



Earn + Learn 2023 Proposed Programming

Erie Together and GECAC propose to collaborate to deliver an Earn + Learn program that will begin in April 2023 and conclude in December 2023. GECAC will be responsible for overall program administration, student recruitment (with Erie Together assistance), and soft skills training, among other tasks, to ensure the program's success as well as job placements for 100 youth who need entry-level positions. Erie Together's role will be to execute a collection of career exploration/ career pathways experiences for approximately 50 participants in the 2023 Earn + Learn program.

The partners recognize that county administration would like to move Earn + Learn to focus on strategic, career pathways-related job placements and that Erie Together has made great inroads into this work. This is necessitated by the number of employers in our community struggling to find quality workers to fill open positions.

We also recognize that many young people in our county need the opportunity to have a first job where they can learn all the basics of being a good employee. They need an understanding employer in an environment where minor mistakes will not cause catastrophic damage – an employment opportunity where they can learn to report to work on time, how to communicate in a professional setting, how to appropriately handle conflict in the workplace, etc.

To address both needs, a two-tiered Earn + Learn program is being proposed – one tier for younger participants, those with no work experience or those who demonstrate they will not have the ability to perform at the level needed to participate in a comprehensive career exploration program. The second tier will be for those youth age 17 and older who are ready for more strategic, career pathways-related job placements. Young people who are at least a high school junior will specifically be targeted for tier two.

GECAC's main focus will be on the tier one students, primarily those who have not yet reached their junior year of high school or who otherwise have barriers that necessitate them to have a first job prior to the more intensive career pathways exploration. For these students, focus will be on placements where they can do all the learning that takes place at a "first job." Program staff will concentrate on placements where the students will learn strong employability (aka "soft") skills and will help the students to hone those skills over the course of the summer.

Erie Together's targeted cohort will include individuals aged 17-21 who are ready for more strategic, career pathways-related job placements. The purpose is to connect this cohort of young people with employers in meaningful ways to expose them to different industries, occupations, and real-time job opportunities in Erie County. Erie Together will plan and execute experiences

that will help these individuals refine their career aspirations and develop mutually beneficial relationships with local employers, and give employers access to, and the ability to shape, a pipeline of future workers.

Proposed Activities

- Working through Erie Together's successful cross-sector Erie County Career Pathways Alliance and with current Earn + Learn contacts, **identify and enroll 150 young people to participate in Earn + Learn – 100 to participate in the traditional tier 1 program and 50 to participate in the tier 2 career exploration program.** Youth will be recruited from across the entire county with a goal of 50% from the city and 50% from the remainder of the county. Youth that are already employed by participating employers are not eligible for the tier 1 program.
- Working in collaboration with each other and other community organizations, recruit employers that are geographically located across the county. In addition to a geographic focus on Metro, East, West, and South County, we will target employers where the data shows that High Priority Occupations and/or In-Demand Occupations exist. Employers will be limited to 3 students, unless strong evidence is presented for a waiver. Waivers will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Employers will be recruited for the following levels:
 - For tier 1 students, employers who are best suited to provide a learning environment for youth participants who are new to the workforce versus those who are ready to learn more in-depth about a specific career or cluster of careers will be selected.
 - For tier 2 students, employers that agree to participate in the program by hosting employer tours and six-week summer job placements aligned with youth participants' interests will be selected.
- All employers will participate in an orientation which will include Clearance requirements, expectations for the work experiences, and other topics necessary for the program's success.
- Students will participate in initial orientation sessions. This will include:
 - For tier 2 students, Erie Together will arrange for youth participation in an **overview of career pathways**. This will include a one-day session with live employer panels, and/or a review and discussion of Erie Together's "Career Pathways Information Sessions for Students and Families" which are pre-recorded panel discussions. This will lay the groundwork for participants to rank their pathways areas of interest and help us schedule student/company interactions moving forward. *Timeframe: June 2023*
 - Following the career pathways overview, Erie Together will **survey participants** to (1) ascertain their understanding of career pathways, (2) understand their existing career aspirations, and (3) identify career pathways of greatest interest, etc. (Note: This baseline data will be used to determine project success when compared with post-survey data at the end of the project.) *Timeframe: June 2023*

- For the students in the entry-level track, pay will be \$8.25/hour for the first 90 hours. Upon successful completion of the first 90 hours, student pay will be increased to \$8.50/hour.
 - For tier 2 students, Erie Together will work with employers and youth participants to **arrange six-week summer job placements** for youth, aligned with their interests. It is anticipated that these placements will average 180 hours (30 hours/week). *Timeframe: July-August 2023*
 - For the students in the Tier 2 track, pay will be \$10/hour for the first 90 hours. Upon successful completion of the first 90 hours, student pay will be increased to \$10.50/hour.
- Employers will be required to provide a partial matching contribution to support wages during the second 90 hours for Tier 1 students assigned to them who successfully complete their initial 90-hour probation. Employers will be required to provide a partial matching contribution to support wages during the full 180 hours for Tier 2 students assigned to them. Thus, for students in the Tier 1 track, employers will be responsible for 90 hours * \$4.25/hour and for students in the Tier 2 track, employers will be responsible for 90 * \$5.00/hour and 90 hours * \$5.25/hour.
- GECAC will provide all payroll functions related to the program and both tiers of students, inclusive of issuing wages via direct deposit, withholding and transmitting wage related taxes and workers compensation insurance, and completing all required federal, state, and local wage reporting. *Timeframe: payroll will be issued every other week. All other reporting, etc. will be completed based on deadlines dictated by applicable regulations.*
- Post-participation surveys for the summer component will be completed for all students. *Timeframe: September 2023*
- Thirty students (20 from Tier 1 and 10 from Tier 2) will be employed for an additional 180 hours from September through December 2023. For these students, the employer contribution will be in effect during the entire Fall employment period.

Budget costs

- ❖ The cost for Erie Together to provide this comprehensive career exploration / career pathways job placement programming for 50 youth as part of the Erie Earn + Learn program is \$50,000, which does not include the compensation to youth participants.
- ❖ The cost for GECAC to administer and payroll the program, provide soft skills training as well as to place and support all tier 1 students is \$136,930.
- ❖ The cost for student wages, fringe and related costs for 150 students based on the tiered wage approach presented above is \$303,424.
- ❖ Total cost for the project will be \$490,354.
- ❖ Total amount of employer contributions will be \$79,695.
- ❖ Total cost to the County and its supporting partners for the project to run from April 1 – December 31, 2023 will be \$410,659.

Indicators to Track

- # of youth who are placed in employment
- # (and %) of youth who successfully complete evaluation period
- # (and %) of youth who remain engaged in either school or employment after program completion
- # (and %) of youth who demonstrate appropriate job readiness skills based on employer feedback
- # (and %) of youth who increase knowledge of the five generally accepted career pathways
- # (and %) of youth indicating increased understanding of career opportunities in the region (Tier 2 only)
- # (and %) of students indicating participation in the program has helped influence, solidify, or refine their career aspirations (Tier 2 only)
- # of companies participating (% non-profit vs. for profit; % city vs. county) (Names of companies will be required to be provided to the County)
- # (and %) of companies repeating participation from year to year (Names of companies will be required to be provided to the County)
- # (and %) of youth who repeat program participation from year to year