MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR & ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY

EMPLOYMENT
& TRAINING

Request for Proposals

Reliable Rides Incentive Grant Pilot Program

January 6, 2026

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS:

5:00 PM

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2026

CONTACT:
Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity
Employment & Training
LEO-Mi-Auto-Workforce-Hub@michigan.gov

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A. Purpose

The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity, Education and Training, (LEO-E&T) is launching a pilot incentive grant program to support employers in addressing workforce transportation challenges. This initiative encourages employers to utilize the *Reliable Rides: Connecting Workers to Jobs* playbook to develop and implement actionable transportation models that improve employee retention, productivity, and access to work. The goal is to identify replicable and sustainable solutions that reduce transportation barriers and strengthen workforce participation across Michigan.

B. Background and Rationale

The MI Auto Workforce Hub is focused on uniting and empowering communities and businesses to strengthen local workforces for a resilient future. The Hub was established to integrate partners and existing auto industry workforce efforts into a comprehensive, statewide collaboration engine that has a place at the table for every stakeholder. In 2024, the MI Auto Workforce Hub surveyed all 16 Michigan Works! Agencies (MWAs) to identify the key employment-related barriers that have the greatest impact on workforce participation in their region. In every region of the state, transportation emerged as the single most pressing barrier to workforce participation. The Structural Barriers Workgroup, one of three workgroups of the MI Auto Workforce Hub, addresses structural barriers that impact employment. To support this effort, the *Reliable Rides: Connecting Workers to Jobs* playbook was developed to provide employers with actionable models to address workforce transportation challenges.

C. Project Overview

To address transportation barriers that affect workers across Michigan, this pilot incentive grant program is designed to support employers in adopting and sustaining transportation programs highlighted in the *Reliable Rides: Connecting Workers to Jobs* playbook. The following goals and objectives will guide the implementation and evaluation of the pilot.

Objectives

- Award competitive grants to 12–20 small and medium-sized manufacturers or workforce/non-profit organizations with a named manufacturer partner.
- Support implementation of multiple transportation models from the playbook across different employers throughout the state.
- Track outcomes related to employee retention, absenteeism, and job access.
- Identify and promote successful models for sustainable replication and obtain feedback to refine and improve the Reliable Rides resource.

Goals

1. Encourage employer adoption of transportation solutions using the Reliable Rides Playbook.

2. Provide seed funding to support program implementation and sustainability planning.

3. Collect data and success stories to build a case for broader adoption and potential future funding.

D. Scope of Work

Grantees selected for the Reliable Rides pilot incentive grant program will be responsible for designing, implementing, and evaluating a transportation solution aligned with at least one transportation model from the *Reliable Rides: Connecting Workers with Jobs* playbook. The proposed Scope of Work should include detailed explanation of the transportation model(s) the grantee intends to implement, including how the employer will partner with local organizations such as transit agencies or other partners; how these models align with the playbook's recommendations; a timeline for implementation; and anticipated outcomes.

Grantees are expected to integrate workplace practices and equity considerations. This includes maintaining competitive wages and positive workplace practices that support employee retention and well-being. In addition, there should be a focus on ensuring that discouraged populations, including individuals with disabilities, can benefit from the transportation services.

E. Eligible RFP Respondents and Applicant Requirements

To be considered for funding, applicants must meet the following criteria and demonstrate readiness to participate in the pilot program.

- Have a physical location in Michigan where work is conducted.
- Be compliant with all state tax obligations including, but not limited to, corporate, sales, use, withholding, personal income and unemployment insurance taxes.
- Be a small or medium-sized manufacturer located in Michigan (1000 or fewer employees) or a workforce organization/non-profit with a small or medium-sized employer partner identified in the grant application.
- Show a demonstrated interest in supporting workforce transportation needs.
- Commit to implementing a Reliable Rides program based on the model(s) from the playbook and providing feedback on the playbook.
- Demonstrate a plan for sustaining the program beyond the grant period.
- Provide a one-to-one financial match to the grant award.
- Commit to sharing data and participating in evaluation activities.

