

B. PROPOSAL COVER/YOUTH PROVIDER INFORMATION FORM

- ORIGINAL -

Proposal Cover/Youth Provider Information Form

Legal Name of Applicant Agency	Parents Alliance Employment Project	
Number of Years in Business	46 years	
FEIN Number		
Type of Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Institution <input type="checkbox"/> Private for Profit <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Agency <i>non-profit</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Describe) _____	
Address – Administrative Office	Address	2525 Cabot Dr. #205
	City, State ZIP	Lisle, Illinois 60532
	Web Site URL	parents-alliance.org
Address of Program Location – This is the location where the services described in this application will be provided.	Address	2525 Cabot Dr. #120
	City, State ZIP	Lisle, Illinois 60532
Principal of Agency –CEO/Executive Director/President	Name	Kristen Sheffield
	Title	Executive Director
	Email Address	kshffield@parents-alliance.org
	Phone	630.697.8199
Program Contact Person	Name	Kiersten Lira
	Title	Program Manager
	Email Address	klira@parents-alliance.org
	Phone	630.248.7726
Funding Amount Requested	\$ 453,200	
Primary Program Name and Target Population	Inspired by Ability <i>*Out of school youth with disabilities</i>	
Number of Youth to be served	32	



PARENTS ALLIANCE EMPLOYMENT PROJECT

2525 Cabot Drive, Suite 205
Lisle, IL 60532
www.parents-alliance.org
630-697-8199

Executive Summary

Parents Alliance Employment Project (PAEP) is a 501(c)(3), non-profit organization, with a mission to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities through individualized employment services that has existed since 1982. PAEP provides a variety of programs to individuals with disabilities including career counseling, job training, job readiness, job development, job placement and job coaching and support services. Each of these individualized services assists individuals with disabilities develop secure career plans, enter into and retain employment. PAEP is a leading provider of many employment programs for people with disabilities including the Illinois Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services, local High School Districts, current Project SEARCH job training programs at Northwestern Medicine Central *DuPage*, *Delnor* and *Huntley* Hospitals and its unique out of school Inspired by Ability job training program.

PAEP has been implementing both in and out of school youth job training and placement programs for youth with disabilities encountering barriers with funding from WIOA since 2014. PAEP is extremely knowledgeable of WIOA youth services and resources. PAEP has been funded by DuPage County WIOA to implement the Inspired by Ability program since 2018 as well as the Project SEARCH program at Northwestern Medicine Central DuPage Hospital since 2014 and has been funded through Kane County WIOA for its Project SEARCH program at Northwestern Medicine Delnor Hospital since 2019. Additionally, PAEP is in its sixth year of receiving funding from McHenry County WIOA to run a Project SEARCH program at Huntley Hospital. PAEP has developed a well-founded reputation and strong presence in DuPage county and has built relationships with local high school districts and businesses to ensure success of the program.

PAEP proposes to continue to implement the Inspired by Ability program utilizing the employment model/work based learning program design to offer an out of school youth job skills training and placement program to thirty-two (32), 18-24 year-old individuals with disabilities who have barriers to employment and are unemployed. PAEP has selected to work with thirty-two (32) individuals because the program has built a successful reputation in the community over the last 7 years in operation for students with disabilities that have exited high school with no connection to job training or placement opportunities. Since starting the program in 2018, the applications for the program have greatly increased, as the model used has shown success for this type of population. Young people with disabilities face particular barriers to becoming employed and living independently. Low educational attainment, low education and employment expectations have resulted in many young people with disabilities not making successful transitions from school to employment and independent living. The program implemented by Parents Alliance Employment Project will offer youth with disabilities the option for employment training and placement after high school if this transition has not already taken place while in school. These services will ensure that youth with disabilities will not fall through the cracks after the support systems in school are no longer available to them.

The Inspired by Ability program will have the following overall objectives: a) expose 32 out-of-school youth with disabilities to the world of work and increase job skills through work based learning internship job training sites, b) increase the knowledge and skills of 32 out-of-school youth with disabilities to prepare for employment, c) assist 32 out-of-school youth with disabilities to become gainfully employed and earn wages, d) assist 32 out-of-school youth with disabilities retain gainful employment post exit.

All 14 identified WIOA Elements will be made available to the participants that are enrolled in the program, many being delivered on-site through the direct program and some through a partnership or seamless referral. PAEP will provide an assessment of academic, skills and employment levels, development of individualized service plans, preparation of employment skills training and mentoring through job-readiness curriculum in areas of interviewing skills, resume writing, goal setting, and positive social behaviors, paid work experiences, job placement into competitive employment sites, and on-the-job training and coaching. Participants will engage in work based learning internships at community businesses to build transferable work skills that include: Independence Village (Food and Nutrition Department, Environmental Services Department, and Maintenance Department), Oak Trace (Food and Nutrition department), SWD (manufacturing) Anytime Fitness (multiple locations), UFC Gym (multiple locations), Carol Stream and Winfield Public Libraries, Aperion Care (laundry Department, Food and Nutrition Department, and Housekeeping Department), Chartwell's at Elmhurst College, WESCO, GMC Dealership, PetPeople, Thriftbooks, Culvers, Northwestern Medicine, Aramark, Westmont Yard, Hyatt, UPS, Cinemark, Tabor Hills, Main Event, Fresh Thyme, Jiffy Lube, WeatherTech, Buffalo Wild Wings as well as new businesses to provide these work experiences. Participants will be placed into unsubsidized, competitive employment with supports following training.

