## **Questions and Answers for Providers about COVID-19 Impacts on ACP Grant Operations**

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| **Question** | How will ACP grants be impacted if providers' close down or limit services during this period? |
| **Answer** | ACP is offering to extend SFY20 competitive grants through 12/31/2020. We had originally offered to extend SFY20 competitive grants until 9/30/2020, but have now added an additional three months. Coordinators will be contacting providers to evaluate their interest in the further extension. If you do not hear from your Coordinator, please email them.  All SFY21 grants will be extended through 9/30/2021 at the time of issuance. |
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| **Question** | Will extension of the SFY18-19 P2P grants funded, in part, by MJSP, be allowed? |
| **Answer** | SFY18-19 P2P grants cannot be extended. This includes any unspent MJSP funds. |
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| **Question** | What does DEED recommend regarding continuing services during the COVID-19 emergency? |
| **Answer** | We encourage our partners to continue to safeguard the health and safety of employees and participants during this emergency. Try to do as much as possible using technology to interface with participants. This may include switching to on-line learning modules, providing case management via skype, zoom, telephone, or other electronic means, and modifying services to adapt them to remote learning. We encourage you to be innovative. I you have ideas about how you can transition to providing services remotely, please contact your coordinator to discuss them. We will be as flexible as allowed under applicable regulations and are open to considering all new ideas that will forward the original purpose of your grant(s). |
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| **Question** | What is DEED doing to facilitate changes to our work that will allow us to continue to serve clients during the crisis even though those changes were not contemplated in our budget or work plan? |
| **Answer** | We encourage providers to suggest ways to shift from provision of services in person to provision of remote services. Changes that do not impact money can be documented and implemented without going through the formal modification process. Contact your grant coordinator to discuss suggestions you have more modifying in-person activities to an on-line venue. If your grant coordinator approves your suggestion and your suggestion does not impact funds, your grant coordinator will work with you to document the changes and this will be incorporated into your work plan without having to go through the standard modification process. |
|  | **For SFY18-19 P2P grants only**, ACP funds remaining in any cost categories may be applied to any allowable costs without going through the modification process. For example, funds remaining in Direct Services could be applied to pay for Support Services. **However, note these two very important points: (1) MJSP funds may not be spent on any services except MJSP approved Direct Training. (2) Administrative costs cannot exceed ten percent of all funds spent.** Call your grant coordinator if you have questions. |
|  | All monitoring will be conducted remotely during this period of emergency. If you have a grant or grants due for monitoring, a monitor will contact you to schedule a date and time for a virtual meeting and to request that documents be completed and/or collected and sent electronically. The monitor will review materials requested and provided. During the call, the monitor will review the guide with your and ask any particular questions about material provided. A file review will not be conducted. |
|  | During this time, Requests for reimbursement (RPRs) need notr have a actual signature. If a provider's authorized signer is not able to physically sign the RPR/FSR/CAPR, the authorized signer may approve via email with the following statement included: "By signing this report, I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that the report is true, complete and accurate and the expenditures, disbursements and cash receipts are for the purposes and objectives set forth in the terms and conditions of this award. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent information or the omission of any material fact, may subject me to criminal civil or administrative penalties for fraud, false statements, false claims, or otherwise." |
|  | Please also be aware that if a provider shifts from in-person to online training, costs for computers and other electronic equipment may be paid from grant funds. If the provider says that the equipment is **required**, costs are allocated to **Direct Training**. If the **provider does not require** the equipment, costs are allocated to **Support Services**. Providers accessing Support Services must include the need for the equipment both in the participant's Individual Employment Plan and in WorkForce One case notes, and must include provision of the equipment in WorkForce One under the support tab. Remember that any purchases using grant funds must be necessary, reasonable, and allocable. This means that the purchase must align with the objectives/goals of the program; the costs must not exceed what a prudent person under prevailing circumstances would spend; the goods or services involved are chargeable or assignable to the program with relative benefits received. |
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| **Question** | Can a provider continue to pay employees if the provider reduces or stops services? |
| **Answer** | DEED expects providers to do as much as they can to modify processes to be online. This may include having employees work to convert classroom trainings to be presented on-line. Contact your grant coordinator to discuss whether this work can be charged to Direct Services.  Where ever possible, DEED encourages providers to have employees work remotely, to the extent that there is grant-related work to do. Work that may be done remotely includes, but is not limited to: o Updating and working on individual employment plans (IEP). o Updating participant information in WorkForce One. o Inputting support services to Workforce One. o Doing case management – telephone calls, skypes, one-one email exchanges, etc. o Participating in ACP monitoring as requested. We hope that these actions will reduce the need for lay-offs. If you do have to lay-off employees, be sure to inform them that they may apply for unemployment benefits.  See Question and Answer below, which applies to all Paid Time Off. |
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| **Question** | If an employee becomes ill with COVID-19 or has to take time off to care for someone who is ill, may a provider pay them out of grant funds? |
| **Answer** | If the employee has paid time off that they will be using during their absence, and if the work plan and budget are clear about how that employee's time is allocated to the grant, the applicable percentage of their time may be charged to the grant. Contact your Grant coordinator to have DEED confirm whether grant funds are available and, if so, what proportion of their PTO can be covered by the grant. |
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| **Question** | How will it reflect on us if we are not able to meet the goals set in our work plan as a result of the emergency? |
| **Answer** | We - providers, their participants and prospective participants, and DEED are all in this together. It is important for providers and DEED to continue to serve Minnesota's unemployed and under-employed populations during this time. Our ability to continue operating to the greatest extent possible will make it easier for us to respond once the crisis begins to recede, when we anticipate a surge in demand for the services providers offer. Try your hardest to meet goals, and DEED will make adjustments for limitations caused by COVID-19 on providers’ ability to meet work plan goals and spend down their budgets for SFY20 and SFY21 grants. |
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| **Question** | May providers enroll participants electronically, foregoing face-to-face enrollment? |
| **Answer** | Participants may be enrolled electronically for the duration of the emergency. See the procedure below. |

