YouthWorks Request for Proposals

2027-2028

MassHire Metro North Workforce Board
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SECTION A: BACKGROUND

About YouthWorks

YouthWorks is a state-funded (line item 7002-0012) youth employment program that helps teens and young adults gain the skills and experience needed to begin their career journey. The Program is offered through the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and administered statewide by the Commonwealth Corporation. The anticipated outcome is to provide young people with the skills, experience, and networks to be able to secure employment in the unsubsidized labor market in critical areas of the economy including but not limited to advanced manufacturing, health care, information technology, and construction.

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Term	Definition
CommCorp	Commonwealth Corporation.
Cycle 1	Summer programming period.
Cycle 2	Year-round (school-year) programming period.
Hub (YouthWorks Hub)	The data management platform used to record youth profile information, eligibility documentation, participation records, and worksites.
MNWB	MassHire Metro North Workforce Board. The organization contracted by CommCorp to deliver YouthWorks programming for the Metro North region. This is the organization applying to receive YouthWorks funds.
LMS (Learning Management System)	The online platform used to complete Signal Success modules and track attendance.
Signal Success	The required work readiness curriculum for all YouthWorks participants. Alternative curriculum must be pre-approved by MNWB and Commonwealth Corporation.
Sub-grantee/Partner:	The entity contracted by MNWB to collaborate or implement specific services. These two terms (sub-grantee/partner) are used

Population Served

Participants of this program are 14- 25 years old who are at risk of falling into chronic unemployment through lack of exposure to employment opportunities, experience, mentorship, and access to opportunity. All YouthWorks participants must meet four eligibility requirements:

1. Age,
2. at least one Risk Factor,
3. and Geographic Residence.

(See Section E for detailed descriptions and documentation requirements)

Metro North's Vision for YouthWorks

The YouthWorks employment program, operated by the MassHire Metro North Workforce Board (MNWB), has annually offered significant and rewarding employment to more than 400 young individuals in the Metro North region every year.

MNWB is issuing this request for proposal (RFP) to select qualified providers to deliver high-quality YouthWorks programming throughout the Metro North region. These employment opportunities are made possible with YouthWorks funds provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through the Commonwealth Corporation (CommCorp). Youth participants are each provided with the support and guidance needed to ensure that the benefits of this work experience extend beyond the paycheck, by developing the essential job skills and workplace readiness needed to excel in their future career field.

Addressing the Fluid Labor Market and Youth Impact

The Metro North region continues to experience a fluid labor market, where shifts in employment demand and economic conditions disproportionately affect young people. When unemployment rises, youth are often the first to feel the impact, facing barriers to entry and fewer opportunities to gain meaningful work experience. Recent data from the 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) highlights the urgency of this challenge. Youth labor force participation rates for individuals ages 16–19 vary significantly across Metro North communities:

- Chelsea: 29.6%
- Revere: 42.6%
- Cambridge: 27.5%
- Somerville: 32.9%
- Everett: 41.9%
- Malden: 39.7%

By comparison, the statewide labor force participation rate for youth ages 16–19 is 41.7%. These figures underscore the disproportionate challenges faced by young people in Metro North's priority communities, where participation rates often fall below the state average.

Preparing Youth for the Future of Work and AI Literacy

As the labor market evolves, the rise of artificial intelligence and digital technologies is reshaping the skills in demand in the regional labor market. MNWB recognizes that preparing youth for the future of work must include AI literacy, ensuring that young people understand, engage with, and adapt to emerging technologies. Providers are encouraged to integrate programming that builds digital fluency, critical thinking, and adaptability, equipping youth with the competencies needed to thrive in industries increasingly influenced by AI and automation.

Metro North's Commitment

A primary focus at MNWB is our dedication to enhancing and delivering high-quality programs for young individuals throughout the Metro North region. MNWB is looking for providers that foster and advocate for a wide range of meaningful work experiences in high demand industries for the Metro North region. Interested providers should submit a program plan that demonstrates how the proposed service model will offer

impactful experiences for at-risk youth and young adults in the Metro North region. MNWB anticipates providers will propose innovative approaches with strategic partnerships that will provide Metro North youth with quality work experience and career development opportunities.

Notable Changes to the 2027-2028 RFP

The following updates apply to all providers for the 2027–2028 program year:

1. **Participant Eligibility:**
   All enrolled YouthWorks participants must meet three eligibility factors: Age, Geographic Residence, and at least one other CommCorp-determined risk factor. Risk factors include:
   - Low-income (200% FPL)
   - Disability status
   - Currently or previously in foster care
   - Unhoused or housing-unstable
   - Not attending school (stop out) and did not earn a high school diploma or equivalency
   - Was institutionalized/incarcerated
   - Currently justice-involved
   - Young mother

2. **Eligibility Documentation:**
   For the CommCorp determined risk factor:
   - Only one form of documentation is required for each criterion.
   - Self-attestation should only be used as a last resort to verify a participant's eligibility. As such, applicants may only use self-attestation for a maximum of 15% of the total participants in their contract.
   - All participants must have a valid Social Security Number (SSN) recorded on the Hub, even if self-attesting to eligibility factors.

   (See pages 21-24 for detailed explanation)

3. **MyFriendBen**
   MyFriendBen is a free online screening tool that helps grantee staff and participants quickly find the public benefits, tax credits, food assistance, and health coverage participants may qualify for, all in one place.

   YouthWorks grant recipients are required to provide participants aged 18 or older with access to the MyFriendBen screener. Dedicated time must be allocated during the intake, enrollment, and/or eligibility verification process for participants to complete the screener. Grant recipients may use creative approaches to facilitate access, such as sharing the screener link, including it in placement letters, displaying posters with QR codes, or providing kiosks at physical program sites.

