

# Inclusive Employment RFP Fall 2024 - Framework and Criteria

## Elements of this RFP:

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- B – RFP's Aim and Approach
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### **A – Context: UWGT's Inclusive Employment (IE) strategy**

UWGT's Inclusive Employment (IE) strategy consolidates, aligns & focuses our employment-related and financial security initiatives addressing systemic & demand-side barriers to deliver improved employment opportunities for low-income job seekers from equity-deserving groups facing multiple barriers to the labour market (hereon referred to as "job seekers"). This includes people who are racialized, in particular Black and Indigenous people, are newcomers, LGBTQIA2S+, have a disability, and/or are involved with the criminal justice system.

The IE Strategy aims to connect job seekers to the opportunities that match their drive and passion, despite their background or circumstances. It will provide access to a set of interconnected education, training & wraparound support services designed to help job seekers gain industry-recognized credentials needed for career opportunities in growing economic sectors. The integration of comprehensive social services with industry-informed education and training responds to gaps in the employment system which require a higher level of service coordination to ensure job seekers are better able to attain their employment goals.

The strategy takes a demand-driven & employer-focused workforce development approach, meaning that the trigger point of any training or intervention must be a response to increased labor demand and the identification of employers with real hiring needs. Job seekers are trained to be placed in growth industries, leading to much stronger employment outcomes and retention. Partnerships/collaborations will be encouraged to promote seamless delivery of programs across the continuum of job readiness from foundational capacities to skills building to employment. The strategy encompasses our youth workforce development programs Career Navigator™ and netWORKS and expands their approach to job seekers of all ages and will include intensive capacity building supports for demand-driven inclusive employment program development.

## **B – RPP’s Aim and Approach**

UWGT’s aim is to enhance employment opportunities and financial security for low-income individuals facing multiple barriers. We strive to bridge the gap between industries, employers and skilled job seekers by capitalizing on real labor market opportunities and developing the skills and training pathways demanded by employers.

For this limited round of funding, United Way is particularly focused on increasing its investments in workforce development programs\* and initiatives that:

- Respond to employers' real hiring needs.
- Prioritize employer engagement.
- Achieve strong employment outcomes.
- Address opportunity gaps for marginalized communities.
- Target neighborhoods with high poverty and limited-service infrastructure.
- Target multiple barrier populations, which may include but are not limited to people who are racialized, in particular Black and Indigenous people, are newcomers, LGBTQIA2S+, have a disability, and/or are involved with the criminal justice system.

*\*Initiatives aimed at enhancing the skills, knowledge, and employability of workers, often through training, education, and job placement services.*

**The following initiatives with the IE Program Model are not being considered for funding currently:**

- Employment Social Enterprises
- Financial Empowerment Programming
- Pre-Employment Training programs

**Examples of interventions that ARE NOT eligible for round of funding:**

- Employment social enterprise are businesses that operate with a primary goal of creating job opportunities for marginalized or disadvantaged individuals in society. These businesses typically generate revenue through the sale of goods or services, but they prioritize social impact over profit maximization.
- Financial Empowerment Programming: Tax Clinics, One-on-one financial crisis counseling and financial literacy training
- Pre-Employment Training programs: soft skills training, resume critic, interview preparation, training that is not industry informed and associated to an experiential learning opportunity.

### **Example of the type of intervention that is eligible for this round of funding:**

Employment Agency ABC, responding to the evolving needs of local businesses, has spearheaded a transformative Workforce Development Program in collaboration with industry leaders like Tech Innovations Inc. Through an in-depth analysis of Tech Innovations Inc.'s workforce requirements, ABC has tailored a comprehensive program aimed at preparing job seekers for positions as Python Coders, a critical need for Tech Innovations Inc.

With a target of training 50 individuals over six months, the program aims for a 90% completion rate and a 70% job placement rate within three months of program completion. By integrating industry-specific training modules and providing hands-on experience through internships at Tech Innovations Inc., participants are equipped with the exact skills and competencies needed for success in the Python Coders field.

Moreover, ABC conducts rigorous assessments to identify and address participants' barriers and needs, offering personalized wrap-around support services such as transportation assistance, childcare support, and access to mental health resources.

The program's success metrics are tracked and evaluated regularly including job retention, with feedback from both participants and employers incorporated into ongoing program enhancements. Through robust partnerships with Tech Innovations Inc., local educational institutions, and community organizations, the program ensures that training initiatives remain aligned with industry standards.

### **C - Competitive organizations for this RFP - You should only apply for this round of funding if:**

- You have been implementing workforce development interventions in **close partnership with employers** for at least three years, including co-design and implementation of career pathways.
- You have **strong employer connections**, supported by **letters of commitment for paid internships**.
- You can provide **comprehensive wrap-around supports**, including post-program retention supports.
- You have **strong community connections** to facilitate outreach and recruitment.
- You are familiar **with integrating technical and soft skills training**.

