

R277. Education, Administration.

R277-731. Applied Professional Education Experience (APEX) Grant Program Policy.

R277-731-1. Authority and Purpose.

- (1) This rule is authorized by:
 - (a) Utah Constitution Article X, Section 3, which vests general control and supervision over public education in the Board;
 - (b) Subsection 53E-3-401(4), which allows the Board to make rules to execute the Board's duties and responsibilities under the Utah constitution and state law;
 - (c) Section 53F-5-224, which:
 - (i) establishes the Applied Professional Education Experience (APEX) Grant Program; and
 - (ii) requires the State Board of Education to make rules to implement the program; and
 - (d) Section 53F-9-204, which describes legislative appropriation for the program.
- (2) The purpose of this rule is to establish standards and procedures for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to qualify for and administer funds from the APEX Grant Program to create new or expand existing catalyst centers to enhance career readiness and align students' skills with Utah's workforce needs.

R277-731-2. Definitions.

- (1) "Advisory board" means a group of individuals composed of industry, postsecondary, and community representatives that review program direction and ensure alignment with workforce needs.
- (2) "Consortium" means two or more LEAs located within the same CTE geographic planning region.
- (3) "Profession-based learning center" means an APEX center as defined in Section 53F-5-224.
- (4) "Program" means the APEX Grant Program defined in Section 53F-5-224.

(5) "Unwarranted duplication" means the overlap of resources that lead to inefficiencies, wasted resources, or a lack of coordination in providing comprehensive CTE programs.

R277-731-3. LEA Grant Requirements.

(1) An LEA or LEA consortium may annually apply for grant funding beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.

(2) An LEA or LEA consortium may not apply for an additional grant that would overlap with an existing award.

(a) An LEA or LEA consortium may not apply for an implementation grant that overlaps with a planning grant.

(3) An LEA shall apply for a grant by submitting an application to the state board that includes:

(a) a general plan, including a proposed timeline for the project;

(b) a detailed budget, identifying proposed expenditures and any matching funds used for the project;

(c) justification for any capital expenditures, including plans for building use, cost analyses, and estimates;

(d) a description of how the grant will be used to improve student outcomes;

(e) a description of the well-defined metrics that will be used to establish and measure student proficiency;

(f) evidence of any existing partnerships with industry, including letters of collaboration;

(g) evidence of alignment with the LEA's strategic plan;

(h) evidence of alignment with local labor market and industry needs;

(i) an explanation of how awarded funds will be used within the defined performance period without unnecessary carryforward;

(j) as applicable, a description of how the APEX center programming will align with or enhance programs funded by the weighted pupil unit add-on described in Section 53F-2-311;

(k) for applications submitted by a consortium of LEAs, a description of:

- (i) which LEA will be the fiscal agent;
- (ii) how the APEX center will serve students across the consortium;
- (iii) how costs and resources will be shared; and
- (iv) how economies of scale will be achieved;
- (l) a description of any proposed planning activities, including expected timelines and outcomes;
- (m) evidence of collaboration with the LEA CTE Director; and
- (n) if applicable, an explanation of the LEA's process for employing an individual with industry experience as an educator who is not a licensed teacher through Subsection 53E-6-204(3), including how the LEA will:
 - (i) determine and verify the individual's industry expertise; and
 - (ii) provide any required training to the individual before or during the teaching assignment.
- (4) Grant funding shall not be used for the unwarranted duplication of existing resources, including physical assets and programmatic offerings, provided by other state or local entities.
- (5) To maximize resources and impact, LEAs may apply for funding as a consortium.

R277-731-4. Superintendent Responsibilities and Award Prioritization.

- (1) Beginning with the 2026-2027 fiscal year, dependent on available funds, the Superintendent shall make the application available beginning May 15.
 - (2) Prioritization for grant funding will be given to an LEA that:
 - (a) proposes innovative programming supported by local labor market data;
 - (b) collaborates with local postsecondary institutions and industry;
 - (c) demonstrates the ability to sustain the APEX center after the grant period;
 - (d) demonstrates a strong focus on student outcomes and workforce alignment;
 - (e) addresses gaps in high-demand, high-skill career pathways;
 - (f) ensures funds are used to enhance programming quality before expansion;
- and

(g) provides for a large number of students to participate in APEX center programs without limiting participation to students based on socioeconomic challenges.

