

SPECIAL EDUCATION PERFORMANCE GRANT 2021-2022
Competitive Integrated Employment Grant

Request for Application (RFA)

I. PURPOSE OF THE COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT GRANT

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), Bureau of Special Education is requesting applications from Local Education Agencies (LEAs) interested in establishing or expanding effective, school-based competitive integrated employment programming for youth with disabilities. The term 'Competitive Integrated Employment' is defined as work that is performed on a full-time basis (including self-employment) -

(A) for which an individual -

(i) is compensated at a rate that -

(I)(aa) shall be not less than the higher of the rate specified in section 6(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. 206(a)(1)) or the rate specified in the applicable State or local minimum wage law; and

(bb) is not less than the customary rate paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by other employees who are not individuals with disabilities, and who are similarly situated in similar occupations by the same employer and who have similar training, experience, and skills; or

(II) in the case of an individual who is self-employed, yields an income that is comparable to the income received by other individuals who are not individuals with disabilities, and who are self-employed in similar occupations or on similar tasks and who have similar training, experience, and skills; and

(ii) is eligible for the level of benefits provided to other employees;

(B) that is at a location where the employee interacts with other persons who are not individuals with disabilities (not including supervisory personnel or individuals who are providing services to such employee) to the same extent that individuals who are not individuals with disabilities and who are in comparable positions interact with other persons; and

(C) that, as appropriate, presents opportunities for advancement that are similar to those for other employees who are not individuals with disabilities and who have similar positions.

The outcome of the Competitive Integrated Employment Grant is to provide youth with disabilities community-based paid work experiences during the 2021-2022 school year.

The purpose of the Competitive Integrated Employment Grant is to:

- 1) improve competitive integrated employment outcomes for youth with disabilities;
- 2) provide virtual and/or in-person work experiences, including but not limited to job shadowing, internship/practicum (paid/unpaid), cooperative education programs, apprenticeship, community-based work programs, and service learning (unpaid), with job coaching as appropriate, for youth with disabilities with preference for students at-risk of dropping out and/or youth who have difficulty obtaining employment, independently;
- 3) establish sites that can serve as models for community-based competitive employment for youth with disabilities; and
- 4) actively involve The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), County/Community-Based Behavioral Health, The Office of Intellectual Disabilities, Centers for Independent Living and other disability-specific support organizations during the development and implementation of the grant-related activities.
- 5) provide Job Coach training to LEA staff on the responsibilities and competencies needed to support transition-aged students build work-related skills in community-based settings.

II. APPLICATION CRITERIA AND GRANT PRIORITIES

A. ELIGIBILITY

Local Education Agencies, including school districts, intermediate units, approved private schools and charter schools and chartered schools for the Deaf and Blind are eligible to apply. Grant monies will be awarded to applicants that:

- 1) have the ability to partner with local business(es);

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- 2) collaborate with one or more of the following: The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, County/Community-Based Behavioral Health, The Office of Intellectual Disabilities, Centers for Independent Living and other disability-specific support organizations; and
- 3) are establishing or have an established school-based career readiness program.

The funding available for each successful grant applicant will be available from the date of the award through August 15, 2022.

- First time applicants are eligible for funding up to \$30,000.
- 2020-2021 Competitive Integrated Employment grantees who received funds up to \$30,000 are eligible for up to \$15,000 to extend current programming.

Note: 2020-2021 Competitive Integrated Employment grantees who received funds up to \$15,000 are not eligible to apply.

B. ASSURANCES

The grantee must agree to the following assurances to ensure quality and fidelity to the stated purposes of the grant.

- 1) Assurance that all activities and expenditures of funds conducted in association with the program are in direct compliance with the provisions of the funding authorities.
- 2) Assurance that reporting requirements will be submitted in a timely manner. Such reporting includes but is not limited to:
 - a. Efficacy and outcome data as directed by the funder and
 - b. Mid-year and summative report on specified activities and budget expenditures in a format to be provided by the grantor.
- 3) Assurance that program staff will participate in all required PaTTAN/PDE training and technical assistance activities.
- 4) Assurance to disseminate materials and effective programs/practices as requested by PDE including presenting project outcomes and lessons learned at the 2022 PDE Conference (March 2–4, 2022) and the 2022 Pennsylvania Community on Transition Conference (August 10-11, 2022).
- 5) Assurance that collaboration with appropriate partners to strengthen and extend impact will be a priority of the project and will include direct engagement of agency partners as part of grant planning and implementation.
- 6) Assurance that the Fair Labor Standards Act will be adhered to within the course of implementing the grant priorities.