- Offer competitive wages and maintain positive workplace practices. Competitive wages are considered equal to or greater than the prevailing wage for the local labor market and occupation. Please note, this is a general expectation that participating employers are paying competitive wages. Data on regional and occupational wages can be found on the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget's Labor Market Information website.

- Operate in or serve a geographically disadvantaged area (*preferred*).*

  *The requirements for Geographically-Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (GDBE) are detailed in. Executive Directive 2019 - 08 An indication that the GDBE satisfies one or more of the following:

  a. The GDBE is certified as a HUBZone Small Business Concern by the United States Small Business Administration.

  b. The GDBE principal place of business is located within a population census tract that is a low-income community designated as a Qualified Opportunity Zone by the United States Secretary of the Treasury pursuant to 26 USC 1400Z-1.

  c. A majority of the employees of the GDBE either work at a location within a Qualified Opportunity Zone or maintain a principal residence within a Qualified Opportunity Zone.

  Employer must submit signed attestation that they qualify for the category.

- Demonstrate a focus on ensuring that discouraged populations, including individuals with disabilities, can benefit from the transportation services (*preferred).*

F. Funding

A total of **$260,000** in funding is available through this pilot program. Individual grant awards will be up to **$20,000 per grantee** with final amounts scaled based on the transportation model selected and the scope of implementation.

G. Allowable Use of Grant Funds

Grant funds may be used for a variety of eligible activities, including **program startup costs**, **coordination or administrative expenses**, and **implementation costs**. Examples of allowable uses include, but are not limited to, vehicle purchase or repair subsidies, transit subsidies, rideshare setup, and carpool or vanpool program development. A one-to-one financial match to the grant award is required as part of this grant to demonstrate commitment and ensure long-term sustainability of the transportation solution.

H. Reporting Requirements and Evaluation Metrics

Applicants must include a proposed timeline for completing the following deliverables as part of their application. The timeline should reflect realistic planning for implementation, data collection, and reporting over the grant period.

Required Deliverables At the midpoint and the end of the grant period, the grantee will be required to submit an implementation survey, which will include information on the following:

- **Number of Employees Served**: Total number of employees who participate in the transportation model.
- **Change in Absenteeism and/or Turnover Rates**: Data showing any changes in employee attendance or retention since program implementation.
- **Total Implementation Costs**: A breakdown of all program costs, including employer, employee, and partner contributions.
- **Employer and Employee Satisfaction**: Summary of feedback collected through surveys, interviews, or other methods.
- **Employer Plan to Continue Program**: A sustainability plan outlining how the transportation models will be maintained post-grant.
- **Testimonials**: At least one employee and one employer testimonial highlighting the impact of the program.

I. Prohibited Uses of Grant Funds

Wages

- Grant funds may not be used to directly pay any wages for either participants or any other individual at the manufacturer.

Equipment

- Equipment purchases, and other capital expenditures are not an allowable cost under this grant program.

Program Implementation

- Program implementation must strictly adhere to **Section** G**. ALLOWABLE USE OF GRANT FUNDS** of this RFP.

- All program implementation outside of Section G are prohibited use of Reliable Rides Grant Funds.

J. Grant Period of Performance

Successful Respondents for funding will be notified within 60 days of the submission deadline. Submissions are due to the LEO-E&T no later than **February 9, 2026**. The grant period will be April 1 – December 31, 2026.

K. Required Document Submission

The following items must be completed and submitted to LEO-Mi-Auto-Workforce-Hub@michigan.gov by Time and Date, to be considered for funding.

