Using Federal Funds
for Grow Your Own Educator Programs

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New America

Federal Funding Overview

There are two main types of federal funding: mandatory and discretionary.

**Mandatory funding**, which is generally part of statute, includes entitlement programs. Entitlement programs are non-competitive, based on eligibility, and set by permanent law. This includes big programs like Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare, and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), as well as smaller programs like pension, unemployment, and student loans. There is not a set spending amount for these programs, because spending is based on the number of people who are eligible (mandatory spending increases or decreases based on the numbers of people eligible). In education, mandatory funds are primarily limited to student loan programs and the Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants program.

**Discretionary funding**, which is based on annual appropriations from Congress, describes the vast majority of education funding. It is distributed either by formula (pre-determined eligibility and non-competitive, e.g., Title I, IDEA) or through competition (grants).

The primary source of funding for schools is the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), which is divided into eight titles. The most recent reauthorization, signed in 2015, is the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Grants are administered by a handful of offices at the U.S. Department of Education:

- Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE)
- Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE)
- Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)
- Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE)
- Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA)

Given the combined education, workforce development, and broader community development goals of GYO, potential federal funding sources stretch beyond the Education Department. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) administers relevant programs under Perkins and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) offices. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) administers programs under the Office of Early Childhood Development, including Head Start and the Preschool Development Grant program.
Every federal grant program has eligibility requirements. These can be checked on grants.gov, where you can also search for grants and find other federal grant information. You must register to apply (and this can take a while, so register before you see a grant opportunity so you are already in the system). Also consider the additional work that a federal grant may require (e.g., a needs assessment for a Perkins application or the evaluation of program outcomes required of Teacher Quality Partnership grant recipients). While these requirements are important and useful for tracking the impact of grant funding, they can also be burdensome for small programs.

Federal grants are also posted daily in the Federal Register.

**Federal Funding Opportunities**

**Elementary and Secondary Education Act**

*Title IIA: Improving Teacher Quality State Grants*

Title IIA is a formula grant program. It gives non-competitive grants that are distributed based on a predetermined formula to state education agencies for activities focused on increasing the quality and effectiveness of teachers and school leaders, increasing the number of effective teachers and school leaders, and boosting access to effective teachers for historically underserved students. The FY 2021 appropriation for Title IIA was around $2.1 billion.

Title IIA offers some opportunities related to GYO, including funding initiatives that support teacher and paraeducator advancement and related career paths; that recruit from other fields (science, business, military); that develop teacher induction and mentoring programs; and that seek to expand, improve, and establish alternative route programs. For more allowable activities, see the text of the law (Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction).

**Title III**

Title III is a formula grant program that offers funding to states to support the education of English learner (EL) students. Each state is eligible to receive Title III funding and allocations are provided based on the number of EL students. Title III funds can be used to support GYO programs that are focused on preparing bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) educators, including helping to fund paraeducator positions that provide direct service to EL students. Some state-level GYO programs also use Title III funds to cover the costs of coursework for endorsements in ESL or bilingual education. The FY 2021 appropriation for Title III was around $797 million.

**National Professional Development Grant Program (Title III)**

The NPD grant program provides competitive grants to institutions of higher education (IHE) to partner with local school districts and community-based organizations to train teachers to better support ELs. The grant competition is run every five years on back-to-back cycles and grant awards range from $2 million to $3 million, paid out over five years. These funds can be used to support GYO pathways for paraeducators to become licensed bilingual and/or ESL teachers. Many of the programs funded under NPD are also focused on helping general education teachers earn an additional certification in the area of EL instruction or certification in dual language/bilingual education. For more on this grant program, see the NPD program website.
Higher Education Authorization Act, Title II

Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) Grant Program
TQP is a competitive grant program that seeks to improve teacher preparation and strengthen professional development with the goal of improving student achievement. Grant funding can be used to support teacher residency programs. The FY 2022 TQP competition was funded at $35 million.

