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Vermont Secures Grant to Improve Career Preparation Systems for Young People

BARRE – The Vermont Agency of Education today announced it has secured a \$100,000 grant to develop a detailed career readiness action plan, which is an essential step to expanding economic opportunity for young people across our state.

Vermont is among 24 states and the District of Columbia that secured grants for this work through phase one of the [New Skills for Youth](#) grant opportunity. The grants are one piece of [a \\$75 million, five-year initiative](#) developed by JPMorgan Chase, in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and Advance CTE, aimed at increasing economic opportunity for young people by strengthening career-focused education, starting in high school and ending with postsecondary degrees or credentials aligned with business needs.

“Vermonters are proud of their education system,” said Gov. Peter Shumlin. “We provide a world-class education to our students and are always searching for ways to maintain that status and strengthen the connection between education and the workforce. The New Skills for Youth grant will help us build on and strengthen work that we have already begun.”

Today, too few young people are receiving the education or training in high school and beyond that would put them on a track to qualify for these careers. By the age of 25, only about half of young Americans have a meaningful postsecondary credential that enables them to compete for good jobs, and the U.S. youth unemployment rate is more than double the national rate.

In Vermont, roughly 41 percent of students who have taken CTE coursework go on to enroll in a two- or four-year college after high school graduation. Data also suggests that Vermont CTE students persist in post-secondary education at a rate of 69 percent.

Through phase one of New Skills for Youth, Vermont and other selected states will each receive a \$100,000 six-month grant, in addition to expert technical assistance and peer support from other grantees. Each state will use the funds to perform a diagnostic assessment of their career preparation system and prepare for implementation of a new action plan. The Vermont Agency of Education will work with the Vermont Department of Labor, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the State Workforce Investment Board, CTE centers and higher education institutions around the state.

The AOE has three goals for the action plan: strengthen the rigor of CTE coursework, improve post-secondary outcomes and align with priority sectors.

This work comes at an exciting time for Vermont. In June 2014, Vermont became one of the few states in the nation to complete a statewide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The Vermont 2020 CEDS identifies priority economic sectors for growth and was completed with support and input from stakeholders around the state, including educators. The plan was approved by Gov. Shumlin and accepted by the U.S. Economic Development Administration in July 2014.

Recently adopted Education Quality Standards also mandate that all Vermont students graduate under proficiency-based requirements beginning with the class of 2020. New state legislation requires 7th through 12th grade students to have personalized learning plans that map out their interests and goals as well as the specific experiences that allow each student to best meet the required graduation proficiencies and post-high school aspirations.

“We are thrilled to receive this award. Not only does it provide substantial funding for our collaborative work moving forward, it gives us independent confirmation that we’re on the right track,” said Deputy Secretary of Education Heather Bouchey. “This work will link K-12 career and technical education, postsecondary training and college curricula, and specific employer needs, all framed around Vermont’s priority industry sectors for economic growth and investment. It’s a win-win for students and employers.”

An independent advisory committee recommended phase one grant recipients after a rigorous review process that considered states’ proposed plans, cross-sector partnerships, and demonstrated commitment and capacity to transform their systems of career preparation according to the grant guidelines. In the judgment of the advisory committee, the selected states showed promise in their career readiness plans and indicated strongly that this work is a priority for them.

Vermont, and the other phase one planning grant states, will be eligible to apply for the phase two grant opportunity, which will require states to demonstrate the commitment and capacity to execute the action plans developed in phase one.

This grant opportunity builds on CCSSO's [Career Readiness Initiative](#), launched in 2015 to help close the skills gap in this country. The goal is to ensure that students are not only college-ready, but that all children also graduate from high school prepared for careers.

For more information on the New Skills for Youth grant opportunity or CCSSO’s Career Readiness Initiative, visit http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/Career_Readiness_Initiative.html.

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