



# Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. I'm an Educator and I really want to start Project SEARCH at my school, but I cannot find an Employment Agency to partner with. Help!

Project SEARCH is all about collaborating at a local level, so you will have to do some legwork to get to know the employment agencies in your area. Here are some ideas to get you started:

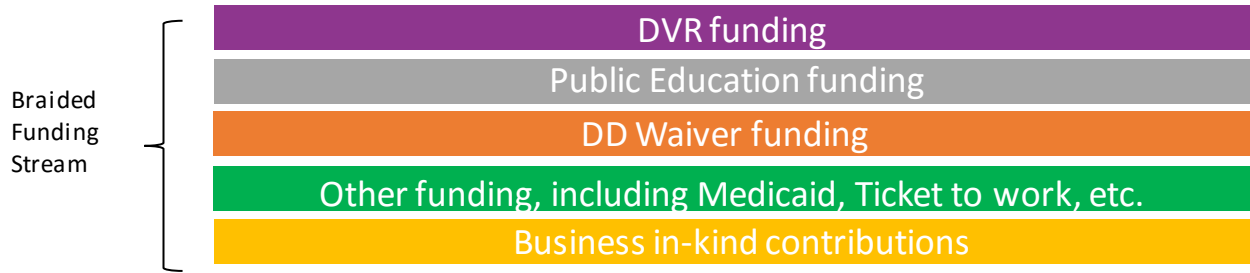
- Search Department of Health's website: <http://archive.nmhealth.org/sfoc/Default.aspx> for an Employment Provider in your area.
- Attend a Supported Employment Local Leader (SELL) meeting. SELL meetings are held every two months throughout each region. Contact Pamela Stafford at [pjstafford@salud.unm.edu](mailto:pjstafford@salud.unm.edu) for the date of the next meeting in your area.
- Contact your local DVR office and let them know you want to get connected with an Employment Agency to talk about partnering with Project SEARCH. <https://www.dvr.state.nm.us/>
- Google! Do your own research and see which employment agencies are operating in your area. Check out their websites and their Facebook pages to get a feel for the agency and the work they do and then start making phone calls.

Finally, you'll need to contact the agency. Set up an appointment with their leadership. Show them this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdHK4IEOig> . Let them know how excited you are to start Project SEARCH in your city.

If you are still unable to find a local employment agency that is willing to partner with you, you may submit an application just as an educational partner. We may be able to match you with an employment agency if an agency from your area also applies.

## 2. How is Project SEARCH funded? Who pays for what?

The Project SEARCH model relies on true collaboration among partner agencies. One example is Project SEARCH's use of braided funding streams which helps to accomplish two things: 1) Create more of a seamless transition from school to work and 2) Increase sustainability of the Project SEARCH site.

