

**ALLIANCE OF COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE
MINISTRIES (ACAM)
NextGen Collaborative WIOA Out-of-School
Youth Services Guidelines**

Out of School Youth Services

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

Table of Contents	2
I. Introduction	3
II. WIOA Youth	4
WIOA Youth Eligibility.....	4
School Attendance/Determining School Status	4
Low-Income	6
Basic Skills Deficient.....	6
High-Poverty Area	7
Out-of-School Youth.....	7
Low-Income Exception.....	8
Youth Program Design.....	8
Youth Program Elements	10
Program Expenditures for Youth Work Experience	16
Incentives for Youth.....	17
III. Attachments	18

I. INTRODUCTION

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) offers an integrated and comprehensive range of services consisting of workforce development activities benefiting employers, job seekers, and communities. The purposes of WIOA are to:

- increase, particularly for individuals with barriers to employment, access to and opportunities for the employment, education, training, and support services needed to succeed in the labor market;
- support the alignment of workforce investment, education, and economic development systems for a comprehensive, accessible, and high-quality workforce development system;
- improve the quality and labor market relevance of workforce investment, education, and economic development efforts to provide individuals with the skills and credentials necessary to secure and advance in employment with family-sustaining wages, and to provide employers with the skilled workers needed to succeed in a global economy;
- promote improvement in the structure and delivery of services through the workforce development system to better address the educational and training needs of workers, job seekers, and employers;
- increase the prosperity of workers and employers; the economic growth of communities, regions, and states; and the global competitiveness of the United States; and
- provide workforce investment activities, through state and local workforce development systems, that increase participants' employment, retention, earnings, and attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials, and as a result, improve the quality of the workforce, reduce dependency on public assistance, increase economic self-sufficiency, meet the skills requirements of employers, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the nation.

The purpose of condensing and providing the Texas Workforce Commission Guidelines for WIOA Out of School Youth Services is to provide ACAM Contractors with criteria and documentation sources for establishing WIOA Title I program eligibility for youth. This policy guidance is based on WIOA final rules spanning WIOA Titles I–IV, which were made publicly available in late June 2016. The WIOA final rules pertaining to Titles I and III were published in the *Federal Register* on August 19, 2016 and became effective on October 18, 2016. Future updates will be added to a new version of the WIOA Guidelines.

Contractors are required to document the eligibility of youth populations served with WIOA funds. These guidelines describe eligible WIOA population and provide information and procedures for documenting and verifying eligibility.

II. WIOA YOUTH

WIOA outlines a broad youth vision that supports an integrated service delivery system and provides a framework to support out-of-school youth (OSY).

Participant in the Youth Program

An individual is a “participant” in the WIOA youth program once all of the following has occurred:

- An eligibility determination.
- The provision of an objective assessment, which includes a review of:
 - the youth’s academic and occupational skill levels; and
 - the service needs and strengths of each youth for the purpose of identifying appropriate services and career pathways.
- Development of an individual service strategy that:
 - is based on the needs of each youth;
 - identifies career pathways, including education and employment goals;
 - considers career planning and the results of the objective assessment; and
 - prescribes achievement objectives and services for the youth.
- Participation in any of the 14 WIOA youth program elements.

WIOA Youth Eligibility

To be eligible to receive WIOA youth services, an individual must:

- be a citizen or noncitizen authorized to work in the United States;
- meet Military Selective Service registration requirements (males only);
- have a determination of school attendance to identify whether the individual is attending school; and
- meet the additional eligibility criteria for OSY, as defined by WIOA §129(a)(1)(B)–(C), and as described in the OSY subsection of this guide.

Note: Authorization to work in the United States can be verified through eligibility for unemployment benefits.

School Attendance/Determining School Status

For the purpose of determining whether an individual is OSY, school status is based on a determination of school attendance on the date of eligibility determination. Once the school status of a youth is determined that school status remains the same throughout the youth’s current participation.