MassHire Metro North Workforce Board as the Lead Entity

In the Metro North region, the MassHire Metro North Workforce Board (MNWB) is the lead entity and fiscal agent for the YouthWorks program. MNWB prepares the regional application to CommCorp's YouthWorks Request for Proposals (RFP) and is the contractor to CommCorp for the region-wide program.

Successful applicants to this RFP will be subcontractors to MNWB.

MNWB***, as regional lead***, provides support and technical assistance to all YouthWorks program partners. MNWB YouthWorks staff will be your first point of contact for any program support needs. As the regional lead, MNWB is committed to offering essential support to sub-grantees, ensuring the delivery of high-quality programs for youth in the Metro North region.

YouthWorks Age, Stage, & Path Model

The YouthWorks Age, Stage & Path Model is grounded in developmental career theory, which recognizes that self-concept evolves throughout one's lifetime, and that career development is shaped by experience, identity, and life stages. By aligning program tiers with both age and stage of experience, Youthworks ensures that participants receive support, training, and experiences that meet them where they are. This allows flexibility for youth whose maturity, experience, or readiness may not align neatly with their chronological age. YouthWorks consists of four tiers that align with youth participant's age and stage of development.

Tier	**Age Range**	**Focus**	**Participant Profile**
Tier 1 – Service & Project-Based Learning	14-15	Introductory work experiences	Youth with little to no work experience and/or no career path in mind
Tier 2 – Early Career Trajectory Experiences	16-17	Career exploration	Youth with no job history or one prior job, open to exploring career paths
Tier 3 – Career Pathway Training & Support	18-21	Career preparation	Youth with some work experience who are intent on a specific career path
(Optional) Emerging Workforce – Career Management	22-25	Career advancement	Young adults committed to exploring and managing a career path offered in their region

SECTION B: GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Application Process and Deadlines

All applications must be received by the MassHire Metro North Workforce Board by **December 7th, 2027, at 11:59 PM EST.** To submit RFP proposals, please email rfp@masshiremetronorth.org

ensuring "**YouthWorks 27-28 RFP**" is included in the subject line. Once MNWB has received and reviewed all proposals, applicants will be contacted for further information.

Once proposals are submitted, MNWB's review committee will evaluate proposals based on program services, recruitment and eligibility processes, case management, employer partnerships, staffing plan, budget, data management, and overall program support.

If selected for inclusion, your organization must make a staff member available who can collaborate with MNWB during the week of December 14th, to finalize additional questions for the regional application.

MNWB must submit its final application on behalf of the Metro North region to the Commonwealth Corporation by January 4th, 2027.

Required Application Contents

1. Application and Program Plan Summary (Section H of this RFP)
2. Program Budget (available at https://masshiremetronorth.org/about/fundingprocurement/)
3. Program Work Plan (available at https://masshiremetronorth.org/about/fundingprocurement/)
4. Programs utilizing an alternative curriculum for career readiness and not the Signal Success curriculum provided by the Commonwealth Corporation, must submit a copy of their alternative curriculum cover page template

RFP Inquiries, Questions and Answers

The primary mode of communication between MNWB and potential bidders will occur via https://masshiremetronorth.org/about/fundingprocurement/. Questions and Answers and any RFP amendments will be posted on the website. It is the bidder's responsibility to check the website page frequently to stay apprised throughout the process.

MNWB staff members are unable to provide technical assistance during the application process. **Please do not contact staff directly with any questions.** All questions pertaining to the RFP must be received in writing via email at RFP@masshiremetronorth.org. Please include "**YouthWorks 27-28 RFP**" in the subject line. Only those questions directed to this email will be answered. All questions must be received by December 3rd , 2026. Questions will not be answered over the phone or in person.

Bidder's Conference

MNWB will host an optional Bidder's Conference, via webinar, for all prospective respondents to this RFP. At this session MNWB staff will review program information, key proposal requirements, contract terms and conditions and respond to questions.

The Bidder's Conference will be held:

November 23, 2026

10:00AM – 11:30AM

Via Zoom Webinar (Registration is Required)

A brief period will be reserved at the Bidder's Conference for additional questions to be submitted in writing. Every effort will be made at the conference to answer questions submitted that day; however, all questions will be answered and posted on the website. No answers are final until posted on the website.

You can register for the Bidder's Conference here: **https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_sLVvRUU2SQKRD2ANVvJ2yQ.** Attendance at the bidder's conference is recommended but not required.

Duration of Grant

Funds must be used in Program Year (PY) 2027-2028 to prepare for and support youth and young adult training and employment programs **between April 1, 2027, and June 30, 2028**. Project expenses related to instructional/training staff, training equipment/supplies, employer outreach, case management and other activities are authorized to begin on the start date listed on the contract, or in the event of delayed signing, as of the date a contract is signed.

- **Cycle 1 Period (June 21, 2027 – August 31, 2027):** Programs must be designed to provide each participant with a minimum of 40 program hours of program activity between June 21, 2027, and August 31, 2027.
- **Cycle 2 Period (September 7, 2027 – June 30, 2028):** Programs must be designed to provide each participant with a minimum of 40 program hours of program activity between September 7, 2027, and June 30, 2028.
    - Note: Participants who are 17 and under may work only within the limits established by Massachusetts and federal child labor laws for both school days and non-school days (see embedded link).

Recognizing not all programs operate at full capacity all year, we require programs to identify beginning and ending dates for cohort programming and provide those details within their work plan.

Guidance on Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI)

Applicants may use generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) tools to support the development of their applications. However, applications should reflect the applicant organization's actual experience, expertise, capacity, and understanding of the communities it proposes to serve.

