



FY25 Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund Annual Report

As required by 2023 Minn. Law, Chap. 53, Art. 15, Sec. 31, Subd. 9

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Program History & Overview

The Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund (ERAF) creates a central fund where small to mid-sized Minnesota employers can request reimbursement for expenses related to providing reasonable accommodations for job applicants and employees with disabilities. The ERAF's purpose is to encourage employment of people with disabilities by reducing any perceived or real financial barriers.

An employer is eligible to apply for accommodation reimbursement under this program if the following conditions are met:

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

Only reasonable accommodations made for an individual with a disability, either a job applicant or employee, will be considered for reimbursement. Employers must certify on the application form that the reasonable accommodations were made for a qualifying job applicant or employee. No personal identifiable information is collected about the individual with a disability, outside of general demographic information for tracking and reporting purposes.

The types of accommodations are:

- Auditory or Communicative Aids (e.g. amplified telephones, captioning, sign language interpreters, communication boards)
- Cognitive Aids (e.g. job coaching, task boards)
- Mobility Aids (e.g. ramps, standing devices, walkers, assist rails)
- Motor Aids (e.g. doorknob latch extenders, adapted writing utensils, dictation software, page turners)
- Visual Aids (e.g. Braille printers, screen reading software, magnifiers)
- Other

The maximum total reimbursement per eligible employer in a state fiscal year (July 1-June 30) is \$30,000. This amount includes both one-time and ongoing reasonable accommodation expenses. Submissions for one-time reasonable accommodation expenses must be no less than \$250 and no more than \$15,000 per individual with a disability. If an employer submits a reimbursement for more than the maximum amount, ERAF will only reimburse up to the \$15,000 limit. One-time expenses are those expenses that are only made one time, such as a purchase of an item or device.

ERAF is a two-year pilot program operating from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2025. The program experienced a funding pause from July 1, 2025, to November 4, 2025 to determine legislative intent on the date of expiration for use of funds. It was ultimately determined that the funds were intended to carry forward beyond the end of the biennium. Program activities resumed on November 4, 2025. ERAF is appropriated a total of \$4,000,000,

available until fully spent. The commissioner may use up to 20% of the appropriation for administration, marketing, and technical assistance to employers.

Remaining Balance

As of December 2, 2025, ERAF continues to make significant progress in supporting workplace accessibility across Minnesota. ERAF reimbursed a total of \$435,621.13 in FY24. In FY25, reimbursements increased substantially, reaching \$926,980.89, demonstrating strong program utilization and employer engagement. So far in FY26, ERAF has reimbursed \$180,168.06, with additional applications currently under review.

With a remaining balance of \$2,023,065.99, ERAF is positioned to maintain steady support for employers and individuals with disabilities throughout the remainder of the fiscal year. The continued growth in reimbursement activity reflects not only expanded awareness of the program but also ERAF's ongoing efforts to streamline processes, strengthen partnerships, and provide clearer guidance to applicants. These efforts enhance program efficiency and ensure that reimbursements directly contribute to fostering inclusive, accessible workplace environments across Minnesota.

Eligible Applications

In FY24, 72 applications were approved for 43 unique employers in the amount of \$435,621.13.

Table 1. FY24 Eligible Applications

Employer	Amount Approved
Adapt Design Works	\$1,040.00
Century Partners LLC	\$30,000.00
Charles Cabinets LLC	\$1,256.52
Cherished Services	\$8,450.00
CHOICE, unlimited	\$3,215.00
Daily Work	\$1,014.57
DARTS	\$599.98
Dendros Group LLC	\$6,088.00
Discover Chiropractic	\$29,803.41
D-Tails Construction Services Inc	\$3,160.63
Dunn Brothers Coffee - Excelsior	\$14,053.11
Dunn Brothers Coffee - Hopkins - 007	\$15,000.00
Dunn Brothers Coffee - Minnetonka - 221	\$15,000.00
Farm in the Dell of the Red Valley	\$30,000.00
Ghost Dog Media, LLC	\$13,807.30