(3) For the purposes of Subsection (2)(b):

(a) coordination with local postsecondary institutions and industry shall be directed by the LEA in a manner that the LEA determines is in the best interest of the program; and

(b) the level of collaboration may be tailored to the individual needs of each program, and each offering within the program.

(4) Subsection (2)(g) shall not be interpreted to mean that LEAs with more students are prioritized over LEAs with fewer students.

(5) Grant funds may be distributed through smaller planning grants.

(6) The Superintendent may use up to 1% of the funds appropriated by the Legislature to administer the program.

R277-731-5. Program Requirements.

(1) An LEA receiving a grant shall utilize funds to plan for, create, establish, enhance, or expand profession-based learning programs that:

(a) provide learning experiences and instruction that:

(i) replicates professional environments and workplace practices;

(ii) builds leadership skills;

(iii) builds durable professional skills;

(iv) allows students to advance as they demonstrate proficiency through well-defined metrics;

(v) utilizes student projects that address the specific needs or objectives of industry partners;

(vi) incorporates industry-standard tools, technologies, and methods;

(vii) provides opportunities for students to develop a product or presentation that is shared with an audience; and

(viii) facilitates mentorship by industry professionals to guide and evaluate the student's work;

(b) align programming with labor market needs and local industry demands;

- (c) establish or enhance partnerships with:
 - (i) local industries and employers to ensure workforce relevance; or
 - (ii) as determined by the LEA, technical colleges, degree-granting institutions, or other postsecondary entities to support postsecondary transitions for students;
 - (d) address gaps in regional workforce training or opportunities;
 - (e) incorporate:
 - (i) career and technical student organizations as the LEA determines relevant;
 - (ii) advisory boards with representation from local industries and workforce experts;
 - (iii) professional learning opportunities for instructors to improve workforce-focused skills; and
 - (iv) strategies for using labor market data to refine and improve program offerings;
 - (f) is tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of the local student body, community, and industry partners; and
 - (g) align with CTE Quality Standards.
- (2) LEAs or LEA consortiums shall use any equipment or capital purchased with awarded funds for the purposes outlined in the application.
- (3) If the award includes a portion of the grant as a lump sum payment, the LEA shall work with the Superintendent to establish a payment timeline requiring milestones and documentation;
- (4) APEX centers may be collocated on the campus of an institution of higher education with an agreement between the LEA and the institution of higher education.

R277-731-6. Oversight, Monitoring, and Reports.

- (1) An LEA that receives a grant shall submit an annual report to the state board no later than September 15.
- (a) An LEA that receives an implementation grant shall submit an annual report during each year they receive funding and for three years following the last year the LEA receives funding.
- (2) The annual report shall include:

- (a) the use of grant funds;
 - (b) progress in meeting proposed goals and benchmarks, including student proficiency measurements using the well-defined metrics described in the application;
 - (c) updates on partnerships with industry and postsecondary institutions;
 - (d) a demonstration of the alignment of programming with labor market data; and
 - (e) a description of applicable student participation and outcomes.
- (3) An LEA receiving funds will be monitored to ensure that awarded funds are used in accordance with an LEA's application.
- (a) An LEA receiving funds shall participate in scheduled desk monitoring and onsite monitoring visits.
 - (b) An LEA receiving funds shall submit quarterly reimbursement requests.
- (4) If requesting a portion of the grant as an initial lump sum payment, the LEA must provide evidence of achieved benchmarks before receiving the remainder of the awarded funds on a reimbursement basis.
- (5) Annually, funds that are not used within the defined performance period will be recaptured for reallocation.
- (6) An LEA that does not comply with the requirements of this Rule R277-731, including not providing evidence of adherence to program standards or misuse of funds, may be subject to a corrective action plan and potential reduction of funds or penalty in accordance with Rule R277-114.
- (7) Upon request, the Superintendent shall submit a report on the program to the Education Interim Committee and the Public Education Appropriations Subcommittee.

KEY: catalyst center, grant program, career readiness, workforce development, profession-based learning

Date of Last Change: July 8, 2026

Authorizing, and Implemented or Interpreted Law: Art X Sec 3; 53E-3-401(4); 53E-3-507.1; 53F-9-204