

Boston's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth Program Policy Principles for Fiscal Year 2020

MISSION

It is our purpose as an innovative public agency to promote economic self-sufficiency to ensure the full participation of all Boston residents in the city's economic vitality and future. It is also our purpose to be an advocate, clearinghouse, and laboratory for "best practices" in literacy, beginning at birth; lifelong learning; job training/placement; and support services so Bostonians may fulfill their educational and employment aspirations.

OVERVIEW

In July 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was enacted, replacing the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Information and resources on WIOA can be found on the Department of Labor's website: www.doleta.gov/WIOA.

In early 2019, OWD intends to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for WIOA youth services for Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020). Boston's Workforce Development Board (the Boston Private Industry Council) and the City of Boston's WIOA Administrator (OWD) have outlined a set of proposed policy principles which will help guide development and implementation of WIOA youth programs¹.

GOAL

The goal of Boston's WIOA youth funding is to ensure that youth who are not being effectively served in mainstream education and workforce development systems have the skills and credentials necessary to access career-oriented employment.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES²

These principles are informed by an extensive review of best practices, as well as broader lessons from the field.

- The use of structured **work experience**, such as career exploration, internships, and pre-apprenticeship programs, providing maximum opportunities for youth to learn about their interests and careers in high-demand fields.
- Investment in programs that establish a framework to move participant along the **career pathways continuum**, defined as high school diplomas/HiSET/GED attainment, matriculation into post-secondary education/training and placement into jobs with demonstrated career paths in high-demand fields. Programs should provide a structured sequences of activities and multiple entry and exit points that provide adequate supportive services to meet the wide range of barriers of various youth populations.
- Provision of long-term career development services, such as occupational training and **apprenticeship programs** leading to unsubsidized employment in growing industries with wage progression.

¹ The Policy Principles within this document are a draft, awaiting final approval by Boston Workforce Development Board (Boston Private Industry Council), anticipated to occur in January 2019.

² The methodology used to formulate a set of proposed policy principles included extensive literature review on well-documented best practices and a city-wide scan of community resources.

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- Inclusion of **youth voice** and leadership to guide the program design process and inform best practices in service delivery.
- Participation in a **partnership and referral** network, including Boston Youth Services Network (BYSN), the Re-Engagement Center and the Mass Hire Career Centers, that allow programs to combine their specialized outreach, education and employment/career services into coherent pathways from disconnection to early career engagement.
- Alternative education programs that provide high school education that allow participants to obtain high school diplomas/HISET/GED and offer college/career preparation for dropouts and off-track students.
- Investment in an early introduction and exposure to post-secondary education and careers, allowing youth to establish career goals and interests, and to experience improved educational and employment outcomes, such as dual enrollment strategies.
- The inclusion of innovative post-secondary **bridge programs** designed to accelerate credentials and skill building, such as use of contextualized and integrated curriculum and instruction.
- Placement in employment both during and after program to provide young people with authentic work experience and employability skills.
- Provision of intensive trauma-informed **case management and support services**, including financial literacy education, to help youth overcome complex barriers and to successfully complete programs, find good jobs, and retain them.
- The use of life and socio-emotional learning skills to better equip youth with non-cognitive skills needed to succeed in jobs.

TARGET POPULATIONS

WIOA requires that 75% of Boston's allocation serve out of school youth 16-24 years old. No more than 25% of the allocation may be spent on in-school youth 14-21 years old. In addition, WIOA will serve other economically disadvantaged and underserved youth populations:

- Low-income youth who are basic-skills- deficient, English Language Learners, Boston Housing Authority (BHA) residents; or residents of a high-poverty area
- Truants, students with a GPA lower than 2.0, whether at the secondary or postsecondary level, or students who failed the MCAS in the most recent round.
- Court-involved; homeless; runaway; in foster care, or aged out of the foster care system; pregnant or parenting; youth with disability; young men of color; documented immigrant youth.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Because WIOA emphasizes education/training, skill development, career development and economic self-sufficiency in integrated, individualized plans, programs should:

- Demonstrate significant gains in **career preparation and success** for participating youth, such as job placement and retention at 6 and 12 month post program

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- Demonstrate significant improvements in **educational success** for participating youth, such as attainment of high school diplomas/HiSET/GED, placement into post-secondary education, training programs, and attainment of post-secondary degree or certificate that lead to jobs.
- Demonstrate overall improvement in the **economic success** of participating youth, such as gains in earnings from jobs.
- Demonstrate **skill gains** relevant to their career goals.

PROPOSED BIDDER COMPETENCIES

When procuring services under WIOA youth, the following competencies will be prioritized, programs may provide the services themselves or leverage the services of a partner agency:

- Demonstrated ability to manage a federal grant with rigorous compliance requirements in terms of eligibility, database management, and performance outcomes tracking.
- Demonstrated ability to train and place youth in unsubsidized employment in industries that align with jobs with projected growth and demands in Boston.
- Strong links to employers to train a qualified pipeline of skilled workers with the goal of job placement.
- Staff expertise and experience in engaging employers and post-secondary institutions in program development and implementation activities.
- Demonstrated ability to provide education services that lead to a high school credential, postsecondary education or training enrollment, persistence and completion.
- Staff expertise in implementing work-based learning, job readiness and preparation activities.
- Experience working with targeted youth population.
- Demonstrated ability to provide intensive case management.
- Ability to partner with other organizations to allow provision of a full set of education, youth development and employment experiences for youth participants.
- Ability to provide culturally and linguistically competent programs and services.
- Demonstrated capacity to follow-up with youth to ensure long-term success.
- Evidence-based, scalable, and cost-effective intervention with opportunities for leveraging additional resources.