

BergenWDB

BUILDING STRONGER BUSINESSES AND CAREERS

REQUEST FOR APPLICATION (RFA)



Project | SEARCH[®]
BERGEN COUNTY

BUSINESS HOST APPLICATION

RELEASE DATE: Friday, January 24, 2020

RESPONSES DUE:

Friday, February 28 by or before 12:00 PM

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS must be scanned and saved in PDF format and emailed to Carol Polack at carpol@bergen.org with "Project SEARCH Business Host Application" in the subject line.

HAND OR POSTAL DELIVERIES must be delivered to Bergen County Workforce Development Board, ATTN: Carol Polack, 60 State Street, Room 200 (2nd Floor), Hackensack, NJ 07601.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CONTACT:

Carol Polack, Business Manager | carpol@bergen.org | (201) 343-8830 x4093

Table of Contents

I.	Background and General Information	2
	About Bergen County Workforce Development Board (Bergen WDB)	2
	About Project SEARCH	2
	About Project SEARCH Partnerships	3
	Program Benefits for Business Host Partner.....	4
	How is Project SEARCH Funded?.....	4
	Purpose of the Request for Applications (RFA).....	4
II.	Request for Applications (RFA) Information	5
	Period of Partnership	5
	Eligible Applicants	5
	Application Content Outline	6
	Evaluation Criteria, Process, and Selection.....	6
	Submission of Applications and Timeline	6
III.	Additional Information.....	7
	Certificates of Insurance	7
	RFA Location	7
	Disclaimer.....	7
	Withdrawals	7
	Appeals.....	8
	ATTACHMENT A	9
	ATTACHMENT B	10
	ATTACHMENT C	11
	ATTACHMENT D	12
	ATTACHMENT E.....	13
	ATTACHMENT F.....	14

I. Background and General Information

About Bergen County Workforce Development Board (Bergen WDB)

The Bergen County Workforce Development Board (Bergen WDB) is a federally funded local workforce development board (LWDB), designated by the State to serve Bergen County, New Jersey, and its neighboring regions. It administers funding for and oversees the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) for the County of Bergen. The WIOA requires each local area to have at least one comprehensive Job Center providing accessible employment and training services to employers and job seekers. The Bergen WDB oversees the Bergen County Job Center (also known as the Bergen One-Stop Career Center) and its service providers to ensure that publicly funded workforce investments are effectively and efficiently delivered. The role of the Bergen WDB is to promote and drive economic stability by providing leadership and oversight and leveraging resources to develop a skilled and adaptive workforce, based on the evolving needs of business, industry, and communities.

The Bergen WDB is also designated by the County of Bergen to administer Bergen County's Project SEARCH programs. The Bergen WDB holds the license for each Project SEARCH program in Bergen County on behalf of the program partners. The established Advisory Committee (comprised of the partners and advocates) provides strategic planning, advice, and oversight of the local program. The Bergen WDB is also the main point of contact for program information, liaison between the local partners and State/National coordinators, and lead facilitator for local events, partner meetings, and technical assistance sessions.

About Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH is an innovative, business-driven, one-year, unpaid internship program for young adults with disabilities who seek competitive employment. The hallmarks of Project SEARCH are total workplace immersion, long-term support, an atmosphere of raised expectations, and a high rate of success. According to the 2017-18 National Project SEARCH data, 77.3% of program completers (94% of those enrolled) are employed. In contrast, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported only 19.1% of the total disability population was employed in 2018. The ultimate goal of the program is for 100 percent of the interns to achieve competitive employment in non-traditional, and rewarding jobs in an integrated setting within the community.

Project SEARCH was developed in 1996 at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (the flagship program headquarters). Since then, it has grown from a single site to over 600 sites across the United States and 10 other countries. Today, Project SEARCH is internationally known as one of the most successful models designed to support young people with special needs on their individualized journey into the workforce.

Bergen County's High School Project SEARCH Program began in 2016. Two programs were concurrently launched at Hackensack University Medical Center (in Hackensack) and Holy Name Medical Center (in Teaneck) to serve special needs students, ages 18 to 21, in their last year of high school. The program's

success is demonstrated by its outcomes – Bergen County’s Project SEARCH recently received the Employment Outcome Award for 80-90% placement by National Project SEARCH. The Bergen County Adult Project SEARCH Program expansion launched in October of 2019 at Bergen New Bridge Medical Center (in Paramus).

The Project SEARCH, transition-to-work training model, consists of a nine-month internship that takes place entirely at a business host site for a minimum of six hours per day, Monday through Friday (excluding holidays). Each program site serves 6-12 interns per year. Dedicated on-site staff (provided by the program partners) provide employment readiness instruction in an on-site classroom (provided by the host business) for the first and last hours of the day and individualized skills training in the internship sites during the rest of the day. Throughout the nine months, the interns rotate through a minimum of three (3) internships (10-12 weeks long) based on their individual interests. Internship rotations teach complex, stackable, and transferable skills, and provide a level of exposure to the working world that is rarely available to differently abled individuals.

