

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1696

To establish a competitive grant program to support out-of-school-time youth workforce readiness programs, providing employability skills development, career exploration, employment readiness training, mentoring, work-based learning, and workforce opportunities for eligible youth.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 19, 2021

Ms. SMITH (for herself, Mr. GRAHAM, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. WYDEN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To establish a competitive grant program to support out-of-school-time youth workforce readiness programs, providing employability skills development, career exploration, employment readiness training, mentoring, work-based learning, and workforce opportunities for eligible youth.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Youth Workforce
5 Readiness Act of 2021”.

1 **SEC. 2. PURPOSE.**

2 The purpose of this Act is to establish or expand ac-
3 tivities to—

4 (1) increase access and opportunities for youth
5 to obtain the education and training that youth need
6 to succeed in the labor market;

7 (2) support engagement in and the integration
8 of programs and activities offered during out-of-
9 school-time hours through the workforce investment,
10 education, and economic development systems;

11 (3) improve the quality of the workforce and
12 meet the skill requirements of employers;

13 (4) engage employers in addressing the train-
14 ing, skill, and employment needs of youth and youth
15 jobseekers, and fostering opportunities for connec-
16 tion and economic mobility; and

17 (5) include younger youth in the education and
18 workforce investment activities in an age and devel-
19 opmentally appropriate manner.

20 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

21 In this Act:

22 (1) **COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION.**—The
23 term “community-based organization” means a
24 youth-serving private nonprofit organization (which
25 may include a faith-based organization) that—

1 (A) is representative of a community or a
2 significant segment of a community;

3 (B) has demonstrated expertise and effec-
4 tiveness in workforce development; and

5 (C) has demonstrated expertise—

6 (i) in the planning and delivery of
7 education, training, and related activities
8 that are included in a career pathway;

9 (ii) in forging coordination and co-
10 operation between educators and other
11 members of the community; and

12 (iii) in development and implementa-
13 tion of data systems that measure the
14 progress of students and outcomes of ca-
15 reer pathways.

16 (2) COVERED PARTNERSHIP.—The term “cov-
17 ered partnership” means a partnership between—

18 (A) a community-based organization; and

19 (B) an industry or sector partnership, a
20 local educational agency, or another public enti-
21 ty or private employer, as appropriate.

22 (3) ELIGIBLE YOUTH.—The term “eligible
23 youth” has the meaning given the term in section 3
24 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

1 (29 U.S.C. 3102), except that the individual involved
2 shall be—

3 (A) not younger than age 6; and

4 (B) not older than age 18 (or age 19 if en-
5 rolled in secondary school).

6 (4) INDUSTRY OR SECTOR PARTNERSHIP.—The
7 term “industry or sector partnership” means—

8 (A) an industry or sector partnership, as
9 defined in section 3 of the Workforce Innova-
10 tion and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3102);
11 and

12 (B) a collaborative that meets the require-
13 ments of paragraph (26) of that section 3 but
14 also includes—

15 (i) an Indian tribe or tribal organiza-
16 tion (as such terms are defined in section
17 166(b) of that Act (29 U.S.C. 3221(b))),
18 as appropriate; or

19 (ii) a community-based organization.

20 (5) OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME.—The term “out-of-
21 school-time”, used with respect to a program, means
22 a supervised program regularly attended by eligible
23 youth, that fosters learning and development during
24 out-of-school-time hours, which includes hours before

1 school, after school, during summer vacation or an-
2 other school holiday, or on a Saturday or Sunday.

3 (6) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
4 the Secretary of Labor.

5 (7) WIOA DEFINITIONS.—The terms “career
6 pathway”, “customized training”, “in-demand indus-
7 try sector or occupation”, “local area”, “local
8 board”, “local educational agency”, and “recognized
9 postsecondary credential” have the meanings given
10 the terms in section 3 of the Workforce Innovation
11 and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3102).

12 (8) WORKFORCE READINESS PROGRAM.—The
13 term “workforce readiness program” means an out-
14 of-school-time program that—

15 (A) meets the requirements of section 7;

16 (B) is offered by a community-based orga-
17 nization of an eligible entity or a related cov-
18 ered partnership; and

19 (C) is intended to help prepare eligible
20 youth for the workforce.

21 **SEC. 4. GRANT PROGRAM ESTABLISHMENT.**

22 (a) GRANTS.—Using the amounts made available
23 under section 9, the Secretary shall award grants, on a
24 competitive basis, to eligible entities.