A youth is “not attending” school if the youth:

- has had at least 10 consecutive days of unexcused absences and on the date of eligibility determination has not returned to school;

- is not attending postsecondary school on the date of eligibility determination;
- has not registered for postsecondary school classes on the date of the eligibility determination; or
- is enrolled only in non-credit-bearing postsecondary classes.

Additionally, participation in the following programs is not considered being “in school” for the purpose of determining OSY status:

- Adult education programs provided under Title II of WIOA
- YouthBuild programs
- Job Corps programs
- High School Equivalency programs (not funded by the public K–12 system)
- Dropout reengagement programs (not funded by the public K–12 system)

Note: School attendance and school status determine OSY eligibility definition.

A youth is “attending school” if the youth:

- is enrolled in any of the following schools:
 - Public school
 - Charter school
 - Private school
 - Disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP);
- is homeschooled;
- is attending high school equivalency programs, including those considered to be dropout reengagement programs, funded by the public K–12 system;
- is a high school graduate who has registered for postsecondary classes, even if not yet attending postsecondary classes;
- is attending postsecondary classes; or
- is in between postsecondary school semesters and has registered for classes for a future semester or has paid all or part of the tuition for a future semester.

Note: A youth with fewer than 10 consecutive unexcused absences, or with 10 or more non-consecutive unexcused absences is still considered “attending school.”

Example 1: A 17-year-old has not attended school for the last 12 consecutive school days. This individual is “not attending” if the absences are unexcused, and he or she may be considered an OSY if an additional youth barrier is met at the time of eligibility determination. This individual may be subject to the local ISD’s truancy and reengagement strategies and subsequently return to school, but at the point of eligibility determination, the individual is not attending school and is therefore potentially eligible as an OSY.

Example 2: A 17-year-old has not attended school for the last 12 consecutive school days. The absences are unexcused; however, the individual has been reengaged through the K–12-funded dropout reengagement program. Because the individual is participating in the reengagement program, he or she is determined to be attending school and is therefore potentially not eligible as OSY.

Low-Income

An individual who meets any *one* of the following criteria satisfies the low-income requirement for WIOA youth services:

- Receives, or in the past six months has received, or is a member of a family that is receiving or in the past six months has received, assistance through SNAP, TANF, or the SSI program, or state or local income-based public assistance.
- Receives an income or is a member of a family receiving an income that, in relation to family size, is not in excess of the current combined DOL 70 percent Lower Living Standard Income Level and HHS Poverty Guidelines identified on the WIOA Income Guidelines web page at: <https://twc.texas.gov/workforce-innovation-opportunity-act-eligibility-income-guidelines> (see Attachment 1. WIOA Income Eligibility Guidelines).
- Is a homeless individual as defined in §41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, or a homeless child or youth as defined in §725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
- Receives or is eligible to receive a free or reduced-price lunch under the NSLA. While the free/reduced-price lunch low-income requirement primarily applies to ISY, if an OSY is a parent living in the same household as a child who receives or is eligible to receive a free or reduced-price lunch based on income level, then the OSY parent would meet the low-income criteria based on the child's qualification.
- Is a foster youth, as defined in Texas Family Code §264.101(a-1) and §264.101(d), on behalf of whom state or local government payments are made.
- Is an individual with a disability whose own income meets:
 - WIOA's income requirements, even if the individual's family income does not meet the income requirements; or
 - the income eligibility criteria for payments under any federal, state, or local public assistance program

Basic Skills Deficient

An individual who meets either of the following criteria satisfies the basic skills deficient requirement for WIOA youth services:

- Is a youth who has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or
- Is a youth who is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

Skill levels "at or below the eighth-grade level" may be determined by a grade level of 8.9 or below received on a generally accepted standardized test.

Contractor may:

- determine the method of assessment and process used to determine a youth’s inability to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual’s family, or in society; and
- based on the method of assessment or assessment tool used, set benchmarks for assessment results that determine basic skills deficiency.

Regardless of how basic skills deficiency is determined, documentation must be maintained in a hard case file and in TWIST *Counselor Notes*.