C. GRANT PRIORITIES

The following essential program priorities must be addressed in the grant application.

- 1) **Identify students who will be targeted for this grant:** Targeted students need to be identified as youth with disabilities who have a primary post-secondary goal of competitive employment upon exiting high school, with preference for:
 - i. youth who are at risk of dropping out of school as determined by indicators of an early warning system
 - ii. youth who have difficulty obtaining employment, independently

Note: Priority consideration will be given to LEAs maximizing the number of students benefitting from this grant relative to the total number of students of transition age within the LEA.

- 2) **Implement an effective school-based career development program:** The grantee must codify that either:
 - i. a school-based career development program is currently in place and is being utilized to support transition planning for youth with disabilities
 - ii. a school-based career development program will be developed and utilized to support transition planning for youth with disabilities

Note: The following are components of a school-based career development program that can be delivered in an in-person or virtual setting.

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- a. Vocational assessment – an assessment that is used to identify employment opportunities by determining a student’s strengths, abilities and needs in an actual or simulated work setting or in real work sample experiences.
 - b. Person-centered planning process that is a strengths-based approach addressing:
 - self-determination
 - personal futures planning
 - unconditional care
 - family and other natural and community supports
 - systematic support and consultation
 - c. Career exploration – a process in which a student chooses an educational path, training or job which fits their interests, skills, and abilities (consider linkages to career education and work standards).
 - d. Instruction in employability skills, including:
 - workplace skills
 - employability skills
 - organizational knowledge
 - e. Self-advocacy skill development – developing skills, behaviors, and attitudes through direct instruction and/or added support, as necessary, that enable students to learn and grow in self-knowledge, social interactions, physical and emotional health, and self-determination.
 - f. Community mapping, including:
 - identification of high-priority jobs with family sustaining wages
 - job analysis
 - travel associated with community-based assessment and work experiences
 - g. Travel-related implications, including:
 - travel training for youth
 - transportation to/from community-based assessment and community-integrated work experiences
 - planning to support transportation acquisition
 - h. Unpaid and paid work experience with job coaching, as appropriate
 - i. Social Security Administration (SSA) benefits and work incentives planning assistance
- 3) **Collect student data:** The grantee must support each targeted youth’s development of a career portfolio representing the youth’s experience(s) and evidence of data collected during the grant period (consider linkages to career education and work standards).
- 4) **Sustainability:** The grantee must describe the vision for sustaining and/or continued expansion of the project at the end of the grant period.
- 5) **Engage family/caregivers as partners in transition planning:** The grantee must engage family/caregivers as participants in the transition process using a variety of activities and resources designed to provide an overview of the grant, strengthen the understanding of secondary transition, and provide an outline of the requirements for competitive, community-integrated employment.
- 6) **Engage relevant LEA personnel:** The grantee must engage the following school-based personnel, as appropriate:
- i. general and special education administrators
 - ii. career and technology education personnel
 - iii. secondary transition coordinator
 - iv. school counselor
 - v. general and special educators
 - vi. individuals who support students in work settings
- 7) **Engage agency and community partners in transition planning:** Based upon the needs of the targeted students, the grantee must engage local agency staff such as The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, County/Community-Based Office of Behavioral Health, County-Based Office of Intellectual Disabilities, and/or the local Center for Independent Living in the development and implementation of the grant project. The grantee must submit one or more letter(s) of support from the local agencies in its grant application.
- 8) **Engage business in transition planning and implementation:** The grantee must engage community businesses with the intent to support unpaid and/or paid work experiences that will lead to competitive integrated employment for youth upon completion of high school, with preference given to the following:

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- i. Community-based experiences for youth supported by the project that result in businesses providing youth with paid work experiences while the youth are still in school.