- Completed Proposal Template
- Completed Budget Worksheet and Budget Narrative

L. Review and Selection

To be considered for an award, Respondents must submit a complete response to this RFP, using the template provided in Attachment A, by **February 9, 2026.**

No other distribution of proposals will be made by the Respondent. The proposal must be submitted in the format outlined below. There should be no attachments, enclosures, or exhibits other than those required in the RFP or considered by the Respondent to be essential to a complete understanding of the proposal. Each section of the proposal should be clearly identified with appropriate headings.

The RFP must be signed electronically by an official of the respondent authorized to bind the respondent to its provisions. The proposal must include a statement as to the period during which it remains valid; this period must be at least ninety (90) days from Day, Date. The rates quoted in the Budget must remain firm for the 90-day period.

Proposals Narrative are limited to no more than 12 (8.5 x 11) pages, single spaced, single sided, with 12point Arial font, using one-inch margins. Each proposal should be prepared simply and economically, providing a straightforward, concise description of the respondents' ability to meet the requirements of the RFP. Emphasis should be on completeness and clarity of content.

All budgets are negotiable and contingent upon grant award and availability of funds. Overall budget and anticipated leveraged resources available and the dollar amounts will be a deciding factor in project consideration as well as adherence to the criteria as presented in this RFP.

QUESTIONS. Bidder questions about this RFP must be emailed no later than the time and date specified on the Cover Page. In the interest of transparency, only written questions are accepted. Answers to questions will be posted on Reliable Rides webpage.

M. RFP Evaluation Criteria

The following scoring criteria will be used to evaluate proposals submitted in response to this RFP. Each proposal will be reviewed for completeness, alignment with program goals, and the strength of the proposed approach. Reviewers will assign scores based on how well each criterion is addressed, using the point values indicated. Proposals receiving the highest total scores will be considered most competitive for funding.

1. Overall Compliance to RFP
2. Demonstrated interest in supporting transportation needs among Michigan's workforce
    a. A clear understanding of employee transportation challenges, including evidence of need or a description of employer obstacles that have prevented the employer from creating a program in the past
3. Scope of Work
    a. Clear plan to implement transportation models from *Reliable Rides: Connecting Workers to Jobs playbook,* including how the employer will partner with local organizations such as transit agencies or other partners.
    b. Competitive wages and workplace practices: wages offered at or above industry or regional averages and benefits offered that support employee well-being and promote career advancement
    c. Integration of workplace practices and equity considerations
4. Support for Discouraged Populations
    a. Operate in or serve a geographically disadvantaged area

        OR

    b. A focus on ensuring that discouraged populations, including individuals with disabilities, can benefit from the transportation services
5. Work Plan
    a. Outline key activities, timelines, and outcomes
6. Sustainability Plan
    a. Employer Commitment to sustaining the program post-grant with a clear plan for how the program will be maintained after grant funding ends
7. Data, Evaluation, and reporting
    a. Track, measure, and report on required deliverables
    b. Clear commitment to collecting and sharing relevant data
8. Budget/Budget Narrative
    a. A one-to-one financial match to the grant award is required

SCORING CRITERIA	SCORING POINTS	EXEMPLARY	ADEQUATE	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	MISSING INFORMATION	BONUS POINTS	TOTAL SCORE
Proposal RFP Compliance (Up to 5 Points)	5						
Demonstrated interest in supporting transportation needs among Michigan's workforce Clear understanding of employee transportation challenges, including evidence of need or a description of employer obstacles that have prevented the employer from creating a program in the past. (Up to 10 Points)	10						
Scope of Work Clear plan to implement transportation models from Reliable Rides: Connecting Workers to Jobs playbook, including how the employer will partner with local organizations such as transit agencies or other partners. Competitive wages offered and integration of workplace practices. (Up to 25 Points)	25						
Support for Discouraged Populations Operates in or serves a high unemployment or a geographically disadvantaged area; OR focuses on ensuring that discouraged populations, including individuals with disabilities, can benefit from the transportation services. (0 or 5 Points)	5						
Work Plan Outline key activities, timelines, and outcomes. (Up to 10 Points)	10						

Sustainability Plan Employer Commitment to sustaining the program post-grant with a clear plan for how the program will be maintained after grant funding ends. (Up to 20 Points)	20						
Data, Evaluation, and Reporting Track, measure, and report on required deliverables as well as a clear commitment to collecting and sharing relevant data. (Up to 15 Points)	15						
Budget/Budget Narrative A one-to-one financial match to the grant award is required. (Up to 10 Points)	10						
TOTALS	100						

N. Timeline

Proposals must be submitted to the contact person listed below via email by 5:00 PM on Monday, February 9, 2026.