High-Poverty Area

A youth living in a high-poverty area automatically meets the low-income criterion. A high-poverty area is a Census tract, a set of contiguous Census tracts, Native American Reservation, tribal land, or Native Alaskan Village or county that has a poverty rate of at least 25 percent, as set every five years using the US Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year data. TWC provides Boards with the ACS High-Poverty Areas in Texas by County data on TWC’s [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#) web page (see Attachment 2. Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) under the [WIOA Eligibility](#) (see Attachment 1. WIOA Income Eligibility Guidelines, Attachment 3. WIOA Eligibility Documentation Log, Attachment 4. WIOA Eligibility Guidelines Selective Service Registration Desk Reference) heading. TWC will update the website when the US Census Bureau publishes a new ACS and will inform Boards about the changes through GovDelivery notices.

High-Poverty Areas in Texas by County: <https://twc.texas.gov/files/partners/high-poverty-areas-texas-by-county-twc.xlsx> (Attachment 5. TWC High Poverty Areas by County).

Out-of-School Youth

An OSY is an individual who:

- is not younger than 16 and not older than 24 years at the time of enrollment in WIOA;
- is not attending secondary or postsecondary school at the time the eligibility determination portion of program enrollment in WIOA is made; and
- has one or more of the following barriers:
 - A school dropout is an individual between the ages of 19 and 24 who is no longer attending any school (including an alternative school) and has not received a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent;
 - Between the ages of 16 and 18, has not received a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate, and has not attended school for three consecutive months, excluding summer months when school is not in session (acceptable documentation includes a self-attestation documented in TWIST *Counselor Notes* and maintained in a hard case file, or a school attendance record);
 - A recipient of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent who is a low-income individual (see [Low-Income Exception](#)) or lives in a high-poverty area and is either:
 - basic skills deficient, as defined by WIOA §3(5); or
 - an English language learner, defined as an individual who has a 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 (self-attestation or notes in TWIST *Counselor Notes* are acceptable documentation);

- Subject to the juvenile or adult justice system;
 - Homeless; a runaway; in foster care, has aged out of the foster care system, or has attained 16 years of age and left foster care for kinship guardianship or adoption; a child eligible for assistance under §477 of the Social Security Act (42 USC §677); or in an out-of-home placement;
 - Pregnant or parenting;
 - Disabled; or
- A low-income individual or an individual who lives in a high-poverty area, who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to obtain or retain employment. Contractors must establish definitions and eligibility documentation requirements for the “requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to obtain or retain employment” criterion of OSY eligibility.

Low-Income Exception

WIOA maintains a 5 percent low-income eligibility exception in which 5 percent of youth who would ordinarily need to be low income for eligibility purposes, do not need to meet the low-income criteria. However, because not all youth are required to be low income, the 5 percent low-income exception under WIOA is calculated based on the number of youth enrolled in a given program year who are required to meet the low-income criteria.

For example, a workforce area enrolled 140 youth, and 80 of those youth were OSY who were not required to meet the low-income criteria, 60 were OSY who were required to meet the low-income criteria. In this example, the 60 OSY required to be low income are the only youth factored into the 5 percent low-income exception calculation. Therefore, in this example, three of the 60 youth who ordinarily would be required to be low income do not have to meet the low-income criteria based on the low-income exception.

Youth Program Design

The design framework of local youth programs must:

- Provide for an objective assessment of each youth participant, including a review of the academic and occupational skill levels and service needs, for the purpose of identifying appropriate services and career pathways for participants and informing the individual service strategy. The objective assessment must include a review of:
 - basic skills;
 - occupational skills;
 - work experience;
 - employability;
 - interests;
 - aptitudes;
 - support service needs; and
 - developmental needs.

As discussed in 20 CFR §681.290, in assessing basic skills, Contractors must use assessment instruments that:

- are valid and appropriate for the target population;
- provide reasonable accommodation in the assessment process, if necessary, for individuals with disabilities;
- are appropriate, fair, cost-effective, and well-matched to the test administrator's qualifications; and
- are easy to administer and interpret results.

