

School-To-Work Opportunities Act (CFDA No. 84.278)

I. Legislation

School-to-Work Opportunities Act, Public Law 103-239, 108 Stat 568, May 4, 1994, (20 U.S.C.6 101-6235) (expires October 1, 2001).

II. Funding History

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation</u>
1994	\$45,000,000*
1995	122,500,000*
1996	180,000,000*

*Identical amounts were included in the 1994 and 1995 budgets for the Department of Labor; \$170 million was included in 1996.

III. Analysis of Program Performance

A. Goals and Objectives

The School-To-Work (STW) program--or school-to-careers program as it is often called--is a one response to more than a decade of renewed interest in improving American education. Since the early 1980s, researchers, educators, employers, and policymakers have sought ways to make education relevant to students' future careers, adapt instruction to the ways in which students learn best, and ensure that students learn the habits and skills that employers value. By adding meaningful context from the world of work, educators hope to engage the interest and intellect of students and help them learn more effectively. Whether learning by doing and in context is accomplished at school, in a work setting, or both, STW seeks to improve career prospects and academic achievement in high school, and thereby boost enrollment in postsecondary education and increase the likelihood of high-skill, high-wage employment.

B. Strategies to Achieve the Goals

Services Supported

The STW program operates through a partnership between the Departments of Education and Labor. Every state has access to seed money to design a comprehensive school-to-work transition system, and to date, 37 states have competed successfully to receive one-time five-year grants to implement school-to-work systems. These systems integrate academic and vocational education, link secondary and postsecondary education, provide learning opportunities at the work site, and fully engage the private sector in the process.

Although states and localities have broad discretion to design their own systems, each system must have the following core components:

- **School-based learning**, including a coherent multiyear sequence of integrated academic and vocational instruction--involving at least two years of secondary education and one or two years of postsecondary education--tied to occupational skill standards and challenging academic standards;
- **Work-based learning**, providing students with workplace mentoring and a planned program of work experience linked to schooling; and
- **Connecting activities**, to ensure coordination of work- and school-based learning components by involving employers, improving secondary-postsecondary linkages, and providing technical assistance.

STW funds are used primarily for grants to states and local communities to build lasting systems.

In addition, the Departments of Education and Labor conduct a number of national activities designed to support the work carried out by state and local grantees. These activities include the following:

- Conducting a national evaluation of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act.
- Establishing, in collaboration with states, a system of performance indicators and measures for assessing state and local progress.
- Providing training and technical assistance to states, local partnerships, and others. A Learning and Information Center has been established to provide technical assistance and disseminate information. In addition, the Learning Center manages a "line of credit" that each state with an implementation grant can use to purchase technical assistance products and services from a wide range of qualified experts.

Major School-To-Work Grants and Contracts*

Awards	1996	1997	1998**
State development grants	15	0	0
State implementation grants			
New awards	10	15	0
Continuation awards	27	37	52
Average amount of award	\$7,260,000	\$6,260,000	\$6,270,000
Local partnership grants			
New awards	29	0	0
Continuation awards	0	0	0
Average amount of award	\$482,760	0	0
Urban/Rural Grants			
New awards	25	20	0
Continuation awards	53	78	98
Average amount of award	\$448,720	\$408,160	\$408,160

Grants to outlying areas	7	7	7
Average amount of award	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Program for Indian youth			
New awards	8	5	0
Continuation awards	18	26	31
Average amount of award	\$69,230	\$64,520	\$61,290
National evaluation	1	1	1
Learning and information center	1	1	1

* Awards reflect funds appropriated to both the Department of Education and the Department of Labor.

** FY 98 awards are projected based on Administration budget request.

Strategic Initiatives

Three major initiatives undertaken to support STW are (1) organization of state-level strategic planning institutes, (2) development of a STW Web site, and (3) creation of a technical assistance resource bank. Since August 1996, teams from 20 states have attended institutes designed to strengthen the connection among grant proposals, subsequent state strategies, and performance agreements. The STW Learning Center has developed and maintains an Internet home page with links to more than 40 other STW-related sites (<http://www.stw.ed.gov>). Finally, a resource bank of 141 technical assistance providers has been selected in accordance with criteria related to ability to deliver technical assistance to states receiving grants for STW implementation. Grantees access services of the resource bank through a "line of credit," enabling each state to customize technical assistance to meet its own needs.

C. Program Performance—Indicators of Impact and Effectiveness

The Departments of Education and Labor have identified a variety of indicators with which to assess program performance. These indicators include student participation, outcomes for in-school and out-of-school youth, involvement of employers and educational institutions, and building school-to-work systems. For details, see attachment A at the end of this chapter.

Several major activities to obtain accurate and timely data measuring program performance are under way. First, a five-year evaluation is being done to assess the progress states and communities are making in developing and implementing STW systems. Second, the National School-to-Work Office is working closely with states to develop a system of performance indicators and measures. Finally, several large-scale national surveys are assessing the participation of employers (V.3) and youth in STW (V.4).

Student participation in School-To-Work

Even this early in the development of STW, according to the National School-to-Work Office, states are reporting relatively large numbers of students participating in STW. In communities building STW systems as of June 1996, 10 percent of high school students were engaged in work-based learning tied to classroom instruction, and 26 percent of high school students were in classes where academic and vocational instruction is linked (V.5). Other data suggest, however, that students' exposure to an in-

depth comprehensive set of school-to-work activities is limited. Preliminary data from a national evaluation show that 63 percent of high school seniors in an eight-state survey¹ have participated in certain career development activities, including work site visits, job shadowing, employer presentations, work-readiness class, and use of career interest inventories. Such activities are available to most students but tend to be of limited scope and duration. Therefore, relatively few students are selecting career majors integrated with academic coursework and participating in work-based learning tied to school activities. In fact, the evaluation estimates that at this point only about 2 percent of the seniors surveyed have participated in a comprehensive STW program of study that includes multiple key components of STW (V.1).

Student Achievement

Data on the educational status of out-of-school youth will be available in July 1998 from a National Longitudinal Survey of Youth being conducted by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (V.4). In addition, the national evaluation of STW is collecting high school transcripts to determine whether students participating in STW also take a full range of academic courses. This evaluation is also following high school graduates as they enter postsecondary education or the workplace. States and local partnerships will also develop ways to track the post-high school transitions of their graduates, and report this information in their progress measures.

System Building--Leveraging State and Local Funds

States report that in 1995 every federal dollar invested in STW grant funds leveraged one to two additional dollars from other public and private sources. These sources include new contributions, funds redirected from other programs, or in-kind contributions such as staff or facilities (V.2). Additional data is being collected in 1997.

Employer Participation

A recent national employer survey reported that 19 percent of employers were participating in one of the following work-based learning activities for high school and college students: internships, mentoring, cooperative education, job shadowing, registered apprenticeships, youth apprenticeship (V.6). Initial evidence from the national evaluation of STW and from grantee-reported progress measures suggests that considerable effort has been made to get employers to participate but that recruiting enough employers to provide many secondary school students with in-depth work-based learning opportunities remains very difficult (V.1, V.5).

IV. Planned Studies

Several major research, evaluation, and data collection activities are in progress:

1. National Evaluation of STW Systems

¹ Survey results are representative of all 12th-grade students in Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon, and Wisconsin.