Employer	Amount Approved
Goldwood Kennels	\$921.15
Golf Evil LLC	\$12,663.80
Greater Mankato Growth	\$523.00
Hazel Park Learning Center	\$1,810.00
Hope Fieldhouse	\$29,730.00
Hornets Hive dba CornerStone	\$14,078.00
Jam HOPE Foundation	\$23,857.00
Jam Hops Gymnastics Factory, Inc.	\$8,260.00
JET Limited Liability Company	\$6,205.03
Lake Darling Resort	\$30,000.00
Lanesboro Area Chamber of Commerce	\$1,087.36
Lyle Public School	\$463.91
Midwest Autism & Psychological Services	\$1,567.00
MN EyeCareNetwork, Inc DBA Azure Vision Care	\$1,362.10
NATIV3	\$748.04
New London Food Cooperative	\$536.98
North Star Law Group LLC	\$6,707.42

Employer	Amount Approved
Oleb Media, LLC	\$21,551.73
Precision Medical Glass LLC	\$362.26
Premium Moving Services LLC	\$7,250.00
Queermunity Collaborative, LLC	\$29,845.86
Slow Road Photo (aka Erika Morrow Photography)	\$8,206.96
Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership	\$455.20
Stevens County Economic Development Commission	\$4,147.39
Treat Enterprises Edina, LLC	\$2,585.74
Vaulted Jewels LLC	\$17,063.68
Willow Pathways Therapeutic Services LLC	\$1,143.00
Wise Elephant Consulting LLC	\$30,000.00
Total:	\$435,621.13

In FY25, 161 applications were approved for 84 unique employers in the amount of \$926,980.89.

Table 2. FY25 Eligible Applications

Employer	Amount Approved
Advanced Auto Care of Fergus Falls, LLC	\$5,067.12
Aitkin County Developmental Achievement Center, Inc. (DAC)	\$5,796.79

Employer	Amount Approved
Animare Inc dba Lili Salon Spa	\$4,205.80
Annex Teen Clinic	\$12,745.93
Carefree Travel of Sauk Centre	\$4,041.80
Charles Cabinets	\$615.29
Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota	\$12,914.13
CHOICE, unlimited	\$11,125.00
Clay Coyote Arts, Inc	\$471.83
Community Action Center of Northfield Inc	\$592.24
Cornerstone Creative	\$7,015.06
Daily Work	\$223.37
DARTS	\$525.00
Dendros Group LLC	\$22,389.75
Digital Accessibility by WeCo	\$10,978.78
Discover Chiropractic Corp, PC	\$30,000.00
D-Tails Construction Services Inc	\$2,320.05
Dunn Brothers Coffee - Excelsior	\$5,655.81
Dunn Brothers Coffee - Hopkins - 007	\$5,630.41
Dunn Brothers Coffee - Minnetonka - 221	\$5,630.41

Employer	Amount Approved
Erik's Ranch	\$3,974.58
Farm in the Dell of the Red River Valley	\$30,000.00
First Financial Title	\$266.46
First Unitarian Universalist Church	\$349.00
Flourish Counseling Center LLC	\$29,013.28
Ghost Dog Media	\$16,119.08
Hazel Park Learning Center	\$5,576.00
Headwaters School of Music and the Arts	\$105.00
Helping Paws of MN	\$30,000.00
Hope Fieldhouse	\$29,904.00
Hunger Ends Here dba Harvest Pack	\$976.76
IB Industries dba IBI Data	\$5,000.00
Inclusive Networking	\$4,283.39
JET LLC	\$6,155.83
Koronis Theater	\$22,162.51
Lake Darling Resort	\$30,000.00
Lakeville Family Dental Center	\$5,205.00
L'Arche Twin Cities	\$1,469.79

