



LINKED LEARNING ALLIANCE

California Career Pathways Trust and Regional Economic Competitiveness

Dear Colleague:

As business leaders committed to improving public education and the workforce pipeline, each of us holds a unique perspective concerning the importance of public education to our respective sectors. As fellow members of the Linked Learning Alliance Leadership Council, we are pleased to offer the following letter which outlines how employers can participate, influence, and leverage an existing grant opportunity to advance regional economies, and increase the competitive advantage for your region's application for the Career Pathways Trust.

Senate Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg and State Superintendent Tom Torlakson have advanced a one-time, \$250 million competitive grant titled the California Career Pathways Trust. Released on January 21, 2014, this grant is intended to mobilize regional collaboration between employers and educators to develop infrastructure that supports Linked Learning pathways and strengthens the local talent supply chain. Linked Learning, an approach which integrates rigorous academics with career-based learning and real workplace experiences, has been proven effective at preparing high school students for success in college and the workforce.

Deep, integrated employer engagement with schools is critical for Linked Learning to be effective at preparing students for successful futures. Commitment to developing systemic approaches to connect employers and schools in a region will be a determining factor in the competitiveness of regional grant applications. Likewise, employers benefit from centralized platforms by which to connect with education systems—an outcome intended by the grant.

The maximum grant award for a regional application is \$15 million. **Coordination among key regional partners is paramount**; applications that demonstrate commitment of comprehensive regional partnerships will have competitive advantage. The following lists outline 1) who should be secured as key local partners and 2) how the business community can join with education agencies and other organizations to develop a comprehensive strategy that supports regional economic development.

*In this critical window in which letters of intent are being drafted—**due February 14th**—the most important role employers can play is to insist on **a single regional infrastructure** through which employers can engage education agencies to define and execute a comprehensive workforce strategy. At the same time, if you are approached by multiple agencies to partner in a manner that is not regionally aligned, **resist making such a commitment.***

Key Regional Partners in Strategy Development and Implementation

- Public school districts
- Community college districts
- Universities

- Employers who represent regional sectors of strength
- Workforce investment boards and other workforce development organizations
- Civic leaders and elected officials
- Foundations and philanthropic entities

Key Activities to Advance to Drive Regional Collaboration and Infrastructure such as Internships and Job Shadowing

- Host work-based learning opportunities for high school and community college students
- Identify and convene a broad-base of employers who represent one or more industry sectors
- Commit to supporting career pathway programs through advisory board service, career exploration forums, and teacher externships
- Urge education leaders to align around issues concerning regional workforce needs
- Insist on the development of an intermediary—a single point-of-contact for employers to partner on a regional level that spans multiple school and college districts
- Consider corporate or philanthropic contributions to increase application competitiveness through matching funds
- Align with postsecondary systems to establish clearly articulated pathways after high school graduation that lead to a college degree or industry certification

Because letters of intent to apply for the California Career Pathways Trust are due February 14, and applications for the grant are due March 28, 2014, **it is incumbent on all regional leaders—business and education—to act with urgency**. Additional information about Linked Learning can be found at www.linkedlearning.org.

If you would like assistance in connecting with your local school districts or community colleges to find out how your company can get involved, please contact Alex Taghavian at (916) 248-4848 or alex@linkedlearning.org.

Sincerely,

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