

STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
State Board Reserve Funding For Employability Skills Alignment Project
FY 2017-18

Request: The State Board is asked to approve up to \$50,000 from State Board Reserve and \$25,000 from Perkins Leadership funds for FY 2017 – 18 to support an Employability Skills Alignment Project (ESAP) to occur between February 1, 2018, and June 30, 2019. Contingent on availability, FY 2018 – 19 funding will be sought through Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title II Leadership and Perkins Leadership resources.

Background: The 2015 “1000 in 100” survey indicated that 44% of the 1000+ employer respondents identified “soft skills” as a workforce need currently not sufficiently addressed.

85% of job success comes from having well-developed soft and people skills based on research conducted by Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation and Stanford Research Center.

At a recent workforce board meeting, one employer put it this way, “The student’s technical skills get them hired and two weeks later their lack of soft skills gets them fired.” Recently, the System Office hosted listening sessions with many of the professional organizations in North Carolina and in each session, employers pointed to a lack of soft skills as one of their biggest challenges.

The 58 North Carolina community colleges offer employability skills through all instructional delivery areas

- College and Career Readiness – mandated under the WIOA
- Curriculum – embedded in program learning outcomes particularly focused on Career and Technical Education (CTE).
- Workforce Continuing Education – Human Resources Development (HRD)

Resources are expended in all areas to deliver “soft skill” training by various methods and utilizing multiple tools to students who will enter the local workforce arena.

Rationale: Employability skills are critical components of North Carolina’s economic growth. Employability skills are cross-divisional (College and Career Readiness, Curriculum and Workforce Continuing Education) and play an essential part in the success of all industries and organizations.

The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) is initiating an “Employability Skills Alignment Project” to establish a collaborative effort to leverage resources across academic areas and develop a unified response to the identified need for effective “soft skill” training. This alignment project will leverage institutional resources and develop value added content modules that have utility across academic levels. This structure provides the advantage of

consistent, effective training of employability skills, regardless of where a student begins their educational pursuits.

The project will be NCCCS managed, college driven and employer focused. As such it will engage System Office personnel, college faculty and staff and employer or association focus groups to ensure outcomes align with needs.

The alignment project will strengthen programs supporting students in identified areas and specifically to meet HRD, WIOA, Career Pathway and CTE outcomes. As such additional funds for the alignment project will be sought from WIOA Title II and Perkins Leadership resources.

Objectives:

Through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process, a lead college will be identified to meet the following objectives, utilizing representative teams from multiple colleges providing perspective across the various academic areas, as well as incorporating voices from employers and industry association groups.

FY 2017-18

- RFP release, college submission and NCCCS Programs Division review – award to lead college by January 2018.
- Collect and review existing employability skills resources and workforce preparation activities currently utilized within the NCCCS. This includes determining common employability skills and workforce preparation activities offered by community colleges to support Career Pathways, Human Resources Development, the High School to Community College Articulation Agreement, and Career and College Promise (CCP) efforts.
- Review existing employability skills resources and workforce preparation activities currently utilized external of the NCCCS. This includes determining common employability skills and workforce preparation activities offered to by Career and Technical Education (CTE)/CCP high schools, NCWorks Career Centers and community based organizations.
- Develop and implement strategies, leveraging the Council of Associations for Engagement, to engage employers and industry voices in providing input on current business needs.
- Identify specific core course content aligned with training standards.
- Identify specific industry contextualized course content aligned with sector needs.
- Identify curriculum standards and opportunities to develop ‘Credit for Prior Learning’ opportunities and stackable credentials.
- Establish timeline for content development.
- Establish professional development tools and implementation guide to include the North Carolina Virtual Learning Center resources.

FY 2018-19 (Contingent on WIOA Title II Leadership and Perkins Leadership funding)

- Create specific courses and modules reflecting the workforce needs of the job market in North Carolina.
- Develop content modules aligned with identified training standards and requirements. Incorporate employer input into the development and redesign of courses considered for this project to ensure that completers will meet workforce needs and expectations. Resources available include (1) NCNET Employability Skills Workbook; (2) Skills USA Employability Skills; (2) HRD Curriculum; (3) Adult Education Employability Skills curriculum; (4) other state and federal resources.
- Develop best practices for community college program areas and employers to better align 'soft skill' programs, services, and activities across the state. This would include working with, but not limited to, (1) employers, such as pulling from NextGen Partnerships, Home Builders, and others; (2) Collaborate with High School Career Development at Department of Public Instruction (DPI); (3) college faculty teaching these subjects and academic faculty implementing the finished product; (4) relevant student service staff including College Career Counselors and Career Coaches; (5) subject matter expert from the workforce system (state or local).
- Collaborate with the North Carolina Virtual Learning Center to leverage resources for Quality Content and Professional Development

This project will support each goal by providing professional development for instructors in content, methodology, and technology training. This time-limited project must be designed to result in innovative and streamlined curriculum revision strategies which have a long-term, systemic impact in the targeted college service areas.

Funding Amount and Time Period: The \$75,000 request is for the period of February 1, 2018 through June 30, 2018.

Fund Source and Availability: FY 2017-18 funding is available from the State Board Reserve and Perkins Leadership funds.

Contact:

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