

Expanding Childcare Opportunities through Apprenticeships

Presenters:

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Agenda for Session

- Why Early Childhood Education Apprenticeships
- Partnerships
- Funding and Expenses
- Implementation
- Outcomes
- Challenges and Lessons Learned
- Video
- Q & A



Why Early Childhood Education Apprenticeships

- Reliable and affordable childcare promotes engagement in workforce.
- Childcare centers rely on trained educators.
- Apprenticeships are a proven model for creating and retaining a pipeline of talent.



Community Need

- State requirements – 1 qualified lead teacher per classroom
- Staffing shortages
 - 60% of lead teacher applicants were unqualified in 2021
 - 2023 turnover rates within 2 years:
 - Early childhood teachers – 40%
 - Early childhood assistant teachers – 69%
- Insufficient child care centers and slots
 - Will County – 20,000 fewer slots than children
 - Grundy County – 3,100 fewer slots than children

Partnerships

- DCEO Supplemental Funding
 - LWIA 11 – Grundy Livingston Kankakee Workforce Board
 - LWIA 10 – Workforce Investment Board of Will County
- Early Care & Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS) grant
- Apprenticeship Expansion Grant
 - LWIA 10 – Workforce Investment Board of Will County





Employer Recruitment

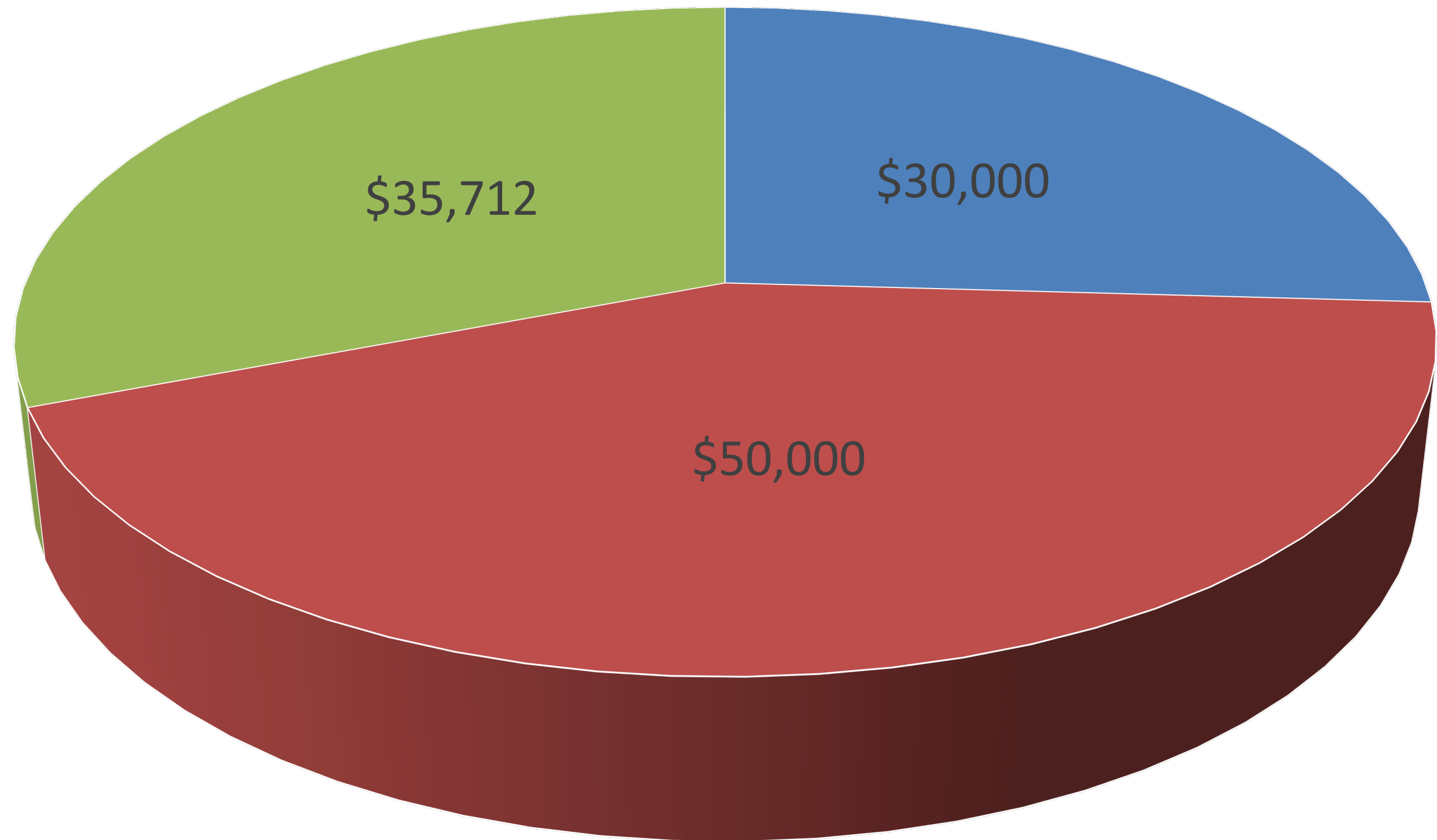
- Makes sense geographically
- Need to have multiple locations/options for students
- What does the site look like? Clean, organized, etc.
- What motivates the site to seek apprentice(s)?
- Existing relationship with JJC in any capacity?
- Is there potential to sustain the relationship beyond just one apprentice?
- Does it seem like a good place to work?