For purposes of the basic skills assessment portion of the objective assessment, Contractors are neither required to use assessments approved for use in the US Department of Education's National Reporting System (NRS), nor are they required to determine an individual's grade-level equivalent or educational functioning level (EFL), although use of these tools is permitted. Rather, Contractors may use other formalized testing instruments designed to measure skills related gains.

In contrast to the initial assessment described above, if measuring EFL gains after program enrollment under the measurable skill gains indicator, Contractors must use an NRS-approved assessment for both the EFL pre- and posttest to determine an individual's educational functioning level. For this reason, it is recommended that Contractors always use NRS-approved assessments when assessing the basic skills of youth.

A new assessment of a participant is not required if the Contractor determines that it is appropriate to use a recent assessment (made within the last six months) of the participant conducted as part of another education or training program. When using a prior assessment, Contractors must ensure that appropriate staff:

- receive a copy of the assessment, including results;
 - ensure that the previous assessment complies with youth requirements, including academic and occupational skill-level assessments;
 - include assessment documentation in the case file;
 - enter comprehensive objective assessment service, TWIST code 8, using the appropriate WIOA youth fund code; and
 - enter complete details in the TWIST *Counselor Note*.
- Develop, and update as needed, an individual service strategy for each youth participant that:
 - is directly linked to one or more indicators of performance (as described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A)(ii));
 - identifies appropriate career pathways that include education and employment goals;
 - considers career planning and the results of the objective assessment; and
 - prescribes achievement objectives and services for the participant; and
 - Provide case management of youth participants, including follow-up services.

Contractors must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff:

- provide youth participants with information regarding the full array of applicable or appropriate services available through the Contractor or other providers or partners; and
- refer youth participants to appropriate training and educational programs that have the capacity to serve them either on a sequential or concurrent basis.

In order to meet the basic skills and training needs of applicants who do not meet the eligibility requirements of a particular program or who cannot be served by the program, Contractors must ensure that youth are referred for further assessment, as necessary, or referred to appropriate programs to meet the skills and training needs of the youth.

Youth Program Elements

Contractors must ensure that the following 14 services are available to youth participants*:

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 postsecondary 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:
 - Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year;
 - Pre-apprenticeship programs—a program or set of strategies designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a registered apprenticeship program and has a documented partnership with at least one, if not more, registered apprenticeship programs;
 - Internships and job shadowing;
 - On-the-job training (OJT) opportunities, as defined in WIOA §3(44).

Work experience is a planned, structured learning experience that takes place in a workplace for a limited period of time. Work experience may be paid or unpaid, as appropriate, and may take place in the private for-profit sector, the nonprofit sector, or the public sector. Labor standards apply in any work experience in which an employee/employer relationship, as defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) or applicable state law, exists.

Work experience must include an occupational education component that:

- refers to contextual learning that accompanies a work experience;
- includes the information necessary to understand and work in specific industries and/or occupations;
- may occur concurrently or sequentially with the work experience;
- may occur inside or outside the worksite;

- may be provided by the employer, or through other means.

Contractors have the flexibility to decide who provides the occupational education component.

*Per the terms of your ACAM NextGen Service Contract

Examples of occupational education may include:

- a hospital work experience in which hospital staff teaches the youth about the duties of different types of hospital occupations, such as a phlebotomist, radiology tech, or physical therapist; or
- an auto-repair shop work experience in which auto-mechanics teach the youth about building or repairing a car.

Local youth programs must expend not less than 20 percent of youth funds to provide youth with paid and unpaid work experiences.

Allowable expenditures that may be counted toward the work experience expenditure requirement may include the following:

- Wages/stipends paid for participation in a work experience;
- Staff time working to identify and develop a work experience opportunity;
- Staff time working with employers to ensure a successful work experience;
- Staff time spent evaluating the work experience;
- Participant work experience orientation sessions or employer work experience session.

