



TO: Roger Breed, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Education

FROM: Donlynn Rice, Administrator Curriculum and Instruction
Rich Katt, Director Career and Technical Education

SUBJECT: Grant to Building Bright Futures

Proposed Board Action:

Provide a Grant to Building Bright Futures to Develop a Model Proficiency Based Career and Technical Education Program

Background Information:

The Nebraska Department of Education is collaborating with Building Bright Futures to identify strategies to support multiple pathways to graduation for disengaged, off-track and out-of-school youth. This grant will provide resources to support this developmental effort. Building on a collaboration with school districts and service providers, this project will begin the development of a comprehensive and coordinated system of credit-bearing and experiential learning opportunities that can be applied toward high school graduation by students at various grade levels, including disengaged, off-track and out-of-school youth, developing new courses and components that result in the implementation of strategies and opportunities to get youth back on track toward graduation. This program will focus on students in three schools in the Douglas/Sarpy County Learning Community.

Credit-bearing opportunities will comprise a Portfolio of Options that include such opportunities as:

- Hybrid courses that include completion of modules (e.g., personal health, family health history, drug/alcohol abuse, teen parenting, and/or diet and nutrition) through class attendance, participation in related community-based program activities, and completion of an independent research project;
- Volunteer activities within the community including requisite numbers of volunteer hours, written documentation of volunteer experiences, and research on similar research projects at a regional, state, national or international level;
- Internships/work experiences including specified work hours, written documentation describing work performed and learning outcomes from the work experience, and utilization of Nebraska Career Connections to research other careers in the field in which the student worked;
- Service learning experiences developed by educational professionals to include specified learning outcomes that match an identified community need and documentation on how the student will learn from the service.

Estimated Cost:

Grant for \$45,000.00 from Federal Perkins Career Technical Education Act

Supporting Documentation Included:

Proposal from BBF is attached

For Additional Information on this item:

Donlynn Rice, 402-471-3240 donlynn.rice@nebraska.gov

Richard Katt, 402-471-4808 rich.katt@nebraska.gov

Building Bright Futures
“Multiple Pathways to Graduation”
October 15, 2011–June 30, 2012

Through a collaboration between Building Bright Futures, the Nebraska Department of Education, Douglas & Sarpy County school districts and community providers, this project will create a system of credit-bearing and experiential learning opportunities that can be applied toward high school graduation by students at various grade levels, including disengaged, off-track and out-of-school youth.

Building Bright Futures

Building Bright Futures (BBF) is an Omaha non-profit organization, established in 2006, whose long-range mission is to improve academic performance, raise graduation rates, increase civic and community responsibility, and ensure that all students are prepared for postsecondary education. BBF develops partnerships with existing providers and school districts, and creates evidence-based programs to develop a comprehensive, community-based network of services.

Goals of Building Bright Futures

- Improve academic achievement
- Increase the number of students who graduate from high school prepared for work or postsecondary education
- Provide postsecondary educational opportunities to every economically disadvantaged high school graduate in the Douglas and Sarpy County area
- Increase civic participation and community responsibility

BBF’s primary program areas are:

- ***Early Childhood Services*** - connects with teen parents in school and those who have dropped out of school; supports early child care centers in the BBF ECS Network of Excellence.
- ***Healthy Futures*** - connects with youth at risk of being unsuccessful due to a lack of access to quality health care and information by providing health care services and referrals to appropriate health care providers.
- ***Student Engagement, Attendance & Service Learning*** - designed to identify and assist students with chronic absenteeism to stay in school by addressing the issues tied to absenteeism.
- ***Mentoring*** - links at-risk youth with a significant adult and builds a pool of diverse mentors to serve a diverse student population through the Midlands Mentoring Partnership.
- ***After School*** - connects at-risk youth with out-of-school activities that support improved academic achievement, enhancing relevancy and engagement, in collaboration with local provider partners.
- ***Academic Supports and Re-Engagement*** - includes various supports and interventions essential for building the academic foundation for nontraditional students to be successful in high school, postsecondary education and in most career opportunities in today’s workforce. BBF’s new re-engagement center – the D2 Center | Directions Diploma – serves disengaged and out-of-school youth ages 15-20, providing the opportunity for re-engagement in an educational program.

Project Background

Building on a collaboration with school districts and service providers, this project will begin the development of a comprehensive and coordinated system of credit-bearing and experiential learning opportunities that can be applied toward high school graduation by students at various grade levels, including disengaged, off-track and out-of-school youth, developing new courses and components that result in the implementation of strategies and opportunities to get youth back on track toward graduation.

