



YOUTH SERVICES GUIDE

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II. About US

A. Introduction

As our nation’s economy continues to evolve, a variety of trends exist that are changing the way our young people will participate in the workforce. Modern technologies have opened new industries and job markets and revolutionized our notion of the workplace. Today’s young adults can look forward to unprecedented opportunities, but only if they are prepared. Young adults with little sense of direction, who do not obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to enter an increasingly complex workplace, will continue to be left behind.

The disparity between skilled and unskilled workers in our region has become particularly affected, with shifting demographics and an increasingly technology-based work environment intensifying competition for jobs. As our region grows and employer demands change, those of us charged with helping young adults reach their full potential must re-examine the way in which we prepare them for today and tomorrow’s workplace. Gulf Coast Workforce Solutions system is there to help the young adults acquire the education, skills, work experience, and support they need to make the transition to productive adulthood.

The Workforce Solutions Youth Services department aims to provide you with the framework for developing comprehensive and effective strategies that ensure the services we provide deliver successful transitions for our youth. This guide, brought together by a diverse set of stakeholders and resources, is designed to provide practical information for contractors, staff and others in the Gulf Coast region committed to effective youth and workforce development. It also serves as a guidepost to be used in addressing the needs of young people in our region more effectively.

B. The Gulf Coast Workforce Board

Our region is more than just a point on a map. It is the home of millions of people and the location of thousands of businesses. The relationship between those two is what keeps our region bustling with activity and rich in promise. Our 13-county area must be a hub for interdependent relationships that lift businesses and people up to their highest heights and promote their goals for success. That will not happen if we lag behind the times or miss opportunities as they arise. That cannot happen if ties are broken between employers and their workers, or if we do not identify opportunities to grow skills and capacity. If our region fails in its ability to support thriving businesses and industrious individuals, it can become irrelevant in the global marketplace – and we all languish as a result. We could then face the consequences of a faltering economy which cannot support a rich and meaningful community drawing people in and inspiring them to stay.

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board and Workforce Solutions exist to keep our region the best place to do business, work, and live. When we identify and pursue every opportunity to bring vibrancy to the labor market, we generate more promise and hope. Our region has become a magnet for amazing businesses and amazing talent. People flock here for jobs and businesses rush for opportunities to grow. We have become a place where businesses and people want to plant their roots because they see a bright future here. Abundance follows, and as a result, we become an even more important player in the world economy and all in our region thrive. We are a place where employers are competitive in their markets, our people are educated and skilled, we continue to add more and better jobs, and all our families see rising incomes. As we work together to keep our region a great place to do business, work, and live, we strive to ensure our service conveys the value we bring to the businesses and people we serve.

As members of the system, it is up to each of us at Workforce Solutions to be the experts in our fields and use our knowledge to guide our customers to the solutions they want and need. And we know we have done our best when customers return to us and recommend us. When they allow us to stay part of their individual journeys, we have more opportunities to make our purpose real in the world.

C. Workforce Solutions Mission & Vision

Our purpose is to keep our region a great place to do business, work, and live.

Mission: We elevate the economic and human potential of the Gulf Coast region by fulfilling the diverse needs of the businesses and individuals we serve.

Vision: Our region attracts and retains the best employers, affords everyone the dignity of a job, remains vitally important to the global economy—and all within it are thriving.

Strongly Held Beliefs are exhibited through the following Values and Behaviors:

We care passionately about:

- Advocating for others
- Inspiring hope
- Fueling progress

We take responsibilities seriously by:

- Being accountable
- Following up and following through
- Driving results

We imagine possibilities:

- Seeking multiple perspectives
- Bringing fresh thinking
- Engaging one another in making a difference

Results are shown through:

Competitive employers

An educated workforce

More and better jobs

Higher income

D. Youth Services

Services for young adults are a diverse set of activities; youth services help young people move toward more mature ways of thinking, feeling, and acting in the workplace. We help young adults in the process by which they enter adulthood and the workforce – a highly individual and often difficult journey.