Outcomes:

1. Youth Placement in Employment: The proposed program has substantial emphasis on job placement following the work-based learning and job training. Participation in the work based learning environments refine their skills and allow for transferring of skills into gainful employment. 100% (32) participants will be placed into unsubsidized employment.
2. Youth Retention in Employment: 94% (30) participants will retain employment post exit for 6 months (2nd quarter)
3. Median Earnings: 88% (28) participant's earnings will be reported at or above the \$6300 target goal.
4. Skills Gain: The participants will engage in intensive skills training at each worksite that will lead to skills acquisition and gainful employment.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Parents Alliance Employment Project (PAEP) proposes to continue implementation of the Inspired by Ability (IBA) program utilizing the employment model/work based learning program design to offer an out of school youth job skills training and placement program to thirty-two (32), 18-24 year-old *individuals with disabilities* who have barriers to employment and are unemployed or underemployed.

1) Outreach & Recruitment: In preparation for PY 25-26, PAEP began outreach and recruitment this past fall and has successfully recruited 32 youth with disabilities ready to start the program in September. PAEP has identified key local schools (High School Districts 200, 94, U-46, 88, 87, 204, 203, 99, and 205) and community partners (the Division of Rehabilitation Services, workNet DuPage, The DuPage County Transition Planning Committee, and the College of DuPage) along with key events that has become part of its extensive outreach and communications plan to ensure stakeholders are aware of the services and opportunities for young adults with disabilities available through PAEP. All activities of the program, including the recruitment and outreach efforts are led by PAEP’s current full time Program Manager, Kiersten Lira who has successfully led both the in- and out of school WIOA funded programs.

The following is a detailed timeline and outreach plan that was conducted in an accessible, youth and family friendly manner to recruit participants for the program:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>RECRUITMENT/PROGRAM ACTIVITY</u>
October 2024	Presentation at Options Fair at Glenbard North High School
December 2024	Presentation to Hinsdale, Addison and Wheaton Parents with Special Needs Committees
January 2024	Information letter and brochure/ Open house flyer sent to community partners and high school district vocational coordinators about the program overview and application opening
February/March 2025	Program application opened; Hosted in person and virtual open house for families and school partners and other community entities; Presented at the DuPage County Transition Planning Committee
April 2025	Presented at the Future Begins Resource Fair; Families of special needs: Next Steps
April 2025	Presented to Adult Down Syndrome Center families, Meeting with College of DuPage and Division of Rehabilitation Services
May 2025	Applications accepted, reviewed and potential participants invited for interview; outreach to business partners to secure work based learning internship sites; Presentation to DuPage Workforce Board
June 2025	Hosted working interviews to assess and accept eligible participants into the program; outreach to business partners to secure work based learning internship sites
August/September 2025	Contingent offers made; Intake, assessment and development of Individual Service Strategy to be completed; outreach to business partners to secure work based learning internship sites
September 2025 through Spring 2026	Participants engage in orientation session/begin program; attend classroom/educational instruction once a week for 2 hour session; begin work based learning internships in the community to gain work skills-individualized job coaching and support provided
March-May/June 2026	Begin job development and secure competitive job placement for each participant/individualized job coaching and support provided

2) Intake-Eligibility

a) PAEP determines eligibility for participants through a thorough review of the application and interview process. In addition to the application and interview process, applicants must submit proof of disability, high school diploma and a resume. Additional required documentation per grant specifications are required and collected. Eligibility for the program includes the following: 1) Youth with disabilities between the ages of 18-24 who have received a high school diploma or equivalent prior to start date of the program, 2) reside in

DuPage County (given a priority, however a number of limited exceptions may be made), 3) individuals who have a strong desire to work competitively at the end of the worksite training, 4) individuals who will benefit from participation in a variety of work based learning and job training skills, 5) individuals who will benefit from a behavioral skills training method, 6) individuals who are independent with self-care and medication management, 7) individuals who can self-monitor on a 1:4 ratio of support and 8) individuals who have access to independent transportation (ability to utilize public transportation or rely on family members) to and from classroom setting and community job sites.

PAEP will select a total of 32 participants that will fulfill a caseload for the Inspired by Ability program. After participants are accepted into the program, the Program Manager will conduct an intake assessment to officially enroll each participant. During the intake, participants will be required to bring in all requested documentation such as high school diploma, driver's license/state identification, social security card, proof of disability, birth certificate, proof of state benefits, passport, VOIDED check, and emergency contact residing outside of the participant's home. The IBA Program Manager, Kiersten Lira will be responsible for maintaining all files/records and ensuring that PAEP is in compliance with the WIOA guidelines and requirements.

b) In addition to completing the required intake and assessments, PAEP will utilize and administer the Basic Skills Screening Tool that was internally developed by the workNet, as well as the Basic Skills Assessment that was internally developed by PAEP-both the screening tool and assessment are specific and appropriate for individuals with disabilities to measure basic math and reading skills and needs of participants. If required through the grant, PAEP will also administer the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) assessment. All assessments will be administered individually with each participant in person. Given that individuals with disabilities present unique social, communication, behavioral and learning deficiencies, the program emphasizes on-the-job skill development. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for skills remediation for youth with disabilities. Each participant is unique, and their learning needs will differ based on the specific disability they face. Therefore, PAEP will utilize the guiding principle for effective remediation of tailoring the teaching method to the individual participant learning style and strengths, understanding how each participant learns best. PAEP will implement academic reading and math skills remediation through a portion of the curriculum that is used during the classroom sessions on a weekly basis utilizing a learning style through visual or auditory means based on each participant's learning needs.

