

Position: Paid Leave Applicant Assistance Consultant

Northland Foundation

Primary Location: 7 Counties of Northeast Minnesota (Remote/Video Conference/In-Person based on availability)

Hours: Part-Time Contractor

Contract Term: November 1, 2026 through December 31, 2027, with possible extension subject to funding

The Northland Foundation is seeking to contract with a consultant to provide one-on-one assistance and group education to individuals applying for Minnesota's Paid Leave program. The intended audiences are employees applying for Paid Leave benefits.

The consultant's central purpose is to ensure that individuals can make informed decisions about whether to apply and that applicants prepare an accurate and complete application the first time. This role is distinct from Northland Small Business Development Center (SBDC)'s existing Paid Leave technical assistance for employers, which is not open for proposal at this time.

Specific Duties

- Provide one-on-one assistance to individuals applying for Paid Leave benefits, helping them understand the program, decide whether applying is right for their situation, and prepare an accurate and complete application.
- Help applicants identify and ask the right questions of Minnesota Paid Leave applicant support staff and assemble the information needed for appeals and incomplete applications so that applications with issues are resolved more quickly.
- Develop and deliver group education sessions for individuals applying for Paid Leave benefits. Sessions may include a mix of in-person and virtual delivery across the seven-county region.
- Provide input to Minnesota Paid Leave, through the Foundation's reporting and monitoring processes, on the parts of the application process that are most challenging for applicants.
- Contribute collaboratively to program design and implementation over the course of the project to improve outcomes for individuals applying for Paid Leave.
- Maintain current knowledge of the Paid Leave program and participate in program updates and training as requested.
- Document all sessions, individuals served, hours provided, and demographic information in the format specified by the Foundation.
- Participate in regular check-in meetings with the Foundation's Paid Leave Education and Outreach team.

Outside the Scope of This Contract

- Legal advice or legal representation, including representation in appeals.

- Tax advice or preparation.
- Determination of eligibility or benefit amounts, which is the responsibility of Minnesota Paid Leave.
- Submitting applications on an individual's behalf or using an individual's login credentials.
- Charging any fee to individuals served under this contract.

Preferred Qualifications

- Working knowledge of Minnesota's Paid Leave program, or a demonstrated plan to reach working proficiency within 30 days of contract execution.
- Experience providing direct assistance, benefits navigation, case management, or comparable individual-level support to members of the public.
- Ability to explain complex program requirements in plain language to individuals with varying levels of literacy, digital access, and familiarity with government programs.
- Experience serving rural or low-income individuals in northeastern Minnesota.
- Experience with Minnesota unemployment insurance, Earned Sick and Safe Time, MinnesotaCare, or comparable state programs.
- Experience developing and delivering adult education or workshop curriculum.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Comfort working with Microsoft Office software and video conferencing (Zoom, Teams).

Contract and Compensation

- Estimated contract amount: \$30,000 to \$50,000.
- Services are billed hourly for direct client contact time and reasonable preparatory time, plus pre-approved time for outreach activities, educational session development and delivery, and administrative meetings with the Paid Leave Education and Outreach team at the Northland Foundation.
- Proposals must include the consultant's proposed hourly rate and preferred number of hours per month.
- Preferred contracting hours will be considered but not guaranteed.
- Northland Foundation reserves the right to award all, part, or none of this engagement based on proposals received and to adjust the scope of this contract based on program needs.
- The Foundation may, at its sole discretion and subject to funding availability, extend the contract term or increase the contract amount for continued services.

Invoicing

The selected contractor will submit monthly invoices to Northland Foundation no later than the 8th of the following month, itemizing hours by the following categories:

- One-on-one applicant assistance sessions

- Group education session development
- Group education session delivery
- Pre-approved outreach activities
- Pre-approved professional development activities related to Paid Leave
- Administrative meetings with the Paid Leave Education and Outreach team

Contingencies

Issuance of this Request for Proposal does not obligate the Northland Foundation to award a contract. Any award is contingent on approval by DEED of an amendment adding this activity to the Foundation's approved work plan and budget and on the availability of grant funds. Continuation beyond the initial term is contingent on release of subsequent-year funding by the State of Minnesota.

How to Apply

If interested, please send the following in the body of an email to Jenny Eaton at jenny@northlandsbdc.org:

- Two to four paragraphs describing your interest in and qualifications for this work, including your experience assisting individuals with benefit or government programs, your knowledge of Paid Leave, and your approach to group education. Specify whether you prefer to meet with individuals virtually, in person (specify communities), or are open to either. You will not receive more consideration because of a longer or shorter email.
- Your proposed hourly rate and preferred number of hours per month.
- Your resume, or a link to your LinkedIn profile.
- Name of your business as registered with the Minnesota Secretary of State.

Deadline to apply: September 8, 2026, at 5:00 PM.

Proposal Evaluation and Selection Criteria

Category	Weight
Relevant Experience Assisting Individuals with Benefit or Government Programs	25%
Paid Leave Knowledge, or Credible Plan to Reach Proficiency	20%
Availability and Regional Coverage Fit	20%
Group Education and Curriculum Development Experience	15%
Cost per Hour of Direct Services (Including Reasonable Preparation Time)	10%
Communication and Professionalism	10%

Anticipated Timeline

- Application deadline: September 8, 2026, 5:00 PM
- Anticipated start date: November 1, 2026
- Initial contract term through: December 31, 2027

The Northland Foundation is a regional foundation serving the seven-county region of northeastern Minnesota and is host of the Northland Minnesota Small Business Development Center (SBDC). This project is funded in part through a grant from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. Programs are open to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities will be made if requested at least two weeks in advance. Northland Foundation is an equal opportunity employer, lender, and provider.