All young people have the same basic developmental need for:

- Safety and structure
- Belonging and membership
- Self-worth and an ability to contribute
- Independence and control over their lives
- Nurturing relationships
- Competence and mastery

Workforce Solutions emphasizes that young people are individuals in need of support and opportunities – not a collection of problems that need to be fixed. This approach requires doing more than simply providing services. Workforce Solutions young adult services has a **dual focus** on meeting young adults’ needs and preparing them for the jobs of tomorrow.

In general, the Workforce Solutions staff approach is to:

- Focus on a young person’s skills and abilities
- Communicate high expectations
- Provide opportunities for leadership
- Encourage a sense of personal identity
- Broaden a young person’s perspective
- Provide safe surroundings
- Connect them with mentors

It is important to understand these concepts because Workforce Solutions fuses youth development with more traditional workforce development approaches. The key is integrating these concepts into a system of effective connections for young adults that will enable them to succeed in life and in the workplace. These connections are the program services, the staff, and the multiple stakeholders that work with a young adult.

This challenge is complex. To reach the goals of productive employment, satisfying family life, and fulfilling citizenship for all youth requires hard work and dedication. Effective youth employment can no longer be separated from youth development. Simply helping a young adult find a job — any job — is no longer enough. Today’s young adult services must focus on

helping young people develop the skills, knowledge, and competencies required for today's complex workplace. Effective youth services use work as a tool to develop a broad array of life skills.

Workforce Solutions youth services are designed to assist young adults 16 to 24 years of age who are seeking assistance in achieving academic and employment success, with effective and comprehensive services and activities that include a variety of options for improving educational and skill competencies and provide effective connection to educational institutions and employers, including employers in-demand industry sectors and occupations in the local and regional labor markets.

1. Implement integrated strategies for career pathway approaches that support post-secondary education, training, and employment.
2. Implement work-based training strategies and employment approaches to help young adults develop essential skills that are best learned on the job.
3. Implement progressive levels of education and training approaches that will help young people with higher skill levels and experience earn marketable credentials.
4. Provide continued support services to young adults who need them to participate and succeed in work investment and training activities.

Overall, comprehensive program design is an essential element in helping staff to develop comprehensive service strategies based upon individual needs. Workforce Solutions staff should develop intensive outreach efforts to non-profits, community groups, faith-based agencies, schools, and other support agencies who are providing youth services. Partnerships should be developed in high school libraries with staff trained to assist youth in accessing all available services. Outreach efforts should be implemented that will target populations with barriers to employment including – but not limited to – offenders, homeless individuals, basic skills deficient, English language learners, individuals aging out of foster care, pregnant or parenting individuals, and persons with disabilities.

E. Youth Program Elements

We have learned from the past that there is no “magic bullet” approach to successful youth services. Experience has taught us that a holistic approach to youth services is critical for success, an approach that focuses on the young person's skills and abilities as well as challenges.

Workforce Solutions outlines a broad youth vision that supports an integrated services model that support the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, entry into postsecondary education, and career readiness for participants. Workforce Solutions staff must

- make each of the following 14 youth elements/services available to all young adults enrolled in WFS youth workforce services (WIOA) either directly or indirectly
- Provide youth participants with written information regarding a full array of services that may help them transition into the workforce

- Save a copy of the Youth Services Brochure with signature from the youth participant and career advisor to the participants case file
- Provide youth participant with a copy of the signed document
- Refer youth participant to appropriate training and educational programs that have capacity to serve them either on a sequential or concurrent basis

Although each of the 14 youth program elements must be made available to each youth participant, staff have the discretion to determine which program services a youth participant receives based on participant’s objective assessment and individual service plan.

The 14 youth program elements are 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 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;
 - 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 academic and occupational education component that:

- refers to contextual learning that accompanies a work experience, for example, a teacher instructing a class on how to build paper airplanes in order to teach them about velocity;
- 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 provided separately in a classroom, or through other means;

Staff have the flexibility to decide who provides the academic and occupational education component.

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.

Examples of the academic component of work experience may include:

- a hospital work experience in which hospital staff teaches the youth what individuals in occupations such as phlebotomist, radiology tech, or physical therapist need to know, such as why blood type matters, the name of a specific bone in the body, or the function of a specific ligament;
- job readiness courses provided by the Board's youth contractor; or
- receiving a lecture from a teacher or an employer on best practices for a plumber.