3) Individual Service Strategy

a: Tools, methods and assessments: After participants are accepted into the program, PAEP staff will conduct a variety of assessments that will help define and develop each participant's Individual Service Strategy (ISS). All results from the assessments will be the defining goal and measure for each participant as the ISS is developed. The results will identify a pathway for each participant with evaluating their education, employment/volunteer history, transferable skills, aptitudes, basic skills, interests, barriers, family, behavior, career readiness goals (short/long term), educational goals (short/long term), employment goals (short/long term), skills gaps, program elements being served, and employment milestone goals for the program. The results will identify employment barriers, skills deficiency, and job preferences that will assist in defining key areas to identify the necessary training, and appropriate job settings for each participant. A Person-Centered Planning (PCP) approach is utilized when providing services throughout the program. PCP is a life-planning model designed to enable individuals with disabilities to increase their personal self-determination and independence. The intake assessment will involve gathering the information of each participant's contact information, emergency contact or other contact information, private information, medical/physical characteristics, other characteristics and barriers, learning and memory characteristics, self-care, medical and psychological history, family and home environment, education background, information on previous employment/volunteer services and work history, work-related information, transferable skills, availability,

employment goals and priorities, job preparation and readiness, references, strengths and abilities, behaviors, skills gaps, personal needs and job preferences, career interests, barriers, desired outcomes, public assistance, and any other issues as identified. PAEP will also gather and create career readiness goals, educational goals, and employment goals, and milestones for each participant during the intake.

i. Basic Skills: PAEP will administer the Basic Skills Screening Tool and an appropriate assessment for individuals with disabilities to determine their basic skills and need.

ii. Employability: During the intake, PAEP will discuss the participant's employment goals and employment expectations. Participants will discuss what availability they have, if they want full-time or part-time, how many days they can work, and how long of shifts can they handle. It will be customized to the participant's employment needs. The Program Manager will also administer the Job Search Attitude Inventory (JSAI) this assessment tool is used to determine a job seeker's attitude and views about the job search process.

iii. Interest and Aptitudes: The Program Manager will administer the Picture Interest Career Survey (PICS). The PICS is a language-free assessment of occupational interests. It uses the RIASEC occupational interest theory developed by John Holland as its theoretical framework. It is a way for individuals with limited reading ability or special needs to explore their career interests and find a job that fits. Instead of using text-based items, PICS uses pictures to help individuals identify their interests. Test takers are presented with 36 sets of 3 pictures and choose which of the three portrayed occupations seems most interesting. Based on the pictures selected, PICS creates a profile of the individual that leads directly to career info and potential job matches.

iv. Prior Work Experience: During the required intake assessment, the Program Manager will have the opportunity to get more information on the participant's prior work experience, as well as review any additional documents that may be provided such as a resume or a portfolio. Due to the nature of the population PAEP will be serving, some participants in the program may not have any prior work experience or only have school based volunteer experience. For those participants, additional training prior to work based placements will be offered through simulated training opportunities with an exposure of a variety of mock occupation-based industries at the PAEP training center.

v. Digital Literacy: During the intake, PAEP staff will have participants complete some of the required assessments on the computer. This will allow staff to see how participants are able to navigate a computer and evaluate what supports will be needed for each participant. Before being accepted into the program, participants engage in a working interview to determine if they are appropriate or not for the program. During this working interview the participants complete a typing test and an email activity. This part of the program will also be taking into consideration while assessing the participant's digital literacy.

vi. Occupational Skills: During the required intake assessment, the Program Manager will ask a wide variety of questions getting to know the participants interest, skills, aptitudes, and any transferable skills the participants may have for the ISS. The Program Manager will use this information to determine where the participant will be placed for their work based learning (WBL)/paid job training site. Placement for WBL/Paid Job Site Training will be based off of the participant's skills, interest, and location. WBL/Paid Job Site Training will allow the participant to work in a real life employment setting of the entry level occupation that meets their interest and skill set. Participants will get to experience what it is like to have a job, but in a trial basis that could lead to possible employment. The Program Manager will also administer the Interest Determination, Exploration, and Assessment System (IDEAS) is administered to help identify career interests for individuals with limited work experience and to assist with planning meaningful work experiences. The IDEAS test has 16 Basic Scales that are organized according to the widely accepted RIASEC themes: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional.

vii. Supportive Service Needs: Historically, individuals with disabilities encounter barriers to transportation related to employment. During the required intake assessment, the Program Manager will ask a variety of

questions to determine who will need supportive services. PAEP is requesting supportive services for participants to receive reimbursement for transportation funding to support these needs.

viii. Developmental Needs: During the required intake assessment, the Program Manager will ask a variety of questions to determine what type of supports or accommodations may need to be put into place to assist each participant based on their development need.

b. Career Exploration: Participants in the program will complete a variety of assessments to evaluate skills and career interests before starting the program. The results of the Picture Interest Career Survey (PICS) will also provide a good pathway towards different types of careers to explore.

