

TO: Youth Council

DATE: 12/14/05

FROM: Youth Council Staff

For Action

For Information

For Discussion

SUBJECT: High Concentrations of Eligible Youth Additional Assistance

PROPOSED MOTION(S): Information only.

DISCUSSION: On October 7, 2005, the California Employment Development Department issued Directive WIAD05-7 explaining EDD's procedures for applying for High Concentrations of Eligible Youth awards for State Fiscal Year 2004-05 and 2005-06. All proposals had to be in Sacramento by October 21st.

The new High Concentration program is very different from last year's program. First and foremost, all proposals required a match of one dollar non-WIA funds for each three dollars of High Concentration grant funds. In-kind funding can not be used to satisfy the match requirements. Second, the local area had to select one priority of focus from the following list: 1) foster youth, 2) youth offender, 3) youth with disabilities, 4) migrant and seasonal farm worker youth, 5) youth with incarcerated parents.

MCOE had originally wanted to include both the YOP and Empower programs in their proposal. The proposal was to have served foster youth, youth with disabilities, and migrant and seasonal farm worker youth. But, in conversation with the California Workforce Investment Board and EDD, the decision was made to concentrate on one priority, youth with disabilities.

The proposal requested the maximum \$75,000. But, because the program is now open to 27 areas of High Concentrations of youth (instead of the top 10 as was done last year), the amount of competition brought down the dollar award available for each proposal. Of the 27 areas eligible to apply, 18 did apply and 16 applications were approved.

The Merced County Local Workforce Investment Area has been awarded \$62,500 from the Governor's 15% WIA Discretionary Funds. MCOE is providing \$33,917 in matching funds. The new program will serve 30 additional in-school youth with a focus on youth with disabilities. The grant funds must be spent by December 31, 2006.

**ATTACHMENTS: 1. Proposal
2. Modified \$62,500 Budget**

The Merced County Office of Education (MCOE), the sole WIA Youth Contractor for Merced County, in concurrence with the Merced County Workforce Investment Area, is submitting this plan for services in response to the Employment Development Department Draft Directive Transmittal Number WIADD-106 dated September 14, 2005. The draft directive authorizes up to \$75,000 in additional WIA funding for the period November 1, 2005 through October 31, 2006 based on Merced County's high concentration of eligible youth.

Requested Amount:

The Merced County Local Workforce Investment Area is requesting \$75,000. Of that amount, fully 89% is budgeted for direct participant services, including student wages, supportive services, professional counseling services, incentives, and instructional supplies. This proposal leverages existing funding for staff salaries and operating costs allowing the additional funding to be maximized for student services.

Matching Funds:

The Merced County Office of Education commits \$33,917 in non-WIA funds to support this proposed plan for services. (See proposed budget narrative.)

Priority Area of Focus:

The plan is written to serve 35 additional in-school youth, with a focus on youth with disabilities. The following performance measures will be achieved:

WIA Performance Measure	2005/2006 Negotiated Performance Rates for Merced County	Expected Outcomes (based on 35 youth served)
Younger Youth Skill Attainment Rate	78.7%	28 youth
Younger Youth Diploma or Equivalent Rate	55.5%	19 youth
Younger Youth Retention Rate	53.8%	19 youth

Projected Increase in the number of WIA eligible youth to be served:

The Merced County Office of Education (MCOE) is submitting this plan to **serve an additional 35 in-school youth** in the WIA funded Youth Opportunity Program (YOP). The YOP is the sole WIA in-school youth program in Merced County and has operated continuously since October 2000. More than 2,200 youth have been served and the WIA performance measures have been met or exceeded in every quarter since the program's inception.

The YOP provides comprehensive, long-term services that address the four major themes of the Workforce Investment Act: 1) improving education achievement, 2) preparation for and success in employment, 3) supportive services, and 4) services

intended to develop the potential of youth as citizens and leaders. These services are provided at all comprehensive and alternative high schools in Merced County.

The YOP is contracted to serve 353 youth during the 2005-2006 fiscal year. In addition, as of October 1, 2005 an additional 229 youth are being provided follow-up services.

