



219 North Main Street, Suite 402
Barre, VT 05641 (p) 802-479-1030 | (f) 802-479-1835

Using Flexible Pathways for Personalized Learning Request for Promising Practices Proposals

The Vermont Agency of Education invites Supervisory Unions and School Districts to apply for a Flexible Pathways Grant to support high-quality, well-rounded, out-of-school time learning opportunities for Vermont learners. Competitive awards will be granted to school and community partnerships that show the greatest promise of providing high-quality out-of-school time learning opportunities that support Act 77 and EQS. SUs/SDs will lead these projects.

Applicants may apply for grants in the following ranges: \$7,500 - \$10,000, \$20,000 - \$30,000 or \$50,000 - \$75,000. Grant applications will be reviewed by the Agency of Education after the May 11, 2018 closing date. The grant may be approved in full, in part, or not approved. Any final award amount will be determined by the reviewers.

Request for Proposal Date: April 9, 2018

Application Due Date: May 11, 2018

Anticipated Grant Duration: July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019

Number of Awards: Multiple awards are anticipated

Introduction and Background

Vermont's "Flexible Pathways Initiative" (Act 77 of 2013) and Education Quality Standards (EQS) established the expectation that students will have access to "flexible pathways to graduation." "Pathways" have been defined as "any combination of high-quality academic and experiential components leading to secondary school completion and post-secondary readiness [...] that allow the student to apply his or her knowledge and skills to tasks that are of interest to that student." Flexible Pathway examples can include: career technical education, dual enrollment, expanded learning opportunities such as after-school programs, work based learning, and virtual learning.

As SUs/districts shift to personalized learning in a proficiency-based system, expectations for students to take ownership over their own learning and collect evidence of that learning will increase. Students will look to integrate learning that takes place during out-of-school time as part of their pathways to graduation. The AOE would like to encourage this effort by providing funding to support SUs/SDs to

collaborate with partners to develop or refine a promising practice that occurs during out-of-school time. Out-of-school time can include before or after school, during summer, and during school vacation periods (see a more comprehensive definition below). This practice will demonstrate direct impact on student growth and will connect to learning that happens during the school day.

The following definitions are used for this RFP only:

Out-of-school time initiatives can include before school, after school and weekend programs; summer learning opportunities; school vacation learning opportunities. They are formal and structured opportunities for school-aged youth that complement or that are best integrated with or into the regular school day. They are most often provided by schools, community groups, youth-serving organizations, cultural institutions, and city/state agencies. Adapted from [Strengthening Out-of-School Time/United Way](#)

Promising practice is a practice involving collaborative activities between the school and the out-of-school time program that develops a new approach or improves an existing approach to support student learning. The practice must show a high degree of success in its setting and the possibility of replication. In accordance with [the Levels of Evidence memo](#) recently published by the AOE, investment requests must identify levels of evidence linked to activities, strategies and interventions proposed.

Vermont Agency of Education Priorities:

This grant will support projects that:

- explain how the out-of-school time promising practice/activity integrates with the school day including staffing, curriculum, space, materials, and systems.
- explain how the results of these promising practices could solve a problem(s) for the field, for example:
 - How are out-of-school time learning opportunities involved in the personalization process?
 - How are out-of-school time learning activities supporting student's flexible pathway opportunities?
 - What are the current challenges schools face when students want to incorporate learning/activities outside of the school into their PLPs?
 - What have been successes in integrating demonstrations of proficiencies in out-of-school time learning into the school day?
 - How can we successfully integrate demonstrations of proficiency that happen during an out-of-school time program into formal spaces, such as portfolios, PLPs, report cards, etc.?
- include a plan for how this work will continue, support and expand personalized learning and flexible pathways opportunities
- build networking opportunities for SUs/SDs, expanded learning providers and other partners

This grant will support projects that meet the following criteria:

I. Project Award and Timeline

Grants will expire on June 30, 2019 provided that program objectives are met and all reporting and monitoring requirements are successfully fulfilled. Grantees are expected to provide a plan, timeline, and budget request for the identified grant activity period.

Timeline

Notification of Request for Proposals – April 9, 2018

Application Due Date - May 11, 2018 (Received at VT AOE by 4:00 PM)

Award Announcements – May 31, 2018

II. Project Requirements

- A. **Contact Information:** Name, address, phone number, and e-mail information for Lead Grant Contact, Partners, and Business Manager.
- B. **Organizational Structure:** Provide clear plans on project structure in order to meet the grant expectations. Provide clearly defined roles and responsibilities of staff and leadership.
- C. **Communication System:** Discuss intended strategies for communication with and among the school(s), partners, AOE staff, and any stakeholders.
- D. **Program, Plan, Timeline, and Benchmarks of Success:** Provide a clear description of the program, an achievable plan and timeline for the work, as well as specific indicators of project success at key points of the timeline. This plan and timeline must be developed for the time period between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019.
- E. **Budget and Budget Justification:** Include a cost effective budget and justification for line items that reflect the goals and priorities of this project. This budget and budget justification must be for the time period between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019.

