

Administrative Memo

Date: October 17, 2014
To: Superintendents, High School Principals, Area Career Center Directors, and Postsecondary Deans and Directors
From: Sharon Helwig, Ph.D.
Assistant Commissioner
Subject: CCR-14-014 – Fiscal Year 2016 Vocational-Technical Education Enhancement Grants

Established through the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993, the Vocational-Technical Education Enhancement Grant continues to serve as a mainstay in the growth and expansion of quality career education in Missouri. With the focus of funds directed towards curriculum, instructional equipment, and facility improvement of career education programs, the Enhancement Grant is committed to providing students with the tools and experience needed to be successful in a high demand career occupation.

Each year the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is required to post a request for grant awards through the [Vocational-Technical Education Enhancement Grant Administrative Planning Guide](#). This guide outlines the grant award process, as well as establishes allowable and non-allowable expenditures.

Please note that the application processes are changing from what has been in use for the most recent two grant cycles. Rather than continue use of emailed narratives and fiscal administration through Excel-based files, the entire application process and financial management will be done via Department web applications, ePeGS and Leader. Tailored access to those resources is still under construction and is not anticipated to be complete until early January 2015. Final construction and testing must be completed before any instructions unique to Vocational-Technical Education Enhancement Grants are released for these systems.

However, we believe the process of planning may require more time for districts and institutions, and are releasing the application guidelines for fiscal year 2016 so that work can be begin now, with what is anticipated as a shorter timeline necessary for data entry once preparation of the web applications are finished.

The information below outlines the implementation process and some of the administrative and procedural changes for fiscal year 2016.

Implementation Process

1. Districts will submit electronic, online requests for enhancement grant funds through Department-based web applications no later than February 6, 2015.
2. The narrative component of the application consists of responses to writing prompts. It requires a detailed improvement plan for each program that includes eligible courses during the 2015-2016 school year, and for which the applicant district or institution seeks grant funding. Planned improvements will continue to provide a focus on identified needs and solutions, but will include measurable objectives, which enable both grantees and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to gauge the impact of the funding on improved instruction and student performance.

3. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will review all program improvement plans and notify any applicant with a plan failing to meet minimum qualification for funding that they have thirty (30) calendar days from the point of notification to make necessary changes in order to remain eligible for funding
 4. Once the Department has reviewed all qualifying applications and the resulting cumulative sum of all preliminary grant awards, a determination will be made whether reductions will be required due to a lack of available funds. Due to administrative changes detailed below, the potential will exist at this point in the implementation period for a grantee to propose an alternative budget.
 5. Once grant award notification has been made, the district will be allowed to expend funds after July 1, 2015.
 6. The district will submit reimbursement requests using ePeGS. Requests can be made monthly or quarterly, or at the end of a trimester, semester or school year.
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Equipment cost threshold

The cost threshold for equipment has increased from \$200 to \$1,000, for those items reimbursed up to 75% of authorized cost. Items priced between \$200 and \$999 which were previously categorized as equipment will remain eligible for reimbursement, but at 50%.

Minimum Expenditure Expectations

Inflated funding level requests, coupled with under expenditure of some grant awards has contributed to significant reimbursement reductions being levied to all grantees. In an effort to bring funding requests more in line with actual expenditures, grantees will be expected to expend no less than 80% of awarded funds. Failure to comply over two grant periods will result in an applied penalty for the next funding request.

It is for this reason that a 30 calendar day allowance will be in place for grantees to prepare a secondary budget for which they are responsible for expenditure at a rate of no lower than 80%. This clause will only apply if their original funding request is reduced by 10% or more.

Elimination of Enrollment Dependent Caveat for Equipment/Materials

For eligible programs that have been in place for three years or more, grantees will be allowed to approach or meet the goal of provision of instructional equipment and materials for students on a 1:1 basis dependent on a formulaic application based upon the number of program concentrators. Exceptions to the formula will be given consideration by the Department.

Programs with less than three years' data will negotiate the number of allowable units with the Department on a case-by-case basis.

Please contact Doug Sutton for more information at (573) 526-2466 or doug.sutton@dese.mo.gov if you have any questions regarding the Enhancement Grant or modifications noted within this memo.