



STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
BUREAU OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES  
55 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0055

JANET T. MILLS  
GOVERNOR

LAURA A. FORTMAN  
COMMISSIONER

## MAINE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

### Policy: PY22-02 QUEST Dislocated Worker Grant Guidelines

**Revised:** 03-22-2024. This repeal and replaces the previous guidance dated 11-28-2023.

**Status:** Active

**To:** Local Workforce Boards, Chief Elected Officials, QUEST DWG Service Providers

**From:** Kimberley Moore, Bureau Director

**References:** WIOA Sec. 170, 20 CFR §687, TEGs 02-22 and 16-21.

- *For guidance on the formula Dislocated Worker program and other National Dislocated Worker Grants please refer to Policy PY20-02 Change-1 Dislocated Worker Status*

**Purpose:** To provide guidance on QUEST grant goals and participant eligibility.

**Grant Goal:** QUEST stands for Quality jobs, Equity, Strategy, and Training. The goal of the QUEST DWG is to enable individuals (*particularly historically marginalized populations*) who have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic to enter, return to, or advance in Good Jobs\*, as defined in [TEGL 07-22](#), in the following growth industries: infrastructure, environment and climate, the care economy, and other critical in-demand sectors offering Good Jobs. Activities of the QUEST DWG are intended to yield improved individual and community resilience to the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Key activities of the QUEST grant include:

- Developing and expanding partnerships with organizations that serve, train, and hire individuals from underserved and marginalized communities most impacted by the pandemic
- Expanding partnerships with businesses and industries hiring workers into Good Jobs
- Ensuring worker voice by getting input from and partnering with dislocated workers, individual workers, labor unions, labor-management partnerships, and other relevant organizations
- Conducting community outreach campaigns in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways
- Improving the transparency of career paths and promotional opportunities in targeted industries
- Developing work-based learning opportunities, including on-the-job training connection to registered apprenticeship
- Providing career, training, and support services that promote successful completion of workforce services and launch workers into longer-term, employer-supported training opportunities associated with economic mobility.

\* TEG 07-22 Increasing Employer and Workforce System Customer Access to Good Jobs-  
<https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/advisories/TEGL/2022/TEGL%2007-22/TEGL%2007-22%20%28Complete%20PDF%29.pdf>

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**Eligible Participants are:**

- A. Individuals temporarily or permanently laid off as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which may include individuals who were let go and/or left employment because of the pandemic and who have not returned to a Good Job as defined below.
- B. Long-term unemployed individuals - which for the QUEST grant include individuals who want to work and meet one of the following:
  - a. Have been without employment for 15 consecutive or non-consecutive weeks in the last 52 weeks
  - b. Have never worked or have never worked in the in the United States but are authorized to.
- C. Dislocated workers as defined by WIOA Section 3(15)
- D. Displaced Homemakers as defined by WIOA Section 3(16)
- E. Self-employed individuals who are unemployed or significantly underemployed at the time of eligibility determination
- F. Significantly underemployed individuals at time of eligibility determination (*see definitions below*)

**Priority populations for the QUEST grant include:**

- Low wage workers
- Women with dependent care challenges
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Immigrants and refugees
- Individuals with disabilities
- Discouraged workers
- Justice involved or incarcerated individuals who will be released in the next 12 months
- Individuals in recovery from substance use disorder
- Individuals from historically marginalized communities

While not every participant is required to fall under the above categories, these categories have been identified as those most greatly impacted by the pandemic and most likely to face unsafe working conditions, be laid off or forced to leave the workforce to protect the health and safety of themselves or to care for family members.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Culturally appropriate outreach** (also known as culturally sensitive and culturally competent outreach) acknowledges and incorporates the importance of racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic experiences of the communities and individuals involved with a particular program, policy, or procedure.

**Discouraged workers** are a subset of persons marginally attached to the labor force. The marginally attached are those persons not in the labor force who want and are available for work, and who have looked for a job sometime in the prior 12 months but were not counted as unemployed because they had not searched for work in the four weeks preceding the survey. Among the marginally attached, discouraged workers were not currently looking for work specifically because they believed no jobs were available for them or there were none for which they would qualify.

**Equity** refers to fairness and justice and is distinguished from equality: Whereas equality means providing the same to all, equity means recognizing that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances. The process is ongoing, requiring us to identify and overcome intentional and unintentional barriers arising from bias or systemic structures.

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**Good Jobs** pay at least 235% of the Federal poverty level, provide at least 30 hours a week of paid employment, have transparent and nondiscriminatory hiring practices and clear paths for professional development and advancement, provide access to employer-provided benefits, including health care, paid vacation, and sick leave, prioritize worker health and safety and are in companies and organizations that support workers' rights and offer workers a voice in the workplace. All workers are respected, empowered, and treated fairly. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) is a core value and practiced norm in the workplace.

