERAF. Start today and see the difference inclusivity can make!*

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Disability Inclusive Business Partner Training

Objective: Equip employers to create inclusive workplaces and enhance company culture.

Focus: Diversifying workforce, supporting employees with disabilities.

For more information, visit: careerforcemn.com/DisabilityInclusive

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    - Short URL www.mn.gov/deed/eraf
    - Long URL www.mn.gov/deed/business/financing-business/eraf/index.jsp

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