

Alabama Workforce Development System

**Alabama Department of Commerce
Workforce Development Division
401 Adams Avenue
Post Office Box 304106
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-4106**

GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE INNOVATION DIRECTIVE No. PY2023 -03

SUBJECT: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth Program Requirements and Procurement of Youth Workforce Investment Activities

1. **Purpose.** This Directive identifies the State-developed criteria to be used by local boards in awarding grants (contracts) for youth workforce investment activities.

2. **Discussion.** The attached policy provides the criteria to be used in awarding youth grants for youth workforce investment activities and programs. There are fourteen program elements which should be offered to a youth participant and the goal of any youth program is to help youth complete a high school diploma or equivalent and to prepare for a career pathway that will transition into skilled employment and/or postsecondary education. Each local area is expected to identify providers of youth services that effectively address the needs of local youth.

This policy includes a description of the fourteen youth elements, the State policy for the Out-of-School youth barrier, and WIOA youth performance measures. This Directive rescinds the Governor's Workforce Innovation Directive 2015-09 issued 1/21/2016.

3. **Action.** The Local Workforce Development Areas/Local Workforce Development Boards will follow this policy in regard to the selection of youth program service providers beginning on or after November 1, 2023.

4. **Contact.** Questions regarding this directive should be emailed to youth@commerce.alabama.gov.

Tammy Wilkinson

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Tammy Wilkinson, Director, Workforce Development Division
Alabama Department of Commerce

Date

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth Program Requirements and Procurement of Youth Workforce Investment Activities Policy

The State Workforce Development Board supports cost-efficient, collaborative efforts that result in comprehensive and innovative services that lead to youth academic improvement, high school graduation or High School Equivalency attainment, employment, military service, advanced training, or apprenticeships, paid and unpaid internships, and/or post-secondary education. Local programs must link academic and occupational learning and develop measures for successful outcomes. Effective programs require the involvement of local groups providing input on the proposed program design and coordinating the delivery of the youth services with local employers, One-Stop Career Centers, and other youth services already available in the community.

Local programs have the discretion to determine what specific programs services will be provided to a youth participant, based on each participant's objective assessment and individual service strategy. Critical to the success is integrating a youth development strategy that focuses on a young person's assets, provides a variety of interventions, and supports allowing the youth to grow, learn and mature successfully transitioning to careers and productive adulthood. Youth development activities include leadership development opportunities that encourage responsibility, employability, and other positive social behaviors. It is expected that each youth will participate in more than one of the fourteen program elements required as part of any local youth program. The overall goal of the youth program is to help youth complete a high school diploma or equivalent and to prepare for a Career pathway that will transition into skilled employment and/or postsecondary education.

Youth program outcomes should prepare youth for post-secondary educational opportunities, provide better linkages between academic and occupational learning, prepare youth for employment; and offer effective connections to intermediary organizations that provide strong links to the job market and employers. All youth must receive some form of follow-up services for a minimum period of 12 months, following the completion of participation in the program.

Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) will follow the procurement procedures established by each local area to ensure proper competition and transparency. Procurement of WIOA funded Youth Services requires the selection of youth providers through a competitive selection process (Section 123(a)). Each LWDA, is afforded the opportunity to identify providers of youth services that effectively address the needs of local youth.

Per WIOA Section 123(b), a local board may award grants or contracts on a sole-source basis if such board determines there is an insufficient number of eligible providers of youth workforce investment activities in the local area involved (such as a rural area) for grants and contracts to be awarded on a competitive basis under Section 123(a). Failed competitive competition would be necessary to make such determination for sole-source procurement.

The local boards will fund youth providers based on the following criteria:

- Experience operating similar youth programs
- Satisfactory evidence of their ability to successfully provide their proposed services
- Knowledge and understanding of WIOA rules and regulations
- Providing services/activities in addition to those already available and not duplicate services
- Financial capability to operate the grant on a cost-reimbursement basis

- Fiscal accountability
- Leveraging funds for use with WIOA funds
- Past performance with similar programs
- Reasonable program cost data which includes mandatory youth activities

Additional criteria include youth providers who:

- Develop relationships between youth and caring adults
- Involve family members
- Build youth responsibility
- Develop youth citizenship and leadership skills
- Place high expectations on youth staff
- Provide appropriate services based on age and needs of each youth
- Demonstrate involvement of the business/employer community
- Provide accessible facilities and accommodations for special needs populations, including individuals with disabilities
- Prepare youth for success in employment
- Advocate for the youth perspective
- Demonstrate the connection between work and learning
- Provide or refer youth to comprehensive guidance and individualized counseling for needs such as emotional health, mental health, substance and alcohol abuse or trauma.

Also, no Local Board member will, as an individual, any member of the individual's immediate family, the individual's partner or an organization which employs or is about to employ any of the above, have a conflict of interest, real or apparent, with the youth provider organization selected for award. Local Board members will have no personal and/or financial interest, direct or indirect, in this process.

The criteria to solicit competitive proposals (per WIOA Section 123(a)) for the operation of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title 1, Public Law 113-128 youth purposes and activities will ensure that youth Programs are competitively procured and solicited for comprehensive year-round Youth Programs for out-of-school youth between the ages 16-24, and in-school youth between the ages of 14 and 21. Local Area youth program design must offer a unique opportunity to provide a creative and innovative mix of services designed to address the academic, vocational, and employment needs of disconnected youth. ***WIOA Title 1 Youth Programs are required to provide access to the following 14 program elements:***

1. Tutoring, study skills, 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 postsecondary credential.
2. Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services, as appropriate.
3. Paid and unpaid work experiences that have as a component, academic and occupational education, which may include summer employment opportunities and tother employment opportunities available throughout the school year, pre-apprenticeship programs, internships, job shadowing, and on-the-job training opportunities.