Upon completion of the program, interns utilize the skills they have learned to achieve competitive employment in the community (including the host business site when appropriate) with help from the Project SEARCH Partners. Program completers also receive effective long-term services, as needed, to retain employment and advance in the workforce.

Project SEARCH is a trademarked and copyrighted program. All Project SEARCH sites are approved and licensed through the national flagship program at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. Each program partner must adhere to model fidelity standards (available at projectsearch.us/core-model-fidelity) and maintain standards of excellence in both implementation and outcomes that are tracked in an international web-based database.

About Project SEARCH Partnerships

The program is based on true collaboration among partners. True collaboration requires a willingness among partners to share resources and adopt policies and procedures. Each Project SEARCH program requires, at a minimum, the following active partner agencies: Business, Workforce Development Board (where available), Education/Training, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Community Rehabilitation Programs, and Long-term Supported Employment.

Bergen County’s Project SEARCH is a collaborative effort among:

- Bergen County Workforce Development Board (WDB)
- County of Bergen
- Holy Name Medical Center
- Hackensack University Medical Center (past partner)
- Bergen New Bridge Medical Center
- Bergen County Special Services

- North Jersey Friendship House
- The Arc of Bergen and Passaic
- New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)
- New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)
- Other Disability Advocates

Program Benefits for Business Host Partner

- Provides an opportunity for businesses to influence employment training and agency policies to create a stronger business/training partnership
- Taps into a resource of employees to fill and retain certain entry-level positions
- Meets customer desires (Gallup polls suggest that people choose a business based upon knowing employees with disabilities are part of their workforce)
- Provides role models for other employees
- Mirrors the organization's workforce to their customer base (Many customers of a business are also people with disabilities or their families; providing employment and training opportunities to their customers can increase their customer base)
- Reaches out to people with disabilities who are a large market group
- Creates a workforce that mirrors the general population (Over ten percent of the public are people with disabilities; our workforce should mirror those numbers)

How is Project SEARCH Funded?

Project SEARCH is a business-led program – this means (according to National Project SEARCH) that students learn relevant, marketable skills while immersed in the host business, and that the host businesses are active partners, participating without subsidies. There is no direct funding or cash award provided to the Business Host. However, all partners receive training, technical assistance, and continuous support to implement the program.

Bergen County's Project SEARCH Program's budget is met by blending and braiding partner funding, reallocating existing resources, leveraging in-kind contributions, private-funding sources, and a portion of an individual's government assistance benefits (where applicable).

Purpose of the Request for Applications (RFA)

The Bergen WDB is seeking applications from potential Business Hosts for its Project SEARCH programs. The primary purpose of the Business Host Partner is to provide professional experiences in a real-world working environment through a variety of internship opportunities. The host business is involved in all decisions, such as intern selection and internship development. The more involvement the business has, the stronger the program will be.

II. Request for Applications (RFA) Information

Period of Partnership

Each year, all partners enter into a collective Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that defines the required and negotiated roles and responsibilities of each partner.

Eligible Applicants

Project SEARCH Business Host & Program Location Minimum Requirements

(see ATTACHMENT A for Business Host Contributions recommendations)

- Employ at least 200 employees at the host location
- The host location is easily accessible to public transportation
- On-site cafeteria or accessible food service at the host location
- A desired organizational turnover rate of approximately 8-9%
- Designate a Business Liaison to dedicate approximately 5% FTE (full-time hours) – approximately 10% FTE during year one; the liaison is expected to:
 - assist with internal marketing of the project,
 - help the site team to identify internships and introduce them to department heads,
 - provide notice/access to internal employment opportunities and advocate for the hiring of qualified interns when appropriate,
 - attend partner meetings (typically bi-monthly),
 - participate in other events throughout the year,
 - assist with disability awareness and education to internship departments,
 - facilitate the on-boarding process for program staff and interns, and
 - participate in interviewing and selecting program participants
- Provide access to hiring opportunities if a Project SEARCH participant is appropriate for an internal job opening
- Identify a variety of high-quality internship opportunities (at least 10-15) and a peer mentor at each internship site department
- Provide a dedicated classroom space (see ATTACHMENT B for recommendations)

Additional Contributions (non-required but desirable)

- On-site exercise facility
- Hosting occasional marketing events, such as open houses, and an end-of-year ceremony
- Supply shirts or uniform (if required by the business) to help identify Project SEARCH Interns

Application Content Outline

The following outline indicates the required components of the application known as the Application Packet. Each component must be addressed specifically and in the same order as below.