TQP incentivizes partnerships between IHEs and high-needs local education agencies and school districts to address teacher workforce needs. These needs may include a high percentage of teachers teaching in subjects that they lack certification in; high rates of teacher turnover; and a high percentage of teachers with emergency, provisional, or temporary licensure. All applicants are required to conduct and submit a needs assessment, documenting the needs of the partner school districts/schools and how the proposed project would help address those needs.

The 2022 TQP competition had three absolute priorities: 1) partnership grants for the preparation of teachers; 2) partnership grants for the establishment of effective teaching residency programs; and 3) partnership grants for the development of leadership programs in conjunction with the preparation of teachers.

TQP grants can be used to support the development of new teacher residency programs or the redesign of existing teacher residency programs. Currently, only master’s level teacher residency programs are eligible for funding under TQP and candidates must graduate within 18 months of starting the program. Teacher residency is defined as a teacher preparation program that provides one year of clinical training alongside a mentor teacher and concurrent coursework in the specified area of certification (e.g., elementary education, secondary math, bilingual education).

In 2022, the TQP application included Grow Your Own as an invitational priority, meaning that the approach is recognized even though it does not add any additional points to the score used to determine an award.

TQP funds cannot be used to support tuition or tuition assistance for students but can be used to help provide a livable wage or stipend to residency candidates. In addition, TQP grants require 100 percent matching from the partner institution, which can be a limiting factor for some programs. For more information, see the Federal Register notice and applicant guidance from OESE.

Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence
The Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence are authorized under Title II of the Higher Education Act, Part B, but were funded for the first time in the 2022 Omnibus Bill at $8 million. Hawkins is a competitive grant program that supports the improvement of teacher preparation programs at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and minority serving institutions (MSIs). Grant funds may be used to reform existing teacher preparation programs, offer high-quality clinical training under the guidance of a mentor teacher, develop initiatives to promote teacher and principal retention, and provide scholarships to help cover tuition and associated costs of college attendance. The 2022 appropriation allows for up to $3 million to be used to support teacher assistant initiatives at HBCUs and MSIs. For more information, see the Federal Register notice.
Indian Discretionary Grant Programs

Indian Education Professional Development

The purpose of this grant program is to increase and strengthen the Indian teacher workforce within local education agencies (LEAs) that serve high proportions of Indian students. These grants are awarded to eligible entities such as tribal colleges and universities, Indian tribes, Indian organizations, and public and private institutes of higher education for a period of five years. The funding can be used to support the preparation and induction of Indian teachers, including paraeducators and other community members, including the full cost of attendance (e.g., tuition, fees, health insurance, technology), stipends, mentoring, and assistance with job placement. Funding can also be used to train Indian school administrators. The FY 2021 competition awarded more than $10 million to 29 grantees. For more, see this OESE overview and the regulations governing the grant program.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA ensures that children with disabilities have access to public education and are provided with necessary special education and related services. IDEA provides formula grants to states to support the education of students with disabilities and discretionary grants that are awarded on a competitive basis. Some states have used IDEA funds to help fund teacher coursework related to earning an endorsement in special education within a GYO program. Funds may also be used to help pay for paraprofessional positions which provide direct services and support to students with disabilities. However, districts must follow the supplement, not supplant rules specified for federal funding.

One of the discretionary grants available under IDEA is the Personnel Development to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities that can be used to develop and improve programs for paraeducators to become special education teachers, creating a fifth year clinical training program for beginning special education teachers, and developing innovative models of teacher recruitment, among other allowable uses. Eligible entities include IHEs, LEAs, nonprofit organizations, state education agencies (SEAs), public charter schools that are LEAs under state law, other public agencies, private nonprofit organizations, for-profit organizations, Indian tribes or tribal organizations, and more.

Perkins V

Perkins V is the federal funding mechanism for career and technical education (CTE). Originally the Vocational Education Act of 1963, Perkins lays out allowable uses for CTE funds (states have their own rules and criteria). Under Perkins, funds can be used for career counseling, professional development for staff, travel/transportation, learning platforms and virtual learning, as long as the use is directly tied to CTE goals. These funds cannot be used for construction, meals, or administrative salaries. Many high school-focused GYO programs are embedded within CTE programs, such as teacher academies.

