



**VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

Guidelines for the Regional Career Pathways System Grants

*Issued by Virginia Community College System on behalf of
the State Career Pathways System Taskforce*

June 22, 2010

I. Purpose of Grants

The Virginia Community College System (VCCS), on behalf of Virginia's Career Pathways System, announces a grant competition for three regionally based \$75,000 grant awards for the period August 1, 2010 through December 31, 2011. The VCCS will fund three regional grant awards, in part, through support provided by the Ford Foundation. Grants will be administered, at a state level, by the VCCS in collaboration with the State Career Pathways Taskforce comprised of representatives of the Office of the Secretary of Education, Commonwealth of Virginia; VCCS; Virginia Department of Education (VDOE); State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV); Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP); and Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI). The purpose of the grant awards is to support development of operational frameworks through which regions can build or improve career pathways systems.

Specifically, regions receiving a Career Pathways System grant award will produce the following:

- A regional plan for career pathways system development that brings together and aligns the workforce development efforts of key partners within a career pathways system, such as economic development organization; Workforce Investment Boards; employers; and education and training institutions and support services providers
- A demonstration project that addresses at least one of the following goals: (a) encourages and facilitates the use of data for improved connections between career pathways system partners and improved analysis and reporting of educational or training program outcomes; (b) encourages successful transitions by participants between different levels of education and training, such as transitions from secondary to postsecondary education or from adult education to postsecondary education as well as transitions from education to employment; or (c) expands the provision of supportive services—such as academic advising and career coaching—to increase retention and completion rates of participants in career pathway and workforce development programs.

Both the required regional plan for career pathways system development and the demonstration project may address the entire regional workforce, or a specific population of participants within a region's workforce system such as high school students, young adults without a high school diploma or equivalency, college students, working adults, displaced workers, or youth or adults with specific barriers to education and employment such as foster youth or single parents. The \$75,000 grants to be awarded to three regions should align with existing efforts in each region to provide and expand business-based career pathways. The Career Pathways System grant funds also should serve to leverage other funds available to the career pathway partners in the region, including federal or state grants, private foundations, or local sources.

II. Eligible Organizations

The expectation is that these new \$75,000 grants will be issued to organizations representing a regional partnership that is comprised of at least some of the following partners in a career pathways system: economic development organization, Workforce Investment Boards, community colleges, universities, private colleges and technical schools, school divisions, adult education programs, social services agencies, and community based organizations. Of these partners, any of the following may apply for the grant on behalf of the other identified partners:

- Regional economic development organization
- Workforce Investment Boards
- Community Colleges
- Universities
- School Divisions
- Regional Career and Technical Education Centers
- A foundation or other organization whose mission is relevant to career pathways system development and the goals and objectives of this grant.

Organizations selected by the region's career pathways system stakeholders to serve as administrative and fiscal agents for this grant should be engaged currently in leadership activities related to regional economic development, or development and assessment of career pathways or workforce development programs in the region. The \$75,000 grants will be awarded as reimbursable grants, with requests for reimbursement to be provided on at least a quarterly basis to the VCCS. Fiscal agents for regional partners must have the infrastructure and means to support reporting and reimbursement processes that are standard to grants issued by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the VCCS.

For the purposes of this grant, a region may be determined by the partners who collaboratively apply for a grant. Applicants may choose to work within the regional boundaries established by the Workforce Investment Act system, VDOE superintendent regions, or other classifications of regions within Virginia employed by economic development, local governments, or common practice.

III. Proposal Submissions

Three hard copies of the grant application, including one with original signatures and two with copies of original signatures included, are due to the VCCS on or before Friday, July 30, 2010. Mailed applications should be addressed to Elizabeth J. Moran, Virginia Community College System, 101 N. 14th Street, James Monroe Building, 17th Floor, Richmond, VA 23219. In addition to providing the VCCS with three hard copies of the application, including signature pages, narrative proposal, Excel spreadsheet work plan, and line item budget, applicants must also send an electronic copy of all of the above materials on or before July 27, 2010 to wdsgrants@vccs.edu.