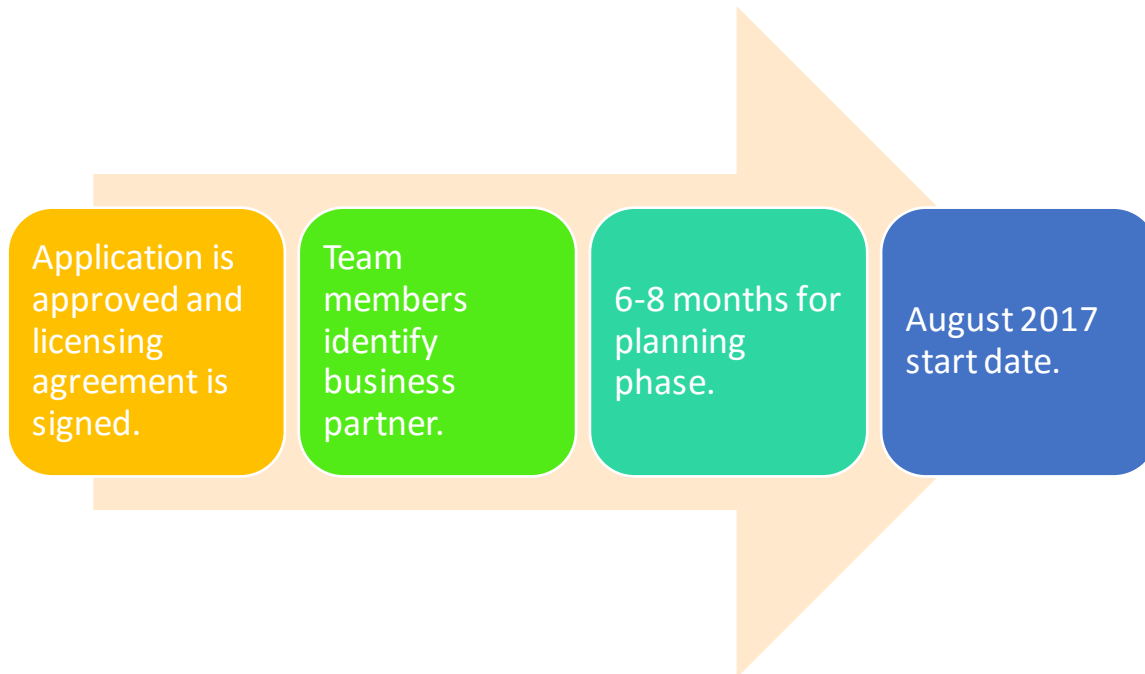


For a Project SEARCH site to be financially viable, 8-12 student interns will need to participate. The sources of funds will come from Public Education, Department of Vocational Rehab, DD Waiver, and other funding sources as applicable.

Partner	Personnel and Supports	Source of Funding
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 full-time New Mexico licensed teacher</li> <li>1 educational assistant or job coach</li> <li>Develops curriculum, provides supplies, etc.</li> <li>Participates in monthly team meetings.</li> </ul>	Public Education funds (8-12 student interns are necessary to make the project financially viable)
DVR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sponsors students to support job coaching and job development.</li> <li>Participates in monthly team meetings.</li> </ul>	State/Federal funding – Students must be eligible for DVR services
Employment Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides on-site job coaching support daily.</li> <li>Provides job development and placement after the completion of the internship.</li> <li>Participates in monthly team meetings.</li> </ul>	DVR, Medicaid, etc.
DDSD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides long-term employment support for retention and career advancement</li> <li>Participates in monthly team meetings.</li> </ul>	Possible sources include, Medicaid Waiver, Ticket-to-Work, etc.
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business Liaison approx. 10% FTE</li> <li>Provides onsite classroom/training room;</li> <li>Provide opportunities within the business for interns to learn employability skills</li> <li>Hosting of some marketing events, such as open houses</li> <li>Participates in monthly team meetings.</li> </ul>	In-Kind Human Resources
CDD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinates monthly meetings and training and technical assistance from national Project SEARCH.</li> <li>Participates in monthly team meetings.</li> </ul>	DVR Contract

### 3. How long does it take to implement?

It takes approximately 6-8 months to implement a Project SEARCH site once a team has been approved. The team will need to meet regularly throughout the process.



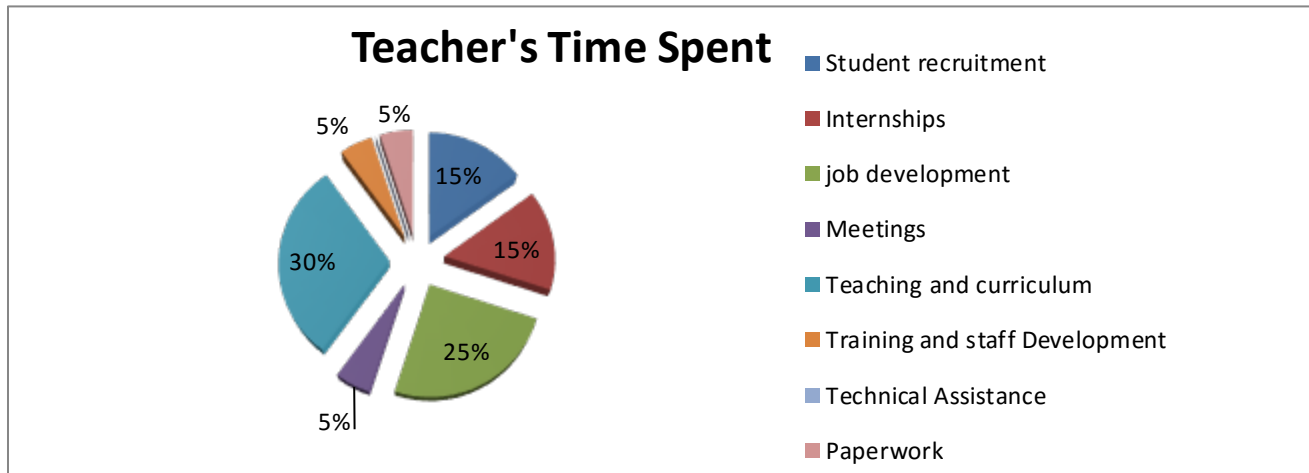
### 4. Does the instructor need to be there all day? What does s/he do besides teach class?