D. ADDITIONAL GRANT REQUIREMENTS

Beyond the priorities delineated in section II.C, Grant Priorities, funded projects must also demonstrate a commitment to the following activities associated with each of the two (2) work-phases of the Competitive Integrated Employment Grant.

- 1) Phase 1 – Planning for Implementation (Timeline: From date of award through February 25, 2022)
 - a. Identify students (by primary disability category) who will be supported through the grant-funded project.
 - b. Conduct a community-based assessment, using county based job market data from the PA Department of Labor <https://www.workstats.dli.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx> regarding integrated, high-priority jobs with family sustaining wages that are within reasonable proximity of the grantee.
 - c. Based on the results of the community-based assessment, identify and provide letters of support from employers who are willing to provide integrated, community-based, unpaid and/or paid work experience for students who will be supported through the grant-funded project.
 - d. Match students, based on the learners' interests, aptitudes, and abilities, with employers who are willing to provide integrated, community-based, unpaid and/or paid work experiences.
 - e. Establish Letters of Agreement (LOA) with local employers to provide the work experiences for students who will be supported through the grant-funded project. The LOA must identify how the participating students will be paid as a result of the work experience, if applicable. Note: Grant funds cannot be used to pay student wages.
 - f. Establish methods by which to monitor the performance of students in the integrated, community-based work experience.
 - g. Participate in supported and/or customized employment training based upon targeted students as needed.
 - h. Identify a minimum of one individual from the LEA to complete the Job Coach Training modules.
- 2) Phase 2 - Implementation (Timeline: From completion of Phase 1 through August 15, 2022)
 - a. Assign students to their integrated, community-based employment settings.
 - b. Monitor the performance of students in the integrated, community-based employment settings.
 - c. Completion of the Job Coach Training modules by a minimum of one individual from the LEA.

E. TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Grant awardees will receive support as follows:

- 1) Technical assistance provided by PaTTAN and Intermediate Unit Training and Consultation (TaC) System personnel.
- 2) Technical assistance and networking opportunities supporting the following:
 - i. Initial grant application training on required grant elements
 - ii. PaTTAN and PDE trainings and/or meetings designed to provide support for funded project priorities
 - iii. No less than two (2) onsite visits with PaTTAN and Intermediate Unit TaC System staff
 - iv. Other assistance, as determined by the need of the grantee
- 3) Training for a minimum of one individual within the LEA provided through the PaTTAN developed Job Coach Training course. This online course will include five modules in which the individual will learn responsibilities and competencies needed to support students with disabilities accurately carry out job duties.

III. BUDGET

The funding available to each successful grant application is as follows:

- First time applicants are eligible for funding up to \$30,000.
- 2020-2021 Competitive Integrated Employment grantees who received funds up to \$30,000 are eligible for up to \$15,000 to extend current programming.

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Note: 2020-2021 Competitive Integrated Employment grantees who received funds up to \$15,000 are not eligible to apply.

The following terms will apply:

- During Phase 1 (Timeline: From date of award through February 25, 2022) the grantee is eligible to request reimbursements of expenditures attributed to Phase 1 activities for up to half of the overall grantee's award contingent upon submission of baseline data and participation in onsite visit(s) with PaTTAN consultants.
- During Phase 2 (Timeline: From completion of Phase 1 through August 15, 2022), the grantee is eligible to request reimbursement of expenditures attributed to the whole of the project contingent upon submission of mid-year and end of year data, and participation in the PDE and Transition Conferences.
- Equipment costs, clothing (except work uniforms – not streetwear), gift cards, food and entertainment, and student salaries are not allowable expenses.
- General supplies must be purchased prior to May 31, 2022.

IV. APPLICATION SUBMISSION

The application can be accessed from the Secondary Transition webpage of the PaTTAN Website (<https://www.pattan.net/Graduation-Post-Secondary-Outcomes/Educational-Initiatives>) or using the following link:
https://fs25.formsite.com/3fHiZQ/deynlzuqtl/form_login.html

Applications must be submitted by **3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 31, 2021.**

Note: Use of the Google Chrome browser will allow for easiest navigation. Applicants have the ability to save and return to the application as needed. The online application platform will enable applicants to upload letters of support and provide electronic signatures.