

Youth Career Connect

Youth CareerConnect is a collaborative effort between the Department of Education and the Department of Labor that allows participants to gain academic and occupational skills to more adequately train students for the workforce by exposing them to experience in a targeted career path, largely in STEM industries. The program was established under President Obama's High School Redesign Initiative, and is currently funded at \$100 million. The American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act of 1998, as amended, authorized the Department to allocate a portion of H-1B visa (non-immigrants seeking employment in high-skill or specialty occupations) revenue toward funding job training services and related activities, and as such, a portion of Youth CareerConnect funding is derived from H-1B visa fees.

The estimated cost is between \$2-7 million per grant, with the Department projecting to award 25-40 grants. The proposed programs must support industries and occupations for which employers are currently using H-1B visas to hire foreign workers. The Department is particularly interested in programs that leverage federal, state, and local funds that are already established with the goal of transforming neighborhoods, schools, the workforce, and the regional economy. Programs must ensure that low-income students, other vulnerable youth—including students with disabilities—and populations underrepresented within H-1B fields, such as females and minorities, benefit from this program and have the supports needed to be successful.

Additionally, programs must:

- include an investment of time allocated specifically for professional learning that could include industry site-based residencies or internships;
- include intensive training and follow-up experiences to the training, such as individualized mentoring and focused coaching by master teachers and industry experts;
- facilitate professional collaboration;
- be focused on specific school and industry-based content with active learning opportunities that will transfer into effective teaching practices and curriculum;
- use multiple measures to evaluate professional learning and effectiveness of professional development

Goals:

- Ensure participants gain academic and occupational skills by completing the program and graduating from high school;
- Move into a positive placement following high school that includes unsubsidized employment, post-secondary education, long-term occupational skills training, or registered Apprenticeship;
- Obtain an industry-recognized credential in an H-1B industry or occupation for those industries where credential attainment is feasible by program completion, in addition to a high school diploma;
- Earn post-secondary credit towards a degree or credit-bearing certificate issued by an institution of higher education

Program models that extend beyond high school into 1 or 2 years of post-secondary education must have established strong partnerships with institutions of higher education, such as local community colleges or four-year universities. Program models extending into two years of post-

secondary education must result in either attainment of an Associate's degree, or entrance into a registered Apprenticeship program.

- Suggested Timeline:
 - Year 1-Research projects, guest speakers, site visits
 - Year 2-Job shadowing and observations in targeted career areas
 - Year 3-Additional job shadowing, a summer internship, and a formal, paid internship

The Department is seeking committed partners who will provide matching contributions and continue funding following the end of the grant to ensure program sustainability. Applicants are encouraged to propose a progressive match that increases with each year of the grant.

Program Sustainability:

- Focus on professional development [i.e. training of teachers, career counselors, staff and educating about industry of focus and how to incorporate it into the core curriculum]
- Develop a sustainability plan that outlines how the program will be designed to build capacity and continue to provide the same level of instruction and support to participants whose participation will extend beyond the grant period

Additionally, in order to evaluate program success, participants are required to report on performance measures:

- Short-term-
 - Enrollment rate
 - Attendance rate
 - Chronic Absence Rate
 - Mentoring rate
 - Yearly program retention rate
 - Work readiness indicator based on employer evaluation
 - Internship placement and completion rate
 - Post-secondary credit attainment rate
 - Average post-secondary credit hours
- Long-term-
 - Final program retention rate
 - High school diploma attainment rate
 - Credential attainment rate
 - Diploma and credit attainment rate
 - Placement rate

Applications were due January 27, 2014, and the decision will be made before April 1, 2014. The programs will begin on April 1, 2014, with a five month planning and implementation period, and will last up to 54 months.