c. Barriers: The Program Manager will administer the "Barriers to Employment Success Inventory" (BESI) to identify barriers that exist in areas of personal/financial, emotional/physical/career, decision-making/planning, job-seeking knowledge, and training and education. The inventory consists of 50 questions/statements that are rated to assist in identifying major barriers to success in the participant's job search and recommended ways in overcoming the barriers. PAEP will provide support and accommodations based on each participant's individual needs and offer job coaching and job support to participants while they participate in WBL/Paid Work Site Training and in the Inspired by Ability classroom.

d. Career pathway/Identified industries: The ISS will clearly identify the participant's career pathway, educational and employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives and goals, responsible parties, end dates, and job development plan as well as other supportive services that may be needed in order to achieve the goals. The ISS will be used throughout the entire span of the program and will be revisited on a monthly basis during Employment Planning Meetings (EPM's) to ensure all participants are reaching their goals. The Program Manager will also administer the Vocational Fit Assessment (VocFit). The VocFit assessment is a job matching program that matches the participant's abilities to the WBL/Paid Job Site Training demands. This program uses an algorithm to match participants to appropriate WBL/Paid Job Site Training placements, as well as employment opportunities. The Job Match Report will identify the pros and cons of each potential job match and also assist with areas of improvements to assist in developing goals for the participant and skills to develop while participating in the Inspired by Ability program.

Using the Person-Centered Planning (PCP) approach and utilizing the assessment results, PAEP will be able to place participants into WBL/Paid Job Site Training that match their skills, interest, and location. PAEP will utilize current partnerships throughout the DuPage County area for the participants into WBL/Paid Job Site, as well as develop new business relationships. *PAEP has set up multiple WBL/Paid Job Site Training and secured employment opportunities at places such as Monarch Landing (Food and Nutrition Department, Environmental Services Department, and Maintenance Department), Wyndemere (Food and Nutrition department within all three of their buildings), Independence Village, West Chicago Park District, Carol Stream Library, SWD Inc.(Manufacturing), Tabor Hills (Food and Nutrition department and Activities Department), Thriftbooks, Pet Supplies Plus, PetPeople, Anytime Fitness (multiple locations), Elmhurst Hospital (Healthcare), Aperion Care (laundry Department, Food and Nutrition Department, and Housekeeping Department), DuPage County (Transportation Department and Human Services Department), Chartwell's at Elmhurst College and North Central College, WESCO, Steve's Car Wash, All Flowers with Expressions, Pride, Partstown, GMC Dealership, TJ Maxx (multiple locations), Marshall's (multiple locations, Aramark, Chick-Fil-A, Northwestern Medicine, Marianjoy, Hyatt, UPS, Cinemark, Mariano's, WeatherTech, UFC Gym, and Buffalo Wild Wings.*

4) Service Delivery:

a.) To ensure there are no gaps in services for all participants throughout the duration of the IBA program, PAEP staff will have in person contact with participants at minimum, once a week through the classroom portion of the program every Wednesday from 9am to 11am at the PAEP office, as well as at each job training site. PAEP staff will be on-site providing all program participants with intensive job coaching and support

during their time at their worksite. To ensure each participant is receiving proper services and ensuring that goals are being met, the Program Manager will host an individualized monthly meeting for each participant. Additionally, at the start of the program, each participant receives a program handbook that clearly states the attendance expectations and policies as well as consequences of not following the policy.

b.) The Program Manager will provide intensive case management throughout the duration of the program for each participant. The Program Manager will document all case management from application through exit for the program. All monthly progress notes will be recorded electronically in the Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS) by the Program Manager. A Monthly Program Participation and Case Note Form will be physically dropped off and submitted monthly by the Program Manager. The Program Manager will also track and submit all Youth Work Experience Timesheet bi-monthly for participants WBL/Paid Job Site Training Sites. The Program Manager will also maintain two complete files for each participant being served throughout the duration of the program. One of the files will contain all WIOA required documents and another file containing all PAEP required documents, both files will be housed with PAEP facility. These files will be kept locked and kept separate file drawers to ensure no HIPPA violations. All documentation that is collected and prepared for each participant will be kept in these files. The Program Manager will ensure that WDD staff receives all original required forms and documentation that is needed. The Program Manager will also keep files for each of the WBL/Paid Job Site Training site that participates in the program with the appropriate paperwork. All required reports by the Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS) will be submitted in a timely manner and the Program Manager will provide status reports to ensure progress on the program.

5. Training Description and Outline:

a.) The following outlines the range hours of services necessary to complete the elements of the program successfully. (Hours based per participant. Total Range per Participant is 630-800 hours.)