**TEMPORARY PROCEDURE**

**DEED E&T**

**Electronic On-Boarding**

In order to increase providers’ ability to continue providing services safely during the COVID 19 pandemic, the following procedure is effective immediately until further notice.

Providers may conduct electronic onboarding as follows:

* Collect an applicant’s social security number verbally, over the phone.
* Required identification from the applicant may be:
  + photocopied and sent through the mail,
  + photocopied, scanned, and sent via email, or
  + photographed using a cell phone and emailed.
* Conduct an objective assessment of the applicant by phone, identifying elements for the individual employment plan (IEP).
* Draft an IEP and mail (2 copies) or email the IEP to the applicant.
* Confirm the applicant’s agreement to the IEP. The applicant may confirm agreement with the IEP by:
  + (i) signing a hard copy of the individualized employment plan (IEP) and (ii) returning the signed IEP by mail or email, or photographing the IEP with a cell phone and emailing the photograph;
  + signing the IEP electronically and returning by email;
  + sending an email confirming agreement and attaching the IEP;
  + speaking directly with the provider by phone and confirming agreement with the IEP.
* Document that the applicant has agreed to the IEP.
  + Note on the IEP that the participant has verbally agreed to the IEP, include the date the participant agreed, and the initials of the staff writing the note.
  + “Activate” the IEP in Workforce One, by entering the date it was signed.
  + Enter a detailed case note of the onboarding process in WF1.
  + Copy/paste any email interaction into notes.
  + Upload any pictures, or scanned emails (e.g. for the SS card or DL) to WF1 Electronic Document (EDS) as “attachments” to the client record. Contact your grant coordinator if you need technical assistance with this.
  + Open the “local flag” activity to indicate documents may be pending and/or collected in an alternative manner.

Providers must verify identity and social security number in person as soon as possible after the COVID 19 emergency is over.