Credit-bearing opportunities will comprise a Portfolio of Options that include such opportunities as:

- Hybrid courses that include completion of modules (e.g., personal health, family health history, drug/alcohol abuse, teen parenting, and/or diet and nutrition) through class attendance, participation in related community-based program activities, and completion of an independent research project;
- Volunteer activities within the community including requisite numbers of volunteer hours, written documentation of volunteer experiences, and research on similar research projects at a regional, state, national or international level;
- Internships/work experiences including specified work hours, written documentation describing work performed and learning outcomes from the work experience, and utilization of Nebraska Career Connections to research other careers in the field in which the student worked;
- Service learning experiences developed by educational professionals to include specified learning outcomes that match an identified community need and documentation on how the student will learn from the service.

Project Objectives

- Conduct a local summit on Multiple Pathways to Graduation, following a professional survey of representatives from education, government, business, community agencies and organizations representing diverse populations on academic opportunities available to Omaha-area students and disengaged, off-track and out-of-school youth.
- Partner with school districts and community organizations to develop and expand nontraditional credit-bearing opportunities designed for application toward high school graduation requirements.
- Implement a comprehensive and coordinated model in Douglas and Sarpy County school districts that provides multiple nontraditional credit-bearing opportunities (Portfolio of Options) from which students may elect to participate and apply toward high school graduation.
- Increase the number of students who are on-track toward high school graduation by creating and implementing a Portfolio of Options for disengaged, off-track and out-of-school youth that includes nontraditional credit-bearing opportunities and needed community resources, aimed at re-engaging youth on a pathway toward high school graduation.
- Implement a data collection and reporting system that tracks at-risk students and their progress in completing nontraditional credit-bearing opportunities toward high school graduation.

Multiple Pathways to Graduation

Multiple pathways to graduation are defined as programs located both within and beyond traditional school settings that provide viable options for disengaged, off-track and out-of-school youth. These rigorous credit-bearing programs are characterized by creative and targeted approaches, community partnerships, innovative use of teaching methods and technology, flexible scheduling, low student/teacher ratios, career and post-secondary opportunities, and connections to community support services.

Project Coordination

This project will be coordinated through the new Building Bright Future (BBF) re-engagement center: *The D2 Center | Directions Diploma*. The D2 Center serves disengaged and out-of-school youth ages 15-20, providing the opportunity for re-engagement in an educational program. D2 Center staff assess youth to determine academic status as well as discern non-academic factors contributing to disengagement. Staff then develop an Individual Action Plan to re-engage youth and empower them in a pathway to a diploma. The D2 Center makes connections with a comprehensive system of supports, including multiple pathways to graduation, mental/behavioral health, juvenile justice, social services, career and college readiness, youth advocates and other community-based partners.

When establishing the D2 Center, staff researched re-engagement centers across the country, revealing common characteristics and a variety of best practices from Boston, Philadelphia and Portland (Oregon). The D2 Center incorporates a number of these best practices including methods of identifying and referring students, initial intake and assessment, assignment of a youth advocate as a caring adult, and provision of non-academic services and academic re-engagement. One of the unique aspects of the D2 Center is the partnership with school districts and community-based organizations to provide credit-bearing opportunities and supports for disengaged and out-of-school youth. This community collaboration includes the juvenile justice system, mental/behavioral health professionals and social service organizations.

This project will include a survey of representatives from education, government, business, community agencies and organizations representing diverse populations to identify academic opportunities available to Omaha-area students and disengaged, off-track and out-of-school youth. This survey will be followed by a day-long Summit on Multiple Pathways to Graduation to initiate a dialogue with these populations on the importance of establishing relationships and collaborating in this effort to help local youth. Credit-bearing opportunities developed through the project will be made available to students at various grade levels, in addition to disengaged, off-track and out-of-school youth.

Project Budget

Budget Description	NDE Request	BBF Match	Project Total
Salaries/Benefits	27,000		TBD
Project Coordination In-kind match by BBF D2 Center Staff		<i>TBD</i>	
Curriculum Development - Instructor Salaries/Benefits 794 hours @ \$32/hr plus Benefits @ .0765	27,000		
Travel	1,000		TBD
Instructor travel to sites for course delivery		TBD	
Student travel to participate in hybrid courses Bus passes, 4 Roundtrips per course @ \$10/RT, 25 courses @ \$40 each = \$1,000	1,000		
Equipment	2,000		2,000
Computer equipment for use by students accessing services at the D2 Center, 2 computer units @ \$1,000 each	2,000		
Other	15,000		TBD
Anderson Survey (conducted prior to MPG Summit) Survey of representatives from education, government, business, community agencies & organizations representing diverse populations	12,500		
Multiple Pathways to Graduation (MPG) Summit -- Facilities rental, luncheon, materials	2,500		
Data Collection and Reporting In-kind match by BBF Staff		TBD	
Total	\$45,000	TBD	TBD