



PROPOSAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Project SEARCH Statewide Initiative Competitive Proposal Announcement

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is seeking local districts or cohort of districts to participate in a statewide initiative to replicate the Project SEARCH High School Transition Program. This competitive proposal process is being issued to provide training and work experience opportunities for students with significant intellectual/developmental disabilities that will lead to and enhance successful competitive employment outcomes. The primary objective will be to implement Project SEARCH, an innovative, well grounded, nationally acclaimed, and business-led career training and education program, in our local communities.

This document contains a thorough description of Project SEARCH and the DESE requirements for the Missouri Statewide Initiative. Proposal description and design instructions can be found on page 5 of this document. Instructions for submitting a proposal are on page 6.

If you have questions or difficulties with the proposal, please contact Barb Gilpin, (Barb.Gilpin@dese.mo.gov) or Connie Walk (Connie.Walk@dese.mo.gov) **by email** no later than *5:00 p.m. on December 1, 2011*.

Project SEARCH High School Transition Program

The High School Transition Program is a one-year educational program for students with significant intellectual and developmental disabilities in their last year of high school. It is targeted for students whose main goal is competitive employment. The program takes place in a healthcare or business setting where total immersion in the workplace facilitates the teaching and learning process through continuous feedback and application of new skills.

A typical school day includes:

- Classroom instruction in employability and independent living skills
- Participation in worksite rotations
- Lunch with peers
- Feedback from the instructor

Job development, business development and individualized placement begin after the rotations are completed. Students are given support through on-the-job coaching and work site accommodations with the ultimate goal of independence.

For information about Project SEARCH, visit the website at: <http://www.projectsearch.us/>.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT SEARCH HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION PROGRAM:

Program Eligibility: The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program serves students with significant disabilities who are 18 to 21 years of age. Specifically, these are students who are on an Individual Education Program (IEP) and have a desire to achieve competitive employment. The students involved with the Project SEARCH High School Transition Program will access Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funding through their local school system to participate in the project.

Program Overview: Students attend the program for a full school year. Each program site is based in a place of business. The business provides access to an onsite classroom that can accommodate up to 12 students. Each site is staffed by a teacher and a job coaches. The required credentials for teachers include a special education or vocational education certificate. An Advisory Board made up of Project SEARCH teachers and co-directors, an additional special education expert, Vocational Rehabilitation counselors, local Developmental Disabilities Agency representatives, employer representatives, parents, and students with disabilities oversees each program site. In addition, program sites will be monitored by a core team of agency personnel including the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

Admissions, Orientation, and Assessment: Students are referred to the program through their schools and apply in the winter and spring of the year prior to entering the program. Project SEARCH teachers and co-directors carry out the selection process with input from the Advisory Board. Students are notified of their acceptance in the spring before entering the program. Student preparation over the summer includes a tour of the workplace with visits to potential work sites, and a home visit with their Project SEARCH teacher. These visits are an opportunity for students to get to know their teachers so that they will find a familiar face when they enter a new environment at the start of the school year. It is also a time when the teachers can discuss program goals and expectations with students and their parents and observe the home environment. A picnic with Project SEARCH staff, students and their families is another important summer orientation event that helps to foster a sense of community and establish a supportive cohort system among the students.

Transportation to and from the program site is another issue addressed in the summer. Transportation is the responsibility of the student.

Once the school year begins, the first few weeks of the program are focused on student assessment and familiarization with a new environment. Students undergo a specially designed career assessment with their teacher. The assessment explores math and reading skills, as well as basic job skills, such as filing, folding, telephone use, and ability to follow instructions.

Classroom Curriculum: The day begins with a one-hour classroom lesson based on a curriculum that stresses employability and independent living skills. Throughout the school year classroom activities are designed around seven major focus areas: self-esteem, communication, career exploration and job search, interviewing skills, job retention, money management, and independent living. Nutrition, budgeting, and workplace attitude are examples of the specific topics covered. The curriculum is flexible and allows teachers to design lessons around the core topics and to adjust the curriculum based on specific student and employer needs. For example, at the beginning of the year lessons are focused on general skills needed to function in the workplace, such as, learning how to get around, making good choices in the cafeteria, and appropriate dress and grooming. In addition, the curriculum can be customized to the students' specific career assessment and outcomes to ensure a meaningful and successful experience.

Linkages: Project SEARCH staff are familiar with community resources and routinely assist students in accessing the services they need. All students are linked with a vocational counselor through Office of Adult Learning and Rehabilitation Services (VR). This permits partial funding for the job-coaching and job placement services received through the program. Other examples of linkages include Department of Mental Health (DMH) or special services related to hearing, speech, or visual impairments. Additional linkages to appropriate community services are made as the need arises.

Worksite Rotations: Students build communication and problem-solving skills, as well as job specific skills, through worksite rotations. These are unpaid student internships. Potential student worksites are identified through a continuous collaborative process involving the teacher, Project SEARCH directors, the employer liaison, and specific worksite supervisors. For the students, work rotations begin in the second month of the program, usually totaling three to four sites per student by the end of the program. The student and teacher work together to choose worksites based on that student's previous work experience, interests, and skills assessment, and a market analysis of available jobs in the community. Students are required to interact with their supervisors via telephone and written communication to arrange a job interview and scheduling details.

Time spent on each work experience is flexible. Students may spend several weeks to several months on each work site depending on factors such as the complexity of the job, tasks to be learned, and benefits to the student. Job coaches and business partner staff collaborate to provide support for students. Job coaches may be phased out when a student gains independence on certain tasks. Students may also participate in more than one work experience at a time, depending on the scheduling needs of the employer and the student.