There is a **documented unmet need** for additional WIA youth services in Merced County. **The County ranks as the 5th highest among the LWIAs in its concentration of economically disadvantaged youth.** Additionally, unemployment is consistently high in the County (8.2% in August 2005, compared to the State average of 5.1%) and the poverty rate is similarly high at 21.7% (compared to 14.2% Statewide). The County's per capita income is only \$14,257. (equivalent to only 63% of the Statewide per capita income). Merced County suffers from numerous problems associated with poverty and is ranked as the **fourth poorest County in the State.** These socio-economic challenges affect the youth of Merced County in countless ways, most notably in academic achievement. Only 63% of County residents over the age of 25 have a high school diploma (compared to the State average of 76%).

It is important to note that the Merced County **Youth Opportunity Program has a documented high school graduation rate greater than 90% for all students exited from the program.** This represents a 5-year proven record of effectiveness. Clearly, the YOP is working to reduce the achievement gap and thus expand opportunities for low-income youth. Additional funding will allow the same proven-effective services to be provided to more Merced County youth.

The **353 youth currently served** in the YOP **represent only 3% of the more than 9,575 Merced County youth who are eligible for and would benefit from services** based on 2000 Census data. **This proposal will allow a full 10% increase in the number of youth served in Merced County,** at an estimated cost per participant of \$2,143.

Services to be provided as described in the WIA, section 129 (c) (2):

The YOP will provide an opportunity for eligible in-school youth, ages 14-18 with identified disabilities, to receive a full array of services and supports that are most likely to result in increased skill attainment, high school completion or achievement of the GED, and retention as defined by the WIA.

Program and partner staff will make available all the program components and program elements described in the following section. All of the program components and elements are fully established and operational throughout Merced County, with the exception of the proposed addition of a part-time contracted mental health professional. This professional's role is described under the program element, Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling which appears on page 8 of this proposal.

Program activities for each participant will vary depending on the needs of each participant as described in the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) or Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Program Design Components

Outreach and Recruitment

Outreach and recruitment will target in-school youth, ages 14-18, with disabilities.

Since October 2000, the Merced County Office of Education (MCOE) has successfully partnered with the Merced Union High School District (MUHSD) Special Education Department, which serves 62% of the special needs youth group in Merced County, to serve this target population through the Youth Opportunity Program (YOP). Since October 2000, more than 300 disabled youth have been served through our well-established partnership. Four existing special education paraprofessionals will recruit students from each comprehensive site and alternative education site in the district, which covers the eastern portion of Merced County. Under this proposal, thirty additional youth will be served in eastern Merced County.

For western Merced County, recruitment will be conducted by an existing MCOE YOP staff member. Students will be recruited from comprehensive and alternative high schools in the city of Los Banos. Under this proposal, five additional youth will be served in western Merced County.

Orientation

Program staff will provide youth with a comprehensive orientation to the program. Participants will be made fully aware of the opportunities, responsibilities, and expectations of the program. Orientation will provide information on the full array of services available through the program and through community organizations including the local Workforce Investment Board, the One-Stop Worknet Employment Resource Centers, and the One-Stop Partners. Information will be provided about how to access these services, and referrals will be made to appropriate services.

Intake and WIA Eligibility Determination (Initial Assessment)

An initial appraisal interview will be used to determine whether WIA services are the most suitable for the individual student. The appraisal interview will be based on a review of the existing student record, motivation of student to participate, and a personal interview with the student. Other family members or related responsible adults will be included in the appraisal interview.

Intake will consist of completing WIA eligibility assessment of each individual in accordance with the rules and regulations for youth eligibility as outlined in the

Workforce Investment Act. Program staff will be responsible for intake and eligibility determination.

Information, Referral, and Resource

Youth determined to be ineligible for WIA services and/or not appropriate for program services will be referred to other community services. Those in need of employment services or training will be referred to the nearest One-Stop Center with a courtesy follow-up phone call.

Enrollment

Enrollment will be available for in-school youth between the ages of 14 and 18 who have identified disabilities and meet the WIA low-income eligibility requirements. MCOE will enroll and serve 35 youth between November 1, 2005 and October 31, 2006. This number is in addition to the 353 youth MCOE is contracted to serve during the 2005-2006 fiscal year.

Objective Assessment and ISS

An objective assessment of the academic and skill levels of each participant will be conducted by program staff to determine the needs of each participant.