AI-generated content can sometimes be overly generic, lack meaningful detail, or include inaccurate or unrealistic descriptions of proposed activities. For example, statements about providing "comprehensive, holistic, wraparound services" or "building meaningful employer partnerships" are not sufficient on their own without explaining what those services or partnerships look like in practice, how they will be delivered, and what experience the organization brings to the work.

If using Gen AI tools, applicants are responsible for reviewing and verifying all content to ensure that responses are accurate, specific to their organization and local context, and reflective of activities that can realistically be delivered within the proposed budget and period of performance.

Right to Contact Applicants for Clarification

MassHire Metro North Workforce Board reserves the right to contact applicants for clarification or negotiation, to extend or revise any deadline, and to reject or accept any proposals in whole or part, if deemed to be in the best interest of the YouthWorks program. MassHire Metro North Workforce Board may negotiate the terms of the contract before issuing the award.

RFP Timeline & Schedule

Activity	Date
Request for Proposals Released	November 13, 2026
Q&A Webinar/Bidder's Conference YW 27-28	November 23, 2026, at 10:00 AM
Priority Deadline to Submit Written Questions	December 3, 2026
Application Responses Due	December 7, 2026, by 11:59 PM
(Anticipated) Application Status Notification	March 6, 2027
(Anticipated) Contract Start	April 1, 2027
Contract End	June 30, 2028

Questions related to the application process can be emailed to: rfp@masshiremetronorth.org

SECTION C: FUNDING GUIDELINES

Sub-Grantees and Partners

Sub-grantees/partners are cities, organizations or other entities that are formally identified in the grant application and contract to provide program services. These are distinct from worksites, which are the individual employers where participants complete work experiences. While an organization may serve as both a sub-grantee and a worksite, only sub-grantees and partners are contracted directly under this grant and are required to submit budgets for grant activity. Sub-grantees and partners may:

- Serve as intermediaries and brokers to recruit employers and youth, or
- provide a gap-filling service to support program goals

Eligible entities include community-based organizations, public agencies, qualified faith-based organizations, One-Stop Career Centers, non-profit youth serving organizations, or other entities whose mission and population served align with the YouthWorks grant program.

Available Funding

Commonwealth Corporation anticipates up to $14,900,000 in total funding across the state to serve approximately 3,000 youth statewide. Metro North's allocation for this program year is up to $1,353,632. Funding awarded will be for the use of the entire program year (Cycles 1 and 2), inclusive of planning, outreach, recruitment, enrollment, and delivery of program activities beginning April 1st, 2027.

- Cycle 1 programming will take place June 21, 2027 – August 31, 2027
- Cycle 2 will take place September 7, 2027 – June 30, 2028.
- The April programming start date is in support of training for Peer Leaders and hiring of supporting program staff.
- Funding will support placements and programming that take place virtually, in-person or hybrid.

Important Note: This year's allocation reflects a return to pre-ARPA funding levels. As a result, MNWB strongly encourages applicants to submit cost-effective proposals that maximize impact while demonstrating efficiency in the use of funds. Proposals that clearly outline strategies for delivering high-quality programming within these funding parameters will be considered more competitive.

Applicants are further encouraged to leverage employer match contributions and strategic partnerships to extend program resources, strengthen career pathways, and ensure sustainability. Proposals that demonstrate innovative collaboration with employers and community partners will be viewed as offering stronger, more resilient programming for Metro North youth.

Participant Wages

The YouthWorks program will continue to provide participants with wages ranging from a base of $15/hr (MA minimum wage) up to $20/hr across all tiers. The Maximum Allowable Combined Incentive, Stipend, and Wage Expense (per participant) for the program year are below:

- **Cycle 1:** $3,000
- **Cycle 2:** $5,000

All programs must apply a consistent wage structure for participants within the same cohort; for example, all participants in the same cohort must receive the same hourly wage. Note:

- These earning limits exclude fringe benefits, participant support services, and support service stipends.
- Peer leaders may be paid a higher rate within the approved wage range to reflect their additional leadership responsibilities
- Any region that anticipates paying over $20/hr. or exceeding the maximum combined stipend and wage limit must obtain written approval from Commonwealth Corporation prior to the start of programming.

These figures exclude fringe, participant support services, and support service stipend.

Employer Match and Partnership Guidelines

Sub-grantees are highly encouraged to strengthen employer relationships and leverage non-public sector investments to enhance worksite placements and expand wage matching opportunities beyond the required 10% fiscal match. MNWB will actively support providers in cultivating these partnerships by connecting applicants to regional employers, facilitating introductions, and sharing insights from our employer network. Increased matching efforts will be a focus of monitoring and technical assistance in the upcoming program year.

MNWB encourages applicants to:

- Leverage regional partners & engage employers whose mission aligns with YouthWorks goals, expand recruitment in high-growth industries identified in their Regional Workforce Blueprints and Commonwealth priorities by the Healey-Driscoll Administration (including life sciences, health care, human services, clean energy, and advanced manufacturing).
- Collaborate with Chapter 74 approved vocational-technical programs; schools participating in MA College and Career Pathway Initiatives community colleges; public agencies; employers; and community-based organizations focused on workforce development.
- Make connections to an academic interest, of their target populations (e.g., climate and clean energy; language arts; numeracy; STEM).
    - Strategically pair cycle 1 and 2 programming so YouthWorks participants can experience a sustained and progressively sequenced set of work and learning experiences.

The required match can be achieved through private sector wages paid to youth who are eligible for YouthWorks or grants made by private sector employers to the region. Private-sector employers include private-sector enterprises and private nonprofit organizations such as private hospitals, colleges, universities, and others. The match progress must be updated quarterly, with match requirements finalized and fulfilled by the end of the contract year.

