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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County Awarded \$750,000 to Administer the Student Training and Employment Program (STEP)

Visalia CA [January 10, 2024] The Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County (WIB) is thrilled to announce the successful award of \$750,000 in grant funding for the Student Training and Employment Program (STEP). The grant, provided by the California Department of Rehabilitation and the Foundation for California Community Colleges, will empower the WIB to continue to expand its efforts in fostering career exploration and employment opportunities for students with disabilities.

STEP is a comprehensive initiative designed to bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world employment for students aged 16-21 who have a 504 or Individual Education Plan (IEP). The program offers a range of services including work readiness training, work-based learning, job exploration counseling, postsecondary enrollment counseling, self-advocacy training, and postsecondary enrollment counseling.

Currently implemented in the Visalia and Porterville areas, STEP has demonstrated remarkable success in preparing students for the workforce through workshops, personalized coaching, online resources, and paid work experience. With the newly secured funding, WIB aims to extend its reach to additional geographic areas including Tulare, Dinuba, Orosi, Cutler, Woodlake, Exeter, and Farmersville.

Key elements of STEP include students collaborating with a youth@work Career Coach to explore in-demand jobs, understand workplace expectations, and consideration of various pathways to employment including postsecondary education. Additionally, students receive instruction in interviewing skills, resume development, job application mastery, and finance and budgeting. The program places a strong emphasis on inclusivity and incorporates self-advocacy, communication, and interpersonal skills into the curriculum.

STEP will be administered in close collaboration with the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR). DOR will extend support, covering transportation, accommodations, and assistive technology to eliminate barriers that may impede participation. The partnership between WIB and DOR ensures that students who qualify for this program can readily access valuable work-based learning experiences. The WIB plans to enroll 100 students in Tulare County and to provide them with paid stipends for work readiness training and paid wages for work experience.

The WIB expressed gratitude to the California Department of Rehabilitation and the Foundation for California Community Colleges for the generous grant funding award.



For more information on the Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County, visit:
www.tularewib.org

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The mission of the Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County (WIB) is to advance the economic vitality of Tulare County through strategic funding investments aimed at growing the skills and talent of our workforce. The WIB brings funding to the region to convene industry, identify skills gaps, and broker solutions that help local businesses find the skilled workforce they need to succeed.

This project is funded by the Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County, an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. This project is fully funded by the California Department of Rehabilitation in partnership with the Foundation for California Community Colleges as part of an award totaling \$750,000.