Local youth programs must expend not less than 20 percent of youth funds to provide ISY and OSY 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 sessions; and
- Classroom training or the required academic education component directly related to the work experience.

4. Occupational skill 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.

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.

Staff 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. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as 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 a Standing Youth Committee.

Positive social and civic behaviors are outcomes of leadership opportunities that are incorporated by Staff 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 child care and 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;
- Assistance with books, fees, school supplies, and other necessary items for students enrolled in postsecondary education classes; and
- 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.

Staff 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 Board'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 includes drug and alcohol abuse counseling, mental health counseling, and referrals to external organizations where trained professionals provide counseling services, as appropriate, to address the needs of the individual youth. If a

youth participant is referred, the Board must coordinate with such organizations and professionals to ensure continuity of service .

Note: This element does not include career and academic counseling, which aligns with youth program element number 13, as provided in 20 CFR §681.460(a)(13).

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, staff 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.

There are many resources that Staff may use to help provide financial literacy education. For example, MyMoney.gov, which provides financial resources, including games, activities, and informational websites, for researchers, educators, and youth. Topics range from budgeting to developing positive relationships with financial institutions.

Additionally, Staff 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 provides an introduction to 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 ISY and OSY 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.

These elements reflect what has been learned from research about the positive connection between education and earnings, and the powerful effect caring adults committed to building our future leaders have on youth workforce programs. There is no pre-packaged recipe for providing successful youth services, only a list of valued ingredients. WFS staff will blend the elements outlined above including an employment plan and a vision for success according to the needs of each individual youth.

The [TWIST Youth Elements Matrix](#) lists the TWIST services with definitions that align with the youth program element services. Some youth program elements may be satisfied by one TWIST service, while other program elements may offer several TWIST services from which to choose. The matrix provides staff with a desk reference that can be used to select the TWIST services that offer the most applicable benefit and are tailored to the needs of the Youth customer.

F. Incentives

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) youth program allows for several types of payments for participants engaged in activities such as work experience, occupational skills training, classroom activities and more. Incentives are given to youth to reward positive behavior towards achieving goals.

An incentive is a type of compensation for youth participants permitted for recognition and achievement directly tied to training activities and work experience. WIOA Youth funds can be used for incentives for completion of a training course (such as completing a high school equivalency course) and/or of an achievement (such as perfect attendance at the course). The purpose of offering an incentive is to induce behavior toward achievement of a specific goal. In order for an incentive to be effective, participants must be aware of the existence of such incentive and understand the terms and standards of its award to improve the likelihood of success and lead to a successful outcome or achievement of grant performance measures.

Incentives must be: (a) tied to the participant goals and (b) outlined in writing to youth participant before the commencement of services that may provide incentive payments. Please refer to the written Youth Incentive Policy and Procedures which governs the award of incentives.

Payments for incentives should not be confused with compensation of wages or stipends. Keep in mind that funds may not be spent on entertainment costs as outlined in 2 CFR 200.438. Therefore, incentives may not include entertainment, such as movie or sporting event tickets or gift cards to movie theaters or other venues whose sole purpose is entertainment.

III. Youth Engagement and Outreach

A. Standards & Guidelines

Developing an outreach plan is a high-priority and an on-going task for recruiting young adults.

Start with the following:

- Set measurable goals for participant enrollment and participation and tailor by age group.
- Research businesses, organizations, community influencers, and media in your community to target.
- Determine promising strategies for connecting with youth and potential partners.
- Set timelines and create an outreach calendar.

Gather information about youth workforce services that are relevant to various stakeholders and the public. Tout your outcome's potential, its effectiveness, benefits, and success stories. The wider a net you cast in the community, the more support you will receive.

Tailor your recruitment strategy to the specific needs and interests of the target population, identify where your target audience interacts and focus your efforts there. Set a weekly task list that includes time for building your network, creating content, and engaging.

Examples of messaging tools include word-of-mouth, electronic newsletters, social media, and podcasts.

