

Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI) Proposal

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1. SUMMARY

1a. Brief summary of the project

Kinexus is seeking funds for its Jobs for Michigan's Graduates (JMG) programming, operating across Region 8 in partnership with Michigan Works! Southwest/The W. E. UpJohn Institute and KRESA. JMG is the state-based affiliate of the National Jobs for America's Graduates ("JAG") organization and one of the largest and most successful school-to-work systems for disadvantaged youth in the United States. JMG focuses on supporting students in an in- and out-of-school context, emphasizing dropout prevention and recovery utilizing the nationally-recognized JAG Model. Core model components of programming include: a competency-based curriculum, classroom instruction, adult mentoring, advisement and support, employment training, leadership development, job placement services, postsecondary education placement services, work experiences and follow-up services.

JMG has experienced tremendous growth in a short period of time, offering one program in 2008 to 57 programs operating across the state in 2016-2017 including multiple sites in Prosperity Region 8. Kinexus is requesting funds to support JMG efforts in the continuation of existing services and expansion of services for JMG programs in Region 8. In partnership with Michigan Works! Southwest, JMG's goal is to provide services to 525 youth in 2016-2017 at eleven sites in Berrien, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph and Van Buren counties. Key performance targets for seven sites implementing a dropout prevention model include: 90% graduation rate; 60% employment rate; 40% pursuit of a postsecondary education; and removal of four barriers. Performance targets for three sites delivering services through the out-of-school model include: 50% graduation rate; 60% employment rate; 30% pursuit of a postsecondary education; and removal of four barriers. Performance targets for the site using the alternative model include: 75% graduation rate; 50% employment rate; 30% pursuit of a postsecondary education; and removal of four barriers. As a result of JMG receiving the proposed RPI funding, 525 youth will have the opportunity to participate in a life-changing experience that will enable them to achieve academic and early career success. Ambitious performance targets and a proven track record in meeting outcomes and providing life-changing services to disadvantaged youth are key components that uniquely position JMG to facilitate economic impact for Region 8's young people.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2a. Describe project, need it intends to alleviate and communities and/or populations it will serve

Project Description: JMG envisions a state where all young people graduate, gain employment, and begin down the pathway towards a meaningful career. The organization works towards this vision by preparing young people for the workforce and equipping them with the tools to pursue in-demand careers in our region and across the state. JMG will use RPI funds to continue providing and expanding services to at-risk youth residing in Berrien, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph and Van Buren counties. In partnership with Michigan Works! Southwest, JMG will provide services to students at eleven sites in Prosperity Region 8. JMG will implement JAG Model programming that includes a comprehensive set of services designed to keep youth in school through graduation and improve the rate of success in achieving their educational and career goals. The JAG Model is standardized at the national level to ensure validity and reliability across the National Network. Key components include:

- Classroom instruction
- Competency-based curriculum
- Advisement and support
- Employment training
- Student-led leadership development
- Job placement services
- Postsecondary education placement services
- Follow-up services

A JMG Specialist located at each site will deliver the evidence-based JAG Model through direct contact hours with students. These contact hours occur in a variety of settings, including traditional high schools, alternative high schools, Adult Education centers, and other dropout recovery centers (such as Michigan Works!). During non-class hours, the Specialist will provide barrier removal support, remedial education and mentoring. As a result of program participation, youth will have a clear understanding of pathways and opportunities for future success.

In addition, JMG requires 12 months of follow-up and support after leaving the school environment. This component helps to ensure success in a job and/or postsecondary education during the time when youth are most at-risk of failure. As a result, participation in the JMG program is a life-changing experience for these youth with the ultimate goal of graduation and successful transition into postsecondary education, employment, and/or the military.

