

Application Report



Applicant Organization: Autism Society Inland Empire
Project Name: Increasing Employment Through Remote Work
Application ID: [REDACTED]
Funding Announcement: DDS Employment Grant
Requested Amount: [REDACTED]

Project Summary: This project would provide training on 21st Century Workskills and remote employment, person-centered careers plans, and supports for 25 Inland Regional Center clients to explore and obtain, if chosen, work in the remote workforce

Authorized Certifying Official: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Project Director/Manager: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Project Manager/Coordinator: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Compliance/Fiscal Officer: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Section Name: Applicant Eligibility

Sub Section Name: Applicant Information

1. Applicant Question: Organization Type

Check all that apply. If selecting "Other" please specify your type of organization.

Applicant Response:

- Community-Based Organization

2. Applicant Question: Description of Agency/Organization

Provide a brief description of the organization or group. You may add a website link for additional information.

Applicant Response:

For the last 36 years and counting, the Autism Society Inland Empire has connected people and families living in the Inland Empire to the resources they need through education, advocacy, support, information and referral, and community programming. Our staff comprises parents of children and adults with Autism and Autistic adults. We have a passion for serving this community because we are this community. Visit our website at ieautism.org for more information.

3. Applicant Question: Applicant in Good Standing

Is the applicant in good standing with the California Secretary of State, California Franchise Tax Board, and California

Department of Tax and Fee Administration? Please upload confirmation letter(s) or proof of good standing.

Applicant Response:

Yes

Attachment:



4. Applicant Question: Subcontractors in Good Standing

Are the applicant's subcontractors in good standing with the California Secretary of State, California Franchise Tax Board, and California Department of Tax and Fee Administration? Select "N/A" if you do not plan to use subcontractors for your project.

Applicant Response:

Yes

Section Name: Grant Application

Sub Section Name: Proposal Summary

1. Applicant Question: Project Type

Choose one project type that best describes your activities.

Applicant Response:

Training and Implementation - Family Adult and Youth

2. Applicant Question: Duration of Project

Choose the duration of your project, 12 months or 18 months.

Applicant Response:

12 months

3. Applicant Question: Regional Centers in Service Area

Identify the Regional Center(s) in the community to be served by this project. Select all that apply. For a regional center map, see [Attachment F](#).

Applicant Response:

- Inland Regional Center

4. Applicant Question: Counties Served

List the county or counties that the project will serve. Check all that apply.

Applicant Response:

- Riverside County
 - San Bernardino County
-

5. Applicant Question: City of Los Angeles

If your project proposes to serve the City of Los Angeles, list the zip codes your project will serve.

Zip code information for Los Angeles County can be found [here](#). If your project does not serve the Los Angeles area, select "N/A".

Applicant Response:

Not Applicable

Applicant Comment:

Not Applicable

6. Applicant Question: Collaborating Organizations or Other Entities

Does your project include partnerships with one or more organizations either as a co-applicant or subcontractor? If "yes", please upload a letter of support from each organization, that includes an explanation of their role in the partnership.

Applicant Response:

Yes

Attachment:



7. Applicant Question: Consultants and Trainers

Describe the qualifications of the consultant/trainer/training organization, including their subject matter expertise in competitive integrated employment for individuals with developmental disabilities. Describe their prior experience as a consultant/trainer, professional credentials, including names of other organizations/entities for whom they have provided consultation or training.

If question does not apply to your project, select "N/A"

Applicant Response:

Daivergent is a Public Benefit Corporation dedicated to the neurodivergent and disability communities. Founded in 2017, Daivergent is the world's first all-virtual job training program and serves as the first bridge between 21st-century employers and this high-potential -- but underutilized -- talent population. Its mission is to equip people with disabilities with the resources they need to maximize their potential and to empower their champions to join them on their lifelong journey.

Since 2017, Daivergent has connected tech companies and companies that use remote work with the underutilized workforce of adults with Autism and other developmental disabilities. They currently have contracts with Arizona and Texas's Department of Rehabilitation.

More information about Daivergent can be found on their website at <https://daivergent.com/>.