Grant awards will be reviewed by a multi-agency team and announced by Friday, August 6, 2010. Regions receiving grants will be required to send a team of four to five representatives from the partners participating in grant projects to a one and a half day statewide grant orientation and career pathways training workshop to take place in Richmond on August 18-19, 2010. Hotel accommodations and meals during the training will be provided through the VCCS in part through Ford Foundation funding. Regions will be responsible for providing other travel costs such as mileage and per diem for meals not provided at the training session.

IV. Pre-Proposal Webinar

A pre-proposal webinar is scheduled for Thursday, July 8, 2010 at 10:00 AM to respond to queries from organizations interested in submitting proposals and to provide national literature and models of career pathways projects. Additionally, applicants can find resource materials related to the grant, including RFP guidelines and applications, Virginia's career pathways plan, and national publications and career pathways models at www.vccs.edu/workforce/grants.

V. Project Background

In December 2008, Virginia initiated the development of a statewide career pathways system encompassing Virginians from kindergarten through retirement through a multi-agency Governor-endorsed state plan: *Bridging Business and Education for the 21st Century Workforce: A Strategic Plan for Virginia's Career Pathways System*. The Career Pathways Task Force that led development of the plan included representatives from the Office of the Governor, Department of Labor and Industry, State

Council for Higher Education, Virginia Community College System, Virginia Department of Education, and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership. The final plan was developed through a yearlong process that included extensive research including reviews of national literature and career pathways models; interviews with state and local leaders of secondary and postsecondary education, economic and workforce development, and business and industry; and strategic planning sessions.

As defined by the state plan, a career pathway system is a series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry or occupational sector and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education or employment in that sector. Each step in a career pathway should be designed explicitly to prepare for the next level of employment and education. A fully evolved career pathways system should bring together education and training programs serving in school and out of school youth, working adults and those who are displaced from work or transitioning into initial employment or from one industry sector to another, as well as hard to serve populations such as potential or incumbent workers with disabilities, language barriers, criminal records, or other barriers to education and career progression.

A fully mature career pathways system would involve a partnership of economic development, Workforce Investment Boards, employers, education and training institutions. These partnerships will drive a common vision, goals and objectives, and a framework for better aligning education and training and support services provided by school divisions including adult education programs; community colleges including workforce development programs; universities; private colleges and technical schools; apprenticeships; social services and community-based organizations; and One Stop Career Centers so as to improve the readiness and potential of local residents to enter today's increasingly fast-paced and technical workplace and gain the skills and credentials needed to progress in high demand, high wage, and highly skilled career fields.

After researching and examining data and consulting with national experts and state and local leaders in Virginia, the state plan for a career pathways system concludes the following:

- Education and training systems in Virginia need to be better aligned
- Connections to the business community and the labor market need to be strengthened
- Support services (such as career and academic advising and coaching) at all levels of education and training need to be bolstered
- Enrollment in and access to post-secondary education and training needs to be increased

- Education and training needs to become more rigorous to meet the skill demands for 21st century careers.

Since the release of the plan, the Virginia Workforce Council has adopted responsibility of statewide leadership and advocacy of the Career Pathways System Development. Agency representatives on the Career Pathways System Taskforce, in cooperation with Workforce Council members, currently are working on action items to move forward on state level goals and recommendations of the state career pathways plan, which include guidelines for One-Stop Career Centers on how they can incorporate career pathways into their delivery of services; a model for more effectively transitioning adult education participants into postsecondary education programs, such as those offered by community colleges; and establishment of a state level Labor Market Information advisory group, and guidelines for increasing the role of registered apprenticeship in advancing attainment of postsecondary credentials. Each of these specific projects relates to the statewide goals of Virginia's career pathways plan that are referenced above as does the regional career pathways grant project that is the subject of this request for proposal.

VI. Grant Deliverables

Each of the three regional grant recipients will be responsible for delivering the following:

- Participation in an initial grant orientation and career pathways training workshop to be held August 18-19, 2010 in Richmond. A regional team of four to five representatives from primary partners in the proposed regional project should be in attendance at this meeting.
- A regional strategic plan, for the period 2010-2013, for developing or expanding career pathways and for collecting data to assess their impact and drive improvement. The strategic plan must bring together economic and workforce development with education, training and support services providers. The plan must include an overview of strengths and weaknesses of the region in terms of career pathways for the targeted population(s) addressed in the plan, analysis of gaps in existing services and service delivery goals, recommendations and action items, and a timeline. A template for the regional career pathways plans will be provided at the August 18-19, 2010 project orientation for regional teams selected to participate in the grant project.
- As applicable, charters or Memorandums of Understanding, signed by all participating partners, to ensure implementation of the strategic plan beyond the grant cycle. A template of a charter establishing regional career pathways will be provided at the August 18-19, 2010 statewide grant orientation and career pathways training workshop.

