

Impact Guidance Letter: Connected to Education and Job Training

Objective: Increase the number of youth (ages 15–25) completing education and job training that provides pathways to career advancement

2030 target: Ensure an additional 50,000 opportunity youth (ages 15–25) are connected to school or work by 2030

Counties served: Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia

Results-based accountability “story behind the curve” (background): Opportunity youth are among the most vulnerable populations in the United States. Sometimes referred to as disconnected youth or out-of-school youth, these are individuals between the ages of 15 and 25 who are not connected to school and/or work. According to the Corps Network, of the 38.9 million Americans who fall into the 16–24 age range, about 6.7 million can be described as opportunity youth. These young people represent a social and economic opportunity: many of them are eager to further their education, gain work experience, and help their communities.

The US Department of Labor’s [Workforce Investment Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#) increased the minimum out-of-school youth (OSY) expenditure rate from the 30% required under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to 75%—a shift that signifies a much greater focus of both dollars and resources on the OSY population, especially for those OSY who face the greatest challenges to attain meaningful employment. United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey will align its workforce efforts with federal, state, and local WIA, philanthropy, and other stakeholder efforts to improve services and supports provided to opportunity youth. United Way is interested in partnering with stakeholders who are interested in addressing three core challenges facing our region:¹

1. The workforce systems in general, including education and training providers in particular, are not well aligned with the needs of employers who provide jobs that pay a living wage.
2. Too many workforce programs are not well integrated into an overall system that allows leveraging multiple funding sources to better serve employers, job seekers, and incumbent workers.

¹ [Pennsylvania Combined State WIOA Plan](#)

3. The workforce system lacks a support structure of training programs and employer peer learning opportunities, including registered apprenticeship programs and industry partnerships. This enables and encourages more employers to invest in workers and implement best organizational practices to create more jobs that pay family-sustaining wages.

United Way's work to date: United Way recently received a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to support collective impact initiatives focused on youth employment to include opportunity youth. To that end, United Way is joining with key stakeholders to turn the curve on the growing rates of youth disconnection. We have set community- and agency-performance levels to successfully measure our progress toward our result. For more information on United Way's work to date, visit: <https://www.unitedforimpact.org/our-work-to-date/>

What works to turn the curve: Training opportunities create or lead to pathways to living and sustainable wages. These types of programs include but are not limited to career-connected awareness education, learn and earn opportunities, transitional jobs, on-the-job training (OJT) opportunities in employer-demand jobs, incumbent worker training (e.g., credential attainment), dislocated worker training, and registered apprenticeship programs in employer-demand jobs—all training experiences create and/or lead to pathways to livable wages.

Required program components

1. Provide job seekers with job training, job placement, and/or job advancement opportunities
2. Form or engage with community partnerships to provide effective programs and services to job seekers
3. Provide workforce services to targeted job seekers (e.g., returning citizens, veterans, and individuals living with disAbilities [physical/mental])
4. Programs that align with the needs of employers who provide jobs that pay livable wages and benefits
5. Programs that demonstrate employer engagement

Preferred program components

1. Provide work-based training opportunities (e.g., transitional work opportunities, on-the-job training, pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, and “earn and learn” opportunities) that provide meaningful work experience and creates access to a living wage
2. Evidence of leveraging multiple funds to better serve employers, job seekers, and incumbent workers
3. Partners with 2-1-1 (NJ and/or PA) to maintain a current list of programs and services and promote 2-1-1 as a resource for individuals and families served, volunteers, donors, and staff
4. Providers and partners that have intentional partnership with other individual and family stability supports that increase the likelihood of success for Opportunity Youth to stay connected, including:
 - a. Delivering trauma-informed services
 - b. History of volunteer management
 - c. History of advocacy
 - d. Two-generation approach: consider dependents and their caregivers in approach to service delivery
5. Serve meaningful numbers of individuals and/or families living at or below 200% of the federal poverty level and/or communities/neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty (eligible zip codes detailed in the objective applications).

Agency performance measures

How much?

- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) served
- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) enrolled in a job training program
- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) enrolled in a job training program who are members of one or more of the following targeted groups: veterans, individuals living with disAbilities (physical/mental), returning citizens, and/or recipients of TANF
- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) enrolled in an employer-demand driven job training program

- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) enrolled in a credentialing program
- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) enrolled a high school or GED attainment program

How well?

- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) who completed a job training program
- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) who completed an employer-demand driven job training program
- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) who completed a credentialing program
- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) who completed a high school or GED attainment program
- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) who received an industry-recognized credential
- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) who received their high school diploma or GED
- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) who were enrolled in at least one public benefit

Is anyone better off?

- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) placed in a job
- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) placed in a job who are members of one or more of the following targeted groups: veterans, individuals living with disAbilities (physical/mental), returning citizens, and/or recipients of TANF
- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) placed in a job where they earned a living wage
- # of unduplicated opportunity youth (ages 15–25) placed in a job connected to a career pathway

In partnership with others, United Way seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. Increase regional stakeholder investment in talent and skills for targeted industries in strategic partnership with employers and educational institutions, resulting in Opportunity Youth (ages 15–25) meeting employer demand by 2030.
2. Increase work-based learning opportunities.
3. Increase number of employers engaged to strengthen the connection of education and training to the regional economy.
4. Improve workforce development referral systems.
5. Increase number of jobs that pay or provide pathways to a livable wage.
6. Strengthen data sharing to more effectively connect Opportunity Youth to career pathways and pipelines.
7. Expand utilization of 2-1-1 and ensure that it is an accurate and robust access point of information and referral for individuals, families and community partners in our region.