



FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.

Florida Development Disabilities Competitive Application Announcement Project SEARCH

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) is seeking five (5) local collaboratives to participate in a statewide pilot of the Project SEARCH High School Transition Program. This competitive application process is being issued to enhance the training and competitive employment opportunities required for individuals with developmental disabilities to live, work and play in their communities. The primary objective of these collaboratives will be to implement an innovative and well grounded nationally acclaimed supported employment system, Project SEARCH, in our local communities.

Not-for-profit agencies/businesses, for-profit agencies/businesses, school systems, and governmental entities may submit proposals as the lead agency in response to this competitive solicitation. The amount of funds available for each of the five (5) projects awarded based on this solicitation will be \$10,000.

Copies of this application can be downloaded from the FDDC website (www.fddc.org) or copies may be requested by writing FDDC at 124 Marriott Drive, Suite 201, Tallahassee, FL 32301, or calling (850) 488-4180 or Toll Free 1-800-580-7801 or TDD Toll Free (888) 488-8633.

**THE ABOVE ANNOUNCEMENT WILL APPEAR ON THE FDDC WEB PAGE
(WWW.FDDC.ORG) ON July 10, 2008.**

**PLEASE FORWARD ALL REQUESTS FOR COPIES OF THE APPLICATION TO
Antionette Williams.**

This document contains a thorough description of Project SEARCH and the FDDC requirements for the Florida pilot sites. Instructions for submitting an application as a pilot site begin on page ten (10).



FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.

Table of Contents

Application Announcement	1
Introduction	3
Program Description	4
Pilot Site Activities and Requirements	6
Funding	7
Application Requirements	8
Application Timelines	10
Instructions for Submitting an Application	10



FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.

Project SEARCH High School Transition Program

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) is seeking five (5) local collaboratives to participate in a statewide pilot of the Project SEARCH High School Transition Program. The High School Transition Program is a one-year educational program for students with 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 not-for-profit agency/business, for-profit agency/business, a school system, or governmental entity total immersion in the workplace facilitates career exploration and training leading to competitive employment.

A typical school day includes:

- Classroom instruction in employability and independent living skills
- Participation at one to three internship rotations
- Lunch with peers
- Feedback from the instructor, job coaches and worksite staff.

Individualized job development and placement begins occurs throughout the course of the internships. Students are given support through on-the-job coaching and work site accommodations with the ultimate goal of independence.

For more detailed information about Project SEARCH, visit the website at:
www.cincinnatichildrenshospital/ps.com

Or contact Michael Kiser, the Florida Project SEARCH Statewide Coordinator at 772.631.3610 or jmichaelkiser@hotmail.com

Introduction:

The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program is a unique one-year school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and on-the-job training and support. The goal for each student is competitive employment. The program provides real-life work experience combined with training in employability and independent living skills to help youth with significant disabilities make successful transitions from school to productive adult life.

The Project SEARCH model involves an extensive period of training and career exploration, innovative adaptations, long-term job coaching, and continuous feedback from teachers, job coaches, and employers. As a result, at the completion of the Project SEARCH program, we are able to place students with significant intellectual disabilities in nontraditional, complex and rewarding jobs. Over the long term, the model increases marketability, longevity, earnings and career advancement for people with disabilities. For example, program graduates currently employed at Cincinnati Children's Hospital make an average salary of \$10.34 and work, on average, 33 hours per week. Forty-nine percent have benefits (many more are eligible, but decline benefits), and 72 percent of



FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.

all placements were successfully employed at 3 months. Many have been continuously employed for 12 years—since the inception of the program. The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program has been available to students in the Greater Cincinnati area since 1997. With the project proposed here, we plan to increase the reach and impact of the Project SEARCH High School Transition Program through a statewide replication initiative.

In addition to the direct benefits that Project SEARCH provides to the interns, the presence of a Project SEARCH High School Transition program can bring about long-term changes in business culture that have far-reaching positive effects on attitudes about hiring people with disabilities and the range of jobs in which they can be successful. Project SEARCH is based upon a collaboration between the following:

- Host Business
- Education/School District
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Agency for Persons with Disabilities

This collaboration allows for a seamless point of entry for students into the host business. Representatives from each partner work together to plan and implement all facets of the Project SEARCH program.

When students arrive at the host business, they experience total immersion within the workplace. It is these day-to-day interactions that generate widespread acceptance of people with disabilities as individuals and valued employees. Expanding Project SEARCH to new businesses is an effective way to expand the reach of the program's philosophy and practices and is, therefore, an extremely effective way of increasing nontraditional employment options for people with disabilities. It is impossible to assess how many people will benefit provided by the visibility of Project SEARCH interns and employees in programs throughout Florida. Success breeds success, and over time changes minds and attitudes—not just in businesses with Project SEARCH program sites, but also in other businesses across the state.