Contact: Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity
LEO-Mi-Auto-Workforce-Hub@michigan.gov

All Respondents will be contacted regarding their status and/or potential grant award per the following schedule:

** Timeline is subject to change at the discretion of the LEO-E&T.

The following timeline outlines key phases of the Reliable Rides pilot incentive grant program, from program design through evaluation. These dates are intended to guide applicants and stakeholders in understanding the overall structure and expectations of the grant cycle. Applicants should align their proposed activities and deliverables with this timeline.

ACTIVITY	DATE
RFP Announcement (Announcement only, not released)	December 2025
RFP Released (Full RFP available to applicants)	January 6, 2026
Deadline for Questions to be Submitted	January 14, 2026
Deadline for Submission	February 9, 2026
Awardees Notified	March 16, 2026
Grant Period of Performance	April 1 – December 31, 2026
Midpoint Survey	August 2026
Evaluation and Reporting	January 1 – March 31, 2027

O. Conditions Upon Award

To receive the total amount of funding requested, selected Respondents will need to successfully complete designated activities and show progress toward milestones to ensure total receipt of funding awarded under the discretion of LEO-E&T.

Further information will be provided to successful respondents selected for awards in the grant award documentation. Funding is also contingent upon timely submission of required quarterly performance, narrative, and financial reporting documents submission.

Registering on the SIGMA Vendor Self-Serve Website:

To receive payment from the State of Michigan, a Grantee must be registered on the SIGMA Vendor Self Service website, which links to the Statewide Integrated Governmental Management Application system (SIGMA).

P. Disqualified/Ineligible RFP Respondents

- Organizations submitting multiple applications.
- Proposals that fail to meet mandatory requirements. There are criteria in the RFP with which the Respondent must comply. These criteria are mandatory requirements.
- **Respondents submitting materials electronically with timestamp 5:01 PM on or after on February 9, 2026.**

Attachment A – Proposal Template

State of Michigan
Labor and Economic Opportunity, Employment & Training (LEO-E&T)
Reliable Rides Incentive Grant Pilot Program

Deadline for Submissions: 5:00 PM, February 9, 2026

GRANT PROPOSAL

Please complete this proposal template which will serve as your response to the RFP for the Reliable Rides Incentive Pilot Program Funding

PROPOSAL RESPONDENT INFORMATION:

Organization Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

GRANT RECIPIENT (Individual with Signatory Authority and Responsibility)

Legal Organization Name: _____

Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN): _____

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI): _____

Recipient Name: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

EMPLOYER INFORMATION (If Different from Proposal Respondent):

Organization Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

To determine if employer qualifies as a small or medium employer, please provide

number of employees: _____

To determine if employer qualifies as providing competitive wages**,** please provide

employee wages: _____

prevailing wage for the local labor market and occupation:

APPLICANT QUESTIONS

DEMONSTRATED INTEREST IN SUPPORTING TRANSPORTATION NEEDS AMONG MICHIGAN'S WORKFORCE (Up to 10 Points)

Describe your organization's prior or ongoing efforts to address transportation challenges faced by employees in Michigan. Please include specific examples that demonstrate your commitment to improving workforce.