- **Word-of-Mouth:** Referral from current youth customers, leveraging word of mouth not only between current customers and other disconnected young adults, but also through relatives and friends of customers and staff members.
- **Electronic Newsletters:** Consistent communication is the best way to motivate current and potential partners and inform community members of the services available for young adults. Build a mailing list and demonstrate your impact with regular updates.
- **Social Media:** Program staff can use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter to communicate in ways disconnected young adults are comfortable with. Upload video testimonies, photos of program activities, and posts about the youth workforce activities. Refer to the WFS public outreach [standards and guidelines](#).
- **Podcasts:** Encourage young adults create podcasts about their experience with your program, services received and what they hope to accomplish after completing the program.

B. Outreach Strategies

Staff must conduct outreach by stepping away from behind the desk and meeting young adults where they are. During the summer months, outreach is even more critical, and it is important to work with local communities and establish strong year-round partnerships with service

providers that work with young adults. Below is a list of community-based organizations that can create a pipeline of young adults to serve.

- Foster Care providers
- Independent School Districts
- Juvenile Justice Departments
- Adult Education providers
- Vocational Rehabilitation providers
- Housing Authorities
- Faith Based Organizations
- Community Centers
- Health Clinics
- Drop-Out Interventions and At-Risk Providers
- Homeless Service Organizations
- Local libraries
- Services for Parenting Teens (WIC Office)
- Health and Human Services

There are also databases that can provide a list of young adults to outreach.

These databases include but are not limited to:

- Young adults in Work-In-Texas
- List of Young Adults receiving childcare
- List of young adults receiving unemployment insurance
- List of young adults receiving adult education services
- List of young adults receiving VR services

C. Media Release Form

All customers and staff who appear in interviews, videos or photographs that are intended for use by the Workforce Solutions system must sign a [media release form](#). Signed copies of the media release form should be filed in DocuWare.

IV. WIOA Youth

A. Eligibility Requirements

Young adults interested in participating in youth services must meet certain eligibility criteria to receive assistance. Eligibility depends on many factors that may include family income or support, age, labor force status, proficiency in basic skills, and receipt of public assistance.

Before we provide financial aid, we must determine eligibility for one or more of the fund sources we use. Additionally, we must establish that the customer needs assistance to attain their employment goals and address the availability of other community resources. Workforce Solutions Youth Workforce services are available for young adults 16 to 24 years of age with one or more barriers to employment.

A young adult is considered an **enrolled participant** once the following has occurred:

- An eligibility determination, *as described in the subsection below.*
- 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.
- Enrollment and participation in any of the 14 WIOA youth program elements.

Income-Tested Fund	Age & Other	Work Status	Selective Service	Income & Other
WIOA In-School Youth	<p>A. 14-21 years old at eligibility determination, <u>and</u></p> <p>B. Attending or enrolled in secondary or for-credit postsecondary school at eligibility determination, <u>and</u></p> <p>C. <u>Low-Income</u>, <u>and</u></p> <p>D. At least one of the following apply</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deficient in Basic Literacy Skills; <u>or</u> 2. Homeless, Runaway; <u>or</u> 3. In foster care or aged out of foster care; <u>or</u> 4. Pregnant/Parenting; <u>or</u> 5. Offender; <u>or</u> 6. Has a disability; <u>or</u> 7. An English language learner who is deficient in Basic Literacy Skills. 	Authorized to work in U.S.	If male, registered as required	<p>Family income at or below 100% of poverty line or 70% lower living standard. Income test not required if customer meets one of the following criteria</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Customer receives or is a member of a family that receives (currently or in the past six months) one of the following: TANF, SNAP, SSI, or other public assistance; or 2. Is a Foster Child; or 3. Is Homeless; or 4. Receives or is eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch; or 5. Lives in a high poverty census tract. <p>Note: customer with a disability must be determined a family of one for income determination purpose if the customer’s family does not meet the income test and 1 through 5 above do not apply.</p>
WIOA Out-of-School Youth	<p>A. 16-24 years old at eligibility determination, <u>and</u></p> <p>B. Not attending or enrolled in secondary or for-credit postsecondary school at eligibility determination <u>and</u></p> <p>C. At least one of the following apply</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School Dropout; <u>or</u> 2. Youth who (a) received HS Diploma/equivalent and (b) is low-income and (c) is Deficient in Basic Literacy Skills or is an English language learner; <u>or</u> 3. Required to attend school but has not attended for at least the most recent complete school year’s calendar quarter’; <u>or</u> 4. Homeless or Runaway; <u>or</u> 5. In foster care or aged out of foster care; <u>or</u> 6. Pregnant/Parenting; <u>or</u> 7. Subject to the juvenile or adult justice system; <u>or</u> 8. Has a disability; <u>or</u> 9. Requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment (must also meet low income requirements) 	Authorized to work in U.S.	If male, registered as required	<p>Note: OSY customers can attend and/or be enrolled in a non-credit postsecondary school at eligibility determination.</p> <p>OSY customers 21-24 years old are not subject to in-school educational requirements.</p> <p>Low income required only if using C. 2. or C. 9. from “Age & Other” column</p> <p>Family income at or below 100% of poverty line or 70% lower living standard. Income test not required if customer is</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Customer receives or is a member of a family that receives (currently or in the past six months) one of the following: TANF, SNAP, SSI, or other public assistance; or 2. Is a Foster Child; or 3. Is Homeless; or 4. Lives in a high poverty census tract.

