

## OPI RECEIVES \$100,000 TO DEVELOP CAREER PATHWAYS

The Council of Chief State School Officers partnered with JP Morgan Chase to offer \$75 million dollars to improve career pathways throughout the nation. Each state was allowed to submit a grant and twenty-four “Phase I” grants were approved. Phase I provides the funding for 6 months of planning as well as assistance in writing Phase II which could bring as much as \$650,000 a year for three years, into the state to pay for the development of the strategies identified in the planning phase.

Here is a summary of what the grant proposes to accomplish:

Montana is a geographically vast state with a total population of just over a million people. Most of our secondary schools are not only rural, but could also be considered to have “frontier” status. Montana is also home to seven Indian reservations. All Montana high schools have Career and Technical Education. While larger schools have the capacity to offer academy models, work-based learning and internships, our objective is to offer the same level of rigorous programs of study in rural areas and on Indian reservations. The Office of Public Instruction’s (OPI) approach to Phase I of the “New Skills for Youth Initiative” grant will be to concentrate on these rural/frontier schools. In addition, Montana seeks to increase the number of students who complete a career pathway in Health Sciences and go on to a credentialed program or 4-year program in the career field. To achieve this, OPI proposes to 1)conduct a baseline data analysis 2) conduct a demand-driven needs assessment, 3) begin developing a unique “hybrid” delivery system that offers school-based programming with additional staff training, development of portable curriculum boxes, dual enrollment options, rigorous online classes and extended learning opportunities through spring/summer camps.

Montana’s goal in Phase 1 is to build a foundation to transform its system of career preparation. This will be accomplished by focusing on the expansion of access to the Health Science Pathway, then using this work as a model for all industry sector career readiness initiatives. Outcomes and outputs of the Phase I funding will include:

- A thorough assessment of Montana’s current career preparation systems;
- Collection of defined data to establish a career readiness profile;
- A three-year career readiness action plan; and
- Recommended policy and/or programmatic reforms to demonstrate sustainability beyond the life of the grant.

Phase 2 will include implementation of identified strategies, resulting in the dramatic increase of students who have access to and complete the Health Science Pathway with skills and credentials that have value in the health care sector’s changing and growing labor market. Phase 2 will also establish a model that can be replicated in additional CTE areas with high demand, high skill and high wage employment. The additional CTE areas will be determined through Dept. of Labor analysis of MT’s workforce needs.

More information will be available next fall on this initiative,