1 (b) GENERAL USE OF FUNDS.—The Secretary shall
2 award the grants, on a competitive basis, to assist eligible
3 entities in planning, developing, and implementing nation-
4 wide, comprehensive workforce readiness programs, that
5 are—

6 (1) in out-of-school-time programs;

7 (2) carried out by community-based organiza-
8 tions of the eligible entity or related covered partner-
9 ships; and

10 (3) for eligible youth.

11 (c) PERIODS OF GRANTS.—The Secretary shall
12 award the grants for periods of not less than 3 years and
13 not more than 5 years.

14 **SEC. 5. ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.**

15 To be eligible to receive a grant under section 4, an
16 entity shall—

17 (1)(A) be a national youth-serving organization
18 with active chapters, affiliates, or subgrant recipi-
19 ents, that are community-based organizations (in-
20 cluding such organizations that are facility-based or-
21 ganizations) in not fewer than 35 States; and

22 (B) provide programming focused on youth
23 workforce readiness in an out-of-school-time pro-
24 gram; and

1 (2) obtain approval of an application under sec-
2 tion 6.

3 **SEC. 6. APPLICATION.**

4 To be eligible to receive a grant under section 4, an
5 entity shall submit an application to the Secretary at such
6 time, in such manner, and containing such information as
7 the Secretary may require, including—

8 (1) a description of how the entity will imple-
9 ment a youth workforce readiness program in a
10 manner that ensures an equitable geographic dis-
11 tribution of program activities, including an equi-
12 table distribution between urban and rural commu-
13 nities;

14 (2) a description of the proposed program ac-
15 tivities to be funded and their locations;

16 (3) a description of populations of eligible youth
17 to be served, including populations living in or from
18 underserved communities or communities with em-
19 ployment disparities;

20 (4) a description of the effective strategies, best
21 practices, or evidence-based practices the workforce
22 readiness program will use;

23 (5) an assurance that the program will take
24 place in safe and easily accessible facilities;

1 (6) a demonstration of how, in implementing
2 the proposed program activities, the entity will co-
3 ordinate activities with Federal, State, and local pro-
4 grams and make the most effective use of public re-
5 sources;

6 (7) a description of—

7 (A) the community-based organizations or
8 the covered partnerships through which the en-
9 tity will implement the program; and

10 (B) if a covered partnership will assist in
11 implementing the program, the collaboration
12 and coordination activities that the community-
13 based organization in the partnership has car-
14 ried out or will carry out with other entities in
15 the partnership, related to that implementation;

16 (8) if the program includes an opportunity to
17 earn a recognized postsecondary credential, a de-
18 scription of the activities leading to the credential;
19 and

20 (9) an assurance that funds provided under this
21 Act will be used to supplement and not supplant
22 other Federal, State, or local funds expended to pro-
23 vide youth programs or workforce readiness pro-
24 grams.

1 **SEC. 7. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that receives a
3 grant under section 4 shall use the grant funds—

4 (1) if the entity seeks to implement the work-
5 force readiness program through a covered partner-
6 ship, to establish the partnership; and

7 (2) to carry out the development and implemen-
8 tation of a youth workforce readiness program—

9 (A) that includes services to help prepare
10 eligible youth for the workforce, which services
11 shall include—

12 (i) leadership development opportuni-
13 ties, which may include community service
14 and peer-centered activities encouraging
15 responsibility and other positive social and
16 civic behaviors, as appropriate;

17 (ii) workforce or workforce readiness
18 opportunities;

19 (iii) supportive services;

20 (iv) adult mentoring for the period of
21 participation and a subsequent period, for
22 a total of not less than 12 months;

23 (v) comprehensive guidance and coun-
24 seling (which may include drug and alcohol
25 abuse counseling and referral, and preven-
26 tion services, as appropriate);

- 1 (vi) financial literacy education;
- 2 (vii) entrepreneurial skills training;
- 3 (viii) services that provide labor mar-
- 4 ket and employment information about in-
- 5 demand industry sectors or occupations
- 6 available in the local area, such as career
- 7 awareness, career counseling, and career
- 8 exploration services;
- 9 (ix) activities to develop fundamental
- 10 workforce readiness skills, or to develop
- 11 employability skills (such as communica-
- 12 tion, creativity, collaboration, and critical
- 13 thinking) that support social-emotional de-
- 14 velopment through every developmental
- 15 stage, in both formal and informal learning
- 16 experiences; and
- 17 (x) career exposure, through men-
- 18 toring and targeted programming, offered
- 19 by local industry or sector partnerships, to
- 20 provide career assessments and education
- 21 and career planning;
- 22 (B) that includes services to help prepare
- 23 eligible youth who are not younger than age 15
- 24 for the workforce, which services shall include—