Intake/Assessments	10-15 hours
Classroom Instruction	60-70 hours
Work Based Learning/Job Site Training	400-500 hours
Competitive Job Support	150-200 hours
Follow-Up	10-15 hours

b.) Curriculum content and tools used: ***Please see attached curriculum inventory.***

c.) Program length and start/end dates: The program will run from October 1, 2025 through September 30, 2026 and beyond with year follow up.

d.) ***Please see attached customer flow chart.*** The following is a timeline and sequence of all activities:

September 2025	Individual participant initial intake interview; comprehensive assessment; career exploration and employment goals identified. Program orientation and expectations, accountability and benefits of the program reviewed. Individual Service Strategy Plan is developed for each participant; career exploration activities to determine work based learning internship placement
Sept/Oct 2025 through March/April 2026	Participants engage in work readiness classroom instruction Wednesdays, 9-11am or 1-3pm and simulated work environments on T/TH 9am to 12pm before they begin work based learning community internships; PAEP provides intensive job coaching, task analysis, identification of possible job accommodations/modifications at each of these worksites-including the use of skill acquisition evaluations to take data (monthly Employment Planning Meetings completed to evaluate progress completed)

March/April - Jun 2026	Continue work based learning training; PAEP staff begin competitive job placement development for participants; participants transfer skills into paid, competitive job settings; PAEP provides intensive job coaching and follow up at new competitive jobs attained by participants. Participants receive certification of completion. Connect participants to community resources as requested/needed.
June 2026-2027	One year follow up

e.) Industry-recognized credentials will be pursued through on-the-job training opportunities or partnerships with training providers. As PAEP identifies and secures placement sites, staff will continue to prioritize credential-earning opportunities wherever possible to strengthen long-term employment outcomes for these young adults. There is definite potential for participants to earn industry-recognized credentials such as: Certified Tire Technician, Forklift Operator Certification, OSHA 10 or OSHA 30 and others aligned with manufacturing and/or skilled trade standards.

f.) Labor Market Information (LMI) plays a crucial role in helping individuals, including those with disabilities, make informed career decisions. PAEP recognizes and takes into consideration current job openings within each business setting, often ones that are high turnover to support the program’s training requirements that will offer more opportunities and chances for individuals with disabilities to enter the workforce, that will require minimal experience, and ones that offer a practical setting to try out accommodations that will ultimately lead to long-term success of the participants.

6. Job readiness training: Job readiness is the process of preparing individuals for employment, including preparing them for interviews, sharpening skills and so forth that are needed to be successful in a work environment, a much needed activity for individuals with disabilities. The components of the classroom instruction include all areas of soft skills and workplace preparation, resume writing, interview preparation, job search skills, industry-specific vocabulary, workplace communication, work ethic, and contextualized math and writing. All of these areas are addressed when participants meet in the classroom on Wednesdays for 2 hours. Many are completed through role playing, so that they can have hands on exposure and demonstrate competency. Please reference the attached curriculum inventory that includes a complete list of job readiness topics that are presented to all participants.

7. WIOA Program Elements: All 14 identified WIOA Elements will be made available to the participants that are enrolled in the program, many being delivered on-site through the direct program and some through a partnership or referral. *Please see attached WIOA 14 Elements Delivery Plan Form.*

1. PAEP will provide direct classroom instruction and on the job training, job coaching, job support, and instruction with work based learning opportunities that will lead to job placement. This will not lead to a secondary school diploma or recognized postsecondary credential. However, participants will receive a certificate of completion from PAEP for completing the Inspired by Ability program. PAEP will refer participants to the Regional Office of Education.
2. Participants will be referred to the local College of DuPage for resources in the area of exploring secondary school offerings. PAEP has a relationship with the Manager of Career Services of the College of DuPage, as well as on-site College of DuPage staff located within WorkNet DuPage.
3. PAEP will provide paid work based learning experiences to the participants through the proposed program. PAEP will work closely with local businesses that it already has relationships developed with as aforementioned in the identified industries section. Following the work based and job skills learning experience, PAEP will place participants into real, paid gainful employment that match their identified career goals and skills that have been acquired through the job skills learning experience.

4. PAEP will be providing each participant with a structured program that includes a set curriculum, group classroom training, and work based learning job skills training that will be teaching the participant job specific skills in a variety of occupations. PAEP will be providing intensive on-the-job training, coaching and support. The occupational skills training will lead to participants being placed into unsubsidized employment.
5. PAEP will be providing each participant with an individualized structured program that will include a set curriculum, group classroom training, and paid work experiences to expose participants to the workforce. PAEP will provide the opportunity each week for participants to engage in classroom discussion to discuss different experiences participants may encounter during their paid work experiences and allow other participants to offer advice or suggestions.
6. PAEP will provide the opportunity for each participant to engage in outside peer-centered and leadership activities and report back to and share with other participants about their experiences and how it has positively affected their behavior. Specifically, how it has assisted them in their employment goals. PAEP will provide a classroom portion for the program that is designed for job readiness and employability skills including; hard and soft skills, team building, workplace safety, career exploration, goal setting, self-advocacy, technology, portfolio building, health and wellness, workplace information, social skills, communication, interviewing skills, money management, positive social behavior, decision making, job search skills, and preparing and maintaining employment.
7. PAEP will provide supportive services to participants in the program. Supportive services provided will include transportation.
8. PAEP has established contact with a provider identified to provide adult mentoring and comprehensive guidance and counseling. PAEP recognizes the importance of their service to assist young adults with mental health and anxiety related issues. Individuals with disabilities especially can benefit from mentorship to build and develop social relationships. Given the uniqueness of our participants, the Program Manager has developed a relationship with the Director at Kids Matter to provide these services.
9. PAEP will provide follow up services for at least 12 months after the completion of the participation to assist participants in maintaining employment and succeeding in their position. Based on the individual needs of each participant, PAEP staff will provide follow up services in the form of monthly check-ins at the employment sites, or a monthly call/email to both the employer and the participant to find out how employment is progressing. PAEP staff will be readily available and act as a resource to identify and address any challenges or changes to their employment situation. This follow up will be thoroughly documented in their case files.
10. PAEP will provide overall guidance and career counseling to participants in the program during the intake assessment phase and throughout the program during the monthly Employment Planning Meetings. PAEP staff is also certified in Adult Mental Health First Aid USA and will utilize this training on an as needed basis for participants. During the programs classroom portion, mental health will also be covered, due to the stress and anxiety that can arise due to starting a new opportunity or new job utilizing the Mighty Minds Mental Health Toolkit that was developed by PAEP. Beyond career guidance and counseling, PAEP will utilize 211 to assist in specific areas in identifying referrals to additional areas of guidance and counseling as appropriate for each participant. Areas related to mental health will be referred to DuPage NAMI.
11. PAEP will provide financial literacy and money management education within the classroom portion of the program. This assists participants with creating budgets, learning how to save, wants vs. needs, reading a paycheck, address banking and other financial literacy education. Participants will also receive a literacy education presentation from BMO Harris Bank, PAEP's banking partner. If participants require more assistance beyond the classroom portion that covers this area, PAEP will refer to the College of DuPage for additional resources.

