

## **1. STATEMENT OF NEED**

Many students with disabilities in **[locality]** in Maryland lag far behind in technology related employment, post-secondary education and other key services that would prepare them for success in adult roles in the community, despite the fact that the state of Maryland is one of the richest and fastest growing centers of science and technology agencies and businesses, and has a long and rich history of collaboration among organizations and groups to assist transition age students with disabilities in preparation for their careers. There is a need to enhance and improve the transition system in **[locality]**, as far too many high school students with disabilities do not have the opportunity to benefit from a high quality, coordinated system of services that allows them to explore high tech careers and/or gain further post secondary education. **[Number of individuals]** between the ages of 14-21 could potentially benefit from transitioning services like High School/High Tech. Enhancing and expanding existing programs is critical to meet the needs of students with disabilities across **[locality]**.

Some gains have been made in Maryland's overall dropout rate, but a disproportionate number of dropouts with disabilities exist in many areas of the state. In **[locality]**, the dropout rate for students with disabilities has averaged **[average dropout rate]**. Many minority students with disabilities and many of those receiving Social Security disability benefits (SSI, and/or SSDI) and Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) remain limited and unprepared in their capacities to explore technology-related careers or gain further post secondary education.

While public education and the workforce development system, employers, parents and young people now have higher expectations for educational achievement, they often fail to recognize the potential that youth with disabilities have for jobs and careers, particularly in technology-related occupations. As a result, many Maryland youth with disabilities are seldom

afforded post-secondary preparation and educational opportunities leading to internships and placements in technology-related careers.

### **Potential Contribution**

The Workforce development system in **[locality]** has undergone significant changes, including the enhancement, development and implementation of new partnerships and leadership roles for the benefit of individuals with disabilities. This project is embracing the opportunity to further enhance, build upon and support efforts to increase employment outcomes for all students with disabilities through a coordinated system based upon the evidence-based model of High School/High Tech. It is intended that those most affected will be young people with disabilities who are at risk of dropping out and those receiving Social Security Disability Insurance, Supplemental Security Income benefits and other public services.

This High School/High Tech project holds significance for young individuals with disabilities, for public and private organizations and agencies involved in the planning and delivery of transition services, for employers and for workforce systems. The proposed project expects to enhance the quality of and the way services are planned and delivered at the state and local level so that effective strategies are implemented that assist transition age youth with disabilities who want to explore technology-related careers or obtain post secondary education. This will be accomplished through expansion of local High School/High Tech sites, as well as use of the local website to enable coordination of transitioning services throughout **[locality]**.

The project will take advantage of **[locality]**'s economy and advances in technology. According to **[name of documentation similar to U. S. Dept of Labor Statistics info that would include local labor market info]**, **[locality]** ranks **[local ranking]** in the percentage of professional technical workers (**[percentage]**) in the workforce. **[more detailed information on local labor market statistics regarding technology and technical occupations.]**.

We feel that this project meets **[Relate to grantor’s statement of what they are looking for, goals priorities etc.]**.

**Status and Actions with Existing Local High School/High Tech Program.**

**[Insert information on how long local program has been in operation, what has been the structure of the program. Include successes, statistics on numbers served, activities in which they participated, follow up statistics of what students have accomplished, and why the local program needs to continue and expand.]**

**Development or Demonstration of Promising New Strategies.**

This project will employ the evidence-based High School/High Tech design features of preparatory experience, connecting activities, work based experiences and youth development and leadership activities. **[Insert information on how the design features will be implemented by the local program. F1 for more instructions. Expanded role of the local website in enabling communication to & for students & other transitioning programs in the jurisdiction, & any other new strategies being proposed. Linkage with statewide website allows for communication between local programs.]**

**Numbers of Students and Importance of Results.**

The most recent Maryland School Census Data and Related Tables (April 15, 2003) shows that there are 35,792 students with disabilities served by special education who are between the ages of 14 to 21. Maryland does not report the numbers of students served under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended. **[local numbers]**. Therefore, there are many more students who could potentially benefit from High School/High Tech. We anticipate that over the **[time period of grant and anticipated number of students served over that time period]**, consistent with the evidence based design model. These results are significant for **[locality]** because all of these

students will receive the highest quality services, potentially increasing graduation rates and impacting students receiving SSI/SSDI or other public benefits.