III. Application Requirements

The narrative sections of the application must be double-spaced and the font must not be smaller than 12-point and shall not exceed 10 pages. Application must contain the following sections:

- A. **Contact Information:** Name, address, phone number, and e-mail information for Lead Grant Contact, Partners, and Business Manager. (please see Appendix B)

B. Grant Narrative:

Project Need and Description:

- A detailed description of the promising practice. Include the number of students served, a plan with a schedule/timeline for July 1, 2018- June 30, 2019, and the number of days or hours of direct service offered.
- Include specific indicators of project success (benchmarks) at key points of the timeline.

Project Management:

- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of staff and leadership, and steering committee membership
- Intended strategies for communication with and among the school(s), partners, AOE staff, and any stakeholders.
- Details of Steering Committee (SC) (if applicable) including membership and process to support implementation.
- An explanation of how the promising practice is integrated into school day systems and on-going initiatives. Include specific commitments from partners and joint planning activities.

Project Evidence and Evaluation:

- A description of the promising practice's objectives including a description of the measurements you will use to determine success including clearly defined program goals, numeric objectives, and specific outcomes.
- Level of Evidence connected to the promising practice. Cite research that establishes the evidence base.
- Theory of Action related to the promising practice if Level 4 is identified. At a minimum, include an Evaluation Plan for the activity so that you can study your activities, strategies, and interventions and document your results **and** summative documentation of the evaluation results for the practice, if done previously. (Support for each of these suggestions can be found in the [Vermont Continuous Improvement Framework](#).)

Budget and Budget Justification:

- A project budget for anticipated funding.
- A budget justification that is clearly tied to the scope and requirements of the project. (Please see Appendix C for Budget Template)

IV. Application Submission and Review

A. Submission: Applicants must submit an original as well as an electronic copy to Jess DeCarolis via email (jess.decarolis@vermont.gov) at the Vermont Agency of Education. To be considered for funding, original signed applications must be received at the Vermont

Agency of Education by 4:00PM on May 11, 2018. Applications should be mailed or delivered to: Jess DeCarolis

Personalization and Flexible Pathways
Vermont Agency of Education
219 North Main Street, Suite 402
Barre, VT 05641

B. Review Process:

A review panel will evaluate the eligible applications in light of the required application components. (for support, please see Appendix A. Quality Guide)

Criteria

<u>Project Need and Description:</u>	25 Points
<u>Project Management:</u>	25 Points
<u>Project Evidence and Evaluation:</u>	25 Points
<u>Budget and Budget Justification:</u>	25 Points

The Agency reserves the right to award in part, to reject any and all applications in whole or in part, and to waive technical defects, irregularities or omissions if, in its judgement, the best interest of students would be served. After receiving the application, the Agency reserves the right not to award a grant, to negotiate specific grant amounts and to select certain grantees regardless of points awarded as part of the process to meet federal requirements or State Board of Education priorities.

Applicants may be asked to clarify or rewrite certain aspects of their applications. Finalists may be asked to participate in an interview before funds are awarded. Applicants will be contacted if such information or actions are necessary.

V. Award Administration

A. Notification of the Award: The SU/SD designee will be notified of the status of their application within two weeks of the application deadline.

B. Reporting Requirements: The Steering Committee and/or SU/SD designee will provide quarterly updates on progress to a designated staff person at the Agency of Education.

Appendix A.

QUALITY GUIDE			
Application Section	Basic or Below Response	Better Response	Best Response
<p>1. <u>Project Need and Description</u> (up to 25 Points)</p> <p>A detailed description of the promising practice. Include the number of students served, a plan with a schedule/timeline for July 1, 2018- June 30, 2019, and the number of days or hours of direct service offered.</p> <p>Include specific indicators of project success (Benchmarks) at key points of the timeline.</p>	<p>The promising practice is unclear or not fully developed</p> <p>Program descriptions lack detail</p> <p>The program design lacks cohesion</p> <p>There is limited evidence that a student-centered approach is used or considered</p> <p>Linkages or innovations to(?) the school day are limited or non-existent</p> <p>The timeline is vague and benchmarks are limited or unconvincing</p>	<p>The proposed practice is well designed</p> <p>Program detail includes numbers of students served, schedules, days, offerings, rationale and approach</p> <p>The program design is varied and tied to a variety of learning outcomes and approaches</p> <p>A student-centered approach is evident but not central to programs</p> <p>School day linkages or innovations are emerging or growing</p> <p>The timeline and benchmarks are reasonable, clear, and achievable</p>	<p>Programming is intentional, well-designed, and purposeful; including rich and effective opportunities for personalization</p> <p>All program details are clearly presented and are aligned to and supported strongly by other assertions throughout the proposal including ties to proficiencies and/or PLPs</p> <p>The program design is carefully constructed and explained, valuing student choice and adaptable to need</p> <p>A student-centered approach is clearly articulated in detail</p> <p>School day linkages are robust and evident with multiple examples</p> <p>A detailed timeline includes benchmarks within an integrated plan that will produce clear outcomes</p>

