

WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §18b-3D-1

§18B-3D-1. Legislative findings and intent.

(a) The Legislature finds that a recent statewide study of the workforce training needs of employers throughout the state provided a clear message from the business community:

- (1) The needs of employers are rapidly changing and training providers must be more responsive or the state economy will suffer;
- (2) Information specific to West Virginia, once again emphasizes the critical link between education and economic development that empowering youth and adults with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the competitive work world also results in a workforce which enables businesses and communities to prosper;
- (3) Although employers are generally satisfied with the quality of the West Virginia workforce and the study provides additional support that the measures adopted in the Jobs Through Education Act will bring continued improvement, workforce needs are not static, critical skill shortages currently exist, and the establishment of a workforce development system that responds more quickly to the evolving skill requirements of employers is needed.

(b) The Legislature further finds that a study of community and technical education in West Virginia performed by the national center for higher education management systems called attention to problems in providing needed workforce education and found that there is a need to:

- (1) Jump-start development of community and technical college and post-secondary workforce development initiatives;
- (2) Provide incentives for existing public post-secondary providers to respond jointly to both short and long-term needs of employers and other clients;
- (3) Provide funding for explicit incentives for partnerships between employers and public post-secondary institutions to develop comprehensive community and technical college and workforce development services; and
- (4) Allocate funds competitively on the basis of proposals submitted by providers.

(c) It is further the intent of the Legislature that the granting of funds under this article will promote the development of comprehensive community and technical colleges as set forth in article three-c of this chapter.

(d) It is the intent of the Legislature through the grant of funds under this article to provide limited seed money to address some of the specific areas where improvement is needed, including, but not limited to:

- (1) Improving employer awareness and access to services available through the state's education institutions;
- (2) Providing designated professionals and resources to support workforce education through the state's education institutions;
- (3) Increasing the capacity of the state's education institutions to respond rapidly to employer needs for workforce education and training on an on-going basis through the development of a client-focused, visible point of contact for program development and delivery, service referral and needs assessment, such as a workforce development center; and
- (4) Maximizing the use of available resources for workforce education and training through partnerships with public vocational, technical and adult education centers and private training providers.

(e) It is further the intent of the Legislature that consideration and partnering opportunities be given to small businesses on an equal basis with larger businesses for the purposes of this article and that the seed money will assist providers in becoming self-sustaining through partnerships with business and industry which will include cost-sharing initiatives and fees charged for the use of services.

(f) The Legislature intends that grants of funds made under the provisions of this article will be competitive among applicants who meet all of the criteria established in this article and such other criteria as may be specified by the Development Office. Subject to the availability of funds, more than one competition may be held during the same fiscal year and the dollar range of awards granted in successive competitions shall be prorated based on the number of months remaining in the fiscal year. Subject to annual review and justification, it is the intent of the Legislature to renew grant awards made under this article each year for not more than five years following the initial grant award.