Failure to provide sufficient employer or non-public sector match in a timely manner may be considered by MNWB as a cause for disallowing expenses in the current year's contract and/or a factor in establishing award levels for the following year's YouthWorks program.

For city funded mayoral programs, city-funded programs would not be considered a match contribution.

Program and Resource Connections

YouthWorks grantees are encouraged to leverage and braid funding with other state and local workforce initiatives such as Connecting Activities (CA), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to maximize their impact. MNWB staff are available to provide technical assistance (TA) to grantees on strategies for integration with CA and WIOA. Examples of these collaborations include:

- Working with CA staff in local high schools to provide information about YouthWorks.
- Providing student support staff with YW enrollment materials; where feasible, support the transition of YW participants into CA school programming so that schools can be deliberate about capturing program experiences in college and career planning.

SECTION D: PROGRAMMATIC REQUIREMENTS

Programs must align implementation with the YouthWorks program model and meet all core programmatic requirements outlined in this section. The Tier Overview Table and Programmatic Element Responsibility Matrix summarize required components.

All Youthworks funded programs are required to:

- **Deliver services consistent with the age, stage, and path model**
    - Participants should generally be placed in the tier that aligns to their age. If during intake, it is determined that a participant stage does not align with their age; programs may place them where they will benefit most.

    - Regions facing enrollment challenges must report these during monthly check-ins and work with Commonwealth Corporation staff to adjust strategies or contracts as needed.
    - Regions with high demand should maintain a documented waitlist.
- **Meet or exceed the minimum required program hours and curriculum standards by tier.**
    - Programs may design different schedules across cycles so far participants complete the required minimum hours per cycle (See Section C: Funding Guidelines for participant wage ranges and limits)
- Comply with the case management, data entry, and program delivery expectations described below and in section E.

Core Programmatic Elements (Required for Every Participant)

Each YouthWorks program must provide the following core elements for every participant:

1. Work Readiness Training
2. Career Exploration Activities
3. Case Management and Wraparound Support Services.

Work Readiness Training

All YouthWorks participants must complete a work readiness training component that develops employability skills necessary to succeed in Massachusetts' evolving economy. This component is fulfilled through Signal Success or an approved alternative curriculum.

- **Signal Success Work Readiness Curriculum:** Participants in programs that utilize Signal Success must complete a minimum of 10 hours of training. The curriculum is divided into tiers that are consistent with YouthWorks' Age and Stage model. Each tier consists of ten modules that take approximately one hour to complete. It is highly recommended that applicants design their programming to include all modules within a tier.
    - The Signal Success training curriculum can be delivered virtually, hybrid, or in-person. Virtual self-paced modules are available for Tiers 1-3 in English and Spanish. Tier 4 is only offered in-person and is not available in Spanish.
    - All modules can be accessed through the YouthWorks Learning Management System (LMS). To ensure a consistent and progressive YouthWorks experience, Commonwealth Corporation will provide access to all instructor-led curriculum training materials for the four Tiers of Signal Success instruction:
        - Signal Success: Tier 1 (Starting off Strong)
        - Signal Success: Tier 2 (Build a Professional Self)
        - Signal Success: Tier 3 (Crafting a Career Path)
        - Signal Success: Tier 4 (Emerging into Career and Career Management)
    - Participants who have completed all modules within a given tier are still required to complete at least 10 hours of Signal Success learning.
        - Programs may provide a refresher of prior Tier topics or use materials from other Tiers.
        - Training can further be adapted to meet each participant's ongoing development needs at a program's discretion.

- **Alternative Curriculum option:** Programs may use an approved alternative curriculum in place of the Signal Success curriculum provided by Commonwealth Corporation. Participants in these programs must complete a minimum of 10 hours of training that meets the criteria outlined below: Includes all Signal Success Key Skills/Level Up Skills

- Includes content for all ages and stages of participants served
- Includes an assessment component that checks for understanding
- Includes a way to collect and report participant feedback

- **Attendance Tracking:** Regardless of the curriculum used or delivery method, all attendance must be entered into the Learning Management System (LMS). It is recommended that sub-grantees enter their participant information in the YouthWorks Hub as soon as possible prior to the start of programming to ensure timely participant access to the LMS.

Case Management and Wraparound Services

Commonwealth Corporation defines case management as participant-centered approach in the delivery of individualized career services designed to develop comprehensive employment plans for participants, assist participants to overcome barriers to employment, ensure access to the necessary training and supportive services that impart relevant skills and connect participants with high-quality career opportunities, and provide support during program participation and after job placement. Each contracted and sub-contracted site is required to provide advocacy and support to program participants by conducting needs assessments, developing customized success plans, and monitoring and evaluating participant progress on a regular basis. In addition, each site should maintain an active list of resources and referrals to other wrap-around support services and networks that participants can access when needed.

Case Management should occur throughout a participant's engagement with the program. Programs are encouraged to keep a detailed log of communication between participant and program support especially indicating multiple efforts to communicate with a participant around subjects such as timesheet completion, completed program hours, additional program opportunities, etc. Challenges that persist with participants should be shared with MNWB to identify a possible solution.

Career Exploration Activities

Commonwealth Corporation defines career exploration as structured activities that expose young people to workplace environments, industries, and career paths through hands-on, simulated, or work-based experiences. These include summer jobs, internships, service-learning projects, project-based learning, or other work-based placements that are designed to build transferable skills and gain insights into potential career pathways.

Service-Learning Projects (Quality Hybrid and Virtual)

Service-learning projects can offer younger participants foundational work skills through substantive and well-structured work-based learning experience. Traditionally in-person, many of these projects can be translated to virtual or hybrid projects alongside learning. Increased mentoring and support are essential components when structuring a service-learning project for implementation, especially virtual and/or hybrid projects.