Yes, the instructor needs to be on site at the host business all day. She is the on-site coordinator and an integral part of the team. Her role would be similar to a case manager for the Project SEARCH students. Her duties include:

- Planning and teaching the Employability Skills curriculum
- Assisting the students with resume and portfolio development
- Coordinating and implementing the monthly Employment Planning meetings.
- Coordinating the Family Involvement Curriculum with the Family Liaison and other family members
- Developing internship sites with the business liaison and job coach
- Ensuring that the students learn competitive, marketable skills and achieve maximum productivity and quality while on their internships
- Developing work accommodations and work aids with the job coach
- Evaluating the student progress and filling out required documentation.
- Providing employer education about disability awareness and supervising people with disabilities.
- Recruiting students for the next Project SEARCH class

- Ensuring that all students are eligible for VR; long-term support; SSI; and other appropriate community, state, and federal supports
- Advocating for and facilitating internal job development at the host business
- Marketing the program within the host business and to the wider community

Below is a graph that shows the approximate amount of time that the teacher will spend on the various Project SEARCH-related activities. The activities and time allotted will vary depending on the time of the year.



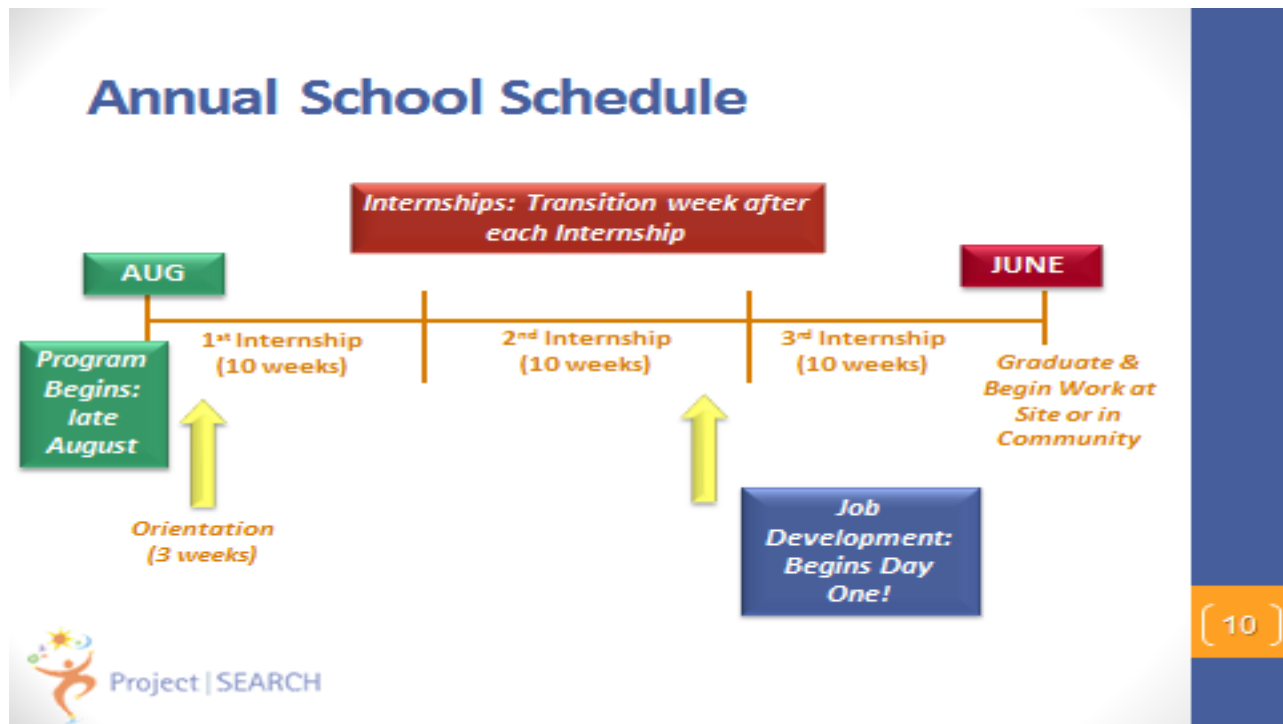
## 5. Are the students on-site all day?

