

January 30, 2024

Senator Erin P. Murphy, Chair
State and Local Government and Veterans
Committee

Representative Ginny Klevorn, Chair
State and Local Government Finance and Policy

Senator Bruce Anderson, Ranking Member
State and Local Government and Veterans
Committee

Representative Jim Nash, Ranking Member
State and Local Government Finance and Policy

SENT VIA EMAIL

Subject: 2023 Accommodation Reimbursement Fund Report

Dear Legislators,

The attached report is submitted by the Department of Administration in accordance with Minnesota Statutes §16B.4805, Subdivision 6. The report details the reimbursement of state agencies for the cost of expenses incurred in making reasonable disability accommodations for employees that occurred in fiscal year 2023.

Please contact Julie Bayerl, julie.bayerl@state.mn.us, if you have any questions or need assistance.

Sincerely,



Tamar Gronvall
Commissioner

Attachment

cc: Legislative Reference Library

Accommodation Reimbursement Fund

Fiscal Year 2023

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
Contact.....	2
Introduction	3
Background.....	3
Accommodation Fund	3
Implementation.....	4
Eligibility	4
2023 Summary	4
Reimbursement Requests	4

Upon request, this document will be made available in an alternative format such as large print, braille, or audio recording.

Contact

STAR Program
358 Centennial Office Building
658 Cedar Street
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Phone: 651-201-2640 or toll-free at 1-888-234-1267
MN Relay: 7-1-1 or 800-627-3529
Fax: 651-282-6671
Email: star.program@state.mn.us

Introduction

This annual report on the State's Accommodation Reimbursement Fund is mandated under [Minnesota Statutes, Section 16B.4805, Subd. 6](#).

Background

The State of Minnesota recognizes the significant contribution workers with disabilities make to keep the state competitive in a global economy. To remain competitive, the State must aggressively pursue new and inclusive recruitment strategies to both prepare for the rapidly approaching workforce shortage, and ensure a state government that reflects the people it serves. However, workers with disabilities remain an underutilized resource. In 2022, there were over 144,854 Minnesotans with disabilities of typical working ages (18-64) of which 44% were not in the workforce.¹

Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB), in collaboration with the Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans (MNCDHH) submitted a report to the Legislature in 2015, noting that:

Several studies have cited a centralized reasonable accommodation fund as a best practice for hiring individuals with disabilities. Specifically, it can reduce the unconscious or conscious bias a hiring manager may experience when considering an applicant with a disability and the associated costs of workplace accommodations. This bias has been shown to potentially deter a manager from hiring an individual with a disability.²

Subsequent to this report, legislation was enacted to establish a fund to reimburse state agencies for qualifying reasonable accommodation expenses to better support the hiring and retention of workers with disabilities.

Accommodation Fund

Each year, \$200,000 is appropriated to the Department of Administration for the accommodation fund for the purpose of reimbursing state agencies (as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 16A.011, subd. 12) up to 50 percent of the cost of reasonable accommodation expenses in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, section 16B.4805, subd. 6. The minimum amount that can be reimbursed is \$500.

The goal of the accommodation fund is twofold:

1. To provide an equal footing for job applicants with disabilities during the hiring process, in support of Executive Order 19-14; and,
2. To provide for a more inclusive workplace environment for current state employees with disabilities.

The three types of accommodation expenses eligible for reimbursement are:

¹ (2022). United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, *Employment Status by Disability Status and Type*. <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT1Y2022.B18120?t=Disability:Populations%20and%20People&g=040XX00US27>

² (2015, February 26). *Centralized Reasonable Accommodation Fund Study - Minnesota....* Retrieved January 12, 2017, from <https://www.leg.state.mn.us/docs/2015/mandated/150351.pdf>

1. For **applicants for employment** in any amount;
2. For **current employees** for services that are needed on a periodic or ongoing basis; and
3. For **current employees** for one-time expenses that total more than \$500 for a single employee in a fiscal year

During Fiscal Year 2016, the Department of Administration set up the fund and a method for distribution. Since its establishment, Admin has distributed approximately \$1.2 million in reimbursement to agencies for accommodations.