Need(s) it Intends to Alleviate: Disadvantaged youth face significant barriers to staying in school through graduation and achieving their educational and career goals. The following data provides a snapshot of the high needs of 483 students enrolled in JMG during 2016-2017 and residing in Region 8:

- 63% economically disadvantaged as defined by public assistance, TANF or free/reduced lunch
- 61% lived with someone other than both parents
- 80% were potential first generation college students (both parents lack a college degree)
- 22% had a mother who did not graduate from high school
- 23% had a father who did not graduate from high school
- 53% had a grade point average of 2.50 or below

JMG aims to provide these at-risk youth with the critical skills and resources they need to overcome barriers in order for them to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce.

Communities/Populations the Project will Serve and Positively Impact: The goal is to serve 525 disadvantaged youth, ages 14 to 26 years, who face multiple barriers to educational and career success.

Programming at these sites, depicted in Table 1 on page 4, will positively impact youth from Berrien, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph and Van Buren counties.

2b. Describe how the project will accomplish one (or more) of the aforementioned themes

JMG is focused on providing youth with the skills necessary to succeed at school, work and home as well as in their communities by utilizing available assets in our region. Consequently, the program directly supports the Prosperity Committee's Career Pathways theme that ultimately leads to an individual obtaining employment at a family sustaining wage. The proposed JMG project will improve capacity throughout Region 8 by:

Strengthening collaboration between businesses, local agencies, nonprofits, philanthropic organizations and educational institutions

- Collaboration with Kinexus and Michigan Works! Southwest staff is a primary strategy for JMG staff to connect with businesses throughout the region. This partnership provides JMG staff with vital industry information such as in-demand industries with current and projected hiring needs and potential work experiences.
- JMG staff collaborate with local agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services and Juvenile Court System to recruit individuals in need of education and career readiness services.
- JMG programming occurs at seven high schools throughout Region 8. JMG is continually seeking new dropout prevention partnerships and provides information to potential K-12 partners whenever possible.
- JMG routinely engages with business partners to visit classrooms and speak to students as well as provide talent tours whereby students are transported to businesses for authentic exposure.
- Students participating in JMG are provided with opportunities to travel to postsecondary educational institutions for on-site campus visits.

Developing strategies for bridging gaps in program services

- JMG staff identified a gap in program services for youth in/transitioning from foster care, homeless, youth in the child welfare system, and/or youth involved in the juvenile justice system.
- A dropout recovery program was added at the Bridge Academy in Benton Harbor to begin bridging a gap in services for systems-involved youth. The program just began its second year.
- JMG is also bridging the gap in program services around employer connectivity. JMG bridges this gap through its career development component and partnerships with Region 8 Michigan Works! organizations. Throughout the program, youth gain a clear understanding of pathways and opportunities for future success. Through the Michigan Works! partnerships, specialists also have access to other support service providers, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Michigan Rehabilitation Services.
- JMG is partnering with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to deliver the "Learn and Earn to Achieve Potential" initiative to increase employment and educational opportunities for young people facing some of the greatest challenges on the path to adulthood. The program aims to help youth who have been involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, or who are homeless.

Creating regional collaborations among employers, educational institutions, etc.

- JMG works closely with Kinexus and Michigan Works! Southwest staff to build upon the existing continuum of services and initiatives. Staff build upon relationships with employer and educational partnerships that enable an enhanced level of quality programming.

Expanding career pathways/career navigation systems to all areas of Region 8 by offering professional development

- The JAG National Curriculum equips participants with a minimum of 37 employability competencies and intensive career exploration and training opportunities.

Leveraging existing resources and collaboratively seeking new resources to support and sustain the career pathway system

- Career exploration is a key component of the JMG curriculum. Participants develop a career and educational plan that reflects their personal goals, interests and skills. Participants receive information on the skills needed for their career choice as well as understanding of the career potential. JMG staff continually seek opportunities to collaborate with businesses to expose youth to career options, mock interviews, summer work experiences, and internships.
- JMG staff members utilize recommendations outlined in The Council for Labor and Economics Growth Report titled “Transforming Michigan’s Adult Learning Infrastructure” as they make program improvements. JMG involves 1) building clear connections between learning and the promise of good jobs; 2) holding partners accountable for success and measuring outcomes; and 3) emphasizing remediation for basic skills such as English and mathematics.