B. Supporting and Recording Youth Eligibility

Assessment

Career Advisors must conduct an initial assessment for all customers interested in substantial assistance to gather background information to understand the customer's current experience, education, and goals. Career Advisors should help the customer identify their employment goals and determine how to help the customer achieve those goals, with or without Workforce Solutions financial aid. The initial assessment should include:

- The customer's:
 - work history and career interests,
 - educational level, any training completed, or training they are interested in,
 - financial goals to help them become self-sufficient,
 - potential challenges to gaining employment or completing activities, and
 - need for support services, including child care assistance, to attain their employment goals or complete activities.

Note: Customers needing child care should be directed to the child care waiting list application

- Referrals to assessments and tests, such as Keirseley-Temperament, TABE, CASAS, etc., related to the customer's interested occupation;
- A discussion of labor market information related to the customer's interested occupation;
- A summary of the customer's need for financial assistance;
- Any WIOA priority criteria the customer meets;
- A determination that the customer is suitable for Workforce Solutions financial aid; and
- An explanation describing how Workforce Solutions' services will benefit the customer.

For education and training, Career Advisors may use the [Touchpoint Management tool](#) to determine suitability and must document in the initial assessment:

- The customer's understanding of the requirements of the chosen occupation, such as working conditions, hours, wages, physical demand, etc.
- Readiness and ability to enter and complete training
- Ability to meet scholastic obligations during the training
- Ability to maintain financial obligations identified by the Monthly Expenses Worksheet during the training period
- Ability to overcome any challenges that may prevent success
- Ability to obtain employment in the chosen occupation or industry based on criminal background or other employment prerequisites
- A clear explanation describing how training will help the customer achieve their career goal.

Career Advisors should help the customer gather supporting documents needed for an eligibility determination, document the assessment in case notes including a list of documents received, and direct the customer to complete the Financial Aid Intake Form.

If the customer is working and only needs assistance for work support, staff must work with the customer to explore other community resources to help them meet their needs. If the customer is unable to obtain timely assistance from other sources or if staff determines Workforce Solutions is the best option for any other reason, staff must document their decision and reason for providing financial aid in the assessment case note. Staff must also include the following in the initial assessment:

- Verification of employment or job offer, and that the employment will last 30 days or more:
 - Verify the customer’s job or job offer with:
 - A check stub, if the customer is working,
 - A letter from the employer on company letterhead stating the customer is an employee or is scheduled to begin work on a specific date,
 - An offer letter from the employer (can be hard copy or email), or
 - Documentation in case notes of a phone conversation in which the employer states the customer is an employee or is scheduled to begin work on a given date.
 - Customer’s employment information:
 - Name of employer
 - Address
 - Phone number
 - Employer contact (not required if the customer provides a check stub, a letter from the employer on letterhead, or an offer letter)
 - Customer’s employment status or pending hire date
 - Job title
 - Wage information
- The type and amount of assistance, and
- Justification of cost.

If the customer is looking for work, staff should use the [Work Search Assessment](#) desk aid to help the customer identify the best methods to look for work and a plan to become job ready, which may include job-readiness seminars and workshops. Staff must also document how Workforce Solutions will help the customer obtain employment or prepare for educational or training activities.