### **State and Local Graduation and Drop out Rates.**

According to the Maryland State Department of Education Report Card from 2006, the overall graduation rate for all students was 85.43% as compared to the overall graduation rate for students served by special education which was 76.77%. The drop-rate for students with disabilities was 5.65% as compared to 3.63% for all students. **[Insert local graduation & dropout data from <http://mdreportcard.org/index.aspx>]**

### **Major Barriers to Employment.**

The major barriers impacting employment for young people with disabilities in **[locality]** and anticipated effects and accomplishments of this project include:

- **Consistency/Quality of Secondary Education.** In a 2001, a Maryland Workforce Skills survey was conducted and revealed that only 17% of businesses rated Maryland public high schools as effective in providing a qualified workforce. Businesses said that only 58% of colleges were effective, down from 68 percent two years previously. At the same time, the report states that students who are exposed to and familiar with technology will be better prepared to succeed in the workplace and in life. The survey was conducted by the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education [a coalition of 80 companies that have made a 10 year commitment to support education reform and improve student achievement in Maryland] in partnership with the Maryland Economic Development Commission, the State Department of Education, the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development, the Maryland Higher Education Commission, and the Governor's Workforce Investment Board. **[name of program] is a multifaceted enrichment program for youth with disabilities who will be exposed to science and technology through the program,**

**opening the options for new and exciting careers and for students who might otherwise drop out or settle for less challenging and satisfying careers. This project will significantly offer employers a qualified employee and an employee who possesses the skills and knowledge to succeed in the workplace.**

- **Need for Comprehensive Strategy.** Ready by 21, a 2002 report from the Advocates for Children and Youth, states that Maryland does not have a comprehensive strategy for improving readiness of youth in Maryland for work, community and family. **Research has shown that the High School/High Tech design elements significantly increase the readiness of youth for their adult roles. Through this project we will be able to provide a blueprint and guide to the state for what works in improving the readiness of students with disabilities for work, community and family.**
- **Variability in One-Stop Centers.** [Insert info on local 1-Stop system & any stats on availability of youth-related job services through it & other youth-related job programs]. **This project will emphasize the importance of and linkage with youth services for students with disabilities and will contribute to consistent standards of effective services for young people with disabilities throughout youth programs in [locality].**
- **Transportation.** [Enter information on local transportation issues and impact on students' ability to participate in career related activities.]. **This project will address transportation, a component of Design Feature II, Connecting Activities through collaboration with agencies and through** [Insert any other activities to circumvent transportation problems, like possibility of on-line service provision].
- **Work Disincentives.** Students with disabilities receiving public benefits and their families often have concerns about possible discontinuation of benefits if the individual achieves employment. For students, such benefits may be tied to health care, attendant care, housing

and monthly cash payments. This project will address work disincentives through linkages with benefits counselors to assure that students are aware of the array of work incentives available to them. More importantly, by supporting achievement of careers and employment with higher earnings, this project may enable earnings at a level which exceeds government benefit programs so that individuals with disabilities are confident in their ability to become financially self-sufficient.

**Method to Increase Services, Skill Training, Employment Outcomes, Educational and Job Retention and Career Advancement.**

A key to increasing the employment of people with disabilities is to ensure that young people with disabilities are provided resources and assistance to move from school to work, as opposed to becoming dependent on welfare or other benefits programs. **[name of program]** is going to accomplish this by increasing the participation of youth with disabilities in High School/High Tech programs. This project will accomplish our objectives by increasing the participation of youth with disabilities in transition programs through enhanced coordination of efforts that include students, parents, the local Workforce Investment Board, WIA youth programs, Youth Leadership Forum, Independent Living Centers, Vocational Rehabilitation, Special Education, Business Leadership Networks, Career Technology and Adult Learning, One-Stop Centers, Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, other High School/High Tech programs in Maryland, colleges and other community, public and private programs, and **[names of other local partners.**

**Let Adele Connolly know if this section does not apply to your local program]** who are interested in and support High School/High Tech in **[locality]**. Working together, we will provide a coordinated program of High School/High Tech through the following **overall major goals:**

**[Insert or attach listing of major goals and objectives to be accomplished under each goal.]**

**Additional State and/or Local Resources.** The state and local funds and resources that will be leveraged to support the overall objectives include:

- The State Vocational Rehabilitation Program –Participants in **[locality]** will be referred to become consumers of the Division of Rehabilitation Services and will have access to assessments and services of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and assistance with transitioning. This will include provision of 1) AT assessments, as needed, and 2) career assessments as often these are not done by the school system. DORS also offers exploration of “Entrepreneurship” through Reach Independence through Self-Employment (RISE) Program where students have the opportunity to participate in classes such as Exploring Entrepreneurships and Business Plan Development-- an optional component of Design Feature III, Work-Based Experiences.
- Youth funds through local WIA Youth councils for internships and/or summer work experiences.
- Technology Assistance Program for assistive technology assessments and try outs of equipment.
- Maryland’s Work Tech (Workforce & Technology Center, Rehabilitation Technology Services) for equipment loans, work-site assessments, complex computer interface and adaptation assessments –design features II, III.
- Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council for support of Youth Leadership Forum activities and identification of mentors – design feature II.
- Independence Now, Inc. for 1) support and management of Youth Leadership Forum and 2) assistance with identifying transportation resources – design feature II.
- Independence Now, Inc., and Making Choices for Independent Living, Inc., for Maryland’s Benefits Planning, Outreach and Advocacy programs to assure program participants who receive public benefits are aware of work incentives.