Career and technical student organizations (CTSOs) are eligible for Perkins V, but many districts are unaware that these funds are available. Each state has a different application, so connecting with the state CTE director is probably the best way to find out if you can access Perkins funds. Perkins Collaborative Research Network has a great site that gives state profiles and contacts. There are eight national CTSOs, members of the National Coordinating Council for Career and Technical Student Organizations. They have state and local chapters across the U.S. Each is aligned with one or multiple nationally recognized
career clusters. The most relevant for high school-focused GYO programs is Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), which has more than 155,000 middle and high school members from 4,253 chapters across 47 state associations including Puerto Rico. According to FCCLA, “members will strengthen skills, forge friendships, and make a positive difference in today’s world through participation in competitive events, serving in leadership positions, attending conferences across the nation, networking with youth leaders, and attaining essential college- and career-ready skills.”

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

WIOA is the primary federal funding for workforce programs. WIOA funds go to state workforce boards, which then distribute funding to local boards. Money is distributed on a formula basis and is used to support six program areas, including a youth program that supports employment and training activities for young people who face barriers to employment. The WIOA Youth Program is mostly geared toward out-of-school youth (16–24 and not in school), but it can also be used for in-school youth (14–21) who are low-income or have identified needs (disability, housing insecurity, need for child care, etc.). WIOA also authorizes activities for specific populations—Job Corps, YouthBuild, Native programs, and migrant and seasonal farmworker programs.

Local workforce development boards are key. They must have supportive services and follow-up services that connect community resources, transportation, housing, testing, accommodations for disability, health, and legal aid. As states move towards designing and implementing Registered Apprenticeships in K–12 teaching, they will have to work closely with workforce development boards to determine which candidates are eligible for WIOA funding and how this funding can be used to support their training to become a licensed teacher.

Using Federal Recovery Funds for GYO

Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER)

The federal government has provided $190.5 billion to state education agencies (SEA) across three rounds of ESSER funding. These funds are flexible and can be used to start or expand comprehensive preparation programs. They can be used “for emergency needs as determined by the [state] to address issues responding to coronavirus” (ARPA, Sec. 2001(f)(4)).

Several states have leveraged ESSER funds to expand and/or implement GYO educator grant programs to help meet their workforce needs. Here are a few examples of these state-led initiatives:

- Mississippi used ESSER funds to launch a new round of competitive grant funding for its state teacher residency program. This initiative funds selected educator preparation programs to run a master’s level teacher residency program for career changers or individuals already working in schools who need to earn a teaching degree and license. Residents are provided with on-the-job training under the guidance of a mentor teacher, coaching, and support with licensure exams and they receive a full tuition scholarship. For more information, see the MTR program information page.

- Missouri leveraged $50 million ESSER funding to offer every school district funding for GYO program development or expansion. School districts were eligible to receive $10,000, with the goal
of all districts in the state using the funds to support GYO efforts. For more information, see the state’s grant announcement.

- Tennessee invested $6.5 million to launch a competitive grant for GYO program development with a focus on building partnerships between educator preparation programs and school districts. Program candidates receive financial assistance to cover the full cost of earning a degree, are employed as paraeducators while enrolled, and must receive a dual endorsement in either special education or ESL. For more information, see New America’s blog post about the initiative.

- Texas has a long-standing competitive grant program for GYO and was able to substantially increase its investment and the number of funded school districts, IHEs, and education service centers. Historically, the state has allocated between $1–3 million for each round of competition but was able to boost that amount to $35 million due to federal recovery funds. For more information, see the state’s GYO program website and this guidance document on the Texas COVID Learning Acceleration Supports that provided funding to districts to support efforts such as GYO.

**Related Resources**

For information on additional federal funds that can be used to support teacher preparation pathways see the U.S. Department of Education’s Fact Sheet: Sustaining Investments in Teachers Beyond the American Rescue Plan.