12. PAEP will have a guest speaker from the College of DuPage present information regarding entrepreneurial skills. PAEP will refer participants interested in learning about entrepreneurial skills to the College of DuPage.

13. PAEP will research and provide labor market information during the intake process. PAEP will also work with employers to provide HR guest speakers to talk to participants about various occupations, resources, and employment and what the current openings and market looks like. This will assist each participant in making an informed decision about the career pathway and employment goal they establish.

14. PAEP will provide direct classroom instruction and on the job training, job coaching, job support, and instruction with work based learning opportunities that will lead to job placement. This will not lead to a secondary school diploma or recognized postsecondary credential. However, participants will receive a certificate of completion from PAEP for completing the program. PAEP will refer participants to College of DuPage and workNet for additional postsecondary training opportunities.

8. Partnerships: The foundation of the work based learning is having strong partnerships with businesses to provide ample work based training opportunities for the program participants. PAEP has built strong partnerships within the business community, has partnered with many of these businesses for over 10 plus years and have been equipped with the tools and training necessary to support individuals with disabilities and welcome them into their workplaces. Please refer to the aforementioned business partners in identified industries. *Please see attached MOU agreements.*

9. Work-based Learning: Over 75% of the program is concentrated on providing paid work based learning experiences to the participants through the proposed program.

Length and Structure: The work based learning internship activities will be 9 months out of the 12, 3-4 days per week with a minimum of 10-15 hour per week per participant. Participants will be paid minimum wage for each hour and PAEP will be the employer of record to distribute paychecks.

Employer Partnerships: PAEP has existing relationships with over 50+ businesses that are ready to host participants in the program to provide work based learning internships. Please see above sections partnerships, and career pathways/identified industries and attached MOU agreements for existing partnerships that will offer work based learning opportunities to IBA participants.

Skill Development: PAEP staff collaborate with employers to complete a job analysis and identify experiences that align with each participant's skills and interests. Industry knowledge skills learned will vary depending on the industry that the participant is in and will teach participants specific job tasks in each sector. Additionally, participants will learn soft skills and career readiness skills like teamwork, time management, adaptability, professional etiquette, how to receive feedback and resume and interview prep.

Supervision and Mentorship: PAEP will work with each employer to provide adequate orientation and onboarding to each participant. PAEP will provide personalized and hands-on support and job coaching to the participants during the early stages of work-based learning internships. PAEP will work with each employer to identify workplace accommodations so the employer supervisor can adequately support the participants.

Alignment with Career Pathways: Using the Person-Centered Planning (PCP) approach and utilizing the assessment results, PAEP will be able to place participants into WBL/Paid Job Site Training that match their skills, interest, and location.

Assessment and Feedback: PAEP utilizes a systematic instruction and data collection forms to track skill acquisition that will be discussed with each employer supervisor on a weekly basis until the participant becomes independent. Monthly goals and progress meetings are then held to evaluate the participant and employer expectations to ensure success.

Employer Engagement Plan: PAEP has long-term relationships with employers that are dedicated to increasing workplace diversity and inclusion. PAEP plays an important role in providing expertise and education to assist them in achieving this. PAEP provides each employer with a clear framework in how to

support individuals with disabilities, schedules, evaluation templates and clear goals and outcomes that reduces uncertainty and administrative burden for them.

Participant Preparation: For participants identified as needing additional training prior to work based placements, PAEP will offer a variety of mock occupation-based industries for 4-6 hours per week. The program will offer 5 industry settings including food service, hospitality, fitness, manufacturing, and retail. The simulated work environments will duplicate the look, feel, and operation of each industry and provide access to equipment and materials that imitate tools used at particular job sites. The participants will engage in scenarios similar to those they will encounter at a job, and allow for repetition to practice industry-specific skills within a protected and safe environment where they can make and learn from their mistakes. It will allow for PAEP staff to provide intensive job coaching and systematic instruction to assist participants learn tasks, identify challenges and implement accommodations to allow the individual to be successful prior to moving into on-the-job training and competitive job placement.

Wage Management: PAEP will serve as the employer of record and manage payroll for participants.