- 1 (i) support for the use of career path-
2 ways;
- 3 (ii) paid and unpaid work experiences
4 that have as a component academic and
5 occupational education, which may in-
6 clude—
- 7 (I) summer employment opportu-
8 nities and other employment opportu-
9 nities available throughout the school
10 year;
- 11 (II) pre-apprenticeship and reg-
12 istered apprenticeship programs;
- 13 (III) internships and job shad-
14 owing; and
- 15 (IV) on-the-job training opportu-
16 nities;
- 17 (iii) work-based learning (as defined
18 in section 3 of the Carl D. Perkins Career
19 and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20
20 U.S.C. 2302)) that provides opportunities
21 for the application of employability skills,
22 and hands-on work experiences through
23 covered partnerships;
- 24 (iv) occupational skill training, which
25 shall include priority consideration for

1 training programs that lead to recognized
2 postsecondary credentials that are aligned
3 with in-demand industry sectors or occupa-
4 tions in the local area involved, if the local
5 board determines that the programs meet
6 the quality criteria described in section 123
7 of the Workforce Innovation and Oppor-
8 tunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3153);

9 (v) the provision of customized train-
10 ing;

11 (vi) education offered concurrently
12 with and in the same context as workforce
13 readiness activities and training for a spe-
14 cific occupation or occupational cluster;
15 and

16 (vii) activities that help youth prepare
17 for and transition to postsecondary edu-
18 cation and training; and

19 (C) that may include—

20 (i) the provision of professional devel-
21 opment (as defined in section 3 of the Carl
22 D. Perkins Career and Technical Edu-
23 cation Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2302)) for
24 training educators and other providers of

1 educational services who participate in the
2 workforce readiness program; and

3 (ii) developing assets and resources
4 that assist an employer or groups of em-
5 ployers or sectors in working with eligible
6 youth.

7 (b) SUBGRANTS.—The eligible entity may use the
8 grant funds, with the approval of the Secretary, to award
9 subgrants to eligible organizations to carry out activities
10 through a youth workforce readiness program.

11 **SEC. 8. EVALUATION AND REPORTING.**

12 (a) MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that imple-
14 ments a youth workforce readiness program under
15 this Act shall—

16 (A) ensure that the program is—

17 (i) based upon an assessment of objec-
18 tive data regarding the need for such a
19 program in the communities served; and

20 (ii) evaluated on an established set of
21 performance measures aimed at ensuring
22 the availability of high-quality opportuni-
23 ties by measuring eligible youth success;
24 and

1 (B) collect the data necessary for the
2 measures of eligible youth success described in
3 subparagraph (A)(ii).

4 (2) MEASURES.—The performance measures
5 (including indicators) that will be used to evaluate
6 the youth workforce readiness programs—

7 (A) shall be aligned with the regular aca-
8 demic program of the school of and the aca-
9 demic needs of participating eligible youth; and

10 (B) shall include performance measures
11 that—

12 (i) are able to track the success (such
13 as improvement over time) of eligible
14 youth; and

15 (ii) include assessment results and
16 other indicators of eligible youth success,
17 such as improved attendance during the
18 school day, better classroom grades, reg-
19 ular (or consistent) program attendance,
20 and on-time advancement to the next
21 grade level; and

22 (C) for high school students, may include
23 indicators such as achievement of career com-
24 petencies, or successful completion of intern-

1 ships, apprenticeships, or work-based learning
2 opportunities, or high school graduation.

3 (b) PERIODIC EVALUATION.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct
5 a periodic evaluation of the eligible entity, to assess
6 the progress of the entity’s youth workforce readi-
7 ness program toward ensuring high-quality opportu-
8 nities by measuring eligible youth success.

9 (2) USE OF RESULTS.—The results of evalua-
10 tions under paragraph (1) shall be—

11 (A) used to refine, improve, and strengthen
12 the program, and to refine the performance
13 measures; and

14 (B) used by the Secretary to determine
15 whether a grant for a program is eligible to be
16 renewed under section 4.

17 (c) REPORTING.—The Secretary shall submit a re-
18 port containing the results of the evaluation to the appro-
19 priate committees of Congress, and make the report avail-
20 able to the public.

21 **SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

22 There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out
23 this Act such sums as may be necessary for each of fiscal
24 years 2022 through 2026.