Application Section	Basic or Below Response	Better Response	Best Response
<p>2. Project Management (up to 25 Points)</p> <p>Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of staff and leadership, and steering committee membership</p> <p>Intended strategies for communication with and among the school(s), partners, AOE staff, and any stakeholders.</p> <p>Details of the Steering Committee (SC) including membership and process to support implementation.</p> <p>An explanation of how the promising practice is integrated into school day systems and on-going initiatives. Include specific commitments from partners and joint planning activities.</p>	<p>Roles and responsibilities are not well-designed and it is unclear how the project will produce outcomes</p> <p>Limited effort or attention to the value of strategic communication is in evidence</p> <p>Steering Committee details are lacking</p> <p>It is not clear how the school leadership and /or partners supports the project</p>	<p>Roles and responsibilities are fairly well-defined but it may not be clear how they fit into the greater school, district, or organizational structure</p> <p>At least three methods of communication are described that appeal to a cross section of the community</p> <p>Steering Committee stakeholders and process is varied and appropriate</p> <p>There is evidence that the school leadership and/or partners is invested in the project</p>	<p>Roles and responsibilities have been identified along with an explanation of how staff supports the school, district, or organizational structure.</p> <p>A system of integrated communication strategies will be implemented</p> <p>Steering Committee stakeholders and process is integrated and aligned with existing systems</p> <p>There is ample evidence that the school leadership team not only supports, but will use the project to implement its educational vision</p>

Application Section	Basic or Below Response	Better Response	Best Response
<p>3. Project Evidence and Evaluation (up to 25 points)</p> <p>A description of the promising practice’s objectives including a description of the measurements you will use to determine success including clearly defined program goals, numeric objectives, and specific outcomes.</p> <p>Level of Evidence connected to the promising practice. Cite research that establishes the evidence base.</p> <p>Theory of Action related to the promising practice if Level 4 is identified. At a minimum include an Evaluation Plan for the activity so that you can study your activities, strategies, and interventions and document your results and summative documentation of the evaluation results for the practice, if done previously. (Support for each of these suggestions can be found in the Vermont Continuous Improvement Framework.)</p>	<p>The questions, goals, objectives and outcomes are minimal, or not well thought out</p> <p>Only a few indicators are used, and there are few specific targets</p> <p>There is limited evidence that best practices and research are being leveraged or even understood and a connection to the evidence memo is non-existent</p>	<p>The questions, goals, objectives and outcomes are in existence but all components of a SMART goal may not be met.</p> <p>The proposed design and evidence measurements are compelling, but certain aspects of the plan could be improved; evidence</p> <p>At least five pieces of evidence across different domains accompany a compelling narrative that aligns to the evidence memo</p> <p>The proposed Theory of Action is sufficient and adds value to the proposal</p>	<p>The questions, goals, objectives and outcomes are concise, well thought out, and are clearly linked to a SMART framework (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time sensitive)</p> <p>Multi layered evidence and data is presented that is linked to the program proposal making a powerful case in line with levels one through three</p> <p>A mixture of academic and other performance measures include multiple assessments using school and other data and linked to valid research based approaches</p> <p>The proposed Theory of Action is clear and demonstrates a connection between need, strategies proposed and includes a formative assessment methodology</p>

Application Section	Basic or Below Response	Better Response	Best Response
<p>4. Budget and Budget Justification (up 25 Points)</p> <p>A project budget for anticipated funding.</p> <p>A budget justification that is clearly tied to the scope and requirements of the project</p>	<p>Costs are not clear and do not relate explicitly to the proposal design</p> <p>Some or many costs may not be reasonable or necessary</p> <p>The budget justification narrative is missing essential information to make a full assessment</p>	<p>The costs are reasonable, balanced, and for the most part tied to the proposal design</p> <p>Some detail may be missing from the budget narrative to understand how funds will be expended, but the information is clear on the whole</p> <p>Costs are well designed, reasonable and necessary, yet a few items may need more information and are not explicitly explained</p>	<p>The budget is reasonable, necessary, clear and convincing and the budget can successfully and reasonably implement the proposed plan.</p> <p>Costs are reasonable and necessary. Administration and direct instruction are balanced and the budget has compelling specificity for each part</p> <p>The budget narrative is clear and convincing and has a high level of detail giving the reader a high degree of confidence in all aspects the proposal.</p>

Appendix B.

Contact Information: Name, address, phone number, and e-mail information for Lead Grant Contact, Partners, and Business Manager.

Lead Grant Contact

Institution or Organization: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Business Manager

Institution or Organization: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Partner(s)

Institution or Organization: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Appendix C.

Project Budget

A. Direct Cost Requested (Object Code)	2018
1. Salaries (100)	_____
2. Employees Benefits (200)	_____
3. Other Purchased Services (500)	_____
• Travel	
• Student Transportation	
• Printing and Binding	
4. Supplies (600)	_____
• Food	
• Books and Periodicals	
5. Professional and Technical Services (300)	_____
• Consultants and Contracts	
6. Equipment (730)	_____
7. Miscellaneous Expenditures (800)	_____
• Dues and Fees	
B. Total	_____

This form is a required element of the grant application. Justification for each of the categories shall be included in the budget narrative portion of the application.