

Support services, which youth need to transition successfully, may include mental and physical health services, transportation, and tutoring, as well as post-program supports through structured arrangements with post-secondary institutions and adult-serving agencies. In the case of youth with disabilities there may be a need for additional support services including, but not limited to, access to and acquisition of assistive technology, benefits counseling, independent living centers and other consumer-driven community-based support service agencies, and personal assistance services, including readers, interpreters, and other personal assistance services.

Unfortunately, access to transition services consistent with these evidence-based transition operating principles is frequently hampered by the fact that the workforce development and education systems, and the linked income support, health, housing, assistive technology, social service, and transportation service systems, are driven by:

- Differing institutional missions, each with distinctive funding parameters and fiscal incentives;
- Multiple funding streams with substantial variations in expected outcomes;
- Traditions;
- Capacities of the institutions and staff, and
- Many other factors that separate rather than promote a transparent and internally/externally logical system that assists young people to become productive members of our society.

To address this situation, states need to help local communities and service providers find ways to more effectively organize, support, and work with—and through—a wide array of institutions, organizations and family support networks to better meet the transition-related needs of young people with disabilities. If the transition outcomes of youth with disabilities are to improve, businesses, labor unions, educational institutions, social service agencies, transportation providers, health service organizations, and other community providers must work together and Federal, state, and local community resources must be leveraged effectively.

To promote the integration of the aforementioned evidence-based transition operating principles into local transition service delivery, and in recognition that intermediary organizations can play a key, convening role in effectuating systems change, ODEP is funding these Innovative State Alignment Grants to address this need. This SGA is designed to help states to:

- Conduct resource-mapping to assess their youth service delivery infrastructure in light of the evidence-based transition operating principles discussed above;
- Develop, implement, and evaluate a cross-agency multi-year state plan to improve transition outcomes for youth with disabilities through blending and/or braiding of Federal, state, and community resources and the use of local intermediary organizations, and
- Conduct local pilot demonstrations to determine:
 - How intermediary organizations can best be used to ensure that youth with disabilities obtain transition services consistent with the evidence-based transition operating principles, and
 - The impact those intermediaries have on improving transition outcomes for youth with disabilities.

All grant-related activities are to be evaluated consistent with the framework set forth in Pro-Bank⁶ and specific outcomes are to be measured based on data already being collected from multiple service sectors (e.g., workforce development, education, etc).

In order to conduct the local pilot demonstrations required under the grant, the grantee is expected to sub-award a substantial portion of its award to fund local intermediary organizations that have demonstrated expertise and experience in enlisting the active support and participation of key stakeholders, including education entities, the workforce development system, businesses, organized labor, and local faith-based and community organizations. These activities include, but are not limited to, effectively operating and managing their programs, accessing governmental and private funding sources, developing and training staff, expanding the types and reach of services in their communities, and replicating promising and effective practices. Grant funds issued through these sub-awards may be used to support a wide range of local intermediary activities that help to

⁶ Utilizing the Congressionally recognized Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award criteria for continuous improvement, as well as research conducted by PEPNet, the Workforce Excellence Network (WEN), the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), and the Center for the Study and Advancement of Disability Policy (CSADP), the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) developed the Pro-Bank framework. The framework consists of eight categories by which an organization can assess its operations; products and services in terms of the aforementioned evidence-based transition operating principles for providing effective transition services to youth with disabilities. Pro-Bank information may be found at: http://www.ncwd-youth.info/promising_Practices/index.html—using guide.

ensure positive transition outcomes for youth with disabilities between the ages of 14 and 24. Allowable activities include, but are not limited to:

- Convening key stakeholders to establish community-wide partnerships committed to preparing young people with disabilities for employment and/or further educational training and/or independent living;
- Supporting peer learning and leadership opportunities;
- Providing necessary information and training in areas such as benefits planning, universal access, reasonable accommodation, mental health, housing, transportation, health maintenance (including Medicare and Medicaid), and other self-sufficiency issues;
- Evaluating transition programs using evidence-based methods as set forth in Pro-Bank;
- Organizing and participating in strategic alliances with business groups and organizations;
- Integrating school and work-based learning, integrating academic and vocational education, and establishing linkages between secondary and post-secondary education;
- Systematically integrating existing local education and training programs and resources with related Federal, State, and local programs to address effectively the learning and employment needs of youth with disabilities;
- Providing staff development to teachers, employers, mentors, counselors, community rehabilitation agency personnel, One-Stop staff, and others critical to successful transition outcomes.

Through these grant activities and associated technical assistance provided by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) (*see www.ncwd-youth.info*), which ODEP funds, ODEP anticipates effectuating systemic change that will lead to improved transition results for youth with disabilities. Projects are required to collaborate with the NCWD/Youth as a condition of the grant to ensure that the strategies and techniques developed as a result of these grant activities can serve as models for other states' systems of youth service delivery.

Part IV. Funding Availability and Period of Performance

ODEP anticipates awarding up to 6 grants in the amount of \$500,000, totaling \$3 million. The grants will be for a one-year period of performance and may be renewed annually up to four additional option years for a total of five years at full funding depending upon