1 **SEC. 10. REESTABLISHMENT OF YOUTH COUNCILS.**

2 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Section 107 of the Workforce
3 Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3122) is
4 amended by adding at the end the following:

5 “(j) YOUTH COUNCIL.—

6 “(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There shall be estab-
7 lished, as a subgroup within each local board, a
8 youth council appointed by the local board, in co-
9 operation with the chief elected official for the local
10 area.

11 “(2) MEMBERSHIP.—The membership of each
12 youth council—

13 “(A) shall include—

14 “(i) representatives with special inter-
15 est or professional expertise in youth work-
16 force development programs, activities re-
17 lated to youth workforce readiness, or
18 youth workforce investment activities;

19 “(ii) local labor or joint labor-manage-
20 ment organizations; and

21 “(iii) representatives of education-re-
22 lated organizations; and

23 “(B) may include—

24 “(i) members of the local board with
25 special interest or expertise in youth work-

1 force readiness or youth workforce develop-
2 ment;

3 “(ii) representatives of local labor or
4 joint labor-management organizations with
5 special interest or expertise in youth work-
6 force readiness or youth workforce develop-
7 ment;

8 “(iii) representatives of the workforce,
9 in the local area, with special interest or
10 expertise in youth workforce readiness or
11 youth workforce development;

12 “(iv) representatives of entities ad-
13 ministering education and training activi-
14 ties, including career and technical edu-
15 cation activities, in the local area, with
16 special interest or expertise in youth work-
17 force readiness or youth workforce develop-
18 ment;

19 “(v) representatives of youth service
20 agencies, including juvenile justice and
21 local law enforcement agencies, and rep-
22 resentatives of local public housing au-
23 thorities;

1 “(vi) parents of eligible youth, and
2 current or former youth program partici-
3 pants;

4 “(vii) representatives of vulnerable
5 populations (including foster youth, minor-
6 ity youth, and youth with disabilities);

7 “(viii) community representatives, em-
8 ployers of eligible youth, and workplace
9 learning advisors (as defined in section 3),
10 with experience relating to youth workforce
11 activities;

12 “(ix) for a local area in which a Job
13 Corps center is located, representatives of
14 that center; and

15 “(x) such other individuals as the
16 chairperson of the local board, in coopera-
17 tion with the chief elected official, deter-
18 mines to be appropriate.

19 “(3) RELATIONSHIP TO LOCAL BOARD.—Mem-
20 bers of the youth council who are not otherwise
21 members of the local board shall be voting members
22 of the youth council and nonvoting members of the
23 board.

24 “(4) DUTIES.—The duties of the youth council
25 shall include—

1 “(A) representing the interests of youth
2 before the local board;

3 “(B) collaborating with the local board to
4 ensure programs address youth workforce devel-
5 opment and youth workforce readiness; and

6 “(C) advising the local board on the inclu-
7 sion and incorporation of the local youth work-
8 force in decisions as appropriate.”.

9 (b) STATE PLANS.—Section 102(b)(2)(C) of the
10 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C.
11 3112(b)(2)(C)) is amended—

12 (1) in clause (vii), by striking “and” at the end;

13 (2) by redesignating clause (viii) as clause (ix);

14 and

15 (3) by inserting after clause (vii) the following:

16 “(viii) how the local boards in the
17 State are incorporating the recommenda-
18 tions of the youth councils within the local
19 boards; and”.

20 (c) LOCAL PLANS.—Section 108(b) of the Workforce
21 Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3123(b)) is
22 amended—

23 (1) in paragraph (21), by striking “and” at the
24 end;

1 (2) by redesignating paragraph (22) as para-
2 graph (23); and

3 (3) by inserting after paragraph (21) the fol-
4 lowing:

5 “(22) how the local board is incorporating the
6 recommendations of the youth council within the
7 local board; and”.

8 (d) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Section 116(d) of the Work-
9 force Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C.
10 3141(d)) is amended—

11 (1) in paragraph (2)—

12 (A) in subparagraph (K), by striking
13 “and” at the end;

14 (B) by redesignating subparagraph (L) as
15 subparagraph (M); and

16 (C) by inserting after subparagraph (K)
17 the following:

18 “(L) information on the activities carried
19 out in the State on the recommendation of
20 youth councils in the State; and”;

21 (2) in paragraph (3)—

22 (A) in subparagraph (A), by striking “(L)”
23 and inserting “(M)”;

24 (B) in subparagraph (B), by striking
25 “and” at the end;

1 (C) by redesignating subparagraph (C) as
2 subparagraph (D); and

3 (D) by inserting after subparagraph (B)
4 the following:

5 “(C) information on the activities carried
6 out in the local area on the recommendation of
7 the youth council within the local board; and”.

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