Section Name: Target Population

Sub Section Name: People Served

1. Applicant Question: Number of youth (under 18) with I/DD that will be served

Specify number of people to participate or be served by this project. If question does not apply to your project, select "N/A".

Applicant Response:

0

2. Applicant Question: Number of adults (18 and older) with I/DD that will be served

Specify number of people to participate or be served by this project. If question does not apply to your project, select "N/A".

Applicant Response:

25

3. Applicant Question: Number of family members that will be served

Specify number of people to participate or be served by this project. If question does not apply to your project, select "N/A".

Applicant Response:

25

4. Applicant Question: Number of professionals and staff that will be trained

Specify number of people to participate or be served by this project. If question does not apply to your project, select "N/A".

Applicant Response:

Not Applicable

Applicant Comment:

Not Applicable

5. Applicant Question: Number of other individuals that will be served/trained

Specify number of people to participate or be served by this project. Please describe the individuals that will be served. If question does not apply to your project, select "N/A".

Applicant Response:

Not Applicable

Applicant Comment:

Not Applicable

6. Applicant Question: Ethnicity Group Served

Select the ethnicity group(s) the project will serve. For "Indian", "Pacific Islander", "Slavic" or "Other" use comment section to list specific groups.

- **"Indian"** includes: Indian (nationals of the present-day Republic of India), Bangladeshi, Nepalese, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan.
- **"Pacific Islanders"** includes: individuals whose origins are the original peoples of Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia. Polynesia includes Guam, Hawaii (Native Hawaiian), Samoa (Samoan), American Samoa (Samoan), Tokelau (Tokelauan), Tahiti (Tahitian), Tonga (Tongan) and other Pacific Islands.
- **"Slavic"** includes: Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian (East Slavic), Polish, Czech, Slovak, and Sorbian (West Slavic), and Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian, and Slovene (South Slavic).
- The **"other"** category includes ethnicities not specified in the ethnicity options.

Applicant Response:

- African American
 - Filipino
 - White
 - Pacific Islander
 - Hispanic
 - Native American
 - Chinese
 - Japanese
 - Korean
 - Vietnamese
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Section Name: Project Application

Sub Section Name: Project Application

1. Applicant Question: Project Abstract

Provide a clear and concise project summary that includes a defined target population, geographic area, and project design. Specifically describe what your project will accomplish and the intended impact it will have on the employment of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Applicant Response:

Neurodivergent individuals often have communication needs and preferences, heightened sensory sensitivity, and challenges with executive functioning. These challenges can often be more intense in a traditional work environment where neurodivergent individuals must navigate lighting, sounds, smells, social conversations, and commuting or transportation issues in a typical employment opportunity.

While working from home was proposed as a potential form of “reasonable accommodation” for people with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1992, it was not until COVID that working from home became one of the new norms. Working from home has allowed flexibility, a comfortable and sensory-friendly location, a convenient work schedule, and the ability to avoid transportation issues.

Remote work gives businesses access to a broader pool of talents. As our economy and society change, our service delivery methods should be ready to shift to ensure our community is prepared to be part of this new business opportunity.

This project would use multiple best practices to show remote work is a viable opportunity for our I/DD community. The target audience for this project would be 25 Inland Regional Center clients, especially clients of underserved ethnicities. Project goals are to:

1. Allow participants to explore multiple entry-level jobs in the remote workforce
2. Opportunity to increase hard and soft skills to increase success in the remote workforce
3. Assist participants in creating a person-centered employment development plan.
4. Support remote job searches, applications, and employment for those who want to pursue remote work.
5. Collect data on practices that work to increase remote employment and barriers encountered.

In 2020, Inland Regional Center reported a 12% employment rate. We expect 80% of this cohort to create an employment development plan and 25% to become employed in the remote workforce.

2. Applicant Question: Need for Project Question 1

Please describe the underlying problem, challenges, or issues that your project will address.

Applicant Response:

Ensuring the diversity and inclusion of all people within the workforce is a matter of equity. Many barriers have led to poor employment outcomes for the I/DD community, including low expectations, many adults with IDD have not gone through a process to identify their own needs/interests, lack of job exploration, lack of knowledge of what employers expect and environmental triggers, lack of transportation and the shortage of DSP providers who can provide innovative services.

