

Black Hawk College

Drop Out Recovery Program Abstract

Contract # OSY-2024-01

This contract has been entered into for the purpose of providing a drop-out recovery program for the high school drop-outs in need of literacy and/or numeracy remediation. The contract begins July 1, 2024 and will terminate on June 30, 2025, but may be extended for two additional years if mutually agreed to. The funding amount is \$80,000. The enrollment goal is 15 students.

Black Hawk College will provide the intensive education and employment skills program for Stark County youth and youth from surrounding counties who may benefit from enrollment in Black Hawk College's program. Consensus from both Black Hawk College and Career Link will be required for students outside of Peoria County. The program will serve students, ages 16-24, that have dropped out of high school, preferably have a deficiency in literacy or numeracy, and will be provide an opportunity to participate in a GED Recovery Program.

Black Hawk College will provide all four required program elements – instruction for GED preparation, for literacy and numeracy gains, for employment related skills, and incentives to motivate students to achieve. The Service Provider will also partner with other groups and businesses to provide Work Experience.

1. GED Preparation

All elements of this program are designed to help students acquire skill, knowledge, and character qualities that will assist them in finding success in life and the ability to contribute to their family and their community. One of the strengths of this program is the ability to access the post-secondary education resources of Black Hawk College and the multitude of employment resources available at the CEC.

Enrolled students use a variety of methods to study for the GED examination. The program is intentional about helping students reverse patterns of academic failure which were previously experienced. Study for the GED involves adopting the characteristics of a self-regulated learner, using available learning resources, incentivizing to motivate, and using cognitive strategies for better learning.

The actual study of the GED covers the four testing areas, as well as the Constitution Modules, as needed. Students work in standard GED preparation texts, the Essential Education GED Academy online program, and other on-line materials as needed. Some course work is contextualized using healthcare, welding, and automotive content (depending on the student's interests). Tutoring and study skills assistance are provided to meet individual needs and goals. Adult literacy volunteers or paid math tutors will be available through this funding and BHC GED program. Gains in literacy and/or numeracy occur as part of the study process for the GED. Black Hawk College tracks the progression of students through educational functioning levels and incentives tied to increases.

Career exploration, job readiness skills, and job search techniques are a part of the instructional curriculum students experience while in the program. Students are expected to investigate different career options, develop a polished resume, practice interviewing, and develop job search techniques. In addition, students practice time management, problem solving, conflict resolution, teamwork, and an understanding of diversity as part of job readiness.

Black Hawk College's GED class uses the Essential Education GED Academy as an important instructional method. This program is favored by students and has an interactive curriculum which includes material for the GED, pre-GED academics, CASAS Academy, and several work habit and vocational content areas. Essential Education is accessible online anywhere internet access is available. This makes the instruction usable at off-site locations such as a student's home, a public library, or the Career Link office. Aligned to the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS), Essential Education features short, mastery-based video lessons and assessments, interactive tutor options and 24/7 access which makes it highly effective and very practical for the students.

2. Literacy and Numeracy Gains/Measureable Skills Gains

The program must provide for specific gains in literacy and/or numeracy, as appropriate, based on the initial assessment with the TABE or CASAS. The standard of achievement is for the youth to increase at least one educational functioning level in at least one area of deficiency. Measurable Skills Gains (MSG) are indicators used to track important achievements of WIOA participants. A student in a GED program can earn a MSG by completing their GED or increasing a reading or math grade level. Attainment of the MSG will be determined by a post-test. The post-test must be the same type (TABE/CASAS) as the pre-test. The Service Provider should work with Career Link to develop an individualized plan for when students should be post-tested.

The purpose of the Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) indicator is to track and measure important progressions and achievements made by WIOA clients (entered in training or education), through pathways and towards various goals of their individual programs. A gain must be recorded for a client each year (July 1 – June 30) they are enrolled in training or education and progress satisfactorily in one or more areas of their employment or training program.

3. Employment-related Skills

The program must provide information in Career Exploration, Job Readiness Skills, and Job Search Techniques in order to enhance the youths' ability to obtain employment or to attend post-secondary educational training. The program provider is responsible for providing adequate training and counseling to assist the youth in achieving one of these outcomes mentioned above, up to the point where the youth has been terminated from the program. Goals for attainment of benchmarks in the area will be jointly established between Career Link staff and Service Provider staff. These Work Readiness goal achievements will flow naturally from the delivery of this element.

4. Incentives

A financial incentive system will be offered to encourage perseverance and participation in goal-directed activities. Incentives may be modified, with prior approval from Career Link, as the need arises to make them more effective and appropriate in promoting program successes. The subcontractor will issue incentives directly to students. Incentives must be awarded throughout the year and may not be withheld from students until completion of the program. Every award will be fully documented and receipt of each incentive will be signed for by the student and the records saved by the subcontractor.

Work Experience Component

Students who demonstrate regular and reliable patterns of attendance, work ethic, and academic performance are selected to participate in a related work program. Worksites are arranged by the Service Provider and the Career Link Career Planner. Efforts are made to place students in sites that are compatible with their interests or previous work experiences and are easily accessed, especially when transportation is a challenge for the student. Career Link will establish a contractual agreement with the employer at the request of the Service Provider. Career Link will pay the youth the current Illinois minimum wage or up to \$5.00 above the minimum wage, depending on the prevailing entry-level wage for the work site. Work Experience may continue up to 1,800 hours, or up to eighteen (18) months duration, whichever occurs first. Student workers cannot exceed 29 work hours per week. Career Link should be made aware of issues at worksites and should be contacted before a student is removed from a worksite. The subcontractor will initiate the process of placing students in job, in conjunction with Career Link oversight.

The program works with Career Link to provide Work Experience in Stark County with local employers. Black Hawk College will leverage established relationships with local employers, the Chamber of Commerce, and Economic Development officials to facilitate suitable job placements.

The program design includes an important component involving employers in the learning process so that students are better prepared for entry into the workforce.

Transition to Employment or Post-Secondary Training

The subcontractor will provide a comprehensive transition program to support GED graduates in their pursuit of post-secondary education or employment, including but not limited to career assessments, job placement services, and referrals to local education and training providers. The subcontractor will work collaboratively with Career Link to identify and address barriers to successful transition, and shall provide regular updates on its progress towards achieving these goals.

The program will prepare students for post-secondary school by using many of the Black Hawk College's resources. College recruitment, career counseling, and financial aid staff meet with students (in class and privately) to help them consider the next step if their choice is to continue their education.