

Chapter 1 – Introduction to Youth at Work Program

Summary

Minnesota Statute (116L.562) authorizes the Youth at Work Equity grant program directing DEED to “award grants to eligible organizations for the purpose of providing workforce development and training opportunities to economically disadvantaged or at-risk youth ages 14-24.” Youth at Work funding is available on a biennial basis and awarded to eligible organizations/applicants in a competitive request for proposal process.

Relevant Laws, Rules, or Policies

[Minnesota Statute 116L.562](#)

Effective Date: 7/1/2019

Last Updated: 9/24/2024

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Youth at Work website: <https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/office-youth-development/special/grants/>

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Program Overview

The Youth at Work program identifies the following priorities, impact areas, and goals for all grantees:

- Provide summer and/or year-round work experience and introduction to career pathways for economically disadvantaged or at-risk youth, ages 14 through 24 (including those who are out-of-school and/or involved in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, residing in MFIP households, youth with disabilities, and youth from communities of color who are under-represented in the workforce; homeless and/or runaways);
- Increase exposure to in-demand jobs important to regional economies;
- Introduce and promote career pathways and skill acquisition (academic and work readiness) through project-based instruction;
- Promote mastery of work readiness competencies and 21st Century skills, as demonstrated through workplace portfolios and/or other assessments;
- Provide high-quality worksites and overall participant and employer satisfaction.

Example Allowable Activities:

- Provide youth with paid private sector work experiences (internships, pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeships) and/or public service employment opportunities.
- Work-based learning and Career pathways programming focused on in-demand industries such as healthcare and information technology.
- Support youth in achieving educational goals such as earning academic/service-learning credits, high school diploma, GED, or post-secondary credential.
- Support youth with exploring, applying to, and accessing post-secondary education opportunities.
- Financial literacy, mentoring, skills building activities, and virtual trainings.
- Career awareness and exploration activities like career aptitude tests, career fairs, industry tours, job shadows, career camps.
- Virtual career services and work experiences.

Group Services:

Some program models funded under youth at work do not utilize an individualized/case management strategy when serving youth. Counting youth under group services should be limited to youth who are not receiving individualized/case management services. Group services is intended to capture youth who are not on a staff person's case load. **Note:** providing group services is **not** required.

Examples of group services can include but are not limited to:

1. A labor market information presentation to a high school classroom of 25 students.
2. Mock interviews with students at a job fair.

Requirements:

1. Group services **should** only count youth not receiving individualized case management services. Grantees should do their best to exclude youth who happen to receive services in a group

setting and is also receiving individualized services from their group services count.

2. Service numbers should be reported on a cumulative basis and be included in the required quarterly report narratives.

Individualized or Case Managed Services:

These are youth whose demographics, program activities, and outcomes are captured and recorded on an individual basis and reported in DEED’s case management system Workforce One. For more information on Workforce One and the reporting requirements of the Youth at Work Program, see Chapter 3 – Youth at Work Performance and Reporting policy.

Competitive Grant Awards:

- A. In awarding competitive grants, priority shall be given to programs that:
 1. Provide students with information about education and training requirements for careers in high-growth, in-demand occupations;
 2. Serve youth from communities of color who are underrepresented in the workforce; or
 3. Serve youth with disabilities.
- B. Eligible organizations must have demonstrated effectiveness in administering youth workforce programs and must leverage nonstate or private sector funds.
- C. New eligible applicants must be youth-serving organizations with significant capacity and demonstrable youth development experience and outcomes to operate a youth workforce development project.

Eligibility Definitions:

Eligible organization or eligible applicant: a local government unit, nonprofit organization, community action agency, or a public school district;

At-risk youth: youth classified as at-risk under section [116L.56](#), subdivision 2:

For purposes of Youth at Work Program eligibility determination, the following individuals are considered at risk:

1. a pregnant or parenting youth;
2. a youth with limited English proficiency;
3. a potential or actual school dropout;
4. a youth in an offender or diversion program;
5. a public assistance recipient or a recipient of group home services;
6. a youth with disabilities including learning disabilities;
7. a chemically dependent youth or child of drug or alcohol abusers;

8. a homeless or runaway youth;
9. a youth with basic skills deficiency;
10. a youth with an educational attainment of one or more levels below grade level appropriate to age; or
11. a foster child.

See [Appendix A](#) within this document for expanded “at-risk” definitions.

Economically disadvantaged: youth who are economically disadvantaged as defined in the rules and regulations of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act:

An individual who received an income, or is a member of a family that received a total family income, that, in relation to family size, does not exceed the higher of —

1. the official poverty level, for an equivalent period; or
2. 70 percent of the lower living standard income level.