This assessment will include a review of:

1. Basic skills
2. Occupational skills
3. Prior work experience
4. Employability
5. Interests
6. Aptitudes (including interests and aptitudes for non-traditional jobs)
7. Supportive services, family and financial situation/needs
8. Development needs of each participant

For students with disabilities, the state and nationally mandated IEP will be used.

In the event that a recent assessment including the above components has been completed, that assessment will be used.

Emphasis will be placed on assessment of supportive services, family and financial situations and needs, and the developmental needs of each student. A personal assessment form will be completed by each student, after which the assigned mentor will review the assessment with the student in a one-on-one interview. If any type of intervention is needed, the mentor will make the necessary connections between the student and the agency providing services. The mentor will also closely monitor the situation to assure that the student is safe and that his/her basic needs are being met.

Based on the results of the objective assessment, a formal training/needs strategy will be mutually developed between the mentor and the student.

The ISS for each student shall include:

1. Identification of the employment goals and a course of action that the participant should take. This will include appropriate achievement objectives, and/or appropriate supportive service needs.
2. Preparation of the participant for post-secondary educational opportunities.
3. Provision of strong linkages between academic and occupational learning.
4. Provision of preparation for unsubsidized employment opportunities.
5. Provision of effective connections to the job market, and to local and regional employers.
6. Provision of connection with positive community youth programs (i.e., recreational activities, community service, cultural activities, and other youth development activities).

Ongoing, general assessment of participants' needs and progress will continue for the duration of enrollment in the program. Any progress changes in the ISS/IEP (activities, goals, etc.) will be reported in the ISS/IEP or diary.

Connection with Youth Development Activities

The Youth Opportunity Program design is reflective of the Search Institute's Developmental Assets Model for youth development. The external asset of support is provided by the Mentor and by the caring program climate. The external asset of empowerment is reflected in the choices related to participation, goal setting, and occupational exploration. The external asset of boundaries and expectations is provided by the program structure, culture, and high expectations. During the orientation session, youth are informed of the program structure, performance measures, and expectations. The external asset of constructive use of time is addressed by the program structure, ongoing availability of program activities, and the availability of a youth computer lab and resource center that is centrally located in Merced.

Case Management

Each participant will be assigned a mentor from our existing program staff. The mentor will work with the participant to complete the eligibility process, develop the ISS or review the IEP, and coordinate referrals to services necessary to accomplish the established goals. The mentor will be responsible to monitor participant progress at least monthly and provide documentation through appropriate diary narratives.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Drop-out Prevention Activities (Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction)

MCOE and Merced Union High School District will provide dropout prevention activities. The assigned mentor will monitor student progress in school and will assist each participant to achieve his or her potential and gain the skills available through this program. Because of the warm, ongoing relationship this adult will be expected to develop with the participant, problems will be identified early and the necessary steps for intervention will be put in place. Intervention may include referral to tutoring, school-based interventions, supportive services, and the PLATO lab. PLATO labs are available at the YOP main office in Merced, Valley Community School, Merced Adult School, Merced Worknet Employment Resource Center, Los Banos Worknet Employment Resource Center, Dos Palos Community Center, Livingston Worknet Employment Resource Center, Livingston High School Career Center, and Atwater High School Career Center.

Alternative Secondary School Services

Valley Community School, Merced Adult School, Dos Palos Continuation, San Luis Continuation, Merced Continuation (Yosemite), Independent Study, and all other alternative schools in Merced County will be available to the participants if necessary.

Paid and unpaid work experience

An integral component of the Youth Opportunity Program (YOP) is paid and unpaid work experience. Students will be provided opportunities to perform meaningful work in a well-supervised context that enables trainees to learn marketable skills and good work habits through the Regional Occupational Program Community Classroom, high school work experience, and community service projects. The mentor will ensure that the work experience opportunities provided support the goals of the students' ISS/IEP. Every student who is placed in paid or unpaid work experience will have a training plan developed by the mentor, the job supervisor, and the student. This training plan must be aligned to the skills required for employment, as determined in the ROP course outline and approved by the advisory committee for that particular occupation. The students will be visited on site. Time cards will be picked up every two weeks and students will attend related classroom instruction at least once each week.