Work-based Learning Placements (Online, Hybrid, and In-Person)

Work-based learning is the foundation of the Early and Career Trajectory Experiences (Tiers 2 & 3) and a core element across all YouthWorks tiers. Commonwealth Corporation defines WBL as structured experiences that integrate classroom instruction with real-world work opportunities. Placements match participants with subsidized jobs that build transferable skills and reflect the rigor of paid employment. While traditionally, these placements are conducted entirely in-person, many can translate into strong online and hybrid options. Regions are encouraged to use existing Work-Based Learning (WBL) tools from other programs to support and document placements.

Peer Leadership

Peer leadership roles provide opportunities for returning and/or older participants to practice leadership and project management skills, while also serving as peer mentors to younger participants. Programs are strongly encouraged to recruit and support at least one peer leader for every 12 projected participants. The peer leaders can support staff implementation tasks while also benefiting from the learning components of the program. The earlier June start date of programming has been incorporated into programming regions to provide support and guidance to Peer Leaders before summer programming launches later in the summer.

Tier-Aligned Career Exploration Activities

All participants must take part in at least one of these, but they may also participate in more than one. Programs should make every attempt to align approach by participant need and tier:

- Tier 1: Service-based learning, Sector-Aligned Project-Based Learning
- Tier 2: Subsidized Work Placements, Sector-Aligned Project Based Learning, Peer Leadership
- Tier 3: Subsidized Work Placements, Sector-Aligned Project Based Learning, Peer Leadership
- Tier 4: Subsidized/Career Specific Work Placements, Peer Leadership

Regions are encouraged to use work-based learning tools (such as the Massachusetts Work-based Learning Plan) and similar frameworks to document and assess participant skill development.

Tracking Participation and Completion Requirements

All participants must be paid for work and training hours, including orientation hours, using grant funds. Participants who engage in both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 may be counted toward the region's participant target for each cycle and must be entered in the YouthWorks Hub as two separate participation records.

- **Program Completer:** To be considered a program completer, participants must complete all required components of their assigned program design, totaling a minimum of 40 total programmatic hours. These hours must include 10 work readiness training hours (Signal Success or approved alternative curriculum) and other work-based learning activities (such as service-based learning, work placement, project-based learning). Completion must be evidenced by data entered in the YouthWorks Hub, including the required fields.

- **Program Non-completer:** Participants who complete **at least one (1) hour of programming** but do not meet the 40-hour minimum or fail to complete all program components are considered enrolled participants/ non-completers. These participants must still be entered into the YouthWorks Hub, with the Overall Program Completion status field marked appropriately based on their circumstances.

This applies to all participants enrolled during Cycle 1 Period (June 21, 2027 – August 31, 2027) and those enrolled in Cycle 2 Period (September 7, 2026 – June 30, 2028).

Notes:

- Programs should support participants with flexible schedules that offer opportunities for substantial skill gain without interfering with educational requirements for in-school youth, including summer school.
    - For example, a Tier 1 or Tier 2 participant might benefit from a shorter-term experience (e.g., a 10-week program averaging four to five (4-5) hours per week) during Cycle 1, whereas an older out-of-school Tier 3 participant may engage throughout the full Cycle 2 period, averaging more than 10 hours a week, based on program design and learning goals.

- Peer Leaders enrolled between June 2027 – June 30, 2028: Peer leaders must also complete at least 40 program hours. Programs need to be mindful to support participants with feasible schedules that offer opportunities for substantial skill gain without interfering with educational requirements for in-school youth.

Recruitment, Enrollment, and Placement

Recruitment and Enrollment: Recruitment processes should assess potential participants' fit for the program in terms of interests and skills. Additionally, programs should think through how each of these components will be accomplished differently for virtual, in-person, and hybrid programming.

- **Every YouthWorks participant must have a signed confidentiality release form, photo and media release form, and data-sharing agreement on file**.
    - For organizations who do not already collect this information in their standard intake process, a template for these releases and agreements will be provided by Commonwealth Corporation upon request and prior to contract start.
- Grantees are responsible for collecting, retaining, and securely storing these documents in accordance with their own organizational policies and procedures. Documentation must be available to Commonwealth Corporation upon request.

Commitment to Participant Wage, Safe, and Appropriate Working Placements

All subsidized placements in the YouthWorks program must include an hourly wage no less than the Massachusetts minimum wage of $15.00/hr. All hourly wages must align with the tiered wage ranges provided.

- Prior to the start of participants engaging at a worksite, site supervisors must provide comprehensive orientation including but not limited to the use of safety equipment and any tools/equipment which will be used by participants.
- Programs must pay an hourly wage or provide a stipend for participation in all programming components. Programs should make every effort to maximize the financial benefits offered to participants through wages, stipends, and appropriate program incentives.
- Whether participants are visiting a worksite for a few hours or are placed there for the whole program, all work sites must be safe and appropriate spaces for all program participants. All programs must have clear and participant-friendly support policies to prevent harassment in the workplace and address any issues that may arise.
- Worksites should post Child Labor Laws, when appropriate, and ensure participants are aware of workers' rights.
- Worksites sponsored by faith-based organizations may not engage participants in activities that are religious in nature.

Note: All participants under the age of 18 taking part in work placements **must have a valid work permit**.