4. Occupational skills training, which includes priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that align with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the workforce area involved, if the programs meet the quality criteria described in WIOA §123.

Occupational skills training is an organized program of study that provides specific vocational skills that lead to proficiency in performing actual tasks and technical functions required by certain occupational fields at entry, intermediate, or advanced levels.

Contractors must give priority consideration to training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that align with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the workforce area. Such training must:

- be outcome oriented and focused on an occupational goal specified in the individual service strategy;
- be of sufficient duration to impart the skills needed to meet the occupational goal; and
- result in attainment of a recognized postsecondary credential.

5. Workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation, occupational cluster, or career pathway.

6. Leadership development opportunities, including community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors.

Leadership development opportunities are opportunities that encourage responsibility, confidence, employability, self-determination, and other positive social behaviors, such as:

- exposure to postsecondary educational possibilities;
- community and service learning projects;
- peer-centered activities, including peer mentoring and tutoring;
- organizational and teamwork training, including team leadership training;
- training in decision making, including determining priorities and problem solving;
- citizenship training, including life skills training such as parenting and work behavior training;
- civic engagement activities that promote the quality of life in a community; and
- other leadership activities that place youth in a leadership role such as serving on youth leadership committees, such as the NextGen Youth Advisory Committee.

Positive social and civic behaviors are outcomes of leadership opportunities that are incorporated by Boards as part of their menu of services and that focus on areas that may include the following:

- Positive attitude development;
- Self-esteem building;
- Openness to work with individuals from diverse backgrounds;
- Maintaining healthy lifestyles, including being alcohol and drug free;
- Maintaining positive social relationships with responsible adults and peers and contributing to the well-being of one's community, including voting;
- Maintaining a commitment to learning and academic success;
- Avoiding delinquency;
- Postponing parenting;
- Responsible parenting, including child support education;
- Positive job attitudes and work skills; and
- Keeping informed in community affairs and current events.

7. Support services, as defined in WIOA §3(59), which enable an individual to participate in WIOA activities. These services include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Linkages to community services;
- Assistance with transportation;
- ~~Assistance with dependent care;~~
- Assistance with housing;
- Needs-related payments;
- Assistance with educational testing;
- Reasonable accommodations for youth with disabilities;
- Referrals to health care;
- Assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire and work-related tools, including such items as eyeglasses and protective eye gear;
- Payments and fees for employment and training-related applications, tests, and

certifications.

8. Adult mentoring for a duration of at least 12 months that may occur both during and after program participation.

Adult mentoring for youth must:

- be a formal relationship between a youth participant and an adult mentor that includes structured activities in which the mentor offers guidance, support, and encouragement to develop the competence and character of the youth;
- include a mentor who is an adult other than the assigned youth case manager; and
- at a minimum, match the youth with an individual mentor with whom the youth interacts on a face-to-face basis. Group mentoring activities and mentoring through electronic means are allowable as part of mentoring activities.

Mentoring may include workplace mentoring in which the local program matches a youth participant with an employer or employee of a company.

9. Follow-up services for not fewer than 12 months after the completion of participation.

Follow-up services are critical services provided after a youth's exit from the program to help ensure the youth is successful in employment and/or postsecondary education and training.

Follow-up services for youth may include:

- leadership development opportunities and support services;
- regular contact with a youth participant's employer, including assistance in addressing work-related problems;
- assistance in securing better-paying jobs, career pathway development, and further education or training;
- work-related peer support groups;
- adult mentoring;
- supportive services;
- financial literacy education;
- services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local workforce area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services; and
- services necessary to ensure the success of youth participants in employment and/or postsecondary education.

Contractor must attempt to provide all youth participants with some form of follow-up services for a minimum duration of 12 months. Follow-up services may be provided beyond 12 months at the Contractor's discretion. The types of services provided and the duration of services must be determined based on the needs of the individual, and therefore, the type and intensity of follow-up services may differ for each participant. However, follow-up services must include more than only a contact attempted or made for securing documentation in order to report a performance outcome.