Please follow this [link](#) to DEED’s website for the current Income Eligibility Table that includes both Poverty Levels and Lower Living Standard Income Level.

Other methods to determine economic status:

1. Youth who are eligible to receive or are receiving **Federal free/reduced school lunch** are considered to be economically disadvantaged.
2. Expected family contribution of “0” on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) qualifies a youth as low-income.
3. Youth is receiving or is from a family receiving public assistance i.e. MFIP, TANF, SNAP, SSI, SSDI, general, refugee or medical assistance qualifies the youth as low-income.

If you have questions about a youth’s eligibility based on income, please contact the grant coordinator.

Youth at Work Eligibility Determination for individuals without a Social Security Number:

Youth at Work grantees must request an individual’s SSN for employment related services as well as reporting purposes. A participant can refuse to disclose the individual’s SSN. Youth at Work grantees cannot deny services if an individual chooses not to share the SSN.

When requesting an SSN, Youth at Work grantees must explain, in writing, the authority to request it, the purpose, how the information will be used for employment-related service provision and understanding program outcomes. Grantees must also explain that the individual has the right to decline disclosure of their SSN.

Prior to, or during eligibility determination, Youth at Work grantees may also explain to individuals that employers will require disclosure of SSN for tax purposes

Grantees must always identify participants by an alternate unique identifier. **Once enrolled into Workforce One, the Record ID for the individual can serve as the unique identifier.**

Youth at Work Eligibility Determination for individuals without Federal Work Authorization:

Youth at Work grantees may deliver many services without proof of participant's work authorization. This can be helpful in many situations, including where workers are awaiting work authorization or who already have work authorization but do not have the documents to demonstrate it. Youth at Work grantees can deliver certain services without checking work authorization prior to the participant moving into services that do not require work authorization.

Youth at Work services and activities that do not require work authorization:

1. Labor exchange services such as labor market information, career exploration, career guidance, resume writing assistance, and job search assistance.
2. Information on worker rights and where to find legal assistance.
3. Referrals to community resources such as transportation, childcare support, food assistance, housing assistance, medical assistance, and other similar resources.
4. Individualized services such as career assessments, development of an individual employment plan, group counseling, one-on-one case management, career planning information on foreign credential evaluation services and on obtaining credit for prior learning.
5. Basic skills education, including English language instruction, and high school equivalency.
6. Assistance in completing paperwork to finalize work authorization.
7. Assistance in applying for an occupational license including the cost of such applications.
8. Outreach to workers regarding the Employment-Related Law Compliant System and processing of such complaints.

Youth at Work services and activities that require work authorization:

1. Job placement
2. Occupational post-secondary training
3. Work experience
4. Supportive services that represent a direct financial benefit such as a voucher or reimbursement, or needs-related payments.

Supporting Youth at Work Participants to Obtain Documents:

Youth at Work grantees can work with individuals to obtain necessary documents for employment, such as driver's license or identification card, a social security card, and/or birth certificate. **Youth at Work funds can be used to pay for fees to obtain such documents.** Youth at Work grantees are encouraged to refer individuals to partner organizations for legal assistance, as well as to partner with organizations that provide support to populations with barriers to employment such as individuals without work authorization including immigrants, refugees, homeless individuals, and justice-involved individuals.

Coordination with Local Workforce Development Boards:

Per Minnesota Statute ([116L.562](#)), if a program is **not** operated by a local unit of government or a workforce development board, the grant recipient **must coordinate the program with the Local Workforce Development Board.**

What does coordination look like? DEED does not provide strict parameters for coordination under the Youth at Work program. Given the wide variety of program models, DEED defers any degree of coordination to the grantee and the Local Workforce Development Board in the grantee's service area.

The requirements of coordination are as follows:

1. Youth at Work grantee must list the Local Workforce Development Board in the grantee's respective service area(s) in the required Youth at Work partnership chart. The partnership chart is completed as part of an applicant's response to the Youth at Work RFP. Contact information for the Local Workforce Development Boards can be found here: <https://mawb-mn.org/workforce-development-areas>.
2. Coordination can take many forms. The following are examples of what coordination can look like:
 - Example 1. "Organization A" and "LWDB C" may agree to provide client referrals when it is in the best interest of the youth.
 - Example 2. "Organization A" serves as a subgrantee to "LWDB C."
 - Example 3. "Organization A" and "LWDB C" serve similar populations so they agree to engage in regular communication so as to reduce duplication of effort.

Other Requirements:

Leveraged Funds

Per Minnesota Statute (116L.562), Youth at Work grantees **must leverage** non-state of private sector funds. These can be cash or in-kind. Leveraged funds must be noted in the Budget Summary form.