2c. List the counties in which the project will take place

The proposed project will take place at eleven sites in five counties within Prosperity Region 8, as depicted in Table 1. JMG services will assist youth in gaining the academic, leadership, vocational and personal skills they need to be successful. Services will be delivered through Kinexus Youth Solutions, a subsidiary of Kinexus, and Michigan Works! Southwest.

County	# of Sites	Program Sites
Berrien	3	Benton Harbor High School (2); Kinexus Bridge Academy
Cass	2	Ross Beatty Senior High School; Dowagiac Union High School
Kalamazoo	3	Michigan Works! Kalamazoo County Service Center; Comstock High School; Loy Norrix High School
St. Joseph	1	Michigan Works! St. Joseph County Service Center
Van Buren	2	Hartford High School; Hartford Alternative Education

2d. Reference best or new practices from which your project may have been derived

As the state-based affiliate of the National Jobs for America's Graduates ("JAG") organization, JMG uses the nationally-recognized JAG Model. Additional best practices utilized in JMG programming include:

- **Responsiveness to non-academic factors** is a key component of JMG programming. JMG specialists help youth overcome environmental and social barriers.
- **Qualitative and quantitative data** – Data is used to monitor progress, identify youth struggling with barriers, inform interventions and provide accountability for overall progress.
- **Continuous monitoring of performance** – The operations team monitors performance of each dropout prevention and dropout recover program twice a month.

3. ORGANIZATIONAL DESCRIPTION

3ai. Organization’s experience, structure, team who will work on the project and other information

Relevant Experience: Kinexus has been in operation since 1984, overseeing millions of dollars in federal, state and local funding that support workforce and economic development activities in southwest Michigan. In 2008, Kinexus began the JMG program in Benton Harbor when a local non-profit, school district, and private sector CEO joined forces to bring dropout prevention services to the Benton Harbor community. Recognizing the significant impact Jobs for America's Graduates had on graduation and employment rates across the country, Kinexus led the charge in expanding Jobs for Michigan's Graduates programming across the state. The JMG initiative experienced tremendous growth, partnering with local Michigan Works! agencies to drive statewide impact. JMG’s partnership with Michigan Works! Southwest is just one of eleven Michigan Works! agency partnerships throughout the state that allows JAG model programming to be delivered to at-risk youth. Each of these partnerships leverages local workforce investment dollars - a highly innovative model for JAG programming that supports sustainability. Thus, JMG has a successful track record in connecting and enhancing the transitions between the talent pipeline and businesses in the region.

Organizational Structure: Youth Solutions, Inc. is a wholly-owned subsidiary organization of Kinexus. Youth Solutions operates across the state and has a Board of Directors representing many of Michigan’s rural and urban cities. Jobs for Michigan’s Graduates is a leading program of the Youth Solutions organization.



Key Project Team Members: Kristin Harrington, Executive Director of Youth Solutions, has overall responsibility for all JMG programming across the state. Harrington has held leadership roles across the Kinexus Talent Division, including tri-county Michigan Works! service center operations and the Kinexus Bridge Academy for re-engaged high school dropouts. Harrington has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Michigan, a Master’s of Science in Education from Dominican University, and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Michigan-Flint. Harrington is a Teach for America alumna, who taught kindergarten on Chicago’s south side and in Gary, Indiana prior to joining team Kinexus.

Jan Ennis, Senior Director of Operations and Engagement of Youth Solutions has responsibility for leadership of the JMG team, strategic partnerships and new business development. Ennis has been employed at Kinexus since 2013. Prior to joining the Kinexus team, he served as an intelligence officer in the U.S. Army. Ennis holds a Bachelor of Arts from San Diego State University-California State University and began the Executive MBA program at Michigan State University in June 2016.

Curtis Warren, Operations Manager, has responsibility for the operation of JMG at all sites throughout Michigan. Warren joined the organization in August 2017 and brings more than 30 years of program

supervision and grant experience to the JMG team. Warren holds a Bachelor of Arts from Kalamazoo College and a Master of Arts in Education from Western Michigan University.