Description of High School Transition Program:

Program Eligibility: The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program serves students with significant disabilities who are 18 to 22 years of age. Specifically, these are students who are on an Individual Education Plan (IEP), have completed all of their high school credits and graduation requirements, and have deferred graduation status. The most important eligibility criterion is a desire to achieve competitive employment. All students must also be eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation and a certain percentage of students selected must be eligible for follow along funding through Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD).

Deferred graduation, a district-level policy, is a key concept in funding the Project SEARCH High School Transition Program¹. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) mandates continued education and transition services for young people

¹ Rutkowski, S. (1996, May). Extending transition services beyond graduation. Paper presented at the biennial topical conference of Ohio's Division of Career Development and Transition, Columbus, OH.



FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.

with disabilities until the age of twenty-two, however this eligibility ends once a student accepts a regular high school diploma. With deferred graduation, students with disabilities who have completed their academic requirements can participate with their peers in the important social ritual of the high school graduation ceremony. However, they receive a blank diploma and, thus, remain eligible for ADM (Average Daily Membership) or FTE (Full-time Equivalent) funding through their local school districts to continue in the educational process and take advantage of additional high school training programs or vocational school.

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 three job coaches (or a sufficient number to achieve a 4:1 student to coach ratio). The required credentials for teachers include a special education or vocational education certificate. An Advisory Board that includes the Project SEARCH teacher, the Exceptional Student Education Director, Vocational Rehabilitation counselor(s), Supported Employment provider, Agency for Persons with Disabilities representative, host business representatives, parents, and students with disabilities oversee each program site.

Admissions, Orientation, and Assessment: Students are referred to the program through their schools and apply in the winter and spring in the year prior to entering the program. The Advisory Board carries out the selection process per the Project SEARCH model.

Students are strongly encouraged to travel independently directly to the Project SEARCH program. The instructor and job coaches work with the student and their family to begin travel training during the summer prior to beginning the program. The school district is ultimately responsible for providing travel training or making other arrangements if independent travel is not possible.

Once the school year begins, the first few weeks of the program are focused on student orientation, assessment and familiarization within the host business environment. The students participate in any mandatory education required at the host business in order to prepare the students to enter the workforce.

Classroom Curriculum: Throughout the school year, the day begins with a one-hour classroom lesson based on a functional curriculum that stresses employability and independent-living skills. 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, in the beginning of the year lessons are focused on general skills needed to function in the workplace, that is, 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 insure 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 Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; this permits partial funding for the job-coaching and job placement services received through the program. Other examples of linkages include the Agency for Persons with Disabilities; Children's Medical Services; or special services related to hearing, speech or visual impairments. Additional linkages to appropriate community services are made as the need arises.

Internship Rotations: Students build communication and problem-solving skills, as well as job-specific skills, through participation in a variety of internships. These internships are unpaid - analogous to the clinical rotations that are part of every medical school curriculum. Potential internships are identified through a continuous collaborative process involving the instructor, job coaches, the host business liaison, and potential worksite supervisors. For the students, internships begin after the initial orientation period, usually totaling three to four sites per student by the end of the program. The student and other team members work together to choose internships based on previous work experience, interests, and skills assessment. Students are required to interact with their supervisors via telephone and written communications to arrange a job interview and scheduling details.

Time spent on each internships lasts approximately 10 weeks in order to marketable, competitive skills. Internships can be flexible depending on factors such as the complexity of the job, tasks to be learned, and the potential of employment at that site. Job coaches and department 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 internship 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 based on the student's experiences, strengths, and skills. Linkages to appropriate services in the community are critical at this stage, as students prepare to graduate from the program, to insure a successful transition to employment and adult life. Job coaching and long-term follow along should be provided through the original supported employment partner. Locally based and disability-specific organizations are additional sources of services.

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, and any awards or special recognition received while in the program.

Pilot Site Activities and Requirements:

1. The Project SEARCH model depends on strong partnerships between employers, education providers and social service agencies. Pilot site applicants are



FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.

