

VI WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD POLICY DOCUMENT

Workforce Program Guidance WIOA 304-15

TO: Virgin Islands Single State Workforce Development Area

SUBJECT: **Delivery of Services and Activities under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) – Youth**

DATE: July 2015

Purpose: To provide guidance to all staff and administrators of the One-Stop Career Centers providing WIOA services to customers of the Workforce Development System.

References: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-128) Title I; TEGL 23-14

Background: The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) shifts the primary program focus of Title I Youth formula programs to support the educational and career success of out-of-school Youth (OSY). A minimum of seventy-five percent (75%) of WIOA Youth funds must be spent on OSY. Youth program elements have increased from ten (10) to fourteen (14) and with a focus on preparation for the workforce, there is now a twenty percent (20%) work experience expenditure requirement.

Policy: Services and activities to be provided to Youth should offer a framework for optimal development and growth of a young person. These activities should begin with career exploration and guidance; contain continued support for educational attainment, opportunities for skills training in in-demand industries and occupations, such as pre-apprenticeships or internships and culminating with work experience that leads to full time unsubsidized employment or follow a track of advanced education that results in certificates and/or degree attainment. All strategies should be based on a career pathway in a demand driven industry sector.

Allowable Activities for Youth

1. Provide an objective assessment of the academic levels, skill levels and service needs of each participant, which assessment shall include a review of basic skills, occupational skills, prior work experience, employability, interests, aptitudes, supportive service needs, and developmental needs
2. Develop service strategies for each participant that are directly linked to one or more of the indicators of performance that shall identify career pathways that include education and employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate services for the participant taking into account the assessment previously conducted;

3. A series of activities including –
 - Activities leading to the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or a recognized postsecondary credential;
 - Preparation for postsecondary educational and training opportunities;
 - Strong linkages between academic instruction and occupational education that lead to the attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials;
 - Preparation for unsubsidized employment opportunities; and
 - Effective connections to employers, including small employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations of the local and regional labor markets

In order to support the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, entry into postsecondary education and career readiness for participants, the activities described above shall provide one or more of the 14 program elements. All activities developed through a joint collaboration between the participant and career counselor should be documented through an Individual Service Strategy or an Individual Employment Plan.

Youth Program Elements

WIOA Section 129 (c) (2) describes the program elements around which services and activities for both in-school and out-of-school Youth should be based. The original ten elements have been consolidated into nine as the summer employment opportunities program element is now a sub-element under paid and unpaid work experiences. The five (5) new elements offer additional work preparatory activities that help broaden opportunities for Youth. The complete listing of program elements is as follows:

1. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent (including a recognized certificate of attendance or similar document for individuals with disabilities) or for a recognized post-secondary credential;
2. Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services as appropriate;
3. Paid and unpaid work experiences that have academic and occupational education as a component of the work experience, which may include the following types of work experiences:
 - (i) Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the year;
 - (ii) Pre-apprenticeship programs;
 - (iii) Internships and job shadowing; and
 - (iv) On-the-job training opportunities;
4. Occupational skill training, which includes priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized post-secondary credentials that align with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area involved;

5. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
6. Leadership development opportunities including community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors;
7. Supportive services;
8. Adult mentoring for a duration of at least 12 months that may occur both during and after program participation;
9. Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation;
10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate to the needs of the individual youth;
11. Financial literacy education;
12. Entrepreneurial skills training;
13. Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services; and
14. Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to post-secondary education and training.

Youth Eligibility Criteria

Youth eligibility is now based on whether the individual meets the requirements of and in-school youth (ISY) or an out-of-school youth (OSY).

An ISY must be attending school, not younger than 14 or older than 21, must be low-income **and** must have *one or more* of the following list of barriers:

1. Basic skills deficient;
2. An English language learner;
3. An offender;
4. A homeless youth or runaway; in foster care or aged out of foster care;
5. Pregnant or parenting;
6. Have a disability;
7. Is an individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment

An OSY must not be attending any school, must not be younger than 16 or older than 24 (at the time of enrollment), **and** must have *one or more* of the following barriers:

1. Is a school dropout;
2. A youth who is within the age of compulsory school attendance, but has not attended school for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter;
3. A recipient of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent who is a low-income individual and is either basic skills deficient or an English language learner;
4. Subject to the juvenile or adult justice system;
5. Homeless, a runaway, in foster care or has aged out of the foster care system; is eligible for assistance under section 477 of the Soc. Sec. Act, or an individual who is an out-of-home placement;
6. Pregnant or parenting;
7. Has a disability;
8. A low-income individual who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment

Out –of-School Priority

Out-of-school youth receive priority under WIOA. Up to seventy-five percent (75%) of Youth funds must be expended on OSY. The 75% is calculated after state and local administrative expenditures have been charged. *Seventy-five percent is the minimum expenditure rate – this does not preclude a higher expenditure rate or focus on OSY if the need is supported.

Exception – Not more than five percent (5%) of the individuals assisted may be persons who would be covered individuals (ISY or OSY) except that the persons are not low-income individuals.

Consistency with Compulsory School Attendance Laws

In providing assistance to an individual who is required to attend school under applicable State compulsory school attendance laws, the priority in providing such assistance shall be for the individual to attend school regularly.

The compulsory school attendance age in the US Virgin Islands is 5 – 18 years of age. See excerpt from VI Code below:

17 V.I.C. § 82 - Compulsory school attendance; age of pupils; exceptions –

(a) All children shall commence their school education by attending an approved kindergarten from the beginning of the school year in the calendar year in which they reach their fifth birthday, and they shall continue to attend school regularly until the expiration of the school year nearest their eighteenth birthday, except as provided in section 287 of this title; provided, however, those who graduate from high school before the age of 18 are excepted and students attending the National Guard Youth Challenge Program or any other program approved by the Virgin Islands Board of Education which has the equivalency of a high school diploma are also excepted.

Expanded Work Experience Focus

WIOA 129 (c) (4) prioritizes the work experience program element. Work experience may be either paid or unpaid and under WIOA is set in four categories: summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities that occur year-round; pre-apprenticeship programs; internships and job shadowing and on-the-job training opportunities.

In order to allow sufficient resources to provide work experience, WIOA authorizes no less than twenty percent (20%) of program funds to be used. The twenty percent work experience expenditure rate is calculated after subtracting funds spent on administrative costs. It is *NOT* applied separately for in-school and out-of-school youth.

Career Pathway Development

Under WIOA, there is an emphasis on using Career Pathways as the strategy for serving Youth. Career Pathways is a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training and other services that –

- (a) Aligns with the skill needs of local industries;
- (b) Prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including apprenticeships;
- (c) Includes counseling to support an individual in achieving the individual's education and career goals;
- (d) Includes, as appropriate, education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
- (e) Organizes education, training, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practicable;
- (f) Enables an individual to attain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent and at least one (1) recognized postsecondary credential; and
- (g) Helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

Delivery of Youth Services

The local Board shall award grants or contracts on a competitive basis to providers of youth workforce investment activities identified based on the criteria in the State Plan and taking into consideration the ability of the providers to meet performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance for youth programs.

Exception

The Board may award grants or contracts on a sole-source basis if it is determined that there is an insufficient number of eligible providers of Youth workforce investment activities in the local area involved for grants and contracts to be awarded on a competitive basis.