

# Boston's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth Program Policy Principles for FY 2016



## 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). The Act "is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy."<sup>1</sup>

In response to the new Act, the Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services (JCS) proposes to refocus its priorities on programs employing career pathways and work-based learning as leading approaches for workforce activities. In addition, JCS intends to align with the new Act by prioritizing services to out-of-school youth between the ages of 16-24 years.

In February 2015, JCS intends to release a Request for Proposal (RFP) for WIOA youth services for the upcoming Fiscal Year 2016 (effective July 1, 2015). Boston's Workforce Investment Board (the Boston Private Industry Council) and the City's WIOA Administrator (JCS) have outlined a set of proposed policy principles which will help guide innovation and development of WIOA youth programs.

## GOAL

The goal of Boston's WIOA youth system 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 PRINCIPLES<sup>2</sup>

In general, the policy principles fit into the rubrics of (1) youth development, (2) education and workforce strategies, and (3) wrap-around support services, with particular focus on employment outcomes. These principles are informed by an extensive review of best practices, as well as broader lessons from the field.

- Provision of long-term career development services, such as occupational training programs leading to unsubsidized employment in growing industries with wage progression.
- Employing career pathways models, with 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/113/bills/hr803/BILLS-113hr803enr.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> 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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- Participation in a referral network, including BYSN, the Re-Engagement Center and the Connection Center, that allows 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 and offer college/career preparation for dropouts and off-track students.
- 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.
- The use of structured work-based learning, such as career exploration, paid experiences, and pre-apprenticeship programs, providing maximum opportunities for youth to learn theoretical and practical skills relevant to their career interests that lead to post-secondary education or employment.
- 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.
- Remedial class preparation, which allows youth to take college level courses upon entry into community colleges.
- Provision of wrap-around 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.
- Investment in long-term follow-up with program participants upon program completion to ensure continued support and success in post-secondary education, training, or employment.
- The use of partnerships and collaborations are strongly encouraged to ensure that there are no gaps in programs and supportive services.

## TARGET POPULATIONS

As stated earlier, the new Act prioritizes serving more out-of-school youth by requiring that 75% of funds go to that population. In addition, WIOA will serve other economically disadvantaged and underserved youth populations:

- Out-of-school youth between the ages of 16-24 years old.
- In-school youth between the ages of 14- 21 years old.
- Low-income youth who are basic-skills- deficient or English Language Learners.
- 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; youth residing in Boston Housing Authority (BHA) facilities.

## INTENDED OUTCOMES

- To demonstrate significant gains in **career preparation and success** for participating youth, such as job placement and retention.
- To demonstrate significant improvements in **educational success** for participating youth, such as attainment of high school diplomas/HiSet, placement into post-secondary education, training programs, and attainment of post-secondary degree or certificate that lead to jobs.

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- To demonstrate overall improvement in the economic success of participating youth, such as gains in earnings from jobs.

## **PROPOSED BIDDER COMPETENCIES**

When procuring services under WIOA youth, the following competencies will be prioritized:

- 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.
- Skilled program staff with experience integrating academic and employment services.
- Staff expertise in implementing work-based learning, job readiness and preparation activities.
- Experience working with targeted youth population.
- Demonstrated ability to provide proactive 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 conduct process and outcome evaluations to implement mid-course program corrections, as necessary.
- 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.