SENATE, No. 3258

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED DECEMBER 10, 2020

Sponsored by:
Senator TROY SINGLETON
District 7 (Burlington)
Senator NELLIE POU
District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes Water Apprenticeship, Training, and Resources Pilot Program in DOLWD.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 1/11/2021)

AN ACT establishing a Water Apprenticeship, Training, and Resources ("WATER") Pilot Program and supplementing P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-1 et seq.).

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. a. There is established in the Department of Labor and Workforce Development a five year Water Apprenticeship, Training, and Employment Resources ("WATER") Pilot Program, which shall provide grants to support funding for adult apprenticeship programs in water infrastructure, water utilities, and other water-related sectors, focusing on underserved and underrepresented communities. A grant may extend beyond one year in duration. To be eligible for the grant, the apprenticeship program shall be accredited and approved by the United States Department of Labor, or shall be in the process of obtaining that accreditation. The program shall be administered by the Office of Customized Training in the department.

b. To apply for the grant, an organization shall submit an application to the Office of Customized Training, which shall include documentation that the apprenticeship which the organization is sponsoring is or will be accredited and approved by the United States Department of Labor. Any organizational sponsor of an apprenticeship program is eligible to receive the grant, including:

(1) businesses;

(2) labor organizations;

(3) colleges;

(4) workforce training providers; and

(5) non-profit organizations.

c. No later than July 1, 2021, the department shall begin accepting grant applications to be awarded no later than January 1, 2022 from funds allocated to the program. The department shall rank eligible applicants for grants based upon:

(1) each applicant's potential to:

(a) reach a broad audience through its recruitment and outreach efforts;

(b) significantly increase enrollment and completion of the apprenticeship program, including enrollment by underserved and underrepresented communities; and

(c) fill existing needs for skilled workers in the market; and

(2) the applicant's partnership with an industry for which apprenticeship programs targeted at training and providing skilled workers who have the ability to perform jobs in that industry have demonstrated positive outcomes.

d. An eligible applicant is required to demonstrate that it intends and is prepared to contribute its own financial resources to

the apprenticeship program and has secured an industry partner or a monetary or in-kind contribution, including conditional job placement guarantees, from an industry partner. Moreover, each eligible applicant shall provide documentation of:

(1) the apprenticeship program's curriculum, location, and skills to be taught;

(2) the recruitment efforts for the apprenticeship program, and projected enrollment with and without receipt of grant funds;

(3) a description of how the grant funds will be utilized;

(4) information on specific industry needs or gaps in the workforce that will be addressed by the apprenticeship program;

(5) costs to operate the apprenticeship program; and

(6) any other information the department requires.

An eligible applicant shall partner with schools, utilities, water purveyors, and other water employers to effectively market these opportunities; strengthen local hiring preferences in support of more minority and women business enterprises, and hold an annual water summit where prospective workers, employers, and community partners can connect.

e. An eligible applicant who is selected by the department for receipt of a grant for the purpose of funding an apprenticeship program in accordance with P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill), shall, on an annual basis for so long as the grant is provided, make an annual report to the commissioner detailing the enrollment in the program, the number of participants completing the program, the number of participants obtaining employment as a result of the program, and any other information as the commissioner may require.

f. Beginning January 1, 2022, and each year thereafter for the duration of the pilot grant program, the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development shall submit to the Governor, and to the Legislature, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), a report that evaluates the results of the program and its effectiveness in preparing individuals to meet existing and burgeoning workforce needs and addressing gaps in skills in the workforce. The report shall include a recommendation regarding whether to renew the WATER Pilot Program, and if renewal is recommended, if the program should be expanded or otherwise enhanced. The report shall include:

(1) The number of grants awarded in the prior year, including the amount, recipient, and duration of each grant;

(2) The number of individuals who enrolled in and completed an apprenticeship program offered by each grant recipient;

(3) The number of individuals who obtained employment in a position that uses the skills for which they were trained by a grant recipient, or in a position for which the completion of the apprenticeship program was a condition of employment; and

(4) All relevant information provided by grant recipients as to measurable outcomes of participants.

g. Funds from grants provided in accordance with P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill) shall not be used:

(1) for any activities which replace, supplant, compete with, or duplicate in any way existing approved apprenticeship programs;

(2) to induce, encourage, or assist any displacement of currently-employed workers by trainees, including partial displacement by means such as reduced hours of currently employed workers; any replacement of laid-off workers by trainees; or any relocation of operations resulting in a loss of employment at a previous workplace; or

(3) to impair existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements, except that activities which would be inconsistent with the terms of a collective bargaining agreement may be undertaken with the written concurrence of the collective bargaining unit and the employer or employers who are parties to the agreement.

h. As used in P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill):

"Eligible applicant" means a business, labor organization, college, workforce training provider, non-profit organization, or any other entity that offers or plans to offer an apprenticeship program that is accredited and approved by the United States Department of Labor and that has partnered with an industry to offer or fund the apprenticeship program.

"Department" means the Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

2. There is established in the Department of the Treasury a special non-lapsing fund to be known as the WATER Fund. The fund shall consist of: all monies appropriated by the Legislature for inclusion in the fund, investment earnings of the fund, and moneys contributed to the fund by private sources, to be used for the purposes of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill). The moneys in the fund shall be invested and reinvested by the Director of the Division of Investment in the Department of the Treasury. The department shall solicit grants from interested public or private sources for the fund.

3. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill creates a five-year Water Apprenticeship, Training, and Employment Resources ("WATER") Pilot Program in the

Department of Labor and Workforce Development to provide grants to support funding for newly-established adult apprenticeship programs in the water infrastructure, clean energy, and digital utilities sectors, focusing on underserved and underrepresented communities. Any organizational sponsor of an apprenticeship program is eligible to receive the grant, including businesses, labor organizations, colleges, workforce training providers, and non-profit organizations, provided that they have secured an industry partner or a monetary or in-kind funding contribution.

The grant applications shall be accepted starting July 1, 2021, and the grants shall be awarded no later than January 1, 2022. The department shall rank eligible applicants for grants based upon each applicant's potential to reach a broad audience through its recruitment and outreach efforts, significantly increase enrollment and completion of the apprenticeship program, including among members of underserved and underrepresented communities, and fill existing needs for skilled workers in the market.

Beginning January 1, 2022, and each year thereafter for the duration of the pilot grant program, the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development shall submit to the Governor, and to the Legislature, a report that evaluates the results of the program and its effectiveness in preparing individuals to meet existing and burgeoning workforce needs and addressing gaps in skills in the workforce.

The bill creates the WATER Fund in the Department of the Treasury to solicit, collect, and invest moneys to be used for the purposes of the bill.