10) Post-Exit Follow-Up Services: PAEP will provide follow up services for at least 12 months after the completion of the program to assist participants in maintaining employment and succeed in their position. Based on the individual needs of each participant, PAEP staff will provide follow up services through monthly check-ins at the job sites, or monthly calls to both the employer and participant to find out how employment is progressing. PAEP staff will be readily available and act as resource to identify/address any challenges or changes in their employment. This follow up will be thoroughly tracked and will include employment retention wage progression, credential attainment and be documented in their case files and the IWDS system.

11) Physical Location-EO/ADA: Most aspects of the program including the classroom portion of the program and where training will be conducted will be out of PAEP's main offices at 2525 Cabot Drive, Suites 205 & 120 in Lisle, DuPage County. The space will offer an ideal location for the classroom training to take place. It will offer an array of career related resources and simulated work environments and is ADA compliant. The work based learning/job training and placement portion of the program will take place at a number of different designated employer paid/business sites throughout DuPage County area.

PAST AND PLANNED OUTCOMES

Program History: PAEP is extremely knowledgeable of WIOA youth services and resources. PAEP has been funded by DuPage County WIOA to implement the Project SEARCH program at Northwestern Medicine Central DuPage Hospital since 2014 and the IBA program since 2018. Additionally, PAEP has been funded through Kane County WIOA for its Project SEARCH program at Delnor Hospital since 2019. PAEP is in its sixth year of receiving funding from McHenry County WIOA to run a Project SEARCH program at Huntley Hospital. PAEP has developed a well-founded reputation and strong presence in the communities which it serves and has diversified and increased its funding sources to meet the needs of these communities. Its existing contracts with both in and out of school youth programs through WIOA programs demonstrates PAEP's ability to administer the required WIOA elements. To date, since 2014, the Project SEARCH program administered through PAEP, supported through WIOA funding has cumulatively served over 280 individuals with disabilities, with an employment placement and retention rate of 93%.

<u>QUANTITATIVE DATA</u>	KANE WIOA- Out of School	McHENRY WIOA- Out of School	DuPAGE WIOA- Both Out and In School
Program Description	Project SEARCH	Project SEARCH	Project SEARCH/IBA
PY 19-20 Benchmark vs.	Benchmark: 12 Outcome: 9	N/A	Benchmark: 24 Outcome: 21

Outcomes	75% of students obtained and retained employment.		88% of students obtained and retained their employment.
PY 20-21 Benchmark vs. Outcomes	Benchmark: 12 Outcome: 10 83% students obtained and retained employment.	Benchmark: 8 Outcome: 8 100% students obtained and retained employment.	Benchmark: 26 Outcome: 23 88% of students obtained and retained their employment.
PY 21-22 Benchmark vs. Outcomes	Benchmark: 12 Outcome: 12 100% students obtained employment	Benchmark: 8 Outcome: 5 63% students obtained employment.	Benchmark: 27 Outcome: 25 93% of students obtained and retained their employment.
PY 22-23 Benchmark vs. Outcomes	Benchmark: 10 Outcome: 10 100% students obtained employment	Benchmark: 7 Outcome: 7 100% students obtained employment	Benchmark: 29 Outcome: 28 96% of students obtained and retained their employment.
PY 23-24 Benchmark vs. Outcomes	Benchmark: 10 Outcome: 8 80% students obtained and retained employment.	Benchmark: 10 Outcome: 9 90% students obtained employment	Benchmark: 33 Outcome: 29 87% of students obtained and retained their employment.
PY 24-25 Benchmark vs. Outcomes	Benchmark: 10 Outcome: 8 80% students obtained and retained employment.	Benchmark: 11 Outcome: 6 54% students obtained employment thus far 100% skills gain	Benchmark: 40 Outcome: 34 85% of students obtained and retained their employment. 100% skills gain.

Documentation of Outcomes: PAEP utilizes an on-line case management system Casebooks to track all activities/outcomes. PAEP is in good standing with all current funding sources, meeting performance measures. Please see attached Proposed Planned Outcomes Form.

Employer Collaboration: Partnerships with employers are vital to the success of the program. The work based learning opportunities with employers oftentimes act like a trial work period, leading to employment following their experience, lending to positive outcomes for the program.

Staffing and Capacity: The program will be led by our current full time Program Manager, Kiersten Lira. Ms. Lira has been with PAEP for over 9 ½ years, and has successfully led both the in and out of school WIOA funded programs including the management of performance tracking, reporting and case management.

ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

PAEP is a 501(c)(3), non-profit organization that provides a variety of programs to individuals with disabilities including career counseling, job training, job readiness, job development, job placement and job coaching and support services. Each of these individualized services assists individuals with disabilities develop secure career plans, enter into and retain employment. The mission of PAEP is to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities through individualized employment services. PAEP is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). CARF accreditation is evidence that PAEP strives to improve efficiency, fiscal health, and service delivery, creating a foundation for consumer satisfaction.

The proposed program is currently integrated into the current structure and services of PAEP. ***Please see attached organizational chart.***

The program will be led by our current full time Program Manager, Kiersten Lira. Ms. Lira has been with PAEP for over 9 ½ years, and has successfully led both the in-school WIOA funded Project SEARCH program as well the out of school, Inspired by Ability program for the last seven years. Ms. Lira holds a Bachelor Degree in Health Sciences with emphasis in Rehabilitation Services, and is a Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP). Ms. Lira also holds a Substitute Teacher Certification for DuPage County area from the Illinois State Board of Education and holds a certification in Adult Mental Health First Aid USA to address the social-emotional needs of the program participants. Ms. Lira will be responsible for all documentation and case management from application through exit for the WIOA grant. Ms. Lira will be responsible for internally monitoring performance, collecting data, reporting and general oversight on-site for the Inspired by Ability program. Ms. Lira has over 8 years of experience with managing WIOA grants. All staff hired to work under this program will be trained by Ms. Lira.