3. Applicant Question: Need for Project Question 2

Provide facts or data to support the need for this project

Applicant Response:

According to the DDS Employment Dashboard, Inland Regional Center's 2020 data shows that 11.82% of the clients aged 16-64 years received wages (compared to 13.5% for all Regional Centers). From 2016-2020, the average employment rate was 12.7%, compared to 15.6% for all Regional Centers during the same period. Remote work could be a tool for some adults in our I/DD community.

Two trends our U.S. economy has seen since the start of COVID are the ongoing growth of the gig economy increase of remote work.

In 2022 in the U.S., more than 35% of the workforce is considered a gig economy. This is 3x faster than the total U.S. workforce. By 2027 this number will be over 50%.

Other data shows remote work will also play a significant role in the economy. As of 2021, 27% of U.S. employees work remotely, four times the number who worked remotely in 2018 (6%). Experts predict there will be 36.2 million Americans working remotely by 2025, a 417% increase from pre-pandemic levels.

4. Applicant Question: Need for Project Question 3

Describe how the project will involve and benefit participants who are from diverse backgrounds

Applicant Response:

This project would expand an existing Disparity Grant pilot project for six individuals by scaling an innovative model to offer to an additional 25 Regional Center clients. There are several ways this grant will reduce barriers to service and improve employment for adults with autism:

- 1) Social media graphics and flyers regarding this program will be distributed in English and Spanish using a network of trusted community messengers.
- 2) An information night will be presented in English, Spanish, and ASL to reach as many families as possible.
- 3) It uses an online model which reduces barriers around transportation
- 4) It provides technology for clients who cannot afford it
- 5) Resource Specialists are available in English and Spanish to answer the concerns of families.
- 6) Vocational Specialists come from diverse backgrounds and model neurodivergence and diversity in the workplace.

5. Applicant Question: Approach Question 1A

For Business Focused Practices, Employment Preparation Services and Supports, Service Models for Individuals with High Support Needs, and Training and Implementation project types.

- Describe the objective for your project
- Describe the new or innovative methods and activities that will be used that correspond to the proposed objective and project type that:
 - Use innovative, evidence-based, best, or promising practices, services and /or supports
 - Promote increased and meaningful opportunities for participants to make an informed choice for career options and prepare for CIE
 - Are designed to achieve, maintain, or advance individuals with I/DD in competitive integrated employment
 - Are designed to be replicable
- Include how you used input from the community and/target population in the design of the project
- Describe any project deliverables

If your project is not Business Focused Practices, Employment Preparation Services and Supports, Service Models for Individuals with High Support Needs, or Training and Implementation, select "N/A".

Applicant Response:

We are looking to solve a problem in a new way. Adults in the IDD community have not had enough person-centered job exploration, skill training for today's workforce needs, transportation barriers, challenges navigating the physical and social workplace environments, and low expectations.

This project aims to provide online training and support to create a pathway to remote employment for adults with IDD. Deliverables include:

- Twenty-five participants to increase hard and soft skills and explore multiple entry-level jobs in the remote workforce
- Creation of person-centered employment development plans.
- Provide support for remote job searches, applications, and employment
- Collection of data

This project will utilize the best-practice self-determination framework to assist participants in person-centered employment goal setting, which is predictive of positive postsecondary outcomes for employment (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997).

Five principles of self-determination will be embedded as participants explore different remote employment opportunities and decide on their next steps in their employment journey:

- Self-awareness. Participants will experience different opportunities which will allow them to individuals to identify and understand their needs, strengths, and limitations.
- Problem-Solving. Participants will be assisted in identifying problems and possible solutions and then choosing the best method to resolve the issue.
- Making Choices and Decisions. Job seekers can exert control over their actions and environment, including choosing support and support personnel.
- Goal setting. Participants will be supported as needed to set a person-centered employment target. This will include determining if they are ready to apply for remote employment, prefer in-person employment, want to pursue an internship, academic or other job skills outside this program. Participants may also discover they are not ready for work or need additional job exploration.
- Advocating. Self-advocacy refers to an individual's ability to express their needs and wants assertively and act on their behalf.

