

# Work-Based Learning Career-themed Academies Request for Applications

## I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Work-based learning (WBL) is an instructional strategy designed to help students connect what they learn in the classroom with what is expected in the workplace by integrating learning with real-world applications in partnership with industry professionals. A high-quality work-based learning program should provide a continuum of diverse work-relevant experiences that (a) allow students to build on their knowledge and skills and (b) become more complex as students move through their learning pathways. At the time of graduation, a high-quality work-based learning program should be able to show a measurable impact on student readiness.

[NAF academies](#) act as a solution to addressing these workforce needs by providing high school students with industry-focused courses and hands-on, work-based learning experiences with professionals. A NAF Academy is required to have an advisory board comprised of industry professionals that can provide students with work-based learning opportunities such as job shadows, worksite tours, clinical projects, and internships. The experiences, paired with industry-focused courses, create a rich learning environment that enhances students' preparation for success in high-demand careers.

**Section 99cc of PA 144 of 2022** provides \$253,000 for the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to allocate as grants to districts and intermediate districts to provide pupils in grades 9 to 12 with expanded opportunities through programs for work-based learning that are hosted in partnership with NAF. Applicants can select a career-connected program of study within NAF's five career pathways: Engineering, Finance, Health Sciences, Hospitality & Tourism, or Information Technology. NAF also approves programs of study that align with the 16 career clusters as defined by the U.S. Department of Education's [National Career Clusters Framework](#).

## II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

### Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are school districts and intermediate school districts. A district can apply for a single academy at a single high school or create multiple academies throughout the district at individual high schools. Similarly, an ISD can apply for one or multiple academies on behalf of districts within their service area.

### Targeted Activities

Funds must be used for one of two NAF options for entry into NAF's academy network:

#### **Year of Planning (\$12,000)**

The Year of Planning is designed for schools with limited experience in creating career-focused academies. This developmental process provides personalized support and technical assistance to align your programming goals with the NAF Design before the academy launches. The planning phase typically lasts one school year but can range from 6 to 18 months. This approach establishes a sustainable foundation for academic success and enhances your capacity to fulfill commitments to students and the community. Key steps for academy development include:

- Designing the academy structure and developing an academy design plan.
- Creating an advisory board development plan to recruit ten or more members.

- Defining a program of study that supports career-connected, project-based learning experiences, combining real-world projects with career exploration and preparation.
- Developing a work-based learning program for each grade in the academy that allows students to connect their classroom experiences to college and career opportunities.

#### **Fast Track Program (\$3,500)**

- The Fast Track offers an accelerated path to NAF membership for established career academies that meet most NAF standards. Designed for academies seeking full membership benefits, it bypasses the more comprehensive Year of Planning process and enables an expedited academy launch. This streamlined approach typically lasts 3 months and involves gathering documentation to demonstrate alignment with the NAF Design. *Note: While enrolling in YOP is advisable, the Fast Track option remains available to schools that demonstrate a strong academy framework and alignment with NAF's Design.*

### III. APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Applications for funding must be submitted through [GEMS/MARS](#).

### IV. SELECTION PROCESS

Grantees will be selected based on the need and evidence of willing partners to support the development of the academy and the students who enroll.

Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis until June 30, 2026, or until grant funds are depleted. A team of members from MDE and NAF will review submitted applications.

### V. FUNDING

Once a grantee is approved for funding, documentation of a contract with NAF must be submitted to MDE before the funds are released through the State Aid Management System (SAMS). The grantee will be invoiced by NAF and is expected to submit payment promptly to begin the academy development process. *Note: The district will be responsible for an annual \$2,000 membership fee after the academy launches, as the grant does not cover ongoing fees.*

### VI. CONTACT INFORMATION

- For more information about NAF Programs, contact Jennifer Geisler, Director Emerging Academies, [jgeisler@naf.org](mailto:jgeisler@naf.org).
- For more information regarding the grant application process, contact the Michigan Department of Education: Ruth Anne Hodges [hodgesr3@michigan.gov](mailto:hodgesr3@michigan.gov), 517-241-2219.