- A demonstration project that moves forward at least one of the goals highlighted in the state career pathways strategic plan and evaluation of the success of this demonstration project. The demonstration project should focus on a specific target population such as high school students, young adults without a high school diploma or equivalency, college students, working adults, displaced workers, or youth or adults with specific barriers to education and employment such as foster youth or single parents as determined by the region. Goals in the state career pathways strategic plan that could be addressed through regional demonstrations include, but are not limited, to the following:
 - Facilitating the use of data: An example of a demonstration project might be sharing data on the impact of a specific regional career pathway initiative on postsecondary education access and credential attainment by participants or on employment and persistence in employment in targeted industry sector(s).
 - Encouraging transitions among education and employment systems or between education and training levels: An example of a demonstration project might be development and assessment of instructional programs for adult education participants that develop basic skills through contextual work-based learning targeted to high demand career fields available in the region or developing and delivering occupationally specific training through a Middle College program.
 - Expanding the provision of support services to increase persistence and completion rates of the target population in attainment of education and workforce credentials: An example of a demonstration project might be expanding the VCCS career coach model to WIA youth services or adult education providers or partnering with businesses to deliver career coaching to adults in the workplace.
- Progress, annual, and final reports that provide both quantitative and qualitative data on progress activities and outcomes. Templates of progress, annual and final reports will be provided at the August 18-19, 2010 grant orientation and career pathways training workshop.

VII. Anticipated Outcomes

Regions participating in the regional career pathways system development grant project will be evaluated based on the following outcomes:

1. Establishment or chartering of a formal, ongoing working group for career pathways for each region. This may involve establishment of a new working group or chartering of an existing group to fulfill this function and oversee the regional career pathways system grant.
2. Increase in the number of Memoranda of Understanding among partners in the grant project and of joint applications for additional grant funding, such as federal, state, and foundation issued grants.
3. Increase in the number of stakeholders providing active and measurable support (such as personnel, technology, and fiscal resources) for improvement of career pathway programs and services
4. Increase in the integration of program elements of career pathways as defined by Virginia's strategic plan for a statewide career pathways system. Specific evidence of increased integration of career pathway elements in regional programs may include but is not limited to the following: increases in articulation agreements between education and training partners; increased levels of coaching, advising or mentoring efforts to program participants including students, adult workers, and those seeking employment services; increased levels of attainment of workforce credentials including degrees, college certificates, industry certifications and licensures; increased levels of experience-based learning in education and workforce development programs; increased numbers of employers participating in apprenticeship programs; and increased use of methods to award college credits to adult workers for certifications and licensures, non-credit training and workforce experience
5. Improvements in the number of targeted participants served, participant outcomes, and participant satisfaction levels with services provided

VIII. Evaluation Criteria for Ranking Proposals

Proposals will be ranked by a multi-agency grant review team based on the following criteria:

1. Alignment of Proposal's Goals and Objectives and Planned Activities with State Career Pathways Plan and with national research and models—30 pts
2. Alignment of Proposed Activities with Grant Goals and Objectives including Required Deliverables—30 pts

3. Significance of Project to Economic and Workforce Development Interests—10 pts
4. Representation and Engagement of Required Stakeholders—10 pts
5. Adequacy of Budget and Committed Resources to Support Project Design—20 pts

IX. Authorized Uses of Career Pathways System Funds

Below is a list of allowable and unallowable expenditures for the Career Pathways System grants. The VCCS will not reimburse college expenses for items listed as Unallowable Expenses. Contact Elizabeth J. Moran (emoran@vccs.edu) for questions regarding authorized uses of Career Pathways System funds.