SCOPE OF WORK (Up to 25 Points)

Please provide a narrative description of the Respondent's approach to implement transportation models aligned with the strategies outline in the *Reliable Rides: Connecting Workers to Jobs* playbook. The description should include a detailed explanation of the transportation model(s) you intend to implement, including how the employer will partner with local organizations such as transit agencies or other partners; how these models align with the playbook's recommendations; a timeline for implementation; and anticipated outcomes.

Grantees are expected to integrate workplace practices and equity considerations. This includes maintaining competitive wages and positive workplace practices that support employee retention and well-being.

SUPPORT FOR DISCOURAGED POPULATIONS (0 or 5 Points Available)

Indicate whether the employer operates in or serves a high unemployment or a geographically disadvantaged area; OR whether the proposal focuses on ensuring that discouraged populations, including individuals with disabilities, can benefit from the transportation services.

PROJECT WORK PLAN (Up to 10 Points)

In determining the quality and viability of proposed Reliable Rides Incentive Grant Pilot Program, LEO-E&T will consider the Work Plan which outlines the goals, and deliverables of the proposed project including clearly defined key activities and timeframes, for accomplishing project tasks. The Work Plan should align with your narrative responses. Use this template to enter **Project Work Plan**

Project Goals and Deliverables

Goal #1:

Deliverable(s)	Timeframe	Deliverable Dates

Implementer(s):

Goal #2:

Deliverable(s)	Timeframe	Deliverable Dates

Implementer(s):

Goal #3:

Deliverable(s)	Timeframe	Deliverable Dates

Implementer(s):

Goal #4:

Deliverable(s)	Timeframe	Deliverable Dates

Implementer(s):

Goal #5:

Deliverable(s)	Timeframe	Deliverable Dates

Implementer(s):

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN (Up to 20 Points)

Please provide the Respondent's sustainability plan for maintaining the transportation program after the conclusion of the grant funding. Your response should address the following:

- Specific commitments (financial, operational, or in-kind) made by the employer or other stakeholders
- A timeline or strategy for transitioning from grant-funded to self-sustained operations

Describe Sustainability Plan for the transportation program beyond the grant period:

DATA, EVALUATION, AND REPORTING (Up to 15 Points)

Describe your organization's willingness and capacity to track, measure, and report data and participate in program evaluation activities. Your response should address the following:

- **Number of Employees Served:** Total number of employees participating in the transportation model.
- **Change in Absenteeism and/or Turnover Rates:** Data showing any changes in employee attendance or retention since program implementation.
- **Total implementation costs**, including contributions by employer, employees, and any partners
- **Employer and Employee Satisfaction:** Summary of feedback collected through surveys, interviews, or other evaluation methods.
- **Testimonials:** At least one employee and one employer testimonial highlighting the program's impact.
- Willingness to participate in interviews, surveys, or other evaluation methods during and after the grant period.

At the midpoint and end of the grant period, the grantee will be required to submit an implementation survey based on the above data.

Confirm your willingness to participate in these implementation surveys. ☐ Yes ☐ No

BUDGET/BUDGET NARRATIVE (Up to 10 Points)

Budget Detail: Grant Costs and Leveraged Dollars

Provide a detailed breakdown of the total implementation costs for your proposed transportation program. Breakdown should include employer, employee, and partner contributions as well as all projected expenses related to program startup, coordination or administrative expenses, and implementation.
A one-to-one financial match to the grant award is required.

Transportation Program	Grant Costs
Administration (not to exceed 10%)	
Total Budget	

Budget Narrative

Please include below narrative descriptions for all items included in the budget above. LEO-E&T will consider the Respondent's level of investment in the proposed project. Please identify the one-to-one match and include a description of amounts and activities for which the leveraged resources will be used.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE

The completed grant proposal and all documentation must be submitted to the LEO-E&T via the LEO-Mi-Auto-Workforce-Hub@michigan.gov email no later than **5:00 PM, February 9, 2026.**

Contact: Michigan Department of Labor Economic Opportunity, Employment & Training
LEO-Mi-Auto-Workforce-Hub@michigan.gov