Two program managers (located in Benton Harbor and Kalamazoo) have responsibility for overseeing the delivery of program services by JMG Specialists. Eleven JMG specialists are responsible for delivering direct services to at-risk youth and are held accountable to the rigorous performance standards. Each Specialist is required to have three years of professional work experience, a bachelor's degree and State of Michigan teaching certification, unless the district waives the certification requirement.

3a.ii. Organization's ability and capacity to complete the project

Organization's Ability: Kinexus' private-sector led board provides strategic direction to ensure that all programming is aligned to employer needs. Annually, the organization serves over 20,000 job seekers and 500 employers in the southwest Michigan region.

JMG operates dropout prevention and dropout recovery programming developed by JAG National. Since program inception in 2008, JMG has expanded to 57 programs serving 2,330 students in 37 Michigan cities. The ability to complete the proposed project is best demonstrated in JAG National's recently released results of the 12 months of follow-up for the Class of 2016 for the 33 states in which JMG is a part. Past year efforts have led to some of the best results in the 35-year history of JAG National: 95% graduation rate, 63% employment rate, 84% positive outcomes rate (work, college or a combination), 75% full-time jobs rate, 90% full-time placement rate and 44% further education rate.

JMG has a proven track record in implementing, delivering and maintaining quality services at affiliate sites throughout the state. In Region 8, JMG achieved the following results for the Class of 2016:

- 99% graduation rate
- 86% positive outcome in employment, education and/or military
- 72% employed in a job in the public or private section
- 86% employed in a full-time job
- 100% full-time placement including employment and/or education
- 43% enrolled in postsecondary education

Organization's Capacity: Youth Solutions' staff members are responsible for oversight of program operations, implementing internal processes and systems to ensure quality programming, providing training to off-site staff, managing data and reporting on performance outcomes. JMG staff members capture data and information using the Electronic National Data Management System (e-NDMS), a unique tracking system developed by JAG National. JMG staff use this system to track and document three categories of vital information that drive the ability to evaluate program success: 1) students served, 2) services delivered and 3) outcomes achieved.

A structured system with defined models and curriculum, a national data management system, staff education and experience as well as a successful track record demonstrates the organization's ability and capacity to provide quality services, leverage resources and expand service offerings.

4. PARTNERS

JMG provides a framework whereby team members from organizations across Region 8 work collectively to provide college and career readiness services to youth. Team members are driving towards the same vision, mission and outcomes of equipping youth with the skills to succeed in education and the workforce, thus maximizing the impact for Prosperity Region 8. Table 2 depicts the network of partners with defined roles demonstrating the breadth and depth of project involvement .

Table 2: Partners		
MICHIGAN WORKS! AGENCY	EMPLOYER PARTNERS	
<p>Role: Provide oversight for direct services offered in Kalamazoo and St. Joseph counties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michigan Works! Southwest 	<p>Role: Provide work experiences, mock interviews, talent tours, in-class presentations, guest speakers and/or JMG event volunteers</p>	
<p>K-12 PARTNERS</p> <p>Role: Provide direct services to participants who possess more than three barriers to success enrolled in JMG programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benton Harbor High School Bridge Academy Comstock High School Dowagiac High School Hartford High School Kalamazoo RESA Loy Norrix High School Ross Beatty Sr High School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A&B Aerotek Benton Harbor Parks/Rec Big Boy Big Brothers, Big Sisters Bronson Healthcare Building Construction Burger King Cass County Medical Cass Dental Celebration Cinema Chassix Chemical Bank Cititrends Corey Lake Conv Store Corstange Greenhouses Dussels Earls BBQ Edgewater Automation Family Dollar Family Fare Foster Swift Law Firm Four Winds General Housekeeping Golden Plain Farms Goodwill Industries Guardianships Alternatives Harding’s Headstart/KRESA Humane Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kalamazoo Drop In Child Kid Builders Day Care Lakeland Healthcare Lexington Little Caesars Lutz’s Drive In McDonald’s MDOT Boys and Girls Club Meijer New Genesis CLC Oasis Panel Room Papa John’s Party City Piggott Farms PNC Bank Popeye’s Qdoba Mexican Grill Salvino’s Schupan & Sons Smoking Good BBQ Sonic Super 8 Kalamazoo Taco Bell Target Timbers of Cass Nursing Wal-Mart Wenke’s Greenhouse Whirlpool Corporation Wright Kare YMCA
<p>POSTSECONDARY ED PARTNERS</p> <p>Role: Provide class college tours and/or in- presentations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Western Michigan University Ferris State University Kalamazoo Valley CC Lake Michigan College Southwestern Michigan College 		
<p>NATIONAL PARTNERS</p> <p>Role: Provide guidance on program components, reporting, and database system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> JAG National 		
<p>Role: Provide oversight of systems-involved program at the Bridge Academy and best practices used throughout the state</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Annie E. Casey Foundation 		