Employer	Amount Approved
LBR Management LLC	\$20,517.00
Lloyd Security Inc	\$30,000.00
Mahtowa Tavern LLC	\$30,000.00
Martha Bird	\$4,511.16
Mighty Fine Coffee	\$13,997.56
Minnesota Center for Book Arts	\$2,587.99
MN EyeCare Network Inc dba Azure Vision Care	\$265.32
NAAA LLC	\$2,857.22
The NeuroDifference	\$603.11
New London Food Coop	\$13,675.05
Oak Lake Lutheran Church	\$15,000.00
Omni Mental Health, Inc	\$2,196.29
Park East Chiropractic PC	\$1,336.00
Pixel Bites LLC	\$26,734.76
Premium Moving Services LLC	\$15,000.00
Queermunity Collaborative	\$30,000.00
Randy's Cabinets and Woodworks	\$15,000.00
Realief Neuropathy Centers of MN PA	\$14,379.48

Employer	Amount Approved
Roots and Wings Therapeutic Services LLC	\$2,006.25
Rubenstein Studio, LLC	\$6,472.50
Seven County Senior Federation	\$20,287.76
Slow Road Photo	\$9,366.40
Sssdude-Nutz LLC dba The Donut Trap	\$30,000.00
St. Francis Xavier Church and School	\$14,775.13
STEP Inc	\$12,273.00
Sumain Roots LLC	\$402.50
SVJ Creative Designs, Inc.	\$30,000.00
TB Automotive	\$30,000.00
Technology for Independence Consulting	\$3,746.53
The Iron House	\$14,340.00
Twin Cities Birth Center	\$2,500.00
Vaulted Jewels	\$12,199.04
Violence Intervention Project	\$389.99
Vision Loss Resources	\$14,475.00
Wabasha Co. Developmental Achievement Center Inc	\$9,955.00
Well Being Development	\$4,612.47

Employer	Amount Approved
Willow Pathways Therapeutic Services LLC	\$1,747.50
Wise Elephant Consulting	\$29,963.70
Woodco Prefinishing	\$12,006.91
Wright County Community Action Inc	\$7,802.10
Total:	\$926,980.89

Taking into consideration the pause in funding, thus far in FY26, **22** applications were approved and payments for new applications and ongoing reimbursements were made to **24** employers in the amount of **\$180,168.06**.

Table 3. FY26 Eligible Applications

Employer	Amount Approved
Annex Teen Clinic	\$1,800.08
CHOICE, unlimited	\$1,900.00
Dendros Group LLC	\$5,900.50
Digital Accessibility by WeCo	\$570.00
Harvest Pack	\$8,976.50
Hazel Park Learning Center	\$138.00
JET LLC	\$350.00
Koronis Theater	\$30,000.00
L'Arche Twin Cities	\$165.00
LBR Management LLC	\$836.53

Employer	Amount Approved
Lloyd Security Inc	\$9,190.95
Martha Bird	\$11,216.50
Omni Mental Health, Inc	\$1,109.98
Pine River Group Home Inc	\$4,096.00
Rubenstein Studio, LLC	5,475.00
Secure Base Counseling Center	\$958.80
Sssdude Nutz LLC dba The Donute Trap	\$18,000.00
SVJ Creative Designs, Inc.	\$29,966.34
TB Automotive LLC	\$4,854.38
Ten Thousand Things	\$367.50
Twin Cities Birth Center	\$1,350.00
Wallerich EyeCare dba Swoop Eye Care	\$12,353.00
Willow Pathways Therapeutic Services LLC	\$743.00
Wise Elephant Consulting	\$29,850.00
Total:	\$180,168.06

Table 4. Total FY24-26 Eligible Accommodations

Number of approved applications	255
Number of unique approved employers <i>(some employers submitted multiple applications or received multiple payments for ongoing accommodations)</i>	106
<u>Type of approved accommodations</u>	
Auditory or Communicative Aids:	30
Cognitive aids:	34
Mobility aids:	64
Motor aids:	22
Visual aids:	24
Other:	80

Ineligible Applications

From FY24 through FY26, a total of 69 applications were denied under the Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund (ERAF), submitted by 51 distinct employers, with several employers submitting multiple denied requests. The primary reasons for denial continue to include employer ineligibility, purchases that do not meet the statutory definition of a reasonable accommodation, and missing or insufficient proof-of-purchase documentation. Among the denied requests, the most frequently denied accommodation types were mobility aids, which accounted for 26 denials ($\approx 38\%$), followed by auditory and communicative accommodations with 13 denials ($\approx 19\%$), and cognitive aids with 11 denials ($\approx 16\%$). These trends suggest recurring areas where applicants would benefit from increased clarity regarding eligibility requirements and documentation standards.