Items to be submitted:

1. Cover sheet with signatures (required, but not scored) - **ATTACHMENT C**
2. Applicant Checklist (required, but not scored) - **ATTACHMENT D**
3. Applicant Questionnaire (40 points max) – **ATTACHMENT E**
4. Narrative (60 points max) – **ATTACHMENT F**

Evaluation Criteria, Process, and Selection

There will be a multi-stage stage evaluation process:

1. Initial review of applications will be completed by the Bergen County Project SEARCH Advisory Committee using the criteria and scoring system as shown in the preceding “Application Content Outline” section of this RFA. The Advisory Committee will submit their recommendation for a Business Host to the Bergen County Workforce Development Board of Directors for final local approval. During the evaluation process, the Advisory Committee may at its discretion, request any one or all applicants to meet in-person, to answer additional questions, or to tour the physical location and proposed classroom space.
2. A representative from the National Project SEARCH Program at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC) will visit the recommended host business site to tour the physical facility, meet with select staff, and review an initial list of internship sites. CCHMC has ultimate authority on approving all Project SEARCH Business Host sites.

Submission of Applications and Timeline

All applications must be received by the Bergen WDB by or before 12 PM on Friday, February 28, 2020.

Electronic submissions must be scanned and saved in PDF format and emailed to Carol Polack at carpol@bergen.org with “Project SEARCH Business Host Application” in the subject line.

Hand or postal deliveries must be sent to Bergen County Workforce Development Board, ATTN: Carol Polack, 60 State Street, Room 200 (2nd Floor), Hackensack, NJ 07601.

To be considered, applicants must submit a complete Application Packet and respond fully to all requirements, using the format described herein. Failure to submit a complete Application Packet or respond adequately to all requirements may cause the entire application to be rejected.

Timeline

Public Notice and Release of RFA	January 24
Business Host Applicant Technical Assistance Conference	February 11 @ 9:00 AM *
RFAs Due Date	February 28
RFA Review and Selection Period	March 2 – March 9
Notification of Decision	March 10
National Project SEARCH (CCHMC) Business Host Site Tour	TBD
Business Host Training	TBD
Intern Applicant Skills Assessments & Interviews	April 29
Advisory Committee Meeting (Intern Selection)	May 12
Incoming Interns Orientation	July 8
Additional Planning Meetings	TBD As Needed
Program Start Date	September

* *Technical Assistance Conference (overview and Q&A session for interested Business Hosts) will be hosted at the Bergen WDB, 60 State Street, Hackensack. Pre-registration is required by contacting Carol Polack at carpol@bergen.org or (201) 343-8830.*

III. Additional Information

Certificates of Insurance

The program partner(s) who employ the on-site staff and manage the program participants will submit original Certificate(s) of Insurance to the Business Host showing all coverage in force.

RFA Location

This RFA is available in electronic format. The link to this Request for Applications (RFA) and additional information about the Project SEARCH model are available on our website at <https://projectsearch.bergenworkforce.org/>.

Disclaimer

The Bergen County Workforce Development Board (Bergen WDB) reserves the right to change any of the enclosed as deemed necessary without prior notice to applicants. The Bergen WDB also reserves the right to reject any applications in whole or in part.

If no adequate or acceptable applications are received in response to this RFA, the Bergen WDB reserves the right to then solicit a Business Host outside of the RFA solicitation process.

Withdrawals

A submitted application may be withdrawn before the application due date by a written request addressed to the Bergen WDB.

Appeals

Each applicant, whose application is reviewed, shall receive a written notice of approval or non-approval (Notification of Decision). Any complaint concerning the issuance of this RFA, the evaluation of applications received in response to this RFA or any matter relating to the method by which the Bergen WDB selects Project SEARCH Partners shall have the right to submit all contested issues in writing. The written appeal must be received by the Bergen WDB no later than five (5) working days after the Notification of Decisions are announced.

Host Business Contributions Recommendations

Business Liaison works in partnership with Project SEARCH staff to:

- **Market the Project SEARCH program**
 - Obtain Senior Leadership/Management support
 - Publish articles for internal publication
 - Host “Brown Bag” lunches or other events to promote the program
 - Facilitate department meetings to promote the program
 - Network with other departments such as Public Relations, Communication, Human Resources to promote program internally
- **Help Develop Internships**
 - Help to identify internship schedule and dates
 - Facilitate tours for on-site program staff and interns
 - Reinforce workplace rules for staff and interns
 - Help develop the evaluation/feedback instrument
 - Liaison with departments for intern issues when needed
 - Advocate for workplace accommodations when needed
 - Assist with ideas for job development
 - Promote hiring within the organization for an appropriate job match
- **Enhance the Project SEARCH program**
 - Participate in the intern selection process
 - Assist with program events such as Intern Orientation and Open House
 - Be involved in continuous improvement
- **Commit to the success of Project SEARCH**
 - Convey a positive attitude about the program to interns, internal organization staff and Project SEARCH Staff
 - Respond to staff and partner requests in a timely manner
 - Interact with Project SEARCH staff and interns on an on-going basis