New interventions will be considered, but only from organizations with a proven track record of achieving successful employment outcomes in previous interventions. Priority will be given to organizations that have demonstrated effectiveness in implementing workforce development programs, particularly those that have successfully run similar programs in the past, citing specific examples of positive outcomes such as high job placement rates or long-term employment retention among program participants.

## D – Programmatic Outcomes

Selected Programs will:

- Improve employment outcomes for low-income job seekers facing barriers to employment.
- Increase economic security (good jobs rubric\*) for residents through demand-driven workforce development programs.
- Engage and support employers to meet talent needs in growing economic sectors!
- Strengthen workplace capacity to onboard and support job seekers with varied skills, backgrounds, and social identities reflecting the diverse populations of Peel, Toronto & York

## E – Programmatic Framework

Applications must demonstrate incorporation of the following program components, either directly or through agreements with other service providers:

- Employer engagement **throughout** the program’s design, implementation, placement, and employment process.
- **Comprehensive** wrap-around supports, including post-program job-retention supports, transportation, childcare, counseling, mental health, and financial support.
- Technical and Life skills training **informed and validated** by employers.
- Experiential learning opportunities such as paid internships or placements

Well-designed program will consider the following components:

### 1. Needs Assessment and Industry Partnerships:

- Conduct thorough surveys and consultations with local employers from diverse industries to ascertain current and future hiring needs, skill gaps, and preferences.
- Analyze market trends and forecasts to anticipate evolving workforce demands.
- Establish strategic partnerships with local businesses, industry associations, and chambers of commerce to facilitate job placements and apprenticeships.

**Goal:** Identify a target occupation and engage one or more employers (Labor Unions) in collaborating in the design and implementation of workforce development initiatives, including paid internships or jobs.

### 2. Curriculum Development and Customized Training:

- Develop training programs based on insights gathered from employers, emphasizing key skills and competencies essential for the targeted occupation.
- Collaborate with industry professionals and educators to ensure program content remains relevant, current, and aligned with industry standards.
- Incorporate industry-validated soft skills training alongside technical skills development.

**Goal:** Develop or leverage existing industry-informed training curricula to equip graduates with the precise skills and competencies required for success in the targeted occupation.

### **3. Recruitment and Assessment:**

- Identify suitable candidates within the local community who express interest in the targeted occupation and can commit to program requirements, such as attending classes.
- Screen applicants based on employer-informed criteria, including relevant skills, experience, and cultural fit.

**Goal:** Establish a “suitability criteria”, outreach plan, and assessment process to identify candidates prepared for successful transition to employment upon program completion.

### **4. Wrap-around Supports:**

- Offer comprehensive wrap-around supports, including transportation assistance, childcare support, and access to mental health resources.
- Offer individualized job placement assistance, including resume writing, interview preparation, and networking opportunities.

**Goal:** Provide all necessary supports for job seekers to thrive.

### **5. Training**

- Delivery of industry informed training and credentials necessary for in targeted in demand opportunity.
- Integration of employers recognized soft skills training.

**Goal:** Equip job seekers with credential (when applicable) and the necessary technical and soft skills to thrive.

### **6. Job Placement and Supports:**

- Provide hands-on learning experiences, such as paid internships and placements, to enhance practical skills and readiness for the workplace.
- Provide ongoing support and mentorship during participants' transition into employment, facilitating seamless integration into the workforce.

**Goal:** Offer paid experiential learning opportunities leading to potential full-time employment and provide post-program supports, including job retention assistance.

### **7. Monitoring and Evaluation:**

- Track participants' progress throughout the program and after 12–16-week placement to measure outcomes effectively.
- Collect feedback from employers, participants, and stakeholders to assess program effectiveness and implement necessary adjustments.

*Overall, this demand-driven framework offers a proactive approach to addressing labor market challenges and creating employment pathways for individuals facing multiple barriers, while also meeting the evolving needs of businesses in the community.*

## **F - Geographical & Population priorities**

- High priorities will be given to Workforce Development interventions in York Region, Peel Region and north-west Toronto including but not limited to people who are racialized, in particular Black and Indigenous people, are newcomers, LGBTQIA2S+, have a disability, and/or are involved with the criminal justice system.

## **G - Proposed Evaluation Criteria:**

### **2. Demonstrated Outcomes and Effectiveness:**

- Track record of successful outcomes and effectiveness in previous similar interventions.

### **3. Capacity to Engage Employers:**

- In program design and curriculum validation.
- Support letters confirming employers' commitment to the intervention, including hiring or offering paid experiential learning opportunities for graduates.

### **4. Provision of Comprehensive Wrap-Around Supports:**

- Including post-program retention supports to ensure long-term success. To be monitored on 3, 6 and 12 months post-employment.

### **5. Cost Per Participant:**

- Consideration of factors such as targeted sector, length and intensity of required training, the barriered population, and associated needs.

### **6. Quality of Jobs:**

- Assessment using the Inclusive Employment rubric.
- Potential for career growth that the graduates are being prepared for.