



Need Funding Assistance for Quality Management Systems Consulting and Training? Public Programs are Available to Help You!

Companies of all sizes can benefit from a variety of local, state and federal funding assistance programs to improve their quality management systems and upgrade employee skills. This broad definition covers ISO, Six Sigma, Lean, change management, leadership and basic skills training. Some of these programs offer matching funds while others provide tax credits. A few even bestow outright grants. However, gaining access to—and understanding—these funding programs can be a daunting task. That's why it pays to select a management consulting firm that knows how to navigate these often bewildering waters.

A Multitude of Funding Programs are Available to U.S. Companies

Funding assistance programs are designed to cover everything from maintaining high employment in local areas, to helping American companies combat foreign competition. Some state programs are even designed to counter out-of-state challenges by domestic competitors. Most programs offer financial assistance to upgrade employee skills and operating efficiency through training.

Typical Qualifying Criteria for Funding Assistance

Although most funding assistance programs are aimed at domestic manufacturers, financial help is also available for other industries that are facing foreign competition.

It is recognized that ISO, Six Sigma, Lean Manufacturing, change management and leadership training are key elements in continuous improvement, and streamlining key business processes. Since these disciplines yield results that strengthen domestic businesses, they are favored by many funding assistance programs.

Situations that typically qualify for some form of funding assistance include:

- When a business is being adversely affected by foreign or out-of-state competitors.
- If a company experiences falling sales due to the onslaught of foreign competition.
- If upgrading employee skills would demonstrably improve company performance or increase employee retention.
- When ISO registration is required by customers or international markets.
- When employee training provides enhanced skill sets that are transferable, or lead to an industry-recognized credential or certification.
- Creation of jobs, or preventing loss of jobs, due to a possible facility closing or changing technology.
- Creation of jobs as a result of a company relocating, or expanding into a state, or starting a business in a state.
- If a company provides critical services or goods to the Department of Defense.

An extensive array of funding programs is available to most types of businesses and manufacturers in particular. Taking advantage of these can significantly reduce—or even cover the complete cost for a company—to provide quality management systems training for its employees.



Examples of Nationwide Programs

Resource	Description
Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP)	MEP is a nationwide network of not-for-profit centers in nearly 350 locations nationwide. Their sole purpose is to provide small and medium sized manufacturers with the services they need to succeed. The centers, serving all 50 States and Puerto Rico, are linked together through the Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology. Centers are funded by federal, state, local and private resources to serve manufacturers.
Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)	Established by Congress in 1974, TAA is managed by business professionals who understand manufacturing. TAA focuses on providing financial assistance to import-impacted manufacturers. TAA offers 50/50 cost sharing of projects aimed at improving a manufacturer's competitive position. Specifically, these matching funds are applied toward the cost of consultants. Funds can be used for on- or off-site employee training. The eleven TAA centers throughout the country work with eligible firms in marketing, production, management and many other areas.

Under certain circumstances, other federal agencies also provide funding for employee training and skills upgrading. The Environmental Protection Agency and Commerce Department are just two examples.

Examples of State Programs

Most states have funding programs for the purpose of improving competitiveness in a global economy and business retention. Here are a few examples:

Resource	Description
California Employment Training Panel (ETP)	ETP is a California State agency that is designed to fund training which meets the needs of employers for skilled workers, and the need of workers for good, long-term jobs. The program supports the California economy, primarily by funding the retraining of incumbent, frontline workers in companies challenged by out-of-state competition.
Illinois Employer Training Investment Program (ETIP)	ETIP supports Illinois workers' efforts to upgrade their skills, in order to remain current in new technologies and business practices. This enables companies to remain competitive, expand into new markets and introduce more efficient technologies into their operations. ETIP grants may reimburse Illinois companies for up to 50 percent of the cost of training their employees.



Resource	Description
New York State Industrial Effectiveness Program (IEP)	IEP is a grant available to small and medium-sized manufacturing firms and industry groups within New York state. This grant provides up to \$50,000 for companies to obtain a wide variety of management consulting training support. Many organizations have accessed this funding for Lean Manufacturing and ISO quality systems training.
New Jersey Customized Training Grant Program (CTGP)	CTGP enhances the creation and retention of skilled jobs in New Jersey through comprehensive workforce training. The aim of the program is to upgrade skills, and enhance the knowledge and work-related abilities of New Jersey workers. It also focuses on improving the overall productivity, and economic well-being of employers. Today, over thirty-million dollars is available for Customized Training Grants.