Implementation

The Accommodation Fund is administered by the Department of Administration's STAR (System of Technology to Achieve Result) program. STAR is federally-funded and provides assistive technology services to help Minnesotans with disabilities of all ages increase their independence at home, school, work, and in their communities. STAR promoted the Accommodation Fund to state agencies at their annual presentation to state ADA coordinators and information on the Fund was included in the monthly Supervisor Core training for new supervisors.

Eligibility

Eighty-one executive branch agencies, boards, councils, and commissions are eligible to submit requests for reimbursement of reasonable accommodations subject to established eligibility requirements.

Reimbursement requests may only be submitted for state employees and job applicants. Reasonable accommodations provided on behalf of board members, unpaid student workers, interns, and volunteers do not qualify for reimbursement.

2023 Summary

Reimbursement Requests

Agency Requests – Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23)

During FY23, thirteen agencies **requested** reasonable accommodation expense reimbursements totaling \$311,001.19. The following breakdown is provided by agency.

Agency	Amount Requested
Employment and Economic Development	\$97,306.68
Human Services	\$93,944.08
Information Technology Services	\$40,053.01

Agency	Amount Requested
Housing and Finance	\$30,389.93
Revenue	\$14,816.25
Council on Disability	\$12,947.18
Natural Resources	\$10,450.06
Board on Social Work	\$4,725.00
State Colleges and Universities	\$1,604.89
Agriculture	\$1,522.94
Board of Executives for Long Term Services and Support	\$1,486.62
Public Safety	\$1,266.75
Veteran Affairs	\$487.80
Total	\$311,001.19

Approved Requests – FY23

The Accommodation Fund approved and reimbursed 162 requests submitted by state agencies. Two of the requests had multiple disabilities.

Number of Approved Reimbursement by Functional Need in FY23

- Vision (12)
- Learning/Cognition (3)
- Hearing (141)
- Physical/Mobility (7)
- Speech (1)

Number of Reimbursements Approved by Accommodation Type in FY23

- One-time expenses for a state employee that total more than \$500 in a fiscal year (9)
- Periodic or ongoing services for a state employee (150)
- Combination periodic services/one-time expense in fiscal year for a state employee (1)
- Combination periodic services/one-time expense in fiscal year and any expense for a job applicant (2)

Recipients (Applicants/Employees)

Of the 162 requests made during FY23:

- 160 requests were for state employees

- 2 requests were for a job applicant. One was hired and one was not.

Agency Reimbursements Received – FY23

The thirteen agencies listed below **received** a total of \$155,500.62 during FY23. All requests met the program requirements, so none were denied. However, requests are only allowed a maximum reimbursement of 50% of the request:

Agency	Amount Reimbursed	Percentage of Total
Employment and Economic Development	\$48,653.34	31.29%
Human Services	\$46,972.04	30.20%
Information Technology Services	\$20,026.51	12.88%
Housing and Finance	\$15,194.97	9.77%
Revenue	\$7,408.13	4.76%
Council on Disability	\$6,473.59	4.16%
Natural Resources	\$5,225.03	3.36%
Board on Social Work	\$2,362.50	1.52%
State Colleges and Universities	\$802.45	0.52%
Agriculture	\$761.47	0.49%
Board of Executives for Long Term Services and Support	\$743.31	0.48%
Public Safety	\$633.38	0.41%
Veteran Affairs	\$243.90	0.16%
Total	\$155,500.62	100.00%

Remaining Balance

The Department of Administration utilizes up to 15% over the biennium to administer the Accommodation Fund, as allowed by statute. Dollars in the Fund do not cancel at the end of the biennium and carry over to be available to be spent in the next year. After carry over and expenditures at the end of FY23 there were \$86,629.34 remaining in the fund.