Program Accessibility

Programs are encouraged to minimize barriers to participation so all participants can fully engage. Program funds (Participant Support Services line item) may be used to increase accessibility, including providing access to technology or addressing other identified barriers.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS TABLE

Tier Details *$15/hr (MA minimum wage) up to $20 across all tiers.*	**Program Hours** *See more info on mass labor laws for youth: work hours & prohibited jobs*	**Target Participant Background**	**Focus**	**Work Readiness Training (minimum 10 hours)**	**Other Program Components**
Tier 1 – Service & Project Based Learning 14-15 years old	• Cycle 1 (Summer): minimum 40hrs • Cycle 2: minimum 40hrs	Youth with little work experience and/or no career path in mind.	Build foundational work-readiness through service-learning, project-based experiences, and early exposure to the workplace.	• Signal Success Tier 1 • *Alternative Curriculum*	• Case management & wraparound services • Service-learning or intro work placements • Project-based learning initiatives
Tier 2 – Early & Career Trajectory Experience 16-17 years old	• Cycle 1 (Summer): minimum 40hrs • Cycle 2: minimum 40hrs	Youth with no job history or one prior job, open to exploring career paths.	Explore career options, transferable skills, personal branding, and early leadership roles.	• Signal Success Tier 2 • *Alternative Curriculum*	• Case management & wraparound services • Career exploration through civic engagement • Transferable skills & personal branding • Career pathway planning
Tier 3 – Career Pathway Training & Support 18-21 years old	• Cycle 1 (Summer): minimum 40hrs • Cycle 2: minimum 40hrs	Youth with some work experience who are intent on a specific career path.	Access certifications, mentorship, resume/interview prep, and aligned job placements.	• Signal Success Tier 3 • *Alternative Curriculum*	• Case management & wraparound services • Industry certification pathways (e.g., Trades) • Mentorship & pre-apprenticeship • Resume building & interview preparation • Job placement with career alignment • Best Practice (optional): Industry aligned credential
Tier 4 – Credentialing & Certification 22-25 years old	**Ideally cohort-based**	Young adults committed to exploring a career path offered in their region.	Transition into the workforce with advanced credentials, peer mentorship, and sustained career support.	• Signal Success Tier 4 • *Alternative Curriculum*	• Case management & wraparound services • Industry certifications & mentorship • Job placement support • Interview preparation & practice • Professional resume & branding • Peer mentorship roles • CPR/First Aid or industry credential • Optional: WIOA-aligned training

Program Element	Lead Entity	Commonwealth Corporation
Work Readiness Training (Signal Success / Alternative Curriculum)	• Identify and ensure that staff facilitating Signal Success complete the fundamentals training • Choose training delivery methods (Instructor-led, self-paced/virtual, or hybrid approaches are all acceptable) • Maintain fidelity to the Signal Success curriculum or approved alternative • Verify that a minimum of ten (10) hours of instruction is delivered per participant.	• Provide Instructor-led materials for Tiers 1-4 and online self-paced modules for Tiers 1 – 3, Online self-paced modules also available in Spanish for Tier 1-3 • Approve alternative curricula • Deliver train-the-trainer sessions to ensure quality and consistency statewide. • Monitor and evaluate programs to ensure they meet compliance and maintain quality.
Case Management	• Establish and implement participant-centered case-management practices, conduct one-on-one and group check-ins, address barriers to participation. • The Grantee shall ensure that at least 80 percent of program completers complete the post-program survey.	• Provide access to and maintain the YouthWorks Hub and LMS systems • Monitor statewide data quality (including deletion of data when needed and provide TA to ensure regional compliance.
Data Entry and Reporting	• Ensure timely and accurate entry of all required data in the YouthWorks Hub • Track attendance through CommCorp's Learning Management System (LMS). • Maintain documentation to support reported outcomes • Submit all quarterly and final reports in accordance with YouthWorks deadlines and data-quality standards. • Complete data clean up (notify CommCorp of inactive staff and unmatched participants)	
Regional Support and Collaboration	• Attend monthly meetings with the YouthWorks leadership team and assigned Regional Support Manager. • Join the virtual November convening and the in-person statewide March convening. • Coordinate and attend three site visits per program year with the regional lead present. • Engage in individualized technical assistance meetings to strengthen program design and implementation.	• Assign a Regional Support Manager to each region. • Host monthly regional lead meetings and facilitate virtual and in-person convenings. • Conduct three site visits per year to review program implementation. • Deliver individualized technical assistance and capacity-building support. • Develop and share tools and resources to guide regional program assessment and continuous improvement.

SECTION E: DATA & REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

MassHire Metro North Workforce Board relies on accurate and up-to-date reporting of program enrollment, participation, and outcome data to:

- Ensure that sub-grantees are meeting contractual obligations and proper collection, maintenance, and storage of documentation.
- Identify regional support needs and provide grantees with timely and effective support;
- Verify that participants are eligible to participate and are engaged in appropriate and relevant program activities; and
- Provide stakeholders with information about the impact of public investment in YouthWorks programs.

Data Entry and Reporting Deadline

Grantees are responsible for maintaining accurate and timely data entry into the YouthWorks Hub and Learning Management System (LMS) for all program participants. The table below outlines the required data points and collection tools. Complete, consistent, and timely data are essential for verifying eligibility, tracking participant progress, and ensuring compliance with YouthWorks reporting requirements. Commonwealth Corporation recognizes that program design, start dates, and enrollment schedules vary. To accommodate this, the following data entry and reporting deadlines have been established. Regions with unique programming schedules that may affect these deadlines should communicate with their Regional Support Manager (RSM) as early as possible. The YouthWorks Technical User Guide provides additional details on data entry procedures and best practices, including a complete list of all required fields within the YouthWorks Hub.

- **Cycle 1 Data Completion Deadline:** All participant and program data must be entered, verified, and finalized in the YouthWorks Hub by **September 8, 2027.**
- **Cycle 2 Data Completion Deadline:** All data related to cycle 2 data must be entered by **July 8, 2028**.
- These deadlines indicate that all data entry, cleanup, and deduplication must be complete. Reporting templates will be provided to support the three required reports due, but sub-grantees are responsible for meeting the data entry requirements.