At the time of enrollment, a youth must be informed that follow-up services will be provided for 12 months following exit. If a youth cannot be located or refuses follow-up services, discontinue attempts to provide follow-up services and document in TWIST *Counselor Notes*.

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.

Comprehensive guidance and counseling is individualized counseling to participants that includes career and academic counseling, drug and alcohol abuse counseling, mental health counseling, and referral to partner programs, as appropriate. When referring participants to necessary counseling that cannot be provided by the Board, the Board must coordinate with the organization it refers to in order to ensure continuity of service.

11. Financial literacy education.

The financial literacy education program element may include any of the following activities that:

- support the ability of participants to create budgets, initiate checking and savings accounts, and make informed financial decisions;
- support participants in learning how to effectively manage spending, credit, and debt, including student loans, consumer credit, and credit cards;
- teach participants about the significance of credit reports and credit scores, what their rights are regarding their credit and financial information, how to determine the accuracy of a credit report and how to correct inaccuracies, and how to improve or maintain good credit;
- support a participant's ability to understand, evaluate, and compare financial products, services, and opportunities and to make informed financial decisions;
- educate participants about identity theft, ways to protect themselves from identify theft, and how to resolve cases of identity theft and in other ways understand their rights and protections related to personal identity and financial data;
- support activities that address the particular financial literacy needs of non-English-speaking participants, including providing support through the development and distribution of multilingual financial literacy and education materials; and
- support activities that address the particular financial literacy needs of youth with disabilities, including connecting them to benefits planning and work incentives counseling.

When providing any of the financial activities listed above, Contractor must ensure that the financial education provided is age-appropriate and timely, and provides opportunities to put lessons into practice, such as by access to safe and affordable financial products that enable money management and savings.

The [Financial Literacy Guide](#) (see Attachment 6. Financial Literacy Guide) is provided for financial institutions interested in enhancing youth financial capability by partnering with youth employment programs. It describes how

and why financial institutions engage in helping youth achieve greater financial well-being and employment success.

Additionally, Contractors may implement other approaches to help participants gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence to make informed financial decisions that enable participants to attain greater financial health and stability by using high-quality, age- appropriate, and relevant strategies and channels, including, when possible, timely and customized information, guidance, tools, and instruction.

12. Entrepreneurial skills training.

Entrepreneurial skills training provides the basics of starting and operating a small business. Such training must develop the skills associated with entrepreneurship, including, but not limited to, the ability to:

- take initiative;
- creatively seek out and identify business opportunities;
- develop budgets and forecast resource needs;
- understand various options for acquiring capital and the trade-offs associated with each option; and
- communicate effectively and market oneself and one's ideas.

Approaches to teaching youth entrepreneurial skills include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Entrepreneurship education that introduces the values and basics of starting and running a business. Entrepreneurship education programs often guide youth through the development of a business plan and may also include simulations of business start-up and operation.
- Enterprise development, which provides support and services that incubate and help youth develop their own businesses. Enterprise development programs go beyond entrepreneurship education by helping youth access small loans or grants needed to begin business operation and by providing more individualized attention to the development of viable business ideas.
- Experiential programs that provide youth with experience in the day-to-day operation of a business. These programs may involve the development of a youth-run business that young people participating in the program work in and manage, or they may facilitate placement in apprentice or internship positions with adult entrepreneurs in the community.

13. Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the workforce area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services.

Numerous tools and applications can be used to provide youth with relevant labor market and career information. Labor market information (LMI) tools can be used to help youth and young adults make appropriate decisions about education and careers. LMI tools identify in-demand industries, occupations, and employment opportunities, and provide knowledge of job market expectations including education, skills requirements, and potential earnings.

WIOA youth program providers are encouraged to use readily available online career exploration tools to help youth assess their abilities and interests and find related employment information. Suggested online tools that connect youth to self-service LMI tools include [Texas Reality Check](#), [Texas Career Check](#), [My Next Move](#), and [Get My Future](#).