Occupational Skills Training

Every participant will have an opportunity to be enrolled in a career-technical program, either through the Regional Occupational Program, vocational programs offered at the high schools, or through on-the-job training. As a component of the employment program, students will be enrolled in ROP and will be taught both job-specific and employability skills. The mentor will monitor each participant's progress and will be responsible for assuring that the participant is enrolled and progressing satisfactorily in

an occupational skills training program, which, in addition to job-specific skills, includes the following: 1) Employment Preparation; 2) Resumes; 3) Job Applications; 4) Interview Techniques; 5) Dress/Appearance Standards; 6) Employer Expectations; 7) Job Leads; and 8) Labor Market Information.

Occupational training will be provided in a demand occupation that corresponds with the employment career goals indicated in the ISS/IEP. A labor market study is conducted for each training program offered. Certificates of skill competence will be provided to all students who complete the occupational program.

In addition to occupational skills training, basic skills and employability skills will be developed. Throughout the program, systematic and extensive attention will be directed toward improving basic education skills, including reading, math, writing, analytical, computer, and communication skills, toward the attainment of a high school diploma to prepare for college and/or the workforce. Participants will complete an employment portfolio and participate in mock interviews. The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) Competencies, which were created in 1991, will be incorporated into all aspects of occupational skills training.

Leadership Development Opportunities

Opportunities for leadership development will be made available to every student, either through formal vocational student organizations, through informal activities organized by the participants and supervised by the mentors, or through participation in the YOP Focus Groups. Every participant will be encouraged to join a vocational student organization aligned to his/her career interest area. Vocational student organizations currently offered through ROP include Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), Future Farmers of America (FFA), Future Homemakers of America/Home Economics Related Careers (FHA/HERO), Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA), and SkillsUSA. As members of these organizations, youth will develop positive relationships within a peer group with a set of positive values and a philosophy of life that can compete with the negative values encountered elsewhere. They will also be given opportunities to play a public leadership role influencing policy that affects the community and to participate in community service projects that improve the quality of life in the community. These programs have a successful history in Merced County. They actively engage students and provide opportunities for social, as well as skill-building, activities. The YOP Focus Groups provide an opportunity for students to voice their opinions, make recommendations, and influence policy for the Youth Opportunity Program.

Supportive Services

Supportive services necessary for each participant to achieve successful outcomes in the program will be identified during the development of the ISS/IEP. The mentor will refer the participant to community services and/or provide direct services, as funding allows, through the program. In addition to the supportive services identified in the

ISS/IEP, the mentor will make every effort to identify other supportive service needs that may arise as the participant progresses through the program.

Adult Mentoring

Each participant will be assigned to a mentor who will assist the participant to complete his/her education and other program activities. The mentor will provide ongoing support and encourage accountability toward individual goals for each participant. Mentor services will be documented by monthly diary entries.

Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling

All participants will complete an academic skills assessment as well as a vocational assessment to determine learning styles, vocational interests, aptitudes, and temperaments. The mentor will work with the student to analyze and interpret the results of the academic and vocational assessments, and establish activities and opportunities for career awareness and exploration in occupational areas consistent with the assessment results.

Participants in need of counseling services for mental health issues, anger management, addiction, or other intensive services will be provided services by a contracted mental health professional who will be out-stationed in school facilities which are easily accessible and familiar to participants. The proposed plan for services intends the mental health professional to be available to students two afternoons per week. The availability of an on-site mental health professional will increase the likelihood and frequency of youth access to counseling services by providing services on a drop-in schedule in a familiar environment.

Follow-up Services

Follow up services will be provided to participants for up to 12 months after program exit. Participants who are exited will be contacted at least quarterly and will be notified and encouraged to attend program activities, visit the Youth Opportunity Zone for assistance with job search activities, and access the computer and PLATO labs for further skills development. Supportive services will be made available as appropriate.

Summer Employment Opportunities

Employment opportunities will be offered to participants year round and will not be limited to the summer months. Participants will be enrolled into paid work experience based on the goals established in the ISS/IEP.

