

Massachusetts Gov. Baker awards \$600,000 in grants to high schools to support innovation pathways

These early career programs help students connect learning to in-demand industry sectors.

The Baker-Polito Administration awarded more than \$600,000 to 22 school districts to help support Innovation Pathway programs, which provide high school students with opportunities to learn and gain experience in a particular industry through career exploration, technical courses and internships.

Students are also able to enroll in post-secondary courses, at no cost to them, to help them make progress toward industry-recognized credentials. Most Innovation Pathways are in STEM-related fields, including advanced manufacturing, information technology, environmental and life sciences, health care and social assistance, and business and finance.

“These programs provide students with hands-on skills learning and access to opportunities for future success in high-demand fields,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “The expansion of Innovation Pathways will allow more students to gain knowledge and work experiences that prepare them for successful careers before they graduate high school.”

“We remain committed to closing opportunity and workforce gaps for students in communities across the Commonwealth, and Innovation Pathways are another tool we can use to do so,” said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. “These early career programs and rigorous learning opportunities offer chances for achievement both inside and outside the classroom.”

The Baker-Polito Administration launched these early career programs in 2017 to help students develop knowledge and skills related to a chosen field of study before they graduate high school. To date, 49 high schools across the Commonwealth have designated Innovation Pathways, totaling 121 different programs. Innovation Pathways differ from its sister program – Early College – in that students focus on a specific industry sector, with greater emphasis on career exploration, technical courses, work-based learning experiences and industry-recognized credentials, rather than college credit courses and college planning.

The 22 schools awarded grants today received designation from 2018 through 2020 and will use funding from the state to support work-based learning, industry recognized credential attainment, and dual-enrollment opportunities with partnering colleges and universities.

“When students have a sense of purpose, they become more interested and engaged in their studies, able to easily see how it all fits into their future,” said Secretary of Education James Peyser. “As more students gain skills and knowledge in a particular industry sector, they will have a better sense of what they want to do after they graduate and what additional post-secondary courses and training they will need to ensure their success.”

“Through participation in Innovation Pathways, students are empowered to explore firsthand and take steps toward possible future careers in promising sectors,” said Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley.

The following school districts received awards:

- Atlantis Charter School – \$41,250
- Barnstable Public Schools – \$26,576
- Berkshire Hills Regional School District – \$41,250
- Boston Public Schools, Dearborn STEM Academy – \$52,250

- Burlington Public Schools – \$26,575
- Dudley Charlton Regional School District – \$30,000
- Everett Public Schools – \$30,000
- Gardner Public Schools – \$30,000
- Hadley Public Schools – \$3,000
- Haverhill Public Schools – \$15,000
- Lawrence Public Schools – \$15,000
- Mashpee Public Schools – \$15,000
- Nantucket Public Schools – \$30,000
- Northampton Public Schools – \$26,575
- Norwood Public Schools – \$26,575
- Somerset Berkley Regional School District – \$30,000
- Tewksbury Public Schools – \$15,000
- Uxbridge Public Schools – \$15,000
- West Springfield Public Schools – \$30,000
- Westfield Public Schools – \$15,000
- Woburn Public Schools – \$41,250
- Worcester Public Schools – \$29,449

Schools that apply for designation for an Innovation Pathways are required to follow five design principles:

- Equitable access for all students
- Guided academic pathway, which, in the case of Innovation Pathways, must relate to one of five specified broad industry sectors
- Enhanced student supports
- Relevant connections to career
- Deep partnerships between high schools and employers or workforce development boards