- Disability Navigators, to facilitate linkages between HS/HT and youth services.

## **2. COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE STRATEGY.**

There are several key factors that establish the capacity of this project to result in lasting de coordination and sustainability of High School/High Tech in **[locality]** for students with disabilities. These include the identified roles and responsibilities of the key partners, collaboration and commitment from critical state agencies and organizations, an emphasis on knowledge dissemination to the local level, and an emphasis on building capacity, developing new linkages and relationships, and leveraging resources within the state to sustain lasting change. The **[name of program]** seeks to ensure systematic, long term changes in the increased availability of skills training, employment opportunities, and career advancement; and increase in the number of youth making successful transition to work or further training.

**STAFF CAPACITY.** The **[name of program]** assures that staff involved in this project have required competencies, comprehensive knowledge of diverse disabilities as the key to reduction of education and employment barriers in science and technology.

**Experience.** **[Delineate experience base of local program and key partner agencies.]**

### **Key Positions**

**Project Director.** **[Delineate experience and expertise of project director.]**

**Grant Coordinator.** **[Delineate experience and expertise of grant coordinator.]**

**Policy Analyst.** **[Delineate experience and expertise of policy analyst.]**

**[Delineate experience and expertise of additional individuals in key positions.]**

### **PROPOSED DESIGN**

Our proposed design will build upon the collaborative planning and efforts of a consortium of strong state and local agencies, consumers, families and advocates and the employment

community and leadership is in place. The leadership consortium will include the Division of Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Education (Divisions of Career Technology and Adult Learning, Special Education/Early Intervention Services), Developmental Disabilities Council, the Governor's Workforce Investment Board, Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council, Governor's Office for Individuals with Disabilities and Committee on Employment of Persons with Disabilities, Maryland Technology Assistance Program, Executive Directors of all existing High School/High Tech programs in Maryland, representative of higher education, consumers (including parents and students) and advocacy group representatives.

**[Summarize proposed project design, followed by goals and objectives under each goal.]**

### **Roles of Partners**

**[Delineate partners followed by their roles and responsibilities.]**

**Use of Technology in Carrying Out Grant Activities.** The project will **[delineate how technology will be used, including local website for communication, e-mentoring, data collection, etc.]**

### **Benefits and results expected from the grant activities proposed**

There is a need within **[locality]** to increase the availability of skills training, employment opportunities, and career advancement for students with disabilities and increase in the number of youth making the successful transition to work or who enter further training or educational programs. Students will be presented with a wider and greater choice for technology-related careers, maximize their potential educational opportunities, learn about careers in science and technology, receive support through mentors and other supportive adults so that technology-related careers seem possible for them. As a result they will complete high school at an increased rate, enter post-secondary education programs at an increased rate, and achieve and retain employment at an increased rate.

As a result, local businesses will benefit from an increase in work-ready employees with skills required for careers in science and technology.

**Strategy for gaining the support of people with disabilities and their families and the outreach marketing strategy**

This project will build upon history of inclusion and the support of individuals with disabilities in the development, planning and delivery of services. **[Delineate strategy for involving parents in local advisory committee & development of ideas & decision-making.]**

**Specific approaches for developing relationships with disability organizations**

**[Delineate how relationships with disability organizations will take place.]**

**Approaches for Developing Relationships with and support of Area Employers**

Existing linkages with employers involved in the Business Leadership Networks, local one-stops and Chambers of Commerce will be capitalized on to support activities of the program, including tours of facilities (physical or virtual), job shadowing, informational interviewing and mentoring. **[Delineate how program will establish and maintain linkages with local employers.]**

**Linkages with State/Local Public Agencies.** **[Delineate how local program will establish & maintain linkages with state & local agencies, and established community linkages.]**

**3. SUSTAINABILITY**

**Extent to which the project is designed to build capacity and yield results beyond the grant.**

- **[Delineate how the local program will build capacity & create systems change, as well as how other funding may be leveraged.]**
- Publicize and promote results. **[Specify how program will publicize and promote results.]**
- Explore all means of financial support for the local program including grants, trusts, foundations, service organizations, etc.

#### **4. MANAGEMENT AND OUTCOMES**

The Management Plan for the program increases collaboration, facilitating linkages and communication among agencies who are concerned with increasing the availability of skills training, employment opportunities, and career advancements for students with disabilities and increasing the number of youth making a successful transition to work or who want to enter further training or educational programs.

**[Delineate management structure & responsibilities for admin and program oversight & financial management, plus location & roles of staff.]**

**[Delineate goal and objectives structure.]**

**Plan for Data Collection. [Specify who's responsible for data collection, what data will be collected, how it will be reported, based on RFP. Attach project financial plan/budget justification, following Table of Contents format, based on parameters outlined by grantor.]**