Financial Literacy Skills Training

The Merced County Youth Opportunity Program is currently piloting the Real Game California curriculum. The curriculum provides financial literacy training, including

personal budgeting and contingency budgeting, through a series of hands-on interactive sessions. This curriculum will be made available to the students enrolled under this proposed plan of services.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND RELATED TIMELINES:

Work Statement

The Contractor MCOE will:

1. Recruit, enroll, and provide services between November 1, 2005 and October 31, 2006 for 35 WIA eligible 14-18 year-old in-school youth who have identified disabilities.
2. Be responsible for administrative and fiscal oversight of the program.
3. Provide services including the ten (10) WIA required comprehensive elements and the program design components outlined in this narrative.
4. Provide outreach and recruitment to enroll 35 new participants.
5. Determine eligibility for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) services for 14-18 year-old in-school youth and complete required WIA enrollment paperwork for 35 youth.
6. Provide each participant with a comprehensive orientation to the program.
7. Provide objective assessment as described in the plan narrative. Complete an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) for each participant. An IEP may be substituted for the ISS.
8. Provide case management services for each participant, including appropriate contact at least once each month, with appropriate diary entry.
9. Provide paid and unpaid work experience.
10. Be responsible for payroll of participants and distribute participant paychecks.
11. Comply with laws and regulations pertaining to Workers' Compensation, federal and state labor laws, and Child Labor Laws for minor participants.
12. Ensure that all work site supervisors receive a program orientation before any participants are placed under their supervision.
13. Provide each participant an orientation to the worksite and/or training program prior to placement.

14. Provide each participant the safety equipment necessary to perform work under the contract.
15. Provide supportive services when needed and as practical. Refer participants to appropriate community services.
16. Carry out all program activities in accordance with the Work Statement and Budget/Budget Narrative in this plan.
17. Attain the final Local Youth Performance Measures established for 14-18 year olds by the State. The performance indicators that must be attained by the contractor are:

Youth skill attainment rate	78.7%
Youth diploma or equivalent rate	55.5%
Younger Youth Retention rate	53.8%
19. Provide follow-up services to all participants up to 12 months after program exit.
20. Provide a Customer Satisfaction Evaluation to measure the level of customer satisfaction with program services.

Budget Narrative

This proposal leverages existing funding for staff salaries. As such, there are no budget costs in this proposal for staff salaries or benefits.

Supplies: Consumable office supplies	\$ 500.
Instructional Software: PLATO software for academic remediation	\$ 2,500.
Contracted Services: Professional mental health counselor out-stationed at various school sites two afternoons (8 hours) per week estimated at \$50. per hour for 36 weeks.	\$14,440.
Participant Wages: 35 students will be provided an opportunity for paid work experience up to 192 hours per student @ \$6.75 per hour.	\$45,360.
Worker's compensation @ 3.08%	\$ 1,397.
Participant Incentives: Students will be provided an opportunity to earn incentives for recognition of achievements. Estimated at \$50.per student for 35 students.	\$ 1,750.
Students will be provided an opportunity to participate in an educational field trip. Transportation costs estimated.	\$ 500.
Supportive Services: Including but not limited to uniforms, pre-employment testing fees, bus tokens, etc. Estimated at \$50 per student for 35 students.	\$ 1,750.
Instructional Supplies: Consumable instructional supplies	\$ 1,418.
Indirect Costs: \$75,000. x .0718%	\$ 5,385.
Total Proposed Budget:	\$75,000.
Match of non-WIA funds: 25% of the program administrator's salary and benefits. Funded through Average Daily Attendance (ADA).	\$33,917

SAMPLE BUDGET SUMMARY

Applicant Name: Merced County Department of Workforce Investment		
Special Project Title: High Concentration		
Term: November 1, 2005, through October 31, 2006		
I. Budget Detail		Planned Expenditures
A. Staff Salaries		
B. Number of full-time equivalents		
C. Staff Benefits		
D. Staff Benefit Rate (percent)	%	
E. Staff Travel		
F. Operating Expenses (communications, facilities, utilities, maintenance, consumable supplies, etc.)		3853.
G. Equipment (not permitted)		
H. Contractual Services (attach specifications)		12,600.
I. Indirect Costs		2969.
J. Indirect Cost Rate (percent)*	5%	
*Name of Cognizant Agency: Merced County Office of Education		
K. Other (describe): Participant wages and workers comp, participant incentives and participant supportive services.		43,078.
L. Match (describe):		33,917.
II. Quarterly Expenditure Plan		Cumulative Expenditures
A. 12/2005		1,000.
B. 03/2006		16,375.
C. 06/2006		31,750.
D. 09/2006		47,125.
E. 10/2006		62,500.