Role-playing exercises, small group discussions, researching, and remote work simulation give meaningful opportunities for participants to make an informed choice for career options and prepare for CIE.

The Autism Society Inland Empire is currently running a pilot program similar to this proposal with six individuals. Feedback from the pilot program participants included more structure and accountability after the training and elimination of the job club.

This proposal is designed to be replicable, and in fact, the next steps for this project would be to develop training for other service providers.

6. Applicant Question: Approach Question 1B

For project type, Service Model Transformation

- A description of the transformation team that will be developing the action plan and includes representation by individuals with ID/D, family members, those who provide direct support, and other relevant community members (e.g., businesses, peer organizations, partnerships, etc.)
- The objective and activities to be used in developing the action plan, including an outline of the areas to be addressed in the transformational planning and organizational change that will affect the CIE employment services.
- Include how you used input from the community and/target population in the design of the project?
- A detailed description of the planning process that will be used
 - Descript project deliverables
 - Describe how you plan to engage the regional center in the transformation plan

If your project type is not Service Model Transformation, select "N/A".

Applicant Response:

Not Applicable

Applicant Comment:

Not Applicable

7. Applicant Question: Sustainability Question 1

How will individuals served by the project continue receiving employment services and supports once the project has ended?

Applicant Response:

These project targets individuals who will more likely benefit from natural support once employed, emphasizing ethnic representation of the Inland Empire. According to the latest census: Hispanic (52%), Black (8%), Asian (8%), Native American (2%), and White (32%). As part of the person-centered planning process, if further support is needed after the grant ends, these individuals will be connected with support through Department of Rehabilitation vendors with a warm hand-off. We have long-standing relationships with key service systems. We plan to meet with the Employment Specialists, Department of Rehabilitation, and San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board staff to discuss findings and next steps to support these clients.

8. Applicant Question: Sustainability Question 2

How will your project continue its work after the grant funding has concluded?

Applicant Response:

This project is approximately \$12k a person from training to employment. While remote work will not be for everyone, we would love for it to be included in the options offered to our community.

The next step after this expanded pilot project would be to pursue a grant to train other service providers to be able to offer remote training and job support.

To make remote training and job support available for more clients, we are considering:

- Braided funding models. Training may be initially offered through one service system and job support for others. Some funding systems include the Regional Center, Department of Rehabilitation, and Workforce Development Board.
 - Grants to continue to expand and refine the project.
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9. Applicant Question: Sustainability Question 3

Describe your plan to engage the regional center for future sustainability of the project and individuals served.

Applicant Response:

This project will only receive if we continue our partnership with Inland Regional Center. Representatives from the Employment Specialist, Community Engagement and Training Departments would be key stakeholders and help ensure clear communication about the project and an opportunity to brainstorm with other passionate people to ensure the client's success. As the project matures, either individual or group meetings would be set up to discuss the findings of the project, the next steps, and how we can best support the client's in this pilot and future plans.

10. Applicant Question: Organizational Capacity Question 1

Please include details about the history of the organization, its mission or purpose, summary of major programs, services and activities and details about how they tie to the target population. If from a large organization with multiple departments, provide a brief overview of entire organization and then focus on the department or program involved with this proposal. Describe any ongoing collaborative partners in your community.

Applicant Response:

The Autism Society Inland Empire's mission is to create connections, empowering everyone in the Autism community with the resources needed to live fully. Every day, we work to create a world where everyone in the Autism community is connected to the support they need when they need it. We have worked on equity and access issues through changes in policies and programs, including competitive employment, for the last 13 years.

In the last year, we have had:

- Pilot project on Remote Customer Service. Seven clients participated in a 4-hour class we developed to introduce and provide hands-on job exploration to adults with ASD.
- Pilot project for Remote Employment. We received an equity grant to pilot six clients through an 8-week training, then job match and support in the remote workforce.
- We continue to offer many educational programs and training on employment services and related skills.

We partner with over 40 CBOs and government agencies on various topics.

11. Applicant Question: Organizational Capacity Question 2

Describe your agency's experience supporting the proposed target population.

