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State Grants Support 13 New Career and Technical Education Programs Across COP ESD Local Districts

Awards expand local opportunities in healthcare, skilled trades, technology, education and public safety

INDIAN RIVER, Mich. — Students across the Cheboygan-Otsego-Presque Isle Educational Service District (COP ESD) will have more opportunities to explore careers and develop technical skills close to home following successful applications by six local school districts for state grants supporting 13 new career and technical education programs.

The awards were secured through Michigan's Section 61v New CTE Program Competitive Grants, which support expanded student access to and enrollment in career and technical education. The funding targets districts located in "CTE deserts"—areas with limited access to CTE programs—or districts that demonstrate a gap in available opportunities.

Cheboygan Area Schools received a first-round award for a middle school manufacturing program. In the second round, five additional districts received awards supporting 12 new programs:

School district	Programs awarded funding
Gaylord Community Schools	Public Safety; Education
Inland Lakes Schools	Healthcare; Welding; Cosmetology
Johannesburg-Lewiston Area Schools	Healthcare; Culinary; Computer Programming
Onaway Area Community Schools	Healthcare; Construction Trades; Machine Tool
Posen Consolidated School District	Welding

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The awards mark a significant step forward for a region where only four of COP ESD's ten local school districts currently offer CTE programming.

In November 2025, voters did not approve a proposed millage to expand CTE opportunities across the service district. The need for additional student vocational opportunities remained, and local educators and partners continued pursuing other sources of support.

In early 2026, the Michigan Department of Education's Office of Career and Technical Education launched the 61v competitive grant opportunity, supported by a $70 million appropriation in the 2025 state budget. Local districts and COP ESD worked together to pursue funding for programs that respond to student interests and workforce needs.

"These awards represent an important step toward ensuring that a student's ZIP code does not determine their access to career and vocational training opportunities available to them," said Jamie Huber, COP ESD superintendent. "Our schools, employers and community partners have continued working toward a shared goal: giving students more ways to discover their interests, build valuable skills and prepare for their futures by connecting them with employers and job opportunities right here in Cheboygan, Otsego and Presque Isle counties. These grants help us turn that work into expanded opportunities in our local schools."

The grant awards provide funding over three years. Districts will use the planning and development process to prepare instructional spaces, obtain equipment, develop curriculum and establish the partnerships needed to launch high-quality programs. Program schedules and enrollment information will be shared by participating districts as plans are finalized.

CTE connects classroom learning with practical experience and helps students prepare for further education, technical training and employment. The programs will broaden students' exposure to careers while helping build a workforce prepared to meet regional needs.

The expansion also builds on regional collaboration that began in 2023, when a business- and industry-led steering committee brought together schools, employers, workforce organizations and community partners to address barriers to technical education.

"These grants give us a strong foundation to build upon," said Laura Percival, COP ESD's MiSTEM Region 12 director and CEPD 8 director. "Continued partnerships with employers, colleges and our communities will be essential as we develop programs that serve students well into the future."