Minnesota Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST)

Effective January 1, 2024, required Earned Sick and Safe Time benefits would be considered fringe benefits similar to Worker's Compensation. Expenses related to ESST should be budgeted in the Youth Participant Wages and Fringe Benefits cost category for the Youth at Work Program.

Outreach Materials

As stated in each Youth at Work grant contract, all outreach materials (displays, flyers, media), etc. must include the following legal statement:

"The State of Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) funded (or funded in part) this training through a grant. The grant recipient created this training. DEED does not endorse this publicity or training to make guarantees, warranties, or assurances of any kind, expressed or implied, regarding the accuracy, completeness, timeliness, usefulness, adequacy, continued availability or ownership of the information herein or elsewhere."

Customer Rights

All youth who are case managed must be provided with the two forms that describe how their personal data is used, commonly referred to as a Tennessen Warning and and their rights regarding complaints, commonly referred to as Equal Opportunity is the Law. These forms must be acknowledged by case managed participants and maintained in the individuals case file. These documents are available in multiple languages.

These can be found here by language: [English](#), [Hmong](#), [Lao](#), [Russian](#), [Simplified Chinese](#), [Somali](#), and [Spanish](#).

Workforce One Case Management System

DEED requires all Youth at Work grantees to utilize Workforce One, Minnesota's Case Management System to record participant data. Rare exceptions to this rule may allow your organization provide required information to DEED via an alternative method. See Chapter 3 – Youth at Work Performance and Reporting policy for additional guidance on Workforce One.

Appendix A – Eligibility Definitions

- A. Limited English Proficient: For people who speak a language other than English at home, the response represents the individual's own perception of his or her ability to speak English.
- B. Participants/Families Receiving Public Assistance: These are participants who receive or come from families receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF/MFIP) and general assistance. It does NOT include any Supplemental Security Income.
- C. Foster Youth: These are youth who are or who have ever been placed in a home by legal action on whose behalf State or local government payments are or have ever been made.
- D. Participants with a Disability: These are participants with a disability as defined by section 3 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
- E. High School Dropout: These are individuals who are no longer attending any school and who have not received a secondary school diploma or a recognized equivalent.
- F. Youth or Adult Offender: These are participants who:
 - 1. Have been subject to any stage of the criminal or juvenile justice process, for whom services under this program may be beneficial; or
 - 2. Require assistance in overcoming artificial barriers to employment resulting from a record of arrest or conviction.
- G. Pregnant or Parenting Youth: These are youth who are pregnant or who have parental responsibilities for a minor (i.e. less than 18 years of age).
- H. Basic Skills Deficient: These are participants who:
 - 1. Compute or solve problems, read, write, or speak English at or below the 8th grade level on a generally acceptable standardized test or a comparable score on a criterion- referenced test; or
 - 2. Are unable to compute or solve problems, read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the family, or in society.
- I. Homeless Individual or Runaway Youth: A participant is considered a homeless individual or runaway youth if the individual:
 - 1. Lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; this includes an individual who:
 - a. Is sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
 - b. Is living in a motel, hotel, trailer park or campground due to a lack of adequate alternative accommodations;
 - c. Is living in an emergency or transitional shelter;
 - d. Is abandoned in a hospital; or
 - e. Is awaiting foster care placement.
 - 2. Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, such as a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
 - 3. Is a migratory child who in the preceding 36 months was required to move from one school district to another due to changes in the parent's or parent's spouse's seasonal employment in agriculture, dairy, or fishing work; or
 - 4. Is under 18 years of age and absents himself or herself from home or place of legal residence without the permission of his or her family (e.g. runaway youth).

Note: this definition does not include an individual imprisoned or detained under an Act of Congress or State Law. An individual who may be sleeping in a temporary accommodation while away from home should not, as a result of that alone, be recorded as homeless.

- J. Not Employed at Program Enrollment: These are participants who have not had a job within one week of program enrollment.
- K. Veteran: These are participants who have served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who have been discharged or released from such service under conditions other than dishonorable.
- L. Economically Disadvantaged: These are participants who received an income, or is a member of a family that received a total family income, that, in relation to family size, does not exceed the higher of:
 - 1. the official poverty level, for an equivalent period; or
 - 2. 70 percent of the lower living standard income level.

Please follow this [link](#) to DEED's website for the current Income Eligibility Table that includes both Poverty Levels and Lower Living Standard Income Level. Youth who are eligible to receive or are receiving Federal free/reduced school lunch are considered to be economically disadvantaged. Youth who have an expected family contribution of "0" on the FAFSA are considered low-income. Youth receiving or youth from families receiving public assistance qualify as low-income.