

## **Request Summary SF 2505 - Gateways2Growth Initiative**

Employers across healthcare, transportation, and technology desperately need skilled workers, yet many hardworking Minnesotans—especially immigrants, refugees, and low-income individuals—lack access to the training and career pathways needed to fill these jobs.

The Gateways2Growth initiative, led by the Center for African Immigrants and Refugees Organization (CAIRO), is about connecting people with opportunity—not just through training programs, but by ensuring job placements, career mobility, and real economic impact.

With the funding provided by SF2505, CAIRO will expand training programs that have already proven successful—helping people move into high-demand, family-sustaining careers in IT, healthcare, and commercial driving.

### **The Need**

Right now, critical industries in Minnesota are struggling:

- Healthcare facilities can't hire enough CNAs, phlebotomists, and pharmacy technicians to meet demand, leaving patients underserved.
- Minnesota's trucking industry is short thousands of CDL drivers, impacting supply chains, commerce, and transportation services.
- Tech jobs are growing, but access to cybersecurity, software development, and business analysis training remains out of reach for many capable workers.

Meanwhile, there is a workforce ready to step in—but they need the right support to get there.

Minnesota has thousands of untapped workers—immigrants, refugees, underemployed individuals, and people looking to reskill—who want stable, well-paying careers.

Many face barriers like tuition costs, licensing challenges, and lack of employer connections that prevent them from accessing high-growth fields. The Gateways2Growth initiative is designed to remove these barriers and build the workforce Minnesota needs.

### **Proven Impact: A Program That Works**

CAIRO has already shown that targeted, community-centered workforce development produces real results. With \$1 **million** in prior state appropriations, CAIRO was able to:

- Enroll 80 participants in credentialed training programs so far, the goal was 98 until June 30, 2025
- Graduate 52 individuals with industry-recognized credentials, from cybersecurity to commercial driving.
- Help all 52 credentialed graduates secure employment, with many waiting for career transitions into their chosen field.
- Expand CNA enrollments and build partnerships with training institutions across the state.

- 85% of recruitment goals six months ahead of schedule by leveraging community networks and outreach strategies.

One of the program's success stories is Ali (Pseudo name), a Somali immigrant who faced barriers due to his disability and was unable to find work. Through CAIRO's hands-on support and CDL training, he earned his commercial driver's license, secured employment, and moved toward financial independence.

### **The Legislative Request: SF2505**

CAIRO is seeking \$2 million over two years to expand the Gateways2Growth initiative, ensuring more Minnesotans can access training and secure employment in IT, healthcare, and transportation.

### **How the Funds Will Be Used**

- IT Workforce Training: Expanding programs in full-stack development, cybersecurity, and business analysis, with employer partnerships for paid internships and direct hiring.
- CDL Training: Providing commercial driver's license training and job placements in trucking and logistics to address Minnesota's driver shortage.
- Healthcare Training: Supporting certified nursing assistants, phlebotomists, and pharmacy technicians to meet urgent healthcare staffing needs.

### **Who This Will Benefit**

- Immigrants, refugees, and BIPOC workers who are ready to enter the workforce but lack access to traditional training path
- ways.
- Displaced workers and individuals seeking career changes who need reskilling into high-demand, stable industries.
- Employers struggling to find talent, ensuring businesses can hire locally and build a stronger, more diverse workforce.

### **The Economic Impact**

With this funding, Gateways2Growth will:

- Train and credential hundreds of new workers to fill critical workforce shortages.
- Increase employment rates and wage growth in IT, healthcare, and transportation.
- Strengthen regional economies by ensuring equitable workforce access across urban and rural Minnesota.

| <b>Grant Summary Category</b>                             | <b>Number of Participants</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Planned Participants                                      | 98                            |
| Total Enrollments                                         | 89                            |
| Actual Enrollments                                        | 89                            |
| Percent of Total Planned Participants                     | 91%                           |
| Unique Persons                                            | 89                            |
| Number of Open Enrollments without a Case Note in 30 days | 4                             |
| Planned Enrolled in Training                              | 98                            |
| Actual Enrolled in Training                               | 80                            |
| Percent of Total Enrolled in Training                     | 90%                           |
| Actual Enrolled in Credentialed Training                  | 80                            |
| Successfully Completed Credentialed Training              | 52                            |
| Actual Enrolled in Non-Credentialed Training              | 0                             |
| Successfully Completed Non-Credentialed Training          | 0                             |
| Actual Enrolled In Pre-Employment Training                | 66                            |
| Successfully Completed Pre-Employment Training            | 41                            |
| Receiving Support Services                                | 71                            |
| Total Amount of Support Services Paid                     | \$28,833.17                   |
| Exits                                                     | 40                            |
| Percent of Total Enrollments Now Exited                   | 45%                           |
| Planned Employment Exits                                  | 98                            |
| Entering Employment at Exit                               | 10                            |
| Percent of Total Enrollments Exiting to Employment        | 11%                           |
| Percent Employment Exits Compared to Planned              | 10%                           |
| Percent of Employment Exits Related to Training           | 90%                           |
| Average Wage at Exit                                      | \$27.82                       |