

Heartland Community College

Drop Out Recovery Program Abstract

Contract # OSY-2024-02

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 \$77,095. The enrollment goal is 30-40 students.

Heartland Community College will provide the intensive education and employment skills program for McLean County youth and youth from surrounding counties who may benefit from enrollment in Heartland Community College's program. Consensus from both Heartland Community 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.

Heartland Community 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

Heartland Community College's Adult Education department will provide classes to prepare participants for the High School Equivalency (HSE) exams (GED and HiSet) and to develop career skills.

Instruction for HSE exam preparation will include language arts (reading and writing), math, science and social studies. The career readiness portions of the curriculum will include instruction in career pathways awareness, job searching and soft skills. Students will also learn about post-secondary transitions.

Core instructional materials for the GED test preparation portion of the class will be: Steck-Vaughn Mathematical Reasoning Test Prep for the 2014 GED Test, New Readers Press Science and Social Studies for the GED Test 2018 Edition, New Readers Press Reading Comprehension, and numerous teacher-generated lessons on Canvas. The remaining hours of instruction each week will be used to develop career readiness and soft skills. Instructional materials for this portion will include Smart Goals from The Coaching Tools Company, Resume and Cover Letter writing and interviewing suggestions from multiple online sources and Speed Interviews materials from Teachers Pay Teachers.

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.

Heartland's students will explore careers by taking the career interest inventory, Career Cruising. With the results, they will dig deeper into the Career Cruising site to research career clusters and career possibilities. Students then will set their SMART goals to aid in their search for a career. Also, they will participate in resume and cover letter workshops and several mock interviews with their peers and professionals in the community. In addition, students tour different college divisions including career and technical education, health sciences, etc. to learn about possible career pathways and certificates and degrees the college offers. They will practice soft skills to help prepare them for the workplace including critical thinking skills, teamwork, organizational skills, work ethic and communication skills.

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.

- Student incentives may not be incurred after 30 days upon attaining a GED.
- Maximum incentive awards per student may not exceed \$300 for the duration of the student's enrollment with Career Link.

ICAPS Training

Students may be eligible to take the Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) which provides concurrent enrollment and instruction in a team-taught environment with Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Adult Education. The Adult Education department will offer College and Career Readiness ICAPS classes where students will take credit classes to earn an industry-recognized certification or degree while working on

attaining their high school diploma with the adult education program. The program will provide programming to accelerate student transitioning into post-secondary education which will include a high support and strong contact approach. From enrollment to final transition, Heartland will provide assistance to the students. At enrollment and orientation, Heartland will help students identify potential barriers and help them find solutions. When students are enrolled in the classes, the college will offer a support class to help with any issues in the credit class and to teach students workplace skills. The credit class will be team taught by a credit class instructor and an adult education instructor who will share learning objectives and outcomes. To help students transition into post-secondary education, an appointed academic advisor and the Associate Director of Adult Education will be a resource for students. The credit class requires tuition and fees for our students until they become financial aid eligible (Students typically do not become financial aid eligible until after receiving their high school equivalency). Heartland anticipates two (2) students for this program to start.

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.

Heartland's Coordinator for the program will reach out and make connections to employers, offer more one-on-one resume and interviewing counseling, and help with job placement. This employee will continue to work closely with Career Link to set up workplace opportunities. Those connections will lead to the interviewing and hiring of students. The Coordinator of the Drop-Out Recovery will foster relationships with employers to establish work placement for students. After determining students' interest in participating in Work Experience, the Coordinator for the program will connect them with the employer and assist with interviewing and hiring.

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.

Students will be provided with one-on-one transition counseling as well as formal classes to teach them about post-secondary and career opportunities. The instructor of the class will also serve as the Drop-Out Recovery Coordinator will work as a team with the Associate Director of Adult Education and career navigators to help

each student individually determine post-secondary and/or career goals. Students will learn about how to reach these goals through their Bridge to College and Career class. The Drop-Out Recovery Coordinator will assist students academically and help them to address specific barriers to success. To assist students in their post-secondary goals, the Associate Director, Adult Education will help students with college advising, navigating the college enrollment and financial aid processes, etc.