

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 16, 2003

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF GRANT AWARD FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR FOR BUILDING CAPACITY AND SUSTAINABILITY IN EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

ISSUE: City Council approval of a grant award in the amount of \$145,500 for Alexandria *JobLink* to better serve persons with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- 1) Approve the grant award in the amount of \$145,500 to build improved, sustainable employment services for persons with disabilities;
- 2) Approve the establishment of one full-time, grant-funded position (one Community Resource Consultant/Assistive Technology Specialist) to coordinate and carry out the program. The position will terminate upon expiration of the grant. The individual who fills the position will be notified of this condition of employment and will sign an agreement of understanding with regard to this condition; and
- 3) Authorize the City Manager to execute all documents as may be required.

The Commission on Persons with Disabilities, at its regular meeting on May 14, 2003, voted unanimously to recommend that City Council approve the recommendations listed above.

BACKGROUND: The 2000 Census data estimates that approximately one in five Americans has a disability. Census data also indicates that only 65.9% of adults with disabilities in Alexandria are working (compared with 81% for the general population). These statistics indicate significant under-representation in the workforce. Meanwhile, studies show that more than two-thirds of unemployed persons with disabilities want to work. Surveys identify employment as the most significant concern of persons with disabilities.

According to the 2000 Census, 17,559 individuals report having a disability in Alexandria. Of this group, 12,084 individuals are of working age (between 21 and 64 years old). Approximately 4,100 of those individuals are unemployed. One-Stop employment centers such as *JobLink* are

able to provide resources to persons with disabilities so that they may optimize their professional pursuits and may maximize their participation in the workforce.

In response to this need, the Alexandria/Arlington Workforce Investment Board submitted an application to the U.S. Department of Labor for an Employment and Training Administration grant. The purpose of the grant is to build sustainable capacity to serve persons with disabilities within the One-Stop career centers in Arlington and Alexandria (*JobLink*). The U.S. Department of Labor has allocated \$300,000 to the Alexandria/Arlington Workforce Development Consortium, with Arlington receiving \$154,500 and Alexandria \$145,500. This is a one-time award aimed at improving *JobLink*'s services to those with disabilities, both during the grant period and afterward, as new initiatives funded by this grant are intended to become embedded into *JobLink*'s existing programs.

DISCUSSION: The proposed grant-based program, entitled "Paths to Employment," will allow *JobLink* to better aid persons with disabilities in achieving employment. The grant will allow *JobLink* to achieve this objective by funding the following improvements:

- purchase additional assistive technology equipment;
- train *JobLink* staff in optimal customer service, career planning, job placement, legal rights, assistive technology, workplace accommodations, and employer relations for persons with disabilities;
- outreach to employers regarding benefits and laws pertinent to hiring persons with disabilities;
- develop a web-based resource guide; and
- coordinate with the Department of Rehabilitative Services and other service providers.

The Community Resource Consultant/Assistive Technology Specialist position will be integral to *JobLink*'s ability to fully realize the benefit of this grant opportunity. The Community Resource Consultant/Assistive Technology Specialist position will be responsible for coordinating improvements to *JobLink*'s processes and resources as they pertain to persons with disabilities. The position will be the "resident expert" on assistive technology, on disability-related accommodations, and on other disability-related issues. Staff will also strengthen *JobLink*'s partnerships with the Department of Rehabilitation Services and other organizations serving persons with disabilities.

The proposed duration of the grant is May 1, 2003, through April 30, 2004.

FISCAL IMPACT: This one-time grant of \$145,500 will be received from the U.S. Department of Labor. Although there is no requirement for the City to provide a cash match or an in-kind match for these funds, the City is responsible for the normal administrative costs associated with this grant. These costs include financial and reporting oversight provided by the Department of Human Services, as well as by the Office of Management and Budget and the Finance Department. There are no monies available or planned in the current or future City budgets once

the grant funds are expended and the person hired will be notified of this condition of employment.

STAFF:

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Dennis McKinney, Division Director, *JobLink*

Beverly Steele, Interim Director, Department of Human Services

Carol Moore, Acting Deputy Director, Office of Management and Budget