Local County and City Programs Abound Too!

Many counties and cities offer incentives in the form of tax credits and other benefits to ensure that local companies remain financially healthy. Local governments support actions that create robust economies, and keep their tax base from moving elsewhere. Upgrading employee skills through ISO training, for example, enhances competitiveness and contributes to company growth—a saleable proposition to tap into many local funding programs.

Acquiring Funding Assistance for ISO and Other Training Requires Expertise

Each funding program has its own qualifying criteria and paperwork. The paperwork and processes involved are sometimes confusing and often intimidating. And packaging successful submissions often requires the assistance of an expert familiar with the targeted program.

The typical steps in pursuing financial assistance are to:

- Conduct a comprehensive training needs analysis. What problems or issues is the client experiencing?
- Specify the proposed solution. Create a succinct definition of the proposed training curriculum or consulting assignment, and explain how this will close the identified performance gaps.
- Identify an appropriate funding assistance program, and demonstrate how the proposed solution satisfies its criteria.
- Complete and process the required paperwork in a timely fashion. Sometimes, it can take months and several iterations for a request to be approved.
- Achieve notification of funding approval and the disbursement criteria.
- Administer the approved funding according to the program's rules and procedures.

Actual levels of funding assistance depend on the program. For example, TAA will share up to 50 percent of the cost for services that improve a manufacturer's competitive position. TAA pays for half of the cost of these services, up to \$150,000 in projects, with a maximum TAA share of \$75,000. On the other hand, the California ETP program funds companies 100 percent of monies



spent for qualified employee training. Also, New Jersey offers a \$22,000 ISO grant (regardless of company size), and customized training grants of up to \$1,000 per person trained.

The main obstacle for companies seeking funding assistance is a lack of familiarity with funding programs and the qualifying criteria. Finding the right program—and then preparing a funding proposal in the proper format—takes expertise that is outside the mainstream of most companies. Administering approved funding and complying with program regulations are also proficiencies lacking in many businesses.

It Pays to Align your Company with a Knowledgeable Consulting Firm

A management consulting firm that is well-versed in obtaining assistance funding for ISO and other continuous improvement skill-based training can dramatically cut costs for their clients. There is no substitute when it comes to successful experience with these programs—the hand that guides must be steady and sure.

Performing a comprehensive training needs analysis, finding the best funding program, navigating intricate paperwork and helping clients satisfy qualifying criteria requires seasoned expertise. Selecting a consulting firm that has a successful track record also gives clients confidence to proceed with training or other quality management projects, knowing that their funding proposal will likely be approved.

Experienced management consulting firms keep abreast of changing regulations and trends. They know how to expedite proposals, and overcome bureaucracy to successfully secure funding. And they issue status reports along the way, so that their clients are fully informed. Moreover, knowledgeable management consulting firms are proactive in advising their clients of funding opportunities and how these can be leveraged.

If a company is interested in getting financial help, it pays to partner with a consulting firm that has a successful track record in obtaining funding assistance. For example, Change Management Consulting, Inc. (CMC) is approved at local, state and federal levels. It has never had a funding application denied. Over the years, CMC has helped countless clients find the best grants and reimbursement programs to address a variety of training and management consulting needs. CMC even offers clients a funding guarantee for selected financial assistance programs.

More established management consulting firms, like CMC, have strategic relationships with dedicated resources that perform funding program management for their clients. This relieves them of this administrative burden. These assets closely monitor a client's compliance with the funding program's regulations. They efficiently manage data entry, tracking, reporting and invoicing. Knowing the ropes, they help clients maintain positive cash flows by expediting the release of program funds.

About the Author

Stanley Cherkasky is the Managing Partner of Change Management Consulting, Inc. (CMC), a thirteen-year-old firm providing worldwide management consulting, training and research for companies of all sizes. The firm has a proven track record in helping public and private sector clients implement quality management systems, improve performance, achieve goals and manage human resources more effectively. Headquartered in Wayne New Jersey—with offices in San Diego, Dallas and Detroit—CMC has extensive experience in obtaining grants and funding assistance for its clients. Learn more at www.cmc-changemanagement.com; contact CMC at (877) 268-2440 or e-mail the company at info@cmc-changemanagement.com.