



WIOA Youth Request for Qualifications

Small Business Owners for the New Business Entrepreneurship Skills Development Training Program

1. Introduction

MassHire Metro North Workforce Board (MNWB) is issuing the following Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to identify qualified small business owners to serve as mentors in the New Business (New Biz) Entrepreneurial Skills Development training program funded by the Workforce and Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth Program.

This open RFQ will establish a pool of pre-qualified small business owners to serve as mentors for youth participants. Applications will be accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis; priority will be given to applications received by the priority deadline of **December 18, 2026, at 5:00pm EST**.

Qualified applicants will be placed on a pre-approved mentors list and may be matched with youth participants to provide structured mentorship and career exploration support.

2. Background

MNWB leverages WIOA Youth funding program to deliver the New Biz Entrepreneurship Skills Development Program, launching **March 16, 2027**, to help young adults gain foundational business knowledge, professional skills, and exposure to entrepreneurship.

Program instruction will be provided twice per week, once in-person and once online, by qualified instructors. Each small business mentor selected through this procurement will be paired with a program participant to provide a biweekly mentorship session through in-person or virtual meetings.

We strongly encourage applications from local business owners with experience supporting individuals with learning and intellectual disabilities, English language learners, or youth from low-income communities in the age range between 16–24.

Ideal candidates are strong communicators, passionate about mentoring, and able to help youth understand real-world business practices and processes while motivating them to pursue their goals. Ideal candidates should have a high level of comfort leading check-in sessions on a virtual platform.

3. Areas of Work and Project Examples

The program runs from **March 16, 2027** to **June 10, 2027**, for a total of **13 weeks**. Mentors will receive a stipend of \$1,200 for participation, contingent upon completion of required mentorship activities, documentation, and compliance with WIOA guidelines.

Classroom Support and Documentation

- Attend the first session to introduce yourself and meet with your mentee on March 16, 2027 in Malden, MA.
- Support student performance through various means such as take-home assignments, pitch practice, review of classroom concepts, and business plan development.
- Maintain updated records of student progress, challenges, and biweekly check-in attendance.
- Submit biweekly updates on student progress to MNWB program staff.
- Communicate with MNWB program staff about any additional support your mentee may need.

Biweekly Mentorship Check-ins

- Schedule and lead biweekly virtual check-ins (up to one hour) with your mentee.
- During your mentorship sessions, complete the three tasks included in the employability skills/job readiness training (curriculum provided by MNWB) covering business-related components including but not limited to business writing, professional communication, networking, public speaking, and time management.
- Provide technical expertise and guidance on a business plan, market analysis, and areas of growth for both the business and an entrepreneur.
- Set working expectations with mentee and understand mentee's personal and business goals.
- Offer constructive feedback and facilitate networking introductions when appropriate.

Job Shadowing Experience

- Design a job shadowing experience that sparks curiosity and encourages meaningful career exploration and discovery.
- Host a minimum 4-hour to maximum 5-day job shadowing experience consistent with WIOA Youth Job Shadowing policy.

Final Graduation & Pitch Presentation

- Attend your mentee's final graduation and pitch presentation on June 10, 2027 in Malden, MA.

4. Preferred Qualifications

- Understanding and sensitivity to diverse cultural backgrounds and exercise patience with students' learning processes.

- Experience mentoring, coaching, or supporting young adults in academic, vocational, or community settings.
- Comfort using digital video conferencing tools to communicate and meet with mentee.
- Ability to adjust mentoring approaches to support diverse learning styles and personal goals.
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills, with a focus on active listening and encouragement.
- Familiarity with entrepreneurship concepts and practical experience in business planning or small business development.
- Willingness to collaborate with program staff, instructors, and other mentors to support youth success.
- Reliable, organized, and able to manage multiple commitments while maintaining consistent engagement.

5. Proposal Response Requirements

Proposals must include the following components:

- Cover page that includes name and contact information of the respondent.
- Experience & Qualifications: maximum 2-page document which answers the following:
 - Summary of related experiences that clearly outlines track record and history of provided business mentorship services, including business-related components such as business writing, professional communication, networking, public speaking, and time management.
 - Outline of interest in mentorship.
 - Overview of proposed youth job shadowing opportunity.

6. Submission Instructions

- Please submit your response based on the following format guidelines: 8.5 x 11 letter size paper, numbered pages, one-inch margins, single-spaced, and minimum 11-point font.
- Applications are reviewed on a **rolling basis**; priority will be given to proposals received on or before 5:00 PM on **December 18, 2026**.
- All proposals should be sent in a single document in a PDF format via email to rfp@masshiremetronorth.org.
- Questions may be directed to rfp@masshiremetronorth.org with the subject line: "RFQ NewBiz Youth Mentorship Program."

7. Evaluation Criteria/Review Process

Proposals that do not meet minimum standards will be considered non-responsive. This RFQ does not commit MNWB to award a contract or pay any costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal. All materials submitted become the property of MNWB and are subject to Massachusetts public records law.

All proposals will be scored according to the evaluation criteria set forth below. Additional information may be considered by reviewers when scoring proposals, such as interviews and questions and answers after submission of the written proposal.

Criteria	Point Value
Relevant Experience and Track Record	35
Proposed Job Shadowing Opportunity	20
Commitment to Mentorship	20
Total Points Available	75

After the review committee scores your written proposal, they will reach out to conduct a virtual interview to follow up with the responses from your application and inquire more about your interest and experience. Final notification of admission into the program will be sent out in January.

8. Contract and Payment Structure

The mentorship services contract will run from **March 16, 2027** through **June 10, 2027**, covering the full **13-week** program cycle. The selected mentors will be compensated a total of \$1,200 paid via direct deposit in 3 equal installments of \$400.

Payments will be issued according to the following schedule:

- Installment 1: March 19, 2027
- Installment 2: April 30, 2027
- Installment 3: June 18, 2027

Please allow 3 to 5 business days for payment processing after each scheduled date.

Each payment is contingent upon the timely submission of required deliverables, including:

- Completed biweekly check-in forms.
- Completed Employability Training/Job Readiness assignments.
- Completed Job Shadowing attendance and evaluation forms.
- Any additional documentation or reports requested by MNWB program staff.

The mentor will be engaged as an independent contractor and classified as a 1099 contractor under this agreement. The mentor is responsible for all applicable taxes and withholdings.

9. Program Monitoring and Compliance

All selected mentors are subject to program monitoring and must maintain accurate records of mentorship activities and mentee engagement. Mentorship services will complement, not replace, formal classroom instruction.

Mentors will comply with all applicable WIOA Youth program requirements, including recordkeeping, reporting, and equal opportunity provisions.

10. Conflict of Interest

Applicants must disclose any real or potential conflicts of interest. Individuals with a financial or personal interest in the RFQ review or selection process may not participate in this procurement.

11. Equal Opportunity Statement

This program is funded under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). MassHire Metro North Workforce Board is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. (TDD/TTY: 1-800-439-2370, Voice: 1-800-439-0183)