5. PROJECT TIMELINE

Table 3 provides a timeline for each activity enumerated in the project description.

Table 3: Timeline of Major Activities	
Activity	Anticipated Time Line
Program recruitment	December 2017 – January 2018; April – May 2018
Classroom and small-group instruction	January 2018; Ongoing
Employment training	January 2018; Ongoing
Talent tours	January 2018; Ongoing
Job placement services	Year-Round
Monthly monitoring begins	January 2018; Ongoing
Employer engagement	Year-Round
Postsecondary education placement services	February through May 2018; Ongoing
State Legislative Day – opportunity for students to engage with legislators in Region 8	February 2018
Employer engagement for summer work experiences	March – June 2018
Career Development Conference – annual event for students to test their leadership, communication skills, teamwork abilities and creativity	March 29, 2018
Summer work experience placement	May – July 2018
End-of-year 2017-2018 reporting	August 2018
2018-2019 programs begin	July 2018
State Leadership Day – opportunity for students to learn leadership-relevant lessons to bring to their local programming, including planning for the student-driven JMG Career Association	October 2018
Going PRO in Michigan: Careers in Manufacturing Week	October 2018
Going PRO in Michigan: Careers in Energy Week	October 2018
JMG Initiation and Induction Ceremonies – platform for official introduction of students elected to leadership roles and a celebration of student involvement in JMG at each site location	October – November 2018
JAG National Student Leadership Academy	November 2018

6. BUDGET

Table 4 details projected expenditures by category for the Regional Prosperity Initiative, funds from other sources and total budget. The overall program budget, totaling \$804,246, includes 11 JMG Specialists and 2 Program Managers providing services in the five-county area. The proposed RPI request includes salary and fringe benefits for 1.73 FTE JMG Specialists.

Table 4: Budget			
Expenditure Category	RPI Request	Funds From Other Sources	Total
Wage/Salaries	\$69,250	\$460,800	\$530,050
Fringe	22,750	161,280	184,030
Indirect	8,000	52,166	60,166
Equipment	0	0	0
Travel	0	15,000	15,000
Materials	0	15,000	15,000
Totals	\$100,000	\$704,246	\$804,246

The above budget represents a significant project encompassing the delivery of JMG programs throughout a five-county area. If RPI funds are unavailable at the \$100,000 level, Kinexus would be able to scale the project based on a lower funding level.

7. PROJECT BREAKDOWN

Table 5 provides a project breakdown by the four project phases, total component cost and prioritization of each component. JMG will provide continuation of existing services and expansion of services for out-of-school youth in Region 8. Youth will acquire knowledge and skills, therefore, all costs have been placed in the “acquisition” phase.

Table 5: Project Breakdown		
Project Component	Component Cost	Component Priority (Scale of 1 to 5; 1=low; 5=high)
Phase 1: Inventory		
Phase 2: Assessment		
Phase 3: Acquisition	\$100,000	5
Phase 4: Installation		