All programs implemented by PAEP are driven by the mission and vision of the organization. The Executive Director of PAEP, Ms. Sheffield will provide overall leadership for the program. She has been with PAEP for over 23 years and has extensive knowledge of WIOA programming. Ms. Sheffield holds a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, and is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. Additional management is provided by Associate Director, Roger Cave, who has been with the agency for over 22 years, holds a Bachelor's Degree in Communicative Disorders and had a brother with Down Syndrome. Finance Director, Brian Suste is a retired Senior Accountant from the County of DuPage. Mr. Suste will oversee the financial aspects of the WIOA funding and has extensive experience with grants administration, primarily WIOA.

Please see attached job descriptions and staff resumes.

FINANCIAL STRUCTURE AND COST EFFECTIVENESS

1) PAEP is requesting a total of \$453,200 for the program. Costs were thoughtfully calculated based on the necessary line items to effectively implement the program that includes: 1) personnel, 2) fringe benefits and 3) Operating costs including payroll services, professional services, auditing services, rent, equipment, phone, electric, supplies, internet, printing and mileage. The total cost also includes direct training costs for specialized classroom instruction, work based learning, participant wages as well as transportation reimbursement/supportive services. The identified costs are necessary and reasonable for proper & efficient operation of the proposed program based on WIOA regulations and guidelines. They are attributable to the benefit of the program. The program year will run October 1, 2025 through September 30, 2026. The average cost per participant (32) is \$14,162.50. There will be a 6:1 participants to staff ratio. The program serves individuals with disabilities, individuals that typically require one-on-one assistance to ensure adequate supports are in place to be successful. It guarantees that the participants will get the support they need to reach their highest potential.

2) PAEP is an experienced agency, working with and utilizing WIOA funding since 2014. Fiscal controls are well established for all the grant funds to ensure proper and timely obligation and expenditures. PAEP utilizes a financial policies manual that serves as the guide for the financial policies and procedures of the agency. PAEP

is financially responsible and solvent, conducting fiscal management in a manner that supports the mission, values and annual performance objectives. PAEP demonstrates good business practices and complies with applicable legal requirements to maintain and retain financial. The total annual budget for the agency for FY 24-25 was \$1,715,525. The following chart provides other grants over \$100,000 and their descriptions/purpose.

SOURCE	PERIOD	\$ AMOUNT	PURPOSE/PROGRAM
DHS/DRS	July 2024-June 2025	\$163,146 \$363,040	Supported Employment Job Placement, Training Support
DuPage County WIOA	July 2024-June 2025	\$124,000 \$434,000	NM Central DuPage Hospital Project SEARCH Program (in-school youth) Inspired by ABILITY (out of school youth program)
Kane County WIOA	July 2024-June 2025	\$215,000	NM Delnor Hospital Project SEARCH Program (out of school youth)
McHenry County WIOA	July 2024-June 2025	\$117,750	NM Huntley Hospital (out of school youth)

3) Fiscal Department: Name: Brian Suste, Finance Director, Address: 2525 Cabot Drive, Suite 302, Lisle, Illinois 60532, Phone: 630-631-9751, Email: bsuste@parents-alliance.org

4) A large percentage of the program budget contributes to personnel and participant operational work based learning costs. Please see aforementioned work based learning section. All work based learning activities (as listed in provided job descriptions-attached) will be properly obligated and reported on staff timesheets (sample included in Cost Allocation Plan) as Work Based Learning Costs and separated from other duties. Participants will also receive paychecks for their time engaged in work based learning job site training. Hours will be logged and tracked through timesheets. PAEP has acted as the employer of record for WIOA participants for the last 7 years, successfully implementing the program. PAEP utilizes PayChex to administer payroll and ensure participants are paid accordingly. The agency has in place all lawful requirements for payroll processing, tax withholding and payments utilizing PayChex payroll services.

5) No costs charged to this budget is shared between other funding sources. All costs for the program will be covered by the WIOA grant. Indirect costs for all grants of the agency are allocated based on benefit received as delineated in the Cost Allocation Plan.

6) **Please see attached Cost Allocation Plan**

7) PAEP does not have an approved indirect cost rate and has elected the federally recognized de minimus rate for indirect costs.

8) **Please see attached most recent audited financial statements.**

9) PAEP audit did not have any opinions or recommendations regarding internal controls, therefore no response was provided.

10) No leveraged funds will be used or provided for the program.

11) If funding is reduced, PAEP would run a shortened version (5-10 participants) of the program as to not completely terminate the program for the next program year, utilizing its existing DRS milestone contract and other community resources (donations and other foundations/donations) to serve individuals with disabilities.

12) PAEP will comply with the Uniform Administrative Requirements and the Cost Principles as delineated in title 29 of the Code of the Federal Regulations Part 95 or Part 97 as the applicable Office Management Budget circulars, as required. PAEP is in compliance with all Federal regulations and circulars.