Allowable Expenses

- All or part of administrative and support staff positions to support grant activities and produce deliverables. Administrators, administrative staff, education and training and support services positions—including advisors, coaches, and mentors--may be supported through the grant, either on a full or part time basis. Grant funds may be used to provide salaries and benefits of existing personnel provided that time and effort to be funded are dedicated to grant activities.
- National, state and local travel of project participants for grant related activities
- Non-personnel administrative expenses such as laptops and office supplies that are specific to the activities of the grant project and that do not supplant or replace other available funds (less than \$5,000)
- Consultant fees and travel
- Meeting costs including facility rentals, working meals, facilitation, and evaluation services
- Costs to produce and disseminate regional plans, to produce required reports, and to disseminate outcomes and findings of demonstration projects

- Costs to produce strategic plan including sustainability and marketing plans as needed
- Research and evaluation projects, including costs of external evaluators, and associated fees such as travel
- Costs of services and products to support demonstration project including education and training and support services provided to participants provided that such support does not supplant or duplicate federal, state or local funds currently available within the region to provide the same type or level of support to the targeted population of participants.
- Costs of participant assessments as needed including testing for certifications and licensures if not otherwise already provided or available through state or local funds

Unallowable Expenses

- Indirect costs
- Alterations to classrooms
- Furniture and facilities other than a facilities rental fee for meetings, workshops, and other grant related events
- Equipment other than that required to support administration of the grant (such as laptops, fax machines, and software)
- Overhead or costs to operate the facilities of the authorized fiscal agent
- Fines and penalties
- Promotional items that do not also have an identifiable educational or informational purpose that clearly relates to the career pathways system grant. Brochures or Web sites that provide stakeholders or participants with information about specific regional career pathways are allowable; general promotional items in support of the organization acting as administrative or fiscal agent that do not directly tie to targeted career pathways are not allowable. Advertisements to attract potential participants to a program designed to prepare them for a GED and provide them occupationally specific training would be allowable; advertisements to promote, in general, spring registration for a college, university or technical school would not be allowable.

- Alcohol
- Fund raising
- Political lobbying
- Contributions and donations to charitable organizations including foundations that are outside a standard contractual relationship for the delivery of specified product(s) or service(s)
- Gifts and awards
- Costs that duplicate or supplant federal, state, or local funds available for the same purpose
- Any cost that is not in direct support of the career pathways system grant and that does not provide direct support of identified education and workforce development efforts in the region.
- Any cost that would reflect unfavorably upon the VCCS, the Ford Foundation, or the organization serving as fiscal administrator for the grant.

Fiscal agents for the career pathways systems grants must abide by the purchasing and procurement regulations that are applicable to their institution. All costs must represent fair market value for the type and level of service provided or product procured.

XV. Grant Proposal Requirements and Timeline

Grant Proposal Requirements

The grant application is divided into two sections. The first part is provided in a word document format. The second part is provided in an Excel format. The following table lists the items that need to be completed as part of the grant application.

Checklist

- Signature Page (Word Section or Part 1 of Regional Career Pathways System Application)
- Narrative Proposal (Word Section or Part 1 of Regional Career Pathways System Application)
- Work Plan (Excel Section or Part 2 of Regional Career Pathways System Application)
- Line Itemized Budget (Excel Section or Part 2 of Application)

Timeline

Grant proposals must be postmarked on or before Friday, July 30, 2010. Application/grant proposals should be E-mailed to wdsgrants@vccs.edu but also **must be either mailed** to Elizabeth J. Moran, Virginia Community College System, 101 N. 14th Street, 17th Floor, Richmond, VA 23219 or **delivered** to Elizabeth J. Moran, 17th Floor, VCCS Offices, James Monroe Building, 101 N. 14th Street, Richmond, VA. Delivered proposals must be received by 5 p.m. EST on Friday, July 30, 2010. Faxed proposals will not be accepted.

E-mailed proposals that are not accompanied by signed hard copies postmarked or delivered by deadline of July 30, 2010 may be disqualified from consideration for grant funding. Proposals must be signed by designated officials of the institution applying for the grant, such as a Community College President or WIB Chair. Unsigned, improperly signed, and incomplete proposals may not be reviewed for funding.

The following table provides a timeline of events for the Regional Career Pathways System Grant:

Event	Date
Deadline for submission of proposals	July 30, 2010
Grant awards announced by VCCS	August 6, 2010
Grant funding for 2010-2011 available	August 1, 2010