Employer Engagement

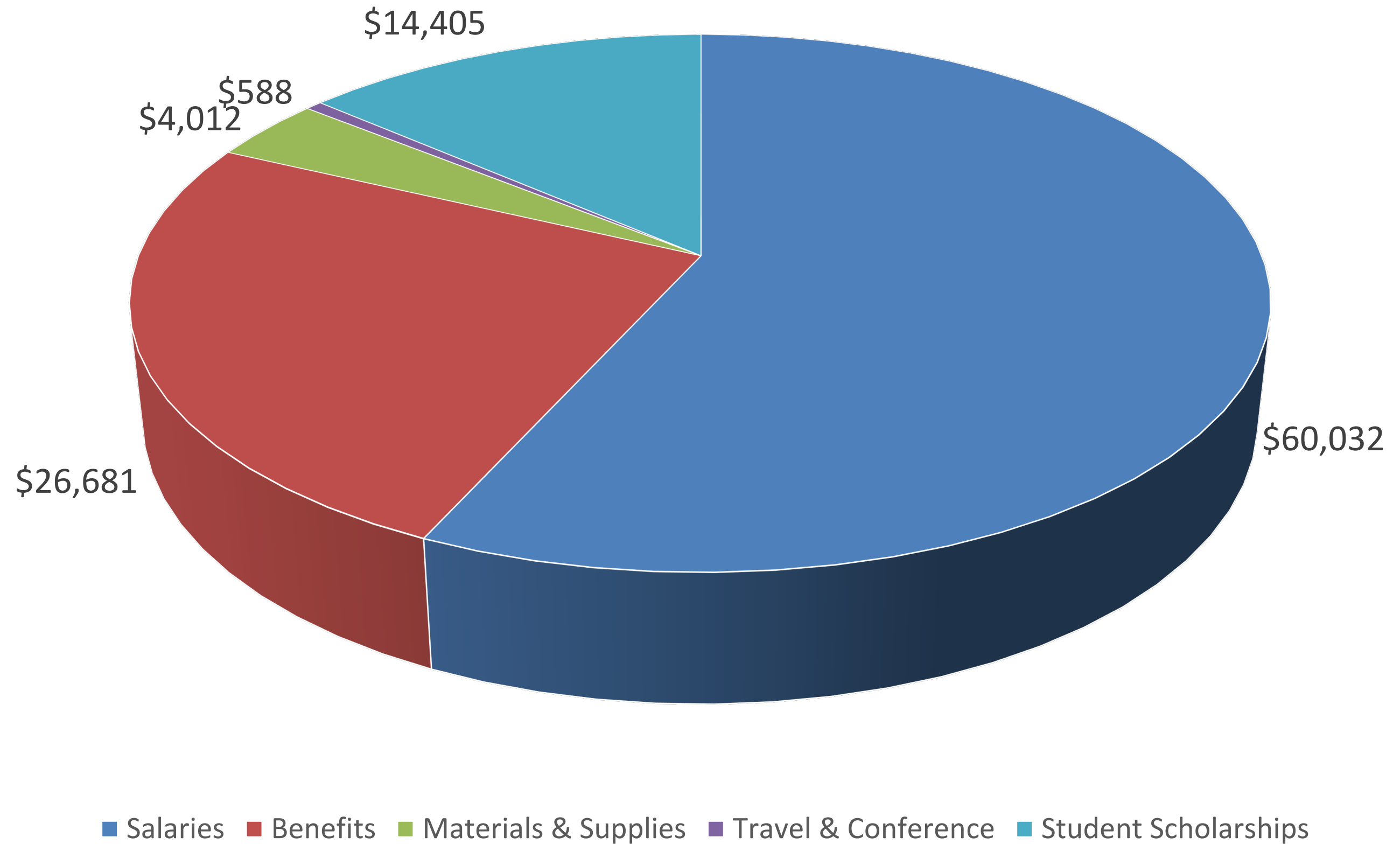
- Need regular communication and check - ins; be available and responsive when sites reach out
 - Clear and direct communication – don't overcomplicate the language we use with employers
- Celebrate the apprentices and the sites – National Apprenticeship Week, Certificates for Completers
- Simplify the process for them
 - Prefill paperwork, come prepared, have answers to their questions
- Connect them with other potential partners/resources
- Tailor the program to the employers' needs