Table E.1: Table of Data Points and Tools

Participant Social Security Numbers	YouthWorks Hub	Eligibility Verification	Upon enrollment.
Participant-level demographic and eligibility information	YouthWorks Hub	Enrollment reporting	Within 2 weeks of program start
Program participation (start date, tier, partner, program year, cycle) and hours of programming)	YouthWorks Hub	Program tracking	Within 2 weeks of program start
Worksite and job information (Worksite Job Name)	YouthWorks Hub	Program tracking	Within 2 weeks of program start
Worksite Assignment	YouthWorks Hub	Program tracking	Within 2 weeks of

(Assignment and Case Management Hours)			program start
Participant post-program outcome data (completion status, hours completed, credentials earned, plans for post-programming next steps)	YouthWorks Hub & Participant End of Program Survey	Program impact (programs are encouraged to aim for an 80% survey completion rate)	Within two weeks of the end of programming
Work Readiness Training Hours (Attendance hours for Signal Success or Alternative Curriculum hours must be entered for each participant)	LMS	Program tracking	As completed
Cycle 1 Report (June 21, 2027 - August 31st, 2027)	Reporting Template	Narrative report (summarizing both quantitative and qualitative information for Cycle 1)	September 23, 2027
Cycle 2 Progress Report (September 9, 2027 - Program end date or Feb 15th, 2028, whichever comes first)	Reporting Template	Narrative Progress report (summarizing both quantitative and qualitative information for Cycle 2)	February 18, 2028
Final Report (June 21, 2027 -June 30, 2028)	Reporting Template	Reflects all participants' data and outcomes for the entirety of programming year 2027-2028, including both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2	July 24, 2028

Youth Participant Reporting Guidelines

Grantees are required to report individual YouthWorks participant record data, including Social Security Numbers (SSNs), on the YouthWorks Hub. This data enables Commonwealth Corporation to develop program profiles, produce statistical reports on the characteristics of participating youth and employers, calculate wage data, and meet reporting requirements to the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) and the Massachusetts Legislature.

- Important Note about participants in other (non-YouthWorks) programs: This database is used to support YouthWorks program management and reporting to the EOLWD and the Legislature. Grantees must record ONLY information about youth and young adults who are participating in YouthWorks programs. Information about participants in other (non-YouthWorks) programs should NOT be included in the database.
- **Narrative Final Report:** Grantees must submit a **final report by July 31st, 2028**. This report will reflect all participants' data and outcomes for the entirety of programming year 2027-2028, including both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. The final invoice for the year will not be paid prior to the completion and submission of the final report.

Eligibility of Participants

All YouthWorks participants must meet all three eligibility requirements: **Age, Risk Factor, and Geographic Residence**. Partners are responsible for verifying eligibility and must provide documentation that shows participants served meet all three eligibility requirements.

For the Risk Factor, only one form of documentation is required for each criterion. Self-attestation should only be used as a last resort to verify a participant's eligibility. As such, applicants may only use self-attestation for a maximum of 15% of the total participants in their contract. All participants must have a valid Social Security Number (SSN) recorded on the Hub, even if self-attesting to eligibility factors.

Eligibility Factor	Criteria Definition	Verification Documentation
Age	14-25 years old at the start of programming	• Birth certificate, • Driver's license or state-issued ID, • Passport, • School record • Self-attestation
Geographic Residence	A participant must reside within the 20 cities and towns of Metro North region. *	• Driver's license, • Documented address provided on W-2 or 1099, • Letter from shelter or social service agency indicating residency, • Proof of enrollment in MA public school, • Membership or enrollment in any geography restricted agency or program • Self-attestation
Risk Factors A participant must meet at least one of the identified demographics and/or risk factors.	Low-Income	• Paystubs • W2 • 1099 • Unemployment documentation • Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

		• Proof of public assistance (SNAP, TANF) that directly correlates to an income threshold within the 200% federal poverty guideline o Parent, Guardian or Youth Selfattestation indicating residence in a high poverty area (using the CommCorp provided attestation form) and Saved Census PDF verification showing Census Tract Poverty Rate of at least 25% o Participant's primary residence must be located within a census tract with an overall poverty rate2 exceeding 25% at the time of enrollment o Program staff must verify the poverty rate of the participant's address by using the standard Census dataset (Explore Census Data) to confirm that the overall tract poverty rate exceeds 25% o Staff must print or save a PDF of the official census lookup showing the participant's street address, designated Census Tract, and corresponding poverty rate.
	Disability status	• IEP or 504 documentations • Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or SSA disability documentation • Physician record/letter indicating a disability that substantially limits the participant's ability to participate in education or employment activities
	Currently or previously in foster care	• Documentation from DCF/EOHHS or other state/local child welfare agency • Court documentation (usually a court order)

		• Placement/discharge papers • Other verifiable third-party documentation (social worker, lawyer, case manager, foster care agency). • Document must be written on official letterhead
	Unhoused or housing-unstable	• Letter from shelter/transitional housing records, host, or EOHHS agency • Mckinney Vento Homeless Act Authorization documentation
	Not attending school (stop out) and did not earn a high school diploma or equivalency	• Transcript or withdrawal letter (school stop-out) • School referral • Verification of Enrollment in High School Equivalency Program (not funded by the public K12 school system) • Certificate of Attainment (Received by students that do not pass the grade 10 MCAS and satisfactory complete all other school requirements)
	Was institutionalized/incarcerated	• Release or discharge documentation • Probation or parole documentation • Written verification, records, or documentation from HOC, DOC, or DYS
	Currently justice-involved	• Court or police records • Referral letter from probation, parole, DYS, or an authorized community supervision program written on official agency letterhead. • Written verification, official care and custody letters, or discharge records from the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Department of Youth Services (DYS), House of Correction (HOC), or Department of Correction (DOC). • Any other official documentation from a state or municipal agency confirming active justice involvement (e.g. referral from local

		police agency)
	Young mother	• Self-identify as a mother **AND** • Birth certificate • Physician or Hospital Record of Birth • Social service letter confirming parent status • School records

Youths who do not qualify under YouthWorks requirements should be referred to other youth programs including but not limited to Connecting Activities, WIOA Youth, and MassHire Metro North Career Centers. Questions about referrals to other youth programs should be directed to your YW Manager at the MassHire Metro North Workforce Board.