4. Occupational skill training, which shall include priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that are aligned with in demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area involved, if the local board determines that the programs meet the quality criteria described in WIOA Section 123.
5. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational structure.
6. Leadership development opportunities, which may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behavior, as appropriate.
7. Supportive services are defined as services that enable an individual to participate in WIOA activities. These services include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - (a) linkages to community services
 - (b) assistance with transportation
 - (c) assistance with childcare and dependent care
 - (d) assistance with housing
 - (e) needs-related payments
 - (f) assistance with educational testing
 - (g) reasonable accommodations for youth with disabilities
 - (h) legal aid services
 - (i) referrals to health care
 - (j) assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire and work-related tools, including such items as eyeglasses and protective eye gear
 - (k) assistance with books, fees, school supplies, and other necessary items for students enrolled in postsecondary education classes; and
 - (l) payments and fees for employment and training-related applications, tests, and certifications.
8. Adult mentoring for the period of participation and subsequent period, for a total of not less than 12 months.
9. Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation, as appropriate.
10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral, as appropriate.
11. Financial Literacy Education.
12. Entrepreneurial skills training.
13. Services that provide labor market information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, education, and training.
14. Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.

The State of Alabama’s Policy for the Out-of-School Youth Barrier “requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment” is defined as a **low-income individual**, not younger than 16 or older than 24, who has at least one of the following criteria:

- Indian, Alaskan Native, or Hawaiian Native
- English language learner: an individual who has limited ability in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language, and whose native language is a language other than English; or who lives in a family or community environment where a language other than English is the dominant language.
- Low levels of literacy: an individual’s ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute, and solve problems, is below the levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society.
- Substantial cultural barriers: an individual who perceives himself as possessing attitudes, beliefs, customs, or practices that influence a way of thinking, acting, or working that may serve as a hindrance to employment.
- Eligible Migrant: seasonal farmworker whose agricultural labor requires travel to a job site such that the farmworker is unable to return to a permanent place of residence within the same day. Also includes dependents of an eligible migrant farmworker or

Eligible Seasonal Farmworker: who for 12 consecutive months out of the 24 months prior to application for the program involved, has been primarily employed in agricultural or fish farming labor that is characterized by chronic unemployment or underemployment; and faces multiple barriers to economic self-sufficiency; and a dependent of the person described above.

- Low academic performance (a grade point C or below or basic academic skills are in the bottom quartile of the class) if enrolled in school during the 6 months prior to date of WIOA application.
- A past record of excessive absences as verified by school officials if in school during the 6 months prior to date of WIOA application
- Has been suspended, expelled, or placed on probation during high school if in school during the 6 months prior to date of WIOA application.
- Has documented alcohol and/or substance abuse.
- Has a documented record of violent behavior.
- Limited English proficiency means an individual whose primary language for communication is not English and who has a limited ability to read, speak, write and/or understand English.
- Has less than 6 months’ work experience.

- Lacks marketable, occupational skills that are in demand in the local labor market.
- Resides in a non-traditional household setting such as single parent, grandparents, relatives, or unofficial guardian.
- Has documented emotional, medical, physical, cognitive, or psychological impairment which creates a significant impediment to employment or education.

Local Areas/Local Boards must follow a procurement process that ensures compliance with the prescribed rules and regulations. At a minimum, the procurement process must ensure:

1. Solicitation methods that promote fair and open competition.
2. A written code of conduct that includes specific conflict of interest provisions to ensure that those who develop or issue a proposal are separate and distinct from those who are in the selection process.
3. A clear and accurate description of the services being procured; and
4. A specific contract time frame with the option to extend the contract for a specified period based on a provider's compliance with the terms of the contract. (Note: This option (to be valid) must be included in the Request for Proposals (RFPs) as well as in the subsequent contracts resulting from the RFPs.)

In addition, each Local Area/LWDB must use the following criteria in awarding contracts for youth services:

1. Ability to measure and attain youth-related core performance levels; participant and employer (customer) satisfaction levels (Note: The State calculates and tracks official standards and performance.)
2. Coordination with local secondary and post-secondary institutions.
3. Prior experience working with disadvantaged, special populations, and in operating education, training, and employment programs.
4. Leveraging funds with other funding sources.
5. Fiscal accountability; and
6. Program design that includes the following components:
 - a. An objective assessment for each participant
 - b. Individual Service Strategy (ISS); and
 - c. Services that prepare youth for post-secondary education opportunities, link academic and occupational learning, prepare youth for employment, and provide connections to intermediary organizations linked to the job market and employers.

WIOA has established core performance indicators to ensure that Federal investments in employment and training programs are accountable to job seekers, employers, customers, and taxpayers. This system of services will ensure that all individuals, regardless of skill level, with barriers to employment can pursue the skills, training, and education they need to obtain employment that leads to financial stability and economic security for themselves and their families. Employers will also have the assurance that trained and qualified workers will be available to fill their current and future openings. The Youth Performance Indicators and Descriptions specifically related to this policy are on the following page.

State WIOA Youth Performance Indicators	
Placement in Employment/Education/Training	The percentage of participants who are in education or training services, or in unsubsidized employment during the 2 nd quarter after exit
Retention in Employment/Education/Training	The percentage of participants who are in education or training services, or in subsidized employment during the 4 th quarter after exit.
Earnings	The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the 2 nd quarter after exit
Credential Rate	The percentage of participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, during participation or within 1 year after exit.
In-Program Skills Gain	The percentage of participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment.