

Call for VET Schools: Funding for Projects to Develop Key Competencies

Georgia

DESCRIPTION

Non-formal education services, including extracurricular activities, play a crucial role in complementing formal learning and cultivating key competences that can create increased opportunities for employment and personal fulfilment for students.

The education system aims to empower the sustainable development of extracurricular services in VET institutions and encourage VET schools to carry out a variety of activities. Accordingly, since 2022, Skills Agency has opened an annual call for VET institutions.

Through this call, **VET institutions, in close collaboration with civil and/or private organisations, write and implement projects that introduce and develop extracurricular activities** within formal VET education. These projects **aim to develop crucial key competences and skills, including CDC, entrepreneurship, and digital competencies**. Extracurricular activities also help participants enhance **critical and creative thinking** as well as their **disposition towards sports, physical activities and healthy lifestyle**. Furthermore, they **foster collaboration between VET institutions and civil organisations**, promoting VET education in general. The call emphasises important issues, such as **inclusion, gender equality, and particularly youth participation**.

Eligible participants include public and private VET institutions, partnering with local or regional youth and civic organisations. A prerequisite is that applicant consortia and partner organisations have signed a **memorandum of cooperation**.

Projects within the competition framework aim to contribute to:

- Develop formal and informal education principles;
- Establish environments based on inclusivity and gender equality;
- Develop key competencies among participants;
- Enhance collaboration across and within various sectors (social partnerships).

Examples of funded projects:

1. **"Nature Activist"** by College "New Wave" in collaboration with Kintrishi National Park

This project aimed to increase **environmental awareness** and educate a new environmentally conscious individual through both theoretical and practical training, including field trips. Students actively participated in community outreach on topics such as global warming, environmental pollution, waste management, energy conservation, deforestation, endangered species, conservation, sustainable use of natural resources, and biodiversity. Field trips were organised to the Kintrishi Protected Area, where students were guided by a ranger who conducted master classes on different topics. The participants, along with the ranger, set up camera traps, learned to identify animal tracks, and how to read hiking maps. 30 students participated in the project.

2. **"Creating a Club for Future Entrepreneurs"** by College Mermisi in collaboration with Ornamental and Native Forest Species Growers Association of Georgia

This project aimed to establish student spaces that would enhance student life and support the creation of student clubs. The project's activities were designed to bring young people together around the shared goal of improving the youth space

known as the College Square. This promoted entrepreneurship and other essential skills among students, while encouraging collaboration among students with different professions and interests.

Students from various programs, including decorative horticulture, construction, electrical, and other fields, contributed to the construction, beautification, and maintenance of the Square. As the square was intended not only for students but also for the local community, young people from the area were also involved and they gained insight into the college and vocational education opportunities.

To ensure the sustainability of the project, the square will be used for a range of informal, community, and student activities. A total of 50 people was involved in the project, with 40 participating in the garden construction and maintenance activities.

IMPACT

In **2022**, the call **received 56 applications and as result funded 22 projects**. These efforts involved **17 VET schools and 28 organisations**, collectively engaging **1,500 participants**. Planned activities included **seasonal camps, the establishment of student spaces in VET schools, intellectual and sports championships, debate clubs, and various interest/hobby clubs**. The positive outcomes included **enhanced collaboration between institutions and community partners**, paving the way for continued cooperation and further project initiatives.

Building on this success, the **2023 grant competition funded 30 projects, involving 22 VET institutions and 36 partner organisations, collectively engaging up to 3000 participants**. This expansion further strengthened the integration of formal and informal education principles, promoted inclusivity and gender equality, and developed key competencies among participants. The diverse range of topics covered included environmental protection, entrepreneurship, and youth activities.

According to the results, the funded projects emphasised the introduction of extracurricular activities as a form of student service aimed at developing a range of key competences and promoting psycho-social well-being, enabling VET students to acquire skills in effective communication, collaboration, teamwork, and gain valuable life experiences.