Project SEARCH Training Room Guidelines

- The **minimum room size** should be approximately 20 x 20 and be adequate for 12 interns; allow for wheelchairs as well.
- It is ideal to have several small worktables that can be moved in different configurations for a variety of learning modalities and situations. The chairs should be easily movable as well.
- If possible, provide additional space for the teacher and skills trainer in a separate area. A private cubicle will facilitate private conversations with interns, family members, internship managers, Vocational Rehabilitation counselors, etc.
- Provide a locked filing cabinet for intern records.
- Include a computer area for interns (at least three computers). Interns will use computers to produce their resumes, letters to the host business, online applications and practice other technology skills, etc. The skills trainers will also use these computers for documentation, report writing, assessments, and to create intern work aids.
- Provide wall space for photos of interns and employability skills references.
- Include at least one whiteboard or smartboard for instructional purposes.
- If possible, add another whiteboard or communication bulletin board to detail the internship assignments and locations, which skills trainers are working with the interns, etc.
- Provide access to conference space for employment planning meetings, IEP meetings, etc.
- Ensure space for interns to hang their coats, backpacks, etc.
- Equipment recommended includes:
 - Access to copier
 - Laminator
 - Printer (that can print digital photo's)
 - Computer for teacher
 - Computers for interns
 - Small Refrigerator or access to a refrigerator for intern lunches
 - Microwave or access to a microwave
 - Cabinets for storage
 - Whiteboard

APPLICATION COVER SHEET

Bergen County Workforce Development Board
Request for Applications (RFA)

**BERGEN COUNTY'S PROJECT SEARCH
BUSINESS HOST PARTNER**

Organization:					
CONTACT PERSON INFORMATION					
Name & Title:					
Email Address:					
Mailing Address:					
Phone:		Fax:		Website:	

Printed Name of Authorized Representative

Title of Authorized Representative

Signature of Authorized Representative

Date

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Received: _____ Received By: _____
Time Received: _____ Initialed By: _____

Application Checklist

It is the applicant's responsibility to make sure that all of the required elements and documents are included in the Application Packet. Applications that do not include the required elements and documents may be automatically disqualified.

Before submitting your application, check the following Application Packet requirements:

- Application Cover Sheet with Signature (ATTACHMENT C)
- Application Checklist (ATTACHMENT D)
- Applicant Questionnaire (ATTACHMENT E)
- Applicant Narrative (see Application Content Outline on pages 4 & 5)
- Other Supportive Documents (*optional*)

Applicant Questionnaire

The Applicant Questionnaire is worth up to 40 points in the evaluation process. Complete each question to the best of your ability.

1. How many employees does your organization employ?

2. What is the turnover rate of the organization?

3. Does the organization have multiple locations?

Yes No

4. If you answered yes to the previous question, are they located on a singular campus (different buildings within walking distance of each other)?

Yes No

5. Is the proposed host location easily accessible to public transportation?

Yes No

6. Does the proposed host location have an on-site cafeteria?

Yes No

7. Does the proposed host location have an on-site exercise facility?

Yes No

- c. **Potential Employment Opportunities** (10 points max) - Although the host business is not obligated to hire the interns, national Project SEARCH data has shown that about a quarter of the interns are hired at the host business. Please identify potential entry-level support positions (requiring short/moderate term on-the-job-training) – especially in areas with chronic high-turnover positions within the organization; indicate if the positions are full-time with benefits, part-time with benefits, or part-time without benefits.
- d. **Internship Development** (10 points max) – Describe how the program will be internally marketed to engage departments that can offer internships; include (if known) a list of possible departments/services that may be suitable for a Project SEARCH internship.

- e. **Location and Space** (10 points max) – Describe the proximity of the organization to public transportation; include (if applicable) availability of private shuttle service (or similar) to the host site. Also, include a description of the physical space for the dedicated on-site classroom (if known).
- f. **Program Administration** (10 points max) – The Business Liaison is the main conduit connecting Project SEARCH to the Business Host. Describe how the organization will utilize its administrative capacity to carry out its Project SEARCH responsibilities and to meet the requirements of the Business Liaison. Describe the qualities, qualifications, and experience of the individual that the organization would assign to this role (resume attachments welcomed); include (if applicable) any previous knowledge or experience with Project SEARCH (or similar program).