ERAF staff remains committed to strengthening program operations, ensuring equitable access, and enhancing the accuracy and consistency of application reviews. Building on lessons learned from FY24 and FY25, ERAF has implemented ongoing improvements in FY26, including refined screening protocols, clearer guidance on eligible expenses, and more proactive communication with employers throughout the application process. In addition to internal improvements, ERAF continues to strengthen partnerships with employers, community organizations, vocational rehabilitation partners, and disability-serving groups. These partnerships expand awareness of program requirements, improve applicant readiness, and support a more coordinated statewide approach to implementing reasonable accommodations.

By continually evaluating and updating internal procedures, outreach strategies, training materials, and collaborative relationships, ERAF reinforces its commitment to program integrity while simultaneously supporting Minnesota employers in providing effective and compliant accommodations. These improvements help ensure that ERAF funds are utilized efficiently and that the program continues to advance workplace accessibility and inclusion across the state.

Table 5. FY24-26 Ineligible Applications and Accommodations

Number of denied applications	69
Number of denied employers <i>(some employers submitted multiple applications)</i>	51
<u>Type of denied accommodations</u>	
Auditory or Communicative Aids:	13
Cognitive Aids:	11
Mobility Aids:	26
Motor Aids:	2
Visual Aids:	1
Other:	16
<u>Denial reasons</u>	
Not an eligible employer:	22
Not a reasonable accommodation under the definition of state law:	9
Not for a job applicant or employee with a disability:	1
Missing or insufficient documentation for proof of purchase or cost:	19
Other <i>(reasons listed below)</i> :	18
Amount requested is under the \$250 minimum	8
Did not understand what was covered:	1
Requested reimbursement for payroll/services they provided	2
Applicant withdrew application	3
Closed due to inactivity	4

Program Highlights

William J. Harris Equal Opportunity Award (NASWA – February)

In FY25, the Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund (ERAF) received national recognition by winning the William J. Harris Equal Opportunity Award at the 2025 NASWA Conference in Washington, D.C. Selected as one of only four recipients from a field of 40 nominees nationwide, ERAF was recognized for its innovative public-private partnership model, its measurable impact on workplace accessibility, and its potential for replication across states. This recognition elevated Minnesota as a national leader in disability-inclusive workforce practices.

Following the award, ERAF staff presented to NASWA's Equal Opportunity Employment Group—sharing insights into program operations, implementation strategies, and measurable outcomes. The strong national response led to an additional invitation to present at the NASWA Veterans Affairs Committee, where ERAF was highlighted as a promising model to support disabled veterans and strengthen equitable employment outcomes across the public workforce system. This momentum solidified ERAF's position as a forward-thinking program with national relevance and long-term potential.

Gaining National Recognition & Building Partnerships in Other States

ERAF's national visibility has prompted significant interest from workforce agencies across the country. Several states—including Colorado, New York, Vermont, and Connecticut—formally reached out to learn how they might replicate Minnesota's model to support disability employment in their own jurisdictions. Additional informal interest from Iowa, South Dakota, Pennsylvania, and Maryland further demonstrates growing nationwide demand for scalable accommodation funding solutions. These inquiries show that ERAF is now viewed as a blueprint for sustainable, outcomes-driven disability employment policy.

Building upon this momentum, ERAF will expand its interstate engagement in FY26, offering virtual technical assistance sessions and cross-state presentations on best practices, program design, and implementation considerations. ERAF staff will continue collaborating with internal DEED partners—including Heather Stein, Ann Macheledt, and other leaders—to strategically align national outreach efforts. These activities may contribute to long-term program sustainability through partnerships, collaborative funding opportunities, and broader policy influence across multiple states.

Return on Investment & Employer Impact

Survey results collected in March 2025 from 41 employer participants demonstrate the strong return on investment provided by ERAF. An overwhelming 94% of employers reported measurable productivity improvements after implementing ERAF-funded accommodations, with 82% describing these gains as "significant" or "exceptional." These findings confirm that workplace accessibility not only benefits employees with disabilities but also enhances overall organizational efficiency and performance.