Career awareness activities include providing information on a variety of careers and occupations available, their skill requirements, working conditions and training prerequisites, and job opportunities across a wide range of industry sectors.

Career counseling or guidance may include advice and support in making decisions about what career paths to take, providing information about résumé preparation, interview skills, potential opportunities for job shadowing, and the long-term benefits of postsecondary education and training (for example, increased earning power and career mobility).

14. Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.

Postsecondary preparation and transition activities and services prepare youth for advancement to postsecondary education after attaining a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent.

Postsecondary education includes many kinds of education and training programs, including technical college degree and certification programs, apprenticeships, two- and four-year public and private colleges and universities, trade schools, and more.

Transition planning may include, but is not limited to, programs designed to expand access to college and other postsecondary institutions, particularly for youth facing barriers to enrollment. Activities may focus on improving academic readiness, identifying postsecondary strengths and interests, and helping with applying for college and institutional admission or financial aid.

Common activities include, but are not limited to:

- individualized career planning;
- career shadowing;
- postsecondary education options exploration, including technical schools, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, and registered apprenticeship programs;
- postsecondary education admissions counseling;
- postsecondary education application assistance;
- postsecondary education financial aid assistance;
- fields of study guidance;
- postsecondary education campus visits;
- postsecondary education entrance exam (SAT/ACT) preparation; and
- study skills workshops and parent support workshops.

Resources for such activities may include school counselors, teachers and parents, graduates and current students, and employers, as well as career exploration programs, and library and online career information.

Boards have the discretion to determine what specific program services a youth participant receives based on each participant’s objective assessment and individual service strategy. Boards are not required to provide every program service to all youth participants.

Program Expenditures for Youth Work Experience

Under WIOA, not less than 20 percent of local youth funds must be used to provide youth with paid and unpaid work experiences that have occupational education as a component of the work experience, which may include the following types of work experiences:

- Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities;
- Pre-apprenticeship programs—a program or set of strategies designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a registered apprenticeship program and has a documented partnership with at least one, if not more, registered apprenticeship program;
- Internships and job shadowing;
- On-the-job training (OJT) opportunities, as defined in WIOA §3(44).

Boards must track program funds spent on paid and unpaid work experiences, including wages and staff costs for the development and management of work experiences, and report such expenditures as part of the local WIOA youth financial reporting.

Incentives for Youth

Under 20 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §681.640, incentive payments are allowed for youth participants if the incentives are connected to recognition of achievement of milestones in a program directly tied to education, training, or the successful completion of a work experience that occurs during program participation. Refer to WD Letter 15-19, issued May 21, 2019, and entitled “Guidelines for the Provision of Incentives for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Youth and Choices, including NCP Choices Participants,” for more details on incentive payments for youth participants.

Contractors must develop guidelines and strategies that align with the local program’s organizational policies governing the award of incentives and must ensure that WIOA-funded incentive payments are:

- tied to the goals of the specific program;
- outlined in writing before the commencement of the program;
- aligned with the local program’s organizational policies;
- based on the availability of funds; and
- provided in accordance with the Cost Principles contained in 2 CFR Part 200 (Uniform Guidance).

Federal funds must not be spent on entertainment costs. Therefore, incentives must not include movie or sporting event tickets or gift cards to movie theaters or other venues whose sole purpose is entertainment.

Incentive payments for youth participants must be considered on a case-by-case basis. Such payments are not guaranteed, and participants are not entitled to receive them. Incentives may be provided to youth if they comply with the requirements of 20 CFR §681.640.

Examples of an achievement of milestones may include:

- attainment of a high school diploma or a Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency;
- completion of an industry recognized certificate/credential or occupational skills training;
- receipt of an associate's or bachelor's degree; or
- successful completion of a work experience.

While incentives may be provided for successful completion of a work experience, Contractors must ensure that incentives are not tied to the “academic or occupational education component” of a work experience.

Note: WIOA funds may not be used to fund incentives for completing job readiness training or classes; however, Contractors may leverage private funds for incentives that WIOA cannot fund.