**Historically marginalized populations** are groups of people who have been excluded from full participation in mainstream educational, economic, cultural, social, and political activities. Examples of marginalized populations include, but are not limited to, groups excluded due to race, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, language, and immigration status. Marginalization occurs due to unequal power relationships between social groups.

**Justice Involved** aka Offender means an adult or juvenile who is or has been subject to any stage of the criminal justice process and for whom services under this grant may be beneficial; or who requires assistance overcoming barriers to employment resulting from a record of arrest or conviction.

**Long-term unemployed** for the purpose of the QUEST grant are individuals who have been without employment for 15 consecutive or non-consecutive weeks in the last 52 weeks or who have no work history or no work history in the United States.

**Low wage workers**, for the purpose of the QUEST grant, are those earning below 235% of the Federal poverty level. In 2024, this is \$17.02 per hour and is subject to change according to updated Federal poverty guidelines.

**Significantly underemployed** is someone who meets one or more of the following:

- a. Employed part-time, seasonal, temporary, or in a short-term survival position.
- b. Employed less than 30 hours a week and seeking full-time employment.
- c. Employed in a position that is inadequate with respect to their skills, experience, and training.
- d. Employed but whose current individual earnings are less than 85 percent of previous earnings or are earning below 235% of the Federal poverty level.
- e. Self-Employed but whose current individual earnings are less than 85 percent of previous earnings or whose current income is under 235% of the Federal poverty level.

**Note on Federal poverty level.** As increases are added to the poverty level, the hourly rate will change accordingly. Maine JobLink will be programmed to calculate this.

### **Documenting Eligibility**

- Staff must document eligibility in accordance with TEGl 23-19 Change 1. and make all attempts to validate eligibility using standard documentation.
- If any box in any of the three categories on the form below is checked, the individual is eligible.
- All QUEST participants must complete the **QUEST Self-Attestation Form** (*attached below*).

Questions about this policy may be submitted to: [virginia.a.carroll@maine.gov](mailto:virginia.a.carroll@maine.gov)

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## QUEST DWG SELF-ATTESTATION FORM

Please complete, sign, date, and return this form to staff.

<b>Applicant Name:</b> _____	<b>MJL ID#:</b> _____
<p><b>Category 1: Dislocated Worker Status</b> (Select all that apply)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Lost or quit employment due to the COVID pandemic and have not returned to full-time employment,</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Laid off due to company closure or downsizing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Receiving or have exhausted Unemployment Compensation (or has been employed for a duration to demonstrate attachment to the workforce but has not yet earned enough to establish a benefit year and receive unemployment).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Was self-employed but no longer employed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Displaced homemaker (was dependent on someone else in the household while caring for family, but no longer supported by that person's income)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Spouse of an active-duty armed forces member who is unemployed or underemployed and/or has lost their job as a result of a permanent duty station change</p>	
<p><b>Category 2: Long-Term Unemployed</b> (Select all that apply)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Have been without employment for 15 consecutive or non-consecutive weeks or more in the last 52 weeks</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Have never worked in the U.S.A. and are authorized to work in the U.S.A.</p>	
<p><b>Category 3: Significantly Underemployed</b> (Select all that apply)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>A.</b> Employed part-time, seasonal, temporary, or in a short-term survival position,</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>B.</b> Employed less than 30 hours a week but want/need a full-time employment,</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>C.</b> Employed but earn less than 85% of my prior earnings or earn less \$17.02 (235% of the 2024 Federal poverty level).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>D.</b> Lost primary job and now employed in a position that is not appropriate based on education and experience levels,</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>E.</b> Self-Employed but earn less than 85% of my prior earnings or earn less than \$17.02 (235% of the 2024 Federal poverty level).</p>	
<p>Please complete below if you have worked previously</p> <p><b>Former Employer Name:</b> _____ Hours per week _____ Hourly wage \$ _____</p> <p><b>Current Employer Name:</b> _____ Hours per week _____ Hourly wage \$ _____</p> <p>If not currently employed leave blank.</p> <p>To figure 85% of former earnings multiply current hours per week by hourly wage (example: 30 hours per week at \$17.00/hour = \$510/week and multiply by .85 which = \$433.50, current weekly earnings less than \$433.50 = eligible).</p> <p>If you selected <b>D. in Category 3</b> above, please explain how your current employment does not fully use your education and experience levels. <i>Examples: I have a four-year degree and ten years of experience as an engineer at Jay Paper, since the layoff I have been employed as a store clerk at Home Depot OR I have a degree as a doctor from a foreign county that is not recognized in the U.S.A. so I cannot work at the level of my degree or experience.</i></p>	

By signing this form, I certify that the information provided by me is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and that I understand this information is subject to verification and that I may be required to document its accuracy. I also understand that incomplete or misrepresented information may be grounds for immediate termination from the program.

**Applicant Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Certified by Program Staff Member:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Staff Name Here

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