Yes, the students arrive directly to the host business via public transportation (if available in your community) or other independent means (i.e. not a school bus). If possible, they should not report to the high school for any reason. Their school day includes approximately 1.5 hours of Employability Skills curriculum and 5 hours at their internship (including lunch and travel time to the internship sites). To be eligible, the students should be finished with their high school credit requirements for graduation, certification, or completion so that they will be able to focus their entire day on learning competitive and marketable skills.

## Typical Project SEARCH Daily Schedule

7:50 am	Arrival at host business site
8:00	Employability Skills Curriculum
9:00	Internships – learning competitive, marketable skills
11:30	Lunch
12:00	Internships (continued)
2:00	Return to classroom, review of day, journaling,
2:30 pm	Adjourn for day

Below is an annual timeline that notes the major components of the program.



## 6. How old do the students need to be to begin the program?

Students need to be at least 18 years old to be considered for the program. Most students are between the ages of 18 and 22.

## 7. What if the students need more classes to fulfill their graduation requirements?

Students should have their necessary classes completed. If students need one or two classes and the Project SEARCH Instructor is "highly qualified" to deliver the academic credit within the Project SEARCH program, school districts might make an exception.

## 8. Can high school graduates and/or adults be in the program?

The program is designed for transition-aged youth. Many communities would also like to extend this training opportunity to young adults who have graduated but are not working. Project SEARCH classes typically include 10 to 12 students. Young adults who are beyond high school eligibility could fill any open spaces. These individuals may be sponsored by Vocational Rehabilitation, WIA, or a DD agency, or they could pay privately. Adult candidates need to go through the same application process as the students, including interviews, assessments, etc.

## **9. Can the students be employed before the school year is over?**

The goal of the program for each student is competitive employment. A student can accept a job offer during the school year if a good job match is found (at the host site or elsewhere in the community) and the IEP team is in agreement. At this time, the student becomes an employee and assumes an employee's schedule. For reporting and insurance purposes, the intern can maintain student status for the remainder of the school year.

## **10. Do the students have to rotate to other internships if they like the first one?**

Project SEARCH is designed to give students the opportunity to have a variety of work experiences, to explore different careers, and to learn competitive work skills in a wide range of settings. This process helps to refine each student's career goal and to prepare each student for employment. However, if a student can gain additional marketable skills *and* if there is a strong possibility of being offered a competitive job, it is often productive for a student to do multiple rotations at a single internship site.

## **11. How do the students get transported to the program?**

Wherever public transportation is available, Project SEARCH programs should take advantage of this resource. Vocational Rehabilitation and the school district can work together to provide travel training before the program begins. Some students may be eligible for a para-transit system. Even though students with disabilities are entitled to school transportation, Project SEARCH strongly recommends that students use this transition year to learn to navigate the public transportation system independently. For families that need assistance, the schools can purchase the bus fare. In rural communities, the school may need to provide buses to the host business.

## **12. How many students are employed at the host site and what happens to the ones who are not hired?**

Our research has shown that about a quarter of the students may be hired at the host business. The other students will need to find employment in the community using the skills they learn from their internship experiences. The program partners—the school, DVR, families, and the Employment Agency partner—should work together during the planning process to design the job placement procedures. The Project SEARCH teacher will be able to find jobs for students who are a good job match for the host business. The Employment Agency partner often takes the lead in the job searches for the remaining Project SEARCH interns.