Funds for Technology

- **No Child Left Behind Act of 2001**
  - **Title V** — Promoting Informed Parental Choice and Innovative Programs
    - **Part D** — Fund for the Improvement of Education
      - **Subpart 11** — Community Technology Centers

Funding Program Overview

Detailed information: http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg77.html

Purpose and Background
The purpose of this subpart is to assist eligible entities to:

a) create or expand community technology centers that will provide disadvantaged residents of economically distressed urban and rural communities with access to information technology and related training; and
b) provide technical assistance and support to community technology centers.

Funding and Eligibility
(Federal Appropriation Fiscal Year 2004: $9.941 million)

The Secretary, in conjunction with the Office of Educational Technology, is authorized to award grants, contracts or cooperative agreements to eligible applicants. Awards are made on a competitive basis and are not to exceed three years in duration.

Eligible entities include: foundations, museums, libraries, for-profit businesses, public or private non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, state educational agencies and local education agencies.

Each entity desiring an award must submit an application to the Secretary that includes project description and objectives, statement of commitment, sustainability plan and project evaluation plan. Applicants must match federal funds.

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Alignment of Choices CD Edition to Requirements of Title V-D-11

Overview: Dynamic Career Development Program for Community Technology Centers

Choices is an interactive program that supports a range of career development needs for both students and adults. *Choices* helps high school students focus on their academic career today and make plans for a smooth transition to a variety of post-secondary education and career options in the future. *Choices* helps parents and other adults explore occupations and education/training options, initiate a variety of job search activities including resume writing, and locate job openings. The program facilitates decision-making with information that is comprehensive, accurate and up to date. *Choices* motivates and engages students and adults through interactive activities for:

- Self-assessment of interests (English and Spanish), work values, basic skills and transferable work content skills;
- Career exploration with information that highlights necessary academic and career skills for hundreds of occupations;
- Post-secondary education/training exploration;
- Four-year high school course planning;
- Career and education portfolio building;
- Financial aid and scholarship research and application;
- Work history analysis
- Job searching

Choices provides a seamless connection to thousands of college websites, America's Job Bank, state job banks, scholarship databases and other high-quality career sites. Students can apply to colleges online. Parents can complete college financial need forms and use tools to better understand the process of financing college costs.

Choices connects to more than 200 online career videos. They bring job information to life through real-world interviews with workers in the field. The videos show workers in action, giving a first-hand sense of what a career is really like. Students learn about required education/training and career skills, work activities, job outlook and earnings.

Academic Enrichment

Choices includes creative, outcome-based solutions for teaching established curricula and supporting remediation efforts with technology. Lessons are designed to integrate career development concepts into the core academics through the use of technology. They support teacher efforts to use technology to enhance academic instruction. The lessons are an excellent way to enrich academic learning and motivate students.

Accountability

The *OnTrack* accountability system provides counselors and administrators with data about *Choices* assessment results and progress with education and career planning for individual students or groups of students. *OnTrack* accountability data can be imported into applications such as Excel for further analysis and consolidation. Schools can also send *OnTrack* student information to parents and guardians quickly and easily, thus promoting parental involvement.

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Authorized Activities

SEC. 5431. Uses of Funds

(a) Required Uses

(1) creating or expanding community technology centers...

(2) evaluating the effectiveness of the project

Choices CD Edition Alignment:

Choices is comprehensive, flexible and user-centered software that can serve as a key resource for Community Technology Centers.

Choices can help students and adults get the information they need for career decision-making and planning with:

- online self-assessments
- up-to-date databases for occupations, education/training and financial aid
- an electronic portfolio and Planner with job search modules
- Internet connections to colleges and job banks

The online lessons in the program can be used by center staff to support academic remediation and/or enrichment efforts. Furthermore, students and adults using *Choices* gain experience in keyboarding skills, searching a database, taking online assessments, printing reports, using a word processor and browsing the Internet. All this makes *Choices* an excellent way to reinforce and apply the technology skills learned at the center.

Choices data can augment information gathered for the center's program evaluation. The OnTrack accountability system provides center staff with data about *Choices* assessment results and progress with education and career planning for individuals or groups of students and adults. OnTrack accountability data can be imported into applications such as Excel for further analysis and consolidation. The center can also send OnTrack student information to parents and guardians quickly and easily.