ERAF also contributed to notable cost savings and financial gains. Over 80% of employers reported reduced turnover and related savings, while 75% identified new revenue growth ranging from \$5,000 to \$100,000 due to increased operational stability. Employee wage outcomes further demonstrate the program's value: 34% of

employers estimated annual earnings of \$10,000–\$25,000 for employees who retained their positions, and 27% reported wages above \$25,000. With 98% of employers extremely likely to recommend ERAF, the program has established itself as a trusted and effective tool for advancing inclusive employment across Minnesota.

Enhanced Employer Outreach Through the Evolve Employment Program

With ERAF leadership and the Retention Specialist now integrated into DEED State Services for the Blind’s Evolve Employment initiative, FY26 marks a new chapter of enhanced outreach and coordinated employer support. By aligning ERAF with Evolve Employment—a five-year federal disability innovation fund grant focused on improving vocational rehabilitation outcomes for and supporting job retention of blind, low vision, DeafBlind (BLVDB) individuals—the programs are collaborating to expand employer education, increase accommodation readiness, and strengthen statewide accessibility efforts.

This collaboration enables ERAF and Evolve Employment to proactively engage small and mid-sized employers who may be unfamiliar with accommodation resources or who lack internal HR capacity. Outreach strategies include joint presentations, hands-on demonstrations of assistive technology, and tailored guidance on supporting BLVDB jobseekers and employees. Together, these efforts reinforce the practical value of ERAF, deepen employer partnerships, and support Minnesota’s broader goals of creating inclusive, competitive, and accessible workplaces.

Success Stories

Lloyd Security

For Lloyd Security, ERAF was “a game changer,” enabling the company to implement accommodations that improved efficiency, accuracy, employee morale, and retention. President Jill Lloyd shared that the fund not only removed financial barriers but also inspired a cultural shift, encouraging the team to think more creatively and proactively about accessibility. She praised the process as smooth and fast, adding that any employer who tries ERAF will quickly become “a raving fan.”

Slow Road Photo

Slow Road Photo credited ERAF with helping the business create an inclusive, high-performing environment by funding accommodations such as adjusted lighting for migraines and modified furniture for mobility needs. These changes improved productivity, supported significant business growth, and removed hiring barriers by allowing the employer to focus on talent rather than costs. David described ERAF as a low-barrier, high-impact resource that made employees feel valued while boosting overall operational success.

Lanesboro Area Chamber of Commerce

The Lanesboro Area Chamber of Commerce emphasized that ERAF made it easy for employers to provide needed accommodations—such as ergonomic equipment—without worrying about budget constraints. Joe Goetzke noted that ERAF removes hiring barriers, supports employees as their needs change, and helps businesses in older buildings address accessibility challenges. He highlighted that ERAF strengthens local workforce participation and provides reassurance to employers that funding will be available when accommodations are needed.

Learnings

The events of August provided critical insight into the profound impact ERAF has on employers across Minnesota. When the program was unexpectedly paused due to uncertainty about fund availability during the transition from FY25 to FY26, several employers immediately felt the consequences. One employer reported that they had to delay hiring an individual who was blind/low vision because they could not afford the necessary accommodations without ERAF support—demonstrating how essential the fund is to equitable hiring practices. Other employers, already carrying significant debt from purchasing accommodations upfront, expressed heightened stress and concern about approaching undue hardship if reimbursements did not resume quickly. These experiences highlighted how closely small and mid-sized businesses rely on ERAF to fulfill their American with Disabilities Act obligations, support existing employees, and continue operations without financial disruption.

These lessons reinforce that ERAF is not simply a reimbursement mechanism—it is a stabilizing force for Minnesota’s business community and a catalyst for inclusive employment. The program reduces financial risk, encourages equitable hiring, and ensures that employees with disabilities can fully participate in the workforce. In doing so, ERAF has proven itself as a transformational investment by the State of Minnesota in both small and mid-sized businesses and the broader economic well-being of the state.