* The Metro North region consists of the following twenty cities and towns north of Boston: Arlington, Belmont, Burlington, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, North Reading, Reading, Revere, Somerville, Stoneham, Wakefield, Watertown, Wilmington, Winchester, Winthrop, and Woburn. Any youth residing in the Metro North region who meets the risk factor and age eligibility guidelines may participate fully in the programming. However, MNWB may make funding decisions to ensure services are targeted at residents from our priority cities with the highest unemployment rates: Chelsea, Everett, Somerville, Revere, Cambridge, and Malden.

Participant Eligibility Policy

Each awarded applicant must maintain a written eligibility verification policy outlining verification methods and acceptable use of self-attestation. Partners must maintain an eligibility checklist for each participant file indicating which factor(s) were used and what documentation was obtained.

SECTION F: FISCAL REQUIREMENTS

Expectations for Grant Administration for 2027-2028

Allowable and Non-Allowable Expenditures

The table below outlines the allowable expenditures under the YouthWorks grant. All expenditures must align with approved budget categories and comply with Commonwealth Corporation's fiscal guidance and grant requirements. Other costs directly related to the program but not listed below must receive prior approval/guidance from YouthWorks staff. Failure to obtain prior approval from Commonwealth Corporation for expenses outside and/or more than these guidelines may result in non-payment from Commonwealth Corporation.

Line Item	Budget Category	Description	Allowable or Non-Allowable Expenses
Clothing / Uniforms for Vocational Programming or Employment	Participant	Clothing or uniforms required for youth employment or vocational training.	Allowable
Trainings	Participant	Trainings directly related to	Allowable

		YouthWorks programming and participant learning.	
Transportation for Youth Participants (Bus Passes, Train Passes, Bus or Van Rentals)	Participant	Transportation provided to enable participation in YouthWorks programming.	Allowable
Driver's Education and License Fees	Participant	Includes permits, driver's education, and license fees required for youth employability.	Allowable
Food for Youth Participants	Participant	Meals or refreshments provided to youth during YouthWorks program activities.	Allowable
Gift Cards or Financial Incentives for Youths (such as bonuses)	Participant	Permissible to a maximum of $350 per youth for the duration of the grant period if they are tied to program milestones and do not occur in any single increment greater than $100. For their participation in Commonwealth Corporation facilitated events, participants may receive additional incentives that will not count towards their $350. Experiences (such as tickets to local events) not to exceed the $350 per youth limit	Allowable
Equipment Purchases – for the participant	Participant	Equipment purchased for participant learning or work experience (for program use). Electronic devices such as laptops, webcams, and Chromebooks and internet access support services	Allowable
Equipment Rental and Leasing	Operations	Equipment rental and leasing (for Ops only)	Allowable
Certificates and Credentialing Opportunities (including GED / HiSET)	Participant	Covers GED / HiSET testing, vocational credentialing, and certification fees or materials. Training Materials (if related to preparation), Participant Tuition and Fees (if related to testing for credentials)	Allowable

Computer Software	Operations	Office supplies	Allowable
Cell Phone Reimbursement for Program Staff	Operations	Reimbursement for staff serving YouthWorks participants	Allowable
Youth and employer outreach materials	Operations	Publications/Printing/Copying – hard copy of materials. Marketing and advertising (if soft copy of materials)	Allowable
Mileage for program staff	Operations	In relation to services rendered under the YouthWorks grant. Reimbursement will be provided for mileage only (at the current reimbursement rate of the grantee's fiscal agent)	Allowable
Staff expenses related to YouthWorks provided training, gatherings, and convenings	Operations	As appropriate one of the following: Mileage, Meal Reimbursement, Parking/Tolls/Taxi, Meetings and Events	Allowable
Salaries and related personnel costs	Operations	Program Staff Salaries and costs related to outreach, counseling, instructional and job site supervisory staff	Allowable
All items listed below are not allowed: • Staff bonuses, incentives, and/or gifts. • Mileage reimbursement not related to the YouthWorks grant. • Any expenses more than the contracted grant amount or outside the contracted grant period; and • Any expenses outside of the approved budget.			Not Allowable

<u>Focus on Participant Wage</u>

Across the full budget of the regional grant, at least 60% of overall funding must be spent on direct to participant dollars including: youth wages and fringe, stipends, tuition and fees, equipment purchases where the participant will own the equipment, and support services.

- **Fringe Cost Guidance:** Regions may determine their own participant fringe as part of their overall program design, provided the total direct to participant costs remain at or above 60% of the budget. If a region's **participant fringe rate exceeds 15%**, a brief description and justification of the fringe cost components must be submitted with the budget for review and approval by Commonwealth Corporation.
- Budgets submitted should include stipends/wages within the approved wage range. Programs expecting to provide stipends/wages higher than the approved wage through match should

incorporate that information in their match report. **A maximum of 40% of the total funds may be spent on the following:**
    - Salaries and related personnel costs of outreach, counseling, instructional and job site supervisory staff
    - Other Admin specific costs as outlined in the budget template and in the chart above.
- **Note:** No funds provided