Service 62 – “Initial Assessment” is used to record assessment services provided before eligibility determination. Continued assessment after eligibility determination should be recorded as 08 – “Objective Assessment”

Individual Employment Plan (IEP)/Employment Plan –

All customers receiving substantial financial aid must have an individual employment plan documented in the case management system. Career Advisors must collaborate with the customer to establish goals and actions needed to help the customer get a job, keep a job, or get a better job. **At minimum, staff must include an employment goal related to the customer’s interested occupation.** Career Advisors must tailor the goals and objectives to the customer’s needs and include timelines and

support services to help the customer achieve their goals. Refer to [WS 23-02 Individual Employment Plans](#) for guidelines on the development of the IEP.

1. **Youth TWIST Counselor Notes** - Use notes section in TWIST to summarize your conversations with the customers regarding the services provided. Counselor notes must include the reasons considered for enrolling young adults in WFS youth workforce services and identify which of the 14 youth elements we plan to provide.

TWIST Counselor notes **MUST** include:

- Initial and Ongoing assessments
- Summary of eligibility for Workforce Solutions WIOA youth funds
- A statement that the customer is suitable for the financial aid and services requested
- A description of the reason the customer needs assistance.
- Confirmation the customer is enrolled in courses that support the training objective (ascertain start date of training)
- Results, updates of the contacts with the customer (e.g., academic progress, need for additional assistance, etc.)
- Statement indicating the WIOA 14 Youth Elements and Incentive Menu were provided to youth participant

C. Financial Aid Intake Form

We use the intake form to collect basic information to assess potential eligibility for Workforce Solutions' funds, establish priority of service, and ensure we serve customers on a first-come, first-serve basis when funds are limited.

Customers determined suitable for Workforce Solutions financial aid must complete the intake form and submit supporting documentation to determine eligibility.

Staff must help the customer to complete the intake form and work with them to collect and submit appropriate supporting documents using the Validating Entering Qualifications Workforce Solutions Financial Aid (VEQ) as a reference.

Note: Staff should not advise the customer regarding their eligibility for Workforce Solutions funds until eligibility is complete.

D. TWIST Data Entry

We record services in WIT and TWIST to track how Workforce Solutions is helping the customer. If we provide financial assistance, we record the amount in the "Support Services" tab under the "Service Tracking Menu" item in TWIST.

TWIST data entry **MUST** include:

- Program Detail
- Service Tracking
- Objective Assessment (service code 8)
- Employability Development Plan (service code 68)
- Training Service (Occupational (service code 01), OJT (service code 03), Work Experience (service code 50), etc.)
- Support Services information, as appropriate. When completing the “Comments” tab, always include a reference to the service related to the support service provided. For example – Refer to 08 service dated 6/10/2017. This may be an objective assessment, an employment plan, or a training service such as occupational skills training, OJT, etc.
- Counselor Notes to record services provided to the customer
- Following Up on an Employment Plan
 - Update the Employment Plan whenever the young adult has accomplished a goal or is requesting a new *type* of service that leads to an educational or employment goal. Counselor notes must support the decision to provide requested assistance by justifying the need, highlighting wrap around services, identifying which one of the 14 elements will be rendered (performance indicators), and addressing the availability of community resources to meet the customer’s need.
 - Review the employment plan periodically (at least once a month) with the customer to determine if the employment plan should be adjusted. Record the results of these monthly reviews in TWIST counselor notes and update the plan, as appropriate.
 - Monthly contact with customers is required, however we know that young adults require contact more frequently. A good rule of thumb is a weekly check-in by text, Teams, email, FaceTime, and other means of communication with the youth. Confirm the customer is continuing to meet the goals and actions identified in the employment plan. Document progress in counselor notes

V. Work Experience

A. Overview of Programs

Work experience or work-based learning (WBL) is a planned, structured learning experience that takes place in a workplace for a limited period. Work base learning may be paid or unpaid, as appropriate. A work experience may take place in the private for-profit sector, non-profit sector, or public sector.

The types of work experiences include the following categories:

- Summer employment opportunities
- Employment opportunities available throughout the year
- Apprenticeship programs
- Internships and job shadowing
- On-the-job training opportunities

The benefits of work-based learning to participating employers include:

- Pipeline of employees
- Wages paid directly to young adults
- Reasonable accommodation provided for customers
- Additional on-the-job training if needed (I.e., Job Coaches for SEAL)
- Site visits to monitor participants and ensure employer satisfaction.