SEC. 5431. Uses of Funds

(b) Permissible Uses

(3) Developing and providing services and activities for community residents that provide access to computers, information technology, and the use of such technology in support of preschool preparation, academic achievement, educational development and workforce development, such as the following:

(c) Career development and job preparation activities.

Choices CD Edition Alignment:

Choices content offers a wealth of opportunities for academic enrichment. For example, students might begin by taking an interest inventory that identifies career clusters and specific occupations of interest to the student. Follow-up reading about key occupations gives students practice in reading comprehension and exposes them to new vocabulary. Graphics and charts give students assistance in comprehension. The occupation reports further validate the importance of academic achievement by highlighting what school subjects relate to the skills required by the occupation. The *Choices* Planner and portfolio invite students to write descriptions of their employability skills through a guided process, create written education and career plans and practice resume writing.

The very nature of using *Choices* leads students to use many critical thinking skills that are so important for academic achievement. They must make decisions and set priorities when they search for occupations, colleges or scholarships. They are given opportunities to compare and contrast options. Students are encouraged to retrieve, evaluate and manage information. Included lessons give center staff a powerful tool to enhance academic achievement. They blend career development concepts, the use of technology and academic skills into interesting lessons that engage students, build on their own context and motivate learning.

Choices is rich in resources for career development and job preparation. The *Choices* technology provides innovative approaches to increasing understanding of work and self, decision-making, and academic and career planning. A variety of online self-assessments expand student and adult awareness of interests, work values, basic skills and transferable work content skills.

Users can compare their assessment results with the factors typically required for success in occupations they select. In this way, they not only learn more about themselves, but also about the realities of work requirements. They can quickly search a large database of occupations by key topics (such as education requirements, skills, interests and earnings) according to their own priorities and then access detailed information about each occupation on the resulting list.

The occupation profile includes: a description of work tasks; information about suggested high school courses; required post-secondary education/training; related basic skills, general workplace skills and aptitudes; transferable work content skills; earnings and outlook; working conditions; physical demands and abilities; and more. The *Choices* work history profile helps users analyze their employment experience for trends and highlights the skills required in previous jobs.

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Choices CD Edition Alignment (continued):

Choices also provides a seamless link from occupations to college majors, with one of the largest (more than 7,000 colleges, technical schools and graduate schools) and most accurate college databases available. Users can explore and compare options quickly and easily. Links directly to college websites further enhance the process. Online college applications can also be accessed. *Choices* includes the Parent Loan Advisor and thousands of financial aid awards as well. Links to America's Job Bank and state job banks provide easy access to employment leads for job seekers.

Choices further facilitates academic and career planning and job searching through the electronic Planner and portfolio. Planner modules include: goal setting and planning for high school education, post-secondary education and career; school to career activities; documentation of employability skills; job search activity planner and tracker; practice with resume writing and other job seeking skills; and more.

Choices promotes intergenerational activities and parental/guardian involvement in student career decision-making in several ways. Students can easily print their work from *Choices* and bring it home for review and discussion.

Parents who visit the Community Technology Center will find that *Choices* is easy to use. They can learn more about the education and training requirements of specific occupations, explore post-secondary options with their students and review college financial aid possibilities. Parents and students can work together on developing four-year high school course plans with the help of the *Choices* Planner.

Choices can be of direct assistance to parents in their own career planning and/or job search with connections to state job banks, help with interviewing and resume writing, and transferable skills checklists. Center staff can use *Choices* to generate letters to parents about career and educational planning for their students. They can also customize the four-year high school course plans (pathways) shown in *Choices* occupation reports to reflect local requirements, thus assuring that parents get accurate information.

Bridges Transitions, developer of *Choices*, can provide extensive services to assist Center staff with implementing and integrating *Choices* into their programs. Customized training focuses on enhancing staff technology skills and building an action plan for maximizing the use of *Choices* to support academic achievement, career development and technology literacy. Participants also explore how the lessons can enhance existing academic programs by incorporating engaging, technology-based activities that motivate students by connecting the academics with career planning.

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