Applicant Response:

The Autism Society Inland Empire is a grassroots organization with 36 years of supporting individuals with Autism and other developmental disabilities. In the last 20 years, we have provided social groups, support groups, and training opportunities for adults with Autism and other disabilities with a range of needs. Additionally, our staff comprises parents with children/adults with Autism, adults with Autism, or both and have years of training in various evidenced-based practices.

12. Applicant Question: Organizational Capacity Question 3

Describe employment (or other relevant services) you currently provide.

Applicant Response:

Besides the two pilot programs we offered in the last year for Regional Center, we believe it is important to "walk the talk."

Over the years, we have had several paid and volunteer opportunities for adults with Autism of all abilities, including social media intern, contract employees who present Emergency and Safety training curriculum, speakers bureau, facilitators of support and social groups, and event support.

Furthermore, we have three regular employees with Autism.

13. Applicant Question: Organizational Capacity Question 4

How will the grant help the organization/agency build expertise to support individuals with I/DD to achieve competitive integrated employment?

Applicant Response:

The Autism Society Inland Empire has a culture of growth that makes us more willing to accept challenges and mistakes, with the understanding that you may need to try several times to succeed. With every pilot project and experience working with an adult with ID/DD, we continue to learn about person-centered choices, communication, support, and disclosure. Since working in the field on remote work, we continue to expand our contacts in the field, remote work in general, and support.

14. Applicant Question: Organizational Capacity Question 5

Describe your organization/ agency experience and current capacity to support grant-based activities and reporting.

Applicant Response:

The Autism Society Inland Empire has had four years of experience with equity grants from DDS and ten years of grants before that from other foundations. We have hired a person focused mainly on grants and reporting, another to assist with data, and a bookkeeper with four years of working with accounting for grants. The Executive Director has fifteen years of experience managing grant projects. Funding from grants is one of our significant streams of income.

15. Applicant Question: Engagement Plan Question 1

Describe how the organization/agency will recruit participants and/or families for participation in the project.

Applicant Response:

The Autism Society Inland Empire has a mailing list of over 7,000 members and a social media reach of over 11,000 by itself. We would partner with Regional Center and ask caseworkers, employment specialists, and their social media to distribute marketing material. Additionally, we would ensure the marketing reaches the Hispanic and Spanish-speaking communities through our relationship with trusted messengers, such as the 47 leaders from the 19 CBOs who attend the CLASE Latino Community of Practice.

With this project, we have also built an Information Night so individuals with ID/DD, family members, and professionals can learn more about the program before committing. This Information Night will have Spanish and ASL interpretations.

16. Applicant Question: Engagement Plan Question 2

Describe how the organization/agency will collaborate with other groups, organizations, employers, and/or agencies to achieve the objective of the project.

Applicant Response:

Collaboration is essential to who we are, and success. We have had long-standing relationships with Inland Regional Center, the Department of Rehabilitation, and the San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board in an effort for all of us to improve communication and leverage resources. We are in our fourth year of facilitating the CLASE Community of Practice for Latino leaders with over 47 leaders from over 19 organizations throughout the Inland Empire. We also co-chair a monthly Autism/Neurodevelopmental Collaboration with other partners in the Inland Empire. These relationships will help us reach a larger constituency, delve into or explore new funding sources to sustain the project, and leverage expertise and resources to serve project participants.

17. Applicant Question: Engagement Plan Question 3

Service Model Transformation Projects must also include a plan to make two community presentations to key stakeholders and community members. The first presentation is to receive feedback about the proposed changes within the agency. The second community presentation is to present the completed action plan. Describe your plan for these two community presentations.

If your project is not Service Model Transformation, please select "N/A"

Applicant Response:

Not Applicable

Applicant Comment:

Not Applicable

18. Applicant Question: Project Activities

Clearly and specifically state how the schedule of activities demonstrates the steps that the project will take to achieve its stated objective and measures. See [Attachment H](#) for instructions on entering objective and activities into GrantVantage.

Applicant Response:

The Autism Society Inland Empire and Daivergent have worked with adults with IDD on employment issues. The activities to support this program include ensuring our outreach to clients with diverse backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses. We will use print, technology, trusted messengers, and family information nights for outreach. We will ensure all participants have the technology to access online classes and, if not, purchase. We are working with a national leader in the United States in the field of remote work. We have experienced personnel both with employment and data collection on staff.