1. Year-round Work Based Learning (WBL)

- Age: 16 and up
- Focus: Eligible individuals in the 13 counties that need additional skills or experience to be marketable
- Pay: up to \$15.00/hour
 - Duration: up to 30 hours/week, up to 240 hours

** Can be eligible through multiple funding streams (Ex. WIOA; TANF Choices)*

2. Summer Earn and Learn

- Age: 16-22
- Focus: Youth with disabilities (In-school & Out-of-school)
- Pay: \$13.00/hour
 - Duration: 5-8 weeks, up to 20 hours/week

** In collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation*

3. Pre-Apprenticeships

- Age: 16-22
- Focus: Eligible individuals in the 13 counties seeking entry into Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAP) or other job opportunities

- Pay: \$250 stipend per week (goals must be outlined in the customer’s employment plan)

4. Apprenticeships

- Age: 16 and up
- Focus: Nationally recognized credential/degree
- Pay: prevailing wage for occupation
* Enhances OJT incentive to 75% reimbursement for up to 640 hours

5. On the Job Training (OJT)

- Age: 18 and up
- Focus: upskilling/re-skilling; permanent employment
- Pay: \$12+/hour
 - Duration: 32 hours/week minimum, up to 400 hours

B. Worksite Development Process

Each new worksite added to the system must be vetted by Workforce Solutions Work-Based Learning (WBL) to make sure the employment opportunity is safe and provides a meaningful work experience to help participants gain work skills, build self-confidence, network with others, receive guidance and feedback on performance, and explore a career field.

As employers express interest in participating as a work-based learning worksite, **BCs and Workforce Solutions staff** will:

- Introduce and provide information to the employer about the services
- BC (or staff making initial contact) will complete a worksite application
- Completed application is sent to the WBL team

WBL team members will:

1. Contact the employer within 48 hours (2 business days), to schedule a **site visit** where:
 - Application is reviewed
 - Job descriptions are collected
 - Worksite safety review form is completed
 - Accommodations needed for positions discussed
2. Work with the employer if they need help to develop job descriptions that accurately reflect the work performed in each position.
 - Conduct a review to vet the appropriateness of the worksite. If necessary, submit job description to G&A for review and approval.
 - Conduct worksite visits using the Worksite Safety Review document.

- Execute worksite agreement via PandaDoc with signatures from board staff designee, G&A Partners, and the worksite.
- After the worksite agreement has been signed off by all parties, staff will:
- Enter worksite information into the G&A spreadsheet on the [Youth Employment Communications Page](#)
- Upload worksite agreement and job descriptions into DocuWare
- Email the worksite information to Lisa Spadoni, Board staff, at lisa.spadoni@wrksolutions.com to create a worksite code in TWIST.

VI. Youth Employment

A. Universal Youth

Workforce Solutions youth services will provide a comprehensive employment program delivery strategy by:

- Providing a robust outreach campaign to reach both young adults and local employers for the
- Delivering virtual hiring events with our local career offices, and community partners to promote youth employment
- Increasing postings in Work-In-Texas to ensure a variety of jobs exist for young adults looking for unsubsidized employment
- Increasing the number of direct hires for young adults between the ages of 16-24
- Outreaching and engaging employers to become host worksites for subsidized work experiences
- Assisting employers to support their hiring needs by hosting and/or supporting hiring events with summer positions for young adults emphasized.
- Intensifying recruiting and outreach efforts for IS/OSY youth looking for work during the peak summer periods.
- Providing hybrid work readiness classes to prepare young adults to enter their first employment
- Providing work orientation to youth entering subsidized employment.
- Providing direct referrals to young adults who need training and skills attainment with our Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) services providers.
- Connecting the young adults to apprenticeship and internship opportunities.
- Providing support services for eligible youth to help them get a job, keep a job, or upskill through training to get a better job.

B. Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning is an umbrella term that applies to a wide range of activities that give individuals of all ages an opportunity to learn valuable workplace skills while being paid for the experience. Workforce Solutions provides work-based learning opportunities on a year-round basis to individuals of all ages. The goal of placing a person in a work-based learning opportunity is to assist them in gaining marketable skills and experience that can lead to gainful employment.