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, ESE teacher
 - b. Vocational Rehabilitation
 - c. Supported Employment Provider – 3 Job Coaches)
 - d. Agency for Persons with Disabilities
 - e. Collaboratives are encouraged to include other partners as deemed appropriate.
2. The Florida Project SEARCH Statewide Coordinator Co-Director of Project SEARCH (from Cincinnati) will have primary responsibility for assisting pilot sites in developing a marketing plan and securing a local host business partner for the collaborative. Local pilots are encouraged to identify 2-3 potential business partners prior to the application process, but are discouraged from making contact with the employers prior to thorough education in the Project SEARCH model. As part of their commitment to the project, the business will be asked to provide an on-site classroom for the project, a business liaison and commitment to market the program.
 3. Pilot 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. Pilot sites will be required to attend a 2-day session at a central location in Florida for the purpose of becoming oriented to Project SEARCH and to begin developing their marketing plans to their local business partners. Travel expenses are to be included in the project budget.
 5. Pilot sites will be required to attend a 2-day orientation session/open house at the Project SEARCH site at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital and other local PS sites. Travel expenses are to be included in the project budget.
 6. Pilot sites are required to serve 12 students per year with a goal of placing a minimum of 9 students in community, competitive employment upon program completion. An outcome of sheltered employment does not meet the goal of this project.
 7. Each Project SEARCH site will have the remainder of the 2008-2009 school year for planning purposes with implementation to begin in the 2009 – 2010 school year.

Funding

FDDC will provide mini-grants to each local pilot site in the amount of \$10,000 to cover travel expenses related to attending the 2-day orientation session in Florida and the 2 day tour/training in Cincinnati. Other funds may be used to cover expenses related to materials and equipment required for the Project SEARCH classroom. The attached application requires a budget which itemizes proposed expenditures.



FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.

FDDC will fund 2-3 site visits by Project SEARCH staff to each pilot site for the purpose of securing a business partner and providing ongoing technical assistance and training for program implementation.

In addition, the Florida Project SEARCH Statewide Coordinator will assist the pilot sites in start-up activities. The Coordinator will be responsible for assisting the pilots in building their business collaborations and other community partnerships.

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 (FTE dollars, Average Daily Membership funding, Vocational Rehabilitation funding, etc.).



Project SEARCH Pilot Site Application Requirements High School Transition Program

Project Description and Design

1. How do you propose to support and manage a project of this scale? Please provide written details that include job titles and job descriptions of all individuals who will be involved in this project and a work plan that describes your planning and implementation process concluding with the final month of the 2009-10 school year. Insure that the minimum staff and collaborative requirements are addressed as outlined in the accompanying program description. (20 points)
2. Identify who will be the on-site lead from your organization for this project. This individual must be an individual with sufficient experience and qualifications that includes, but is not limited to, exceptional education, transition, and supported employment for students with developmental disabilities. Please include the potential staff name, actual work examples with qualifications and experience. (20 points)
3. How will your organization provide staff and coverage when the assigned staff is unavailable for support? Does your organization have a generic plan or process to ensure that service is continued without gaps? (10 points)
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 recruit and commit students and fund an instructor for 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 Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Area Office and a local Supported Employment Provider. (20 points)
8. **Budget** (10 points)
The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council is providing \$10,000 to each pilot site to cover travel expenses related to attending the 2-day orientation session in Florida and the 2-day tour/training in Cincinnati. Other funds may be used to cover expenses related to materials and equipment required for the Project SEARCH classroom.

FDDC will fund 2-3 site visits by Project SEARCH staff to each pilot site for the purpose of securing a business partner and providing ongoing technical assistance and training for program implementation.



FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.

In addition, FDDC is funding a full-time in-state Project SEARCH Coordinator to assist the pilot sites in start-up activities. The Project Coordinator will be responsible for assisting the pilots in building their business collaborations and other community partnerships.

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 (typical school funding for students, Vocational Rehabilitation funding, etc.).

Therefore, provide a budget which itemizes the use of the \$10,000 mini-grant for start-up costs related to the project including the travel expenses related to attending both the in-state and Cincinnati based orientation sessions.

NOTE: According to the Project SEARCH Co-Director, Erin Riehle, start-up costs for the Project SEARCH High School Transition Program average close to \$7500 or more per site.



FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.

Application Timeline

- Pilot Site Applications Due in FDDC Office by **2:00pm** EDST: **August 27, 2008**
 - Emails will not be accepted.
 - Fax will not be accepted
- Pilot Site Application Selection: Week of **September 15, 2008**
- Pilot Site Selection Posting: **September 30, 2008**
- Anticipated date for contracts to be awarded: **November 3, 2008**

Instructions for Submitting an Application

1. Applications must be delivered sealed, clearly marked "Project SEARCH" to the attention of Antionette Williams, and delivered by August 25, 2008, 2:00pm EDST in the FDDC office (124 Marriott Drive, Suite 201, Tallahassee, FL 32301).
2. Applications must not exceed ten (10) single-sided 8.5" x 11" pages with 1" margins. The application length does not include table of contents, cover page, or the budget pages. Applications over ten pages in length will not be considered for selection.
3. An original and five (5) print copies of the application are required. Additionally, one electronic copy in the form of a CD is required. At least one copy of the application submitted to FDDC must contain an original signature of an official of the offeror who is authorized to bind the offeror to their application.