There is a clear and concise plan to implement this project successfully. The project has four main components:

- Virtual classes delivered in a small group and facilitated by staff will allow clients to build job skills in remote work and provide work simulations to explore and participate in simulations of different 21st-century careers. Digital skills include using Slack, Microsoft Teams, Google Chat, Dropbox, Google Meet, Chrome Remote Desktop, Microsoft OneNote, and digital skill norms in the virtual world.
- Creation of person-centered employment development plans.
- Training will be provided around self-disclosure, self-advocacy, accommodations, and updating their resume.

- Provide support for remote job searches, applications, and employment
- Collection of data

We have piloted similar projects and the plan is proven.

19. Applicant Question: Project Data

Provide a clear plan of how data will be collected to track project objectives, activities and measures (e.g., what data collection tools will be used, who will collect, software used, who will summarize, etc.).

Applicant Response:

We appreciate DDS providing consistent measures required for this project.

We use Survey Monkey to collect survey data. We continue to use Excel and Google sheets to compile and share data. This allows us to communicate with the vocational specialists providing day-to-day support constantly. The Autism Society Inland Empire will have a team of staff to work on this project to ensure project timelines and deliverables are met, communication is consistent, data is being tracked, and the financial records are up-to-date. The Executive Director will be responsible for summarizing the data and reporting. She has four years of using Grantvantage.

We will track utilization data like attendance, individuals who needed translation, and what kind of technology was purchased to assist those who needed access. Qualitative data will be gathered using observations and interviews from the Vocational Specialist, pre/post training surveys from participants, and Pre/Post Participant Experience surveys.

20. Applicant Question: Budget Template and Narrative

Explain how the project budget is consistent with the stated project objective and activities, and clearly and concisely

explain how the proposed expenditures support the overall project design.

Applicant Response:

Our organization has many years of experience building grant budgets and executing programs and services, including four for the DDS Disparity grants. The budget reflects costs to support the activity and achieve project outcomes. Expenses are allowable according to DDS guidelines.

This project would be an expansion of a DDS Disparity for six clients interested in remote work. We have taken that knowledge and incorporated it into the program design and the budget. This budget is an accurate and detailed prediction of the total costs that may be incurred during the project execution. The budget narrative explains detailed calculations for each line item.

Periodic forecasting of the budget will occur at least every quarter, and we monitor the usage of resources and program goals monthly.

21. Applicant Question: Budget Costs

Confirm that that budget does not include non-allowable costs or costs funded by other sources. See [Attachment D](#) for allowable and non-allowable costs.

Applicant Response:

I Confirm

Section Name: Proposal Certification

Sub Section Name: Certification

1. Applicant Question: Confirm Proposal Discussion with RC(s)

Applicants are required to discuss their proposal with each RC(s) service area to be served. Have you discussed your proposal with each RC you are intending to serve?

Applicant Response:

Yes

2. Applicant Question: RC Contact

Applicants are required to submit their application concurrently to the Department and to each RC(s) service area the applicant is intending to serve. State the name(s) of the contact person(s) at each RC you have discussed your proposal with.

Applicant Response:

This proposal was discussed with CJ Cook, Manager, Community Engagement. We have received a letter of support from the Inland Regional Center (attached).

Attachment:



3. Applicant Question: Regional Center Service Provider

If you are a vendored regional center service provider, are you in compliance with [Welfare and Institutions Code Section 4652.5](#)?

If you are a not a vendored regional center service provider, please select "N/A".

Applicant Response:

Yes

4. Applicant Question: Confirm review of Standard Measures

DDS has developed standard project measures for each project type. Have you read the guidelines and agree to the standardized measures for your project type. See [Attachment C](#) for Standard Project Measures.

Applicant Response:

Yes

5. Applicant Question: Applicant Certification

By submitting this application, the applicant is certifying the truth and accuracy of the proposal. The applicant also certifies that if you have subcontracting organizations, each participating organization has reviewed your project and agrees to their assigned activities, measures, and the budget.

Applicant Response:

Yes