During the summer months we offer paid work experience to eligible young adults. This service can also be referred to as subsidized employment or internships. In collaboration with Employer Service, Workforce Solutions develops paid work experience opportunities in the 13 county Houston-Galveston region. Our system utilizes G&A Partners (G&A) who serves as the employer of record covering the wages, FICA taxes, and insurance liabilities. Employers who partner as a worksite create opportunities to mentor and train young adults for the duration of the placement.

1. Work-Based Learning Hours

The duration for all paid work experience opportunities must last at least 5-8 weeks and not exceed 240 hours based on available funding. When determining the number of hours, a young adult will be working at a worksite, staff should consider weekly school/training schedules and the number of hours the young adult can complete each week. It is the intent to provide every young adult entering work experience the opportunity to gain skills needed by working the number of hours agreed by the intern and the employer.

2. Determining Eligibility

Staff must complete the following for youth to determine they might be eligible for Work-based Learning opportunities:

- a. Conduct initial assessment,
- b. Enter services in TWIST,
- c. Screen the youth for support services, and
- d. Develop an Individual Employment Plan that addresses youth's career interest, skill sets, workplace values, and career goals.
- e. Once the youth is determined eligible, staff may then assign the youth to a worksite.

Eligible Youth Entering Work Experience will:

- a. Complete Workforce Solutions Work Readiness sessions
- b. Attend Workforce Solutions orientation/onboarding sessions
- c. Earn \$10.00 - \$15.00 per hour
- d. Work a minimum of 5 weeks
- e. Eligible to work minimum of 15 hours up to 30 hours a week
- f. May work up to a total of 240 hours (Requests for more than 240 hours must be approved by youth services board staff)

VII. Employer Engagement

A. The Employer - Our Number One Customer

As the demand for a highly skilled labor force grows, employers can consider young adults to meet those labor demands. When it comes to doing business, young adults included in their hiring strategies can offer employers a competitive edge. Paid/unpaid work experience (WBL) offers a risk-free pipeline to meet the employer's recruitment needs and allows an opportunity to mentor a pipeline of future talent. Optimal partners are Employers that are committed to helping young adults attain work experience that will provide them with career pathway opportunities. A combination of public sector, private sector, and non-profit employers, as well as summer and year-round employment opportunities will help in meeting our young adults' needs.

B. Employer Service

Business Consultants (BCs) play a key role in helping support the career offices in finding worksites that are appropriate for the young adults referred for work experience opportunities. BCs and office staff are expected to work collaboratively to make sure a variety of meaningful worksites exist to meet the needs of the young adults in their area.

Employer Services (BCs) will support youth employment by:

- Soliciting employers as host worksites for work experience placements
- Increasing the job postings for young adults in Work-In-Texas
- Receiving referrals from employers and directly connecting the employer to the appropriate office staff
- Creating opportunities for on-the-spot/virtual hiring events throughout the year, with a heightened awareness of summer and holiday labor needs
- Coordinating and collaborating with the WBL team to make sure employers identified as potential worksites are contacted within 2 business days
- Providing follow-up with local office staff and employers to ensure establishment of worksite agreements when employers are identified

As new employer partnerships are created for work experience placements, employers in both public and private will be outreached, example of these entities are below:

- Public Sector Employers
- Local Governments Agencies
- Chamber of Commerce Members
- Libraries
- Non-profit Organizations
- Independent School Districts

- Community Colleges
- Universities

C. Marketing to Employers

BCs and Workforce Solutions staff must share information/make presentations with local civic groups, such as Chambers of Commerce, Rotary and Lions Clubs, Industry partnerships, Economic Development Councils, and trade associations who are uniquely positioned with local employers across the region. This is an important strategy to reach a multitude of employers who make up many of the memberships within each of the organizations.

To ensure a coordinated outreach effort, staff should work collaboratively with the board's Industry Liaisons, or a key representative, who has established relationships with each of the associations to provide an introduction and help promote the effort.

Materials suitable for use in employer sales presentations, at expos, employer job fairs/events, and for any marketing communications purpose can be found [here](#). Download and print what you need to customize your presentation, so it fits the customer and occasion.