Job Placement and Community Connections: During the last few months of the program the emphasis is on refining skills, defining a career goal and carrying out individualized job placement. Job development and placement occurs throughout the program based on the student's experiences, strengths, and skills. To ensure a successful transition to employment and adult life, linkages to appropriate services in the community are critical as students prepare to graduate from the program. Specific availability of services varies with the locale. But, in most cases, assistive technology and/or accommodations required to perform a specific job (job coaching, and long-term follow up) can be arranged for eligible students through Office of Adult Learning and Rehabilitation, Department of Mental Health and local Developmental Disabilities agencies.

Upon satisfactory completion of the program (95% or better attendance, good attitude, successful skill acquisition at each job site) students receive a "Career Passport". The contents of this packet will vary among replicated program sites, but generally the packets contain a resume, letters of recommendation, a competency profile, any awards or special recognition received while in the program, and a Career and Technical Certificate administered by the local site.

STATEWIDE INITIATIVE SITE ACTIVITIES AND REQUIREMENTS:

1. The Project SEARCH model depends on strong partnerships between employers, education providers and social service agencies. Applicants are responsible for establishing a local collaborative that includes the following partners, at a minimum, with the corresponding dedicated staff:
 - a. Local School District – one full-time, Special Education teacher
 - b. Vocational Rehabilitation Job Coaches
 - c. A Business where the classroom will be located.
 - d. Department of Mental Health (DMH)
 - e. Local providers – including SB 40

Collaboratives are encouraged to include other partners as deemed appropriate.

2. The Project SEARCH Co-Director assists sites in developing a marketing plan. Local sites are encouraged to identify 2-3 potential business partners prior to the Proposal process, but are discouraged from making contact with the employers about specifics without support from the Project SEARCH Co-Directors. As part of their commitment to the project, the business will be asked to provide an on-site classroom for the project.
3. Sites will receive a “Start-Up Kit” to aid in replication of the Project SEARCH model. Start-up items will include program curriculum, job analyses, program guidelines, accommodations and adaptations, funding strategies, sample contracts, presentation materials, and videos.
4. Sites will be required to attend a two-day session at a central location in Missouri for the purpose of becoming oriented to Project SEARCH and to begin developing their marketing plans to their local business partners. Travel expenses are included in the project budget.
5. Sites will be required to attend a one-day orientation tour /open house at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Project SEARCH site in Cincinnati, Ohio. Travel expenses are included in the budget.
6. Sites are required to serve 8-12 students per year with a goal of placing a minimum of eight students in competitive employment upon program completion.

FUNDING:

DESE will provide funding to districts to contract with Project SEARCH and to offset the cost of training, technical assistance, travel to national/local meetings and the site license. Awards will be \$65,000 per site.

It is the intent of this project to create a sustainable service delivery system based on the Project SEARCH model which draws on existing resources from FTE dollars, (teacher moves with class to site), Average Daily Attendance funding, Vocational Rehabilitation funding, and Medicaid Waiver.

PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION AND DESIGN

1. **How do you propose to support and manage a project of this scale? (20 points)**
Please provide written details that include job titles and job descriptions of all individuals who will be involved in this project and a description of program activities. Ensure that the minimum staff and collaborative requirements are addressed as outlined in the accompanying program description.
2. **Identify who will be the on-site lead from your organization for this project. (20 points)**
This individual must have sufficient experience and qualifications that include, but are not limited to, special education, transition, and supported employment for students with significant intellectual/developmental disabilities. Please include the potential staff name with qualifications and experience.
3. **How will your organization provide staff and coverage when the assigned staff is unavailable for support? (10 points)**
Does your organization have a generic plan or process to ensure that service is continued without gaps?
4. **How does your organization strategize to develop natural supports? Provide specific examples. (10 points)**
5. **Please provide examples of effective current supported employment and/or transition services partnerships. Include communication strategies, relationships, etc. (10 points)**
6. **Provide confirmation of your school district's ability to contribute ADA funding for each student participating in this project. (10 points)**
7. **Provide evidence of the required collaborative and minimum dedicated staff as outlined in the accompanying program description through letters of commitment from the local Office of Adult Rehabilitation and Learning (VR). (20 points)**
8. **Budget (10 points)**
The DESE is providing funding to each recipient to cover travel expenses related to attending orientation, training expenses related to technical assistance and payment of the site license to Project SEARCH (\$30,000).
9. **Market analysis of available jobs in the community. (10 points)**
Estimate the budget that you think will be required to replicate Project SEARCH in your area.

PROPOSAL TIMELINE

Project SEARCH Statewide Initiative Proposals are to be **postmarked** and received in the DESE office no later than December 20, 2011 at 5:00 p.m. Emails or faxes **will not** be accepted.

- If you have questions or difficulties with the proposal, please contact Barb Gilpin, Barb.Gilpin@dese.mo.gov, or Connie Walk, Connie.Walk@dese.mo.gov, **by email before December 1, 2011**
- Decisions on selection will be completed by January 8, 2012.
- Posting: January 8, 2012
- Anticipated date for letters of agreement: February 1, 2012.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL

1. Project SEARCH Statewide Initiative Proposals must be sealed, clearly marked, “*Project SEARCH*” and addressed to Attn: Barb Gilpin, DESE, Office of Special Education, Effective Practices Section, P. O. Box 480, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 and delivered *postmarked no later than December 20, 2011 at 5:00 PM CST DESE office.*
2. Emails or faxes **will not** be accepted.
3. Proposals must not exceed ten (10) single-sided 8.5” x 11” pages with one inch margins. The proposal length **does not include** table of contents, cover page, or the budget pages. Proposals over ten pages in length will not be considered for selection.
4. An **original and five (5) printed copies** of the proposal are required. At least one copy of the proposal submitted to DESE must contain an original signature of an official who is authorized to bind the organization to their proposal.