



City of Austin – Direct Appropriation

As Required by Laws of Minnesota 2024, Chapter 120, Article 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 3(h)

2024 Report

April 3, 2025

Department of Employment and Economic Development
Employment and Training Division
Adult Federal and State Programs
Great Northern Building, 12th Floor
180 East Fifth Street
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

Ann Meyers, Director Adult Career Pathways
651-259-7174
Ann.Meyers@state.mn.us

As requested by Minnesota Statutes, Section 3.197: This report cost approximately \$1,729.42 to prepare, including staff time, printing and mailing expenses.

Upon request, this material will be made available in an alternative format such as large print, Braille or audio recording. Printed on recycled paper.

Contents

City of Austin – Direct Appropriation 1

City of Austin 2

 Background..... 2

Summary of Grantee Work Plan and Objectives 2

 Program Structure and Activities 2

 Geographic Area(s) to be Served..... 2

 Collaborations and Partnerships 3

 Target Population 3

 Outreach, engagement, and retention strategies..... 3

 Staffing for the project 3

 Specific industry recognized credentials to be awarded..... 4

 Participant support..... 4

 Evaluation..... 4

Data 4

Achieving Equity 5

Total Expenditures..... 5

Future Allocations..... 5

City of Austin

Background

[Laws of Minnesota 2024, Chapter 120, Article 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 3\(h\)](#) authorized a direct appropriation of \$350,000 in SFY2025 from the workforce development fund to the commissioner of the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) for a grant to the City of Austin to develop and implement training programs for water operators and wastewater operators. Riverland Community College must offer the training programs. This is a onetime appropriation and is available until June 30, 2027. Of this amount, the city of Austin may use up to five percent for administration of the program.

Summary of Grantee Work Plan and Objectives

Program Structure and Activities

The City of Austin will utilize these funds to create and market the Water Operator training and Wastewater Operator training programs by Riverland Community College and create marketing materials for both programs by Riverland Community College to be used by the college and workforce centers in southern Minnesota. The training programs will follow the guidance provided in materials from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). The programs will be designed to prepare students to take the MDH and MPCA exams for licensure to operate the respective facilities for water and wastewater. Credentials available to participants will be Water Operator Certificates I and II and Wastewater Operator Certificates I and II, all through Riverland Community College, which is Minnesota Office of Higher Education (OHE) compliant. These funds will not be used for tuition or support to individual participants.

At the time of the publication of this report, the City of Austin continues to work with DEED on a final grant agreement. The Adult Career Pathways Team remains in consistent contact with the City of Austin and Riverland Community College and are making final revisions to the detailed budget needed to execute the grant agreement. Due to the unique nature of this appropriation, the Adult Career Pathways Team has engaged the DEED General Counsel's Office to determine the methods by which progress will be tracked and to ensure adherence to the legislative requirements of the appropriation. The Adult Career Pathways Team is expecting a revised budget from City of Austin no later than April 7, 2025.

Geographic Area(s) to be Served

The training programs will be open to all Minnesotans, with an emphasis on those in the Southern Minnesota region.

Collaborations and Partnerships

Acknowledging the importance of partnerships and collaborations, the City of Austin partnered with Riverland Community College to create and deliver the curriculum and programming, marketing materials, enrollment process, and provide internal grant oversight.

Target Population

The programs target individuals of all ages, genders, and any other categories who are interested in training to become water and/or wastewater operators licensed by the State of Minnesota.

Outreach, Engagement, and Retention Strategies

Riverland Community College will create marketing materials for both the water and wastewater operator training programs to be used by the college and Workforce Centers in southern Minnesota. Riverland Community College's staff will share the materials with staff and partners including:

- Career advisors
- Program navigators
- Adult Basic Education partners
- Regional municipalities

CareerForce Center staff will also share the information with their clientele. Riverland Community College staff and CareerForce Center staff will encourage candidates to connect with area cities interested in hiring and funding the training for prospective students. Prospective students can also pay for their own training while finding an employer match, so they do not need to wait to begin the program. These materials will highlight the availability of Sallie Mae loans to cover expenses that may not be covered by other entities. Riverland Community College will utilize all college social media platforms, television, radio, and print outlets for outreach, recruitment, and community awareness.

Additionally, the Southeastern Minnesota League of Municipalities (SEMLM) will provide information and communication to and from cities with both the CareerForce Centers and Riverland Community College to facilitate connections between potential training candidates and cities looking to hire qualified candidates. The SEMLM has a strong email communication system to reach cities in southeast Minnesota and is building further contacts with cities in South Central and Southwest Minnesota. The SEMLM meets four times per year, providing opportunities for cities to discuss their operational needs in person. The SEMLM also has a quarterly email newsletter to share information and updates with cities across Southern MN on this topic. The SEMLM has shared information about the new programs with local media and will continue to do so as a way of reaching the public about these programs and opportunities.

Staffing for the Project

- Customized Training Business Consultant, 0.30 FTE

- Curriculum Developer, 1.0 FTE
- Part-time Instructor Water I and II, 0.25 FTE
- Part-time Instructor Wastewater I and II, 0.25 FTE

Specific Industry Recognized Credentials to Be Awarded

Credentials available to participants will be Water Operator I, Water Operator II, Wastewater Operator I, Wastewater Operator II, all through Riverland Community College.

Participant Support

The City of Austin will utilize these funds to create and market the programs. These funds will not be used for tuition or support to individual participants.

Evaluation

Evaluation of success of the program will consider the following factors:

- Number of participants served,
- Number of participants enrolled in a training program,
- Number of participants completing training and earning credentials, and
- Number of participants who maintained employment or become employed in water and wastewater jobs.

Data

The City of Austin and its partners will enroll and record demographics for program participants, their activities, services received, and outcomes in WorkForce One, DEED's web-based client management application. Only those activities related to education, training, and employment will be tracked in WorkForce One.

The table below presents data on demographics and outcomes to be recorded for the full appropriation period from the date the grant agreement is executed through the expiration of the appropriation on June 30, 2027. Data will not be provided for immigration status, English proficiency, or primary language.

	TOTAL
Number of participants served	NA
Number of participants enrolled in training	NA
Total complete training and attain a credential	NA
Total exit to unsubsidized employment	NA
Total exit to employment related to training industry	NA
Total exit to employment at or above \$16 per hour	NA
Average Wage at Exit	NA

NA = Data are not available as grant agreement has not been executed.

Achieving Equity

DEED is working to address disparities and achieve economic equity for all Minnesotans by identifying and breaking down barriers to employment and business opportunities. Data on the populations served are valuable for program development and policy decisions. Figures below represent the percentage of those targeted populations served in the program.

	TOTAL
Communities of Color	NA
Individuals with Disabilities	NA
Veterans	NA
Women	NA

NA = Data are not available as grant agreement has not been executed.

Total Expenditures

The City of Austin is in the process of developing an SFY2025 projected budget that will be effective on the date of grant agreement execution through June 30, 2027.

COST CATEGORY	ALLOCATED AMOUNT	TOTAL EXPENSES/ REIMBURSEMENTS
Administration:	TBD	NA
Direct Customer Training:	TBD	NA
Outreach:	TBD	NA
Capacity Building:	TBD	NA
Total:	\$350,000	NA

NA = Data are not available as grant agreement has not been executed.

Figures in the “Allocated Amount” column represent DEED funds.

Future Allocations

The 2024 Minnesota Legislature appropriated these funds for the SFY2025 as a onetime appropriation and is available to the City of Austin through June 30, 2027.