FY25 Funding

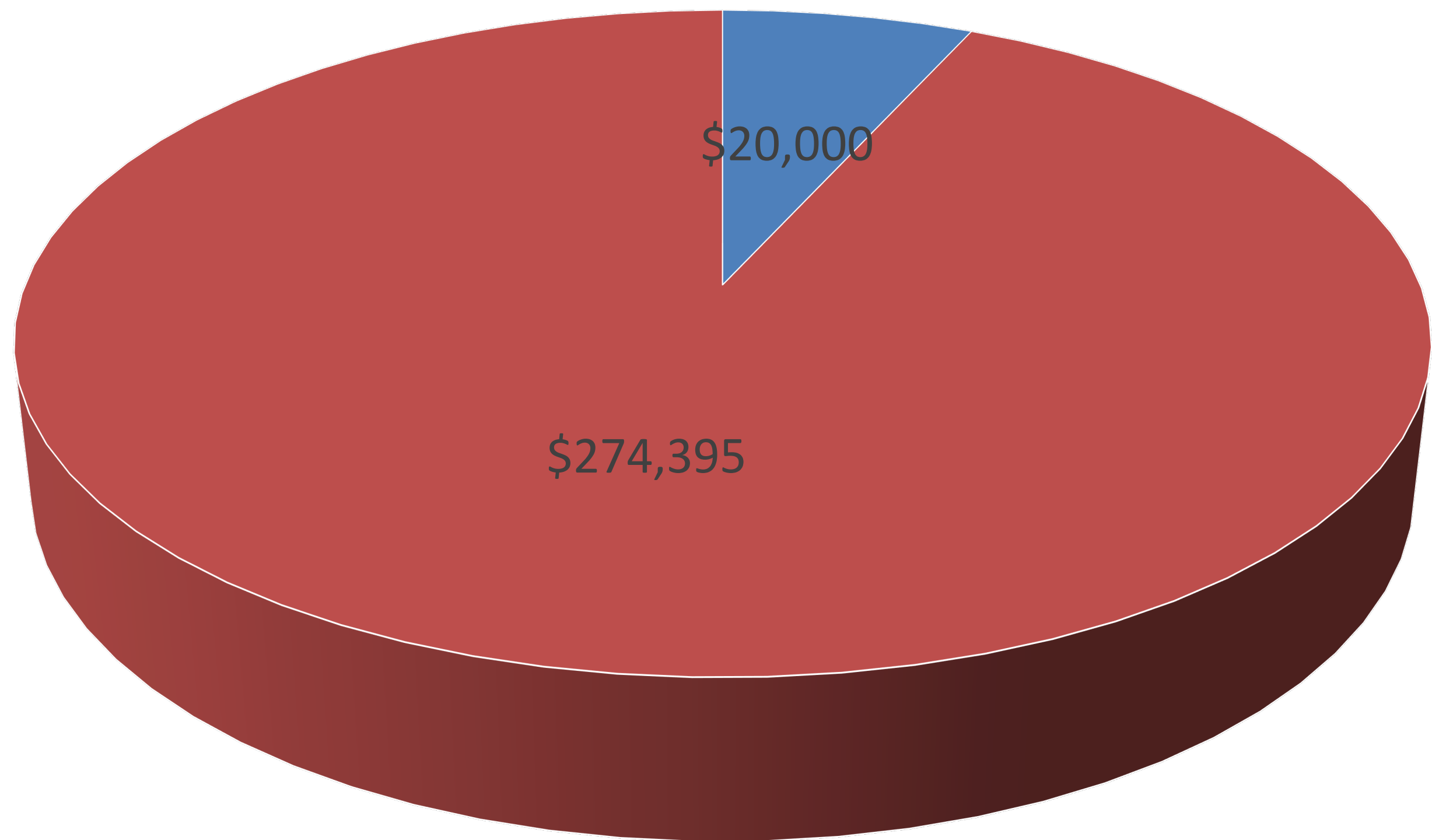


■ ECEPTS ■ Will Co WIB Supplemental Funding ■ GLK Workforce Board Supplemental Funding

FY25 Expenses

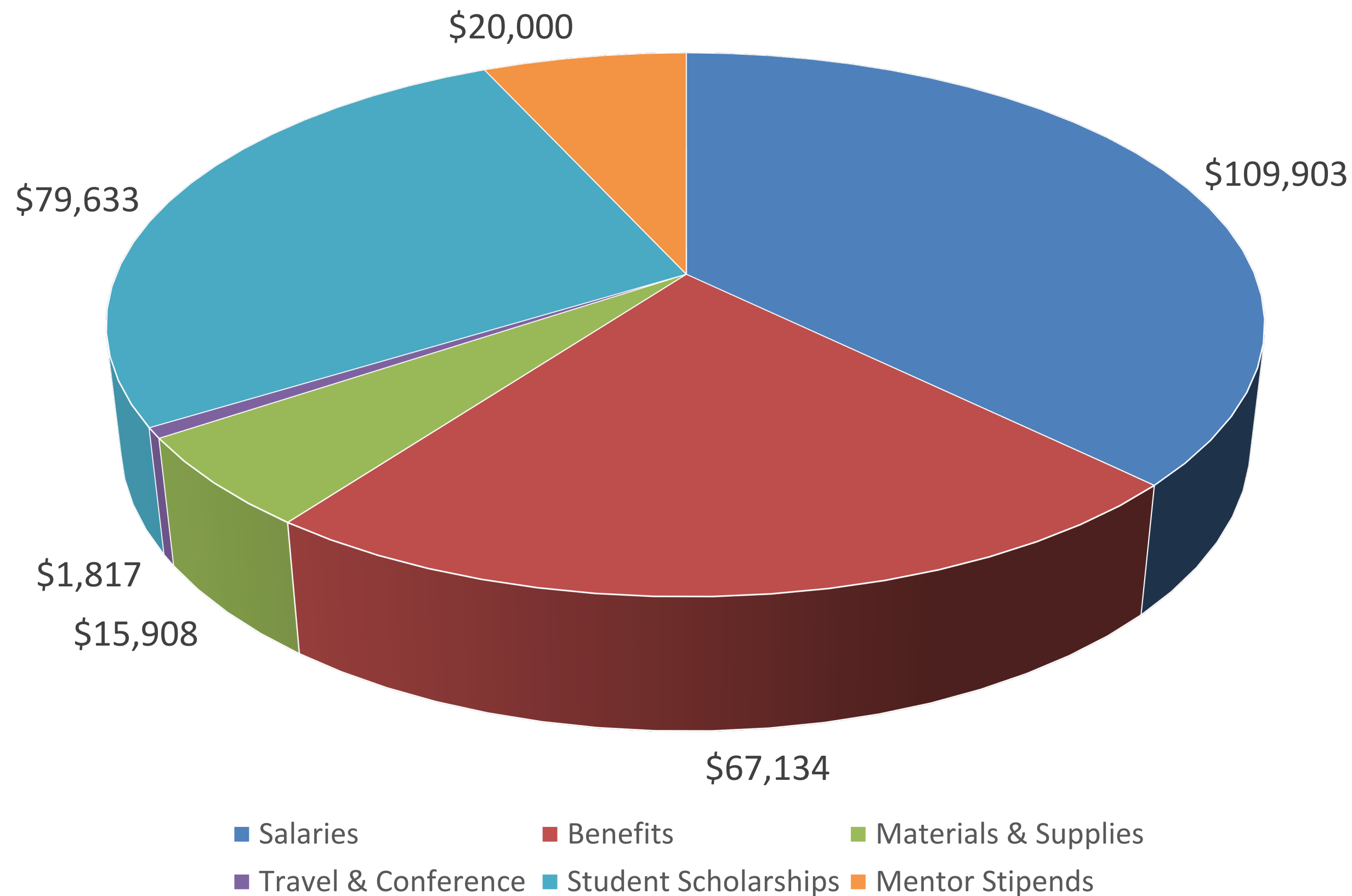


FY26 & FY27 Funding



■ ECEPTS ■ Will Co WIB Apprenticeship Expansion

Projected FY26 & FY27 Expenses



Implementation

- Engaging employers
- Identifying and supporting mentors
- Placing apprentices





FY25 Outcomes

Dual Credit

- Expanded to 2 new high schools in FY25
- Commitment from 2 new high schools for FY26

Pre- Apprenticeships

- 1 class, 12 pre-apprentices

Registered Apprenticeships

- Early Childhood Educator, Lead Teacher RAP
- 8 employer agreements
- 14 registered apprentices
 - 10 retained apprenticeships through FY25
- 8 journey worker/apprentice mentors



FY26 Outcomes

Dual Credit

- Expanded to 2 new high schools

Pre- Apprenticeships

- 1 class, 9 pre-apprentices
 - 2 pre-apprentices transitioned into apprenticeships

Registered Apprenticeships

- Revised ECE Manager curriculum based on new DOL guidance
- 16 employer partners
 - Head Start program
- 21 registered apprentices
 - 6 completed apprentices
 - 7 additional completions by 12/2026
- 9 journey worker/apprentice mentors



Total ECE Apprentices

Since October 2025

Pre- Apprentices

- 2 cohorts/classes
- 21 individuals served
- 10 obtained apprenticeships

Employers

- 16 employer agreements
- 12 employers with apprentices

Apprentices

- 32 apprentices
 - 6 RAP completers
 - 17 active
 - 2 suspended
 - 7 cancelled

Headlines

**SHAW LOCAL**Sign in 

Joliet Junior College, Head Start help fill need for early childhood educators with apprenticeship program

June 01, 2026 at 8:00 am CDT

 Expand



A photograph of a woman with glasses and a red shirt sitting in a classroom. The wall behind her is decorated with various educational posters, including an alphabet chart, a number chart, and a cartoon character. There is a window with a view of a city skyline in the background.



Where We're Going

- ECE Manager RAP
 - Pre - Apprenticeship
- Apprentice Mentor Training
 - Stipend
- WIOA Apprenticeships
- Identify new funding opportunities



Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Grant timing
- Partnering with industry groups
- Narrow focus
- Funding opportunities
 - Bra id in g fu n d in g
 - Fle xib ility o f su p p le m e n t a l fu n d in g
 - Lo n g - t e r m fu n d in g



Student Testimonial

Questions

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