THE RURAL YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
(RYAD) Learning Collaborative:
Request for Participation

Application Due: April 12, 2021

The Rural Youth Apprenticeship Development Project (RYAD), housed at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston, is forming a Learning Collaborative to support 2-3 State and American Indian VR agencies in creating apprenticeship programs for youth with disabilities (ages 16-24) in underserved rural communities in their states. This would include agencies looking to create a new or advance an existing apprenticeship program (including pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeships). RYAD will document the implementation of the apprenticeship model and create a toolkit with rural-specific apprenticeship tools and resources.

The RYAD Learning Collaborative will facilitate a cross-VR agency forum to solve problems, identify and apply solutions, and evaluate outcomes and results through an impact and process evaluation. The apprenticeship programs should have a significant impact on the VR agency's employment outcomes for youth with disabilities in rural communities.

We intend to launch the RYAD Learning Collaborative in May 2021!

RYAD Learning Collaborative:

The Learning Collaborative is a peer-to-peer knowledge exchange model (notably used in public health) that will allow VR agencies to collaborate with one another to identify and apply practice-based solutions. We are using the learning collaborative as a vehicle for bringing multiple VR agencies together to implement the apprenticeship model. Each VR agency will customize the approach to adapting the model to rural communities and evaluating the impacts in their state.

The basic components of the Learning Collaborative include:
- One in-person meeting in years 2, 3 and 5 (conducted based on safety measures/comfortability/travel restrictions) and regularly scheduled telephone/videoconferences as needed
- On-site, phone, and email guidance from RYAD staff
- Wrap around evaluation embedded in activities.

Participating in the RYAD Learning Collaborative:

The RYAD project is releasing this request for participation in the RYAD Learning Collaborative to all VR agencies. VR agencies interested in participating must complete an online application to be considered. The RYAD Learning Collaborative provides an infrastructure to encourage cross-state practical solutions, "space to innovate," and peer-based learning. Learning Collaborative participants will also receive guidance from RYAD staff on program implementation and use of the VR Program Evaluation Coach.

Agencies selected to participate in the learning collaborative will receive guidance from RYAD Subject Matter Experts on the following:
- Steps and considerations in approaching and selecting local businesses/employers to create apprenticeship opportunities;
- Identification of potential partners and facilitation of planning meetings;
- Drafting implementation plans; and
- Establishing outcome metrics, identifying data collection measures, and using the VR Program Evaluation Coach to evaluate efforts.

Timeline and Instructions for Application:

Please refer to the following timeline for key project dates:
- Request for Participation in the RYAD Learning Collaborative Information Released: March 15 2021
- Electronic Request for Participation Application Due Date: April 12, 2021
- Review and Follow up Period: ICI staff will review submitted materials and may request clarification or additional information of VR agencies during the period of April 13 - April 23, 2021.
- Notification of selection to participate in the RYAD Learning Collaborative: April 23, 2021
- Learning Collaborative Start Date: May 3, 2021

The electronic application is available at
https://umassboston.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9sq6T4KgGIExRjw .

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2

The application has four sections:

1) Agency and Demographic Information
2) Letter of Commitment
3) Narrative
4) Staff Roster

The Letter of Commitment (LOC) should be 1-2 pages long, on official letterhead with the director's signature. The LOC should indicate firm commitment for the VR agency to join the Learning Collaborative for a 36-month period and for support to complete activities as defined in the narrative. The Narrative section includes nine total questions with six being open-ended (150 to 500 word maximum per question) about the VR agency's proposed plan to create or expand an apprenticeship program. You will be asked to describe your agency's current structure (staffing, case management system), plans for implementing the apprenticeship model (rural location), and data tracking capacity. The Staff Roster is a list of agency personnel who are participating in the project and their contact information. The electronic form must be submitted using the Qualtrics platform by pushing the submit button on the last page, by 5pm Eastern Time on April 12, 2021 to be considered.

For technical support with the electronic form, contact Julisa Cully at Julisa.Cully@umb.edu.

Selection Criteria:

This Request for Participation in the RYAD Learning Collaborative is extended to all state VR agencies in the United States and territories, including blind/general/combined agencies and American Indian VR programs.

VR agencies interested in participating in RYAD Learning Collaborative must:

- Agree to create or expand an existing apprenticeship program (including pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeships) for youth with disabilities in rural communities;
- Have business engagement staff who will work with businesses to develop the apprenticeship program;
- Understand current federal and state labor laws applicable to youth ages 16 to 24.
- Have (or can develop) a data tracking tool and agree to use the VR Program Evaluation Coach to evaluate the program. In addition, agree to complete quarterly progress reports.
- Agree to participate in virtual and in-person Learning Collaborative meetings and act as peer consultants to other members of the learning collaborative by

suggesting solutions, identifying experts both within the VR agencies and networks, and describing experiences in implementing the apprenticeship model.

VR agencies that complete all required components of the Request for Participation form will be considered. The RYAD team will consider VR agencies' responses to the narrative questions in the application to assess the agency capacity to create or expand an apprenticeship program. Any additional publicly available data about the VR agency and the selected rural community may be consulted by the RYAD team to inform the selection process.

Notification of selection to participate in the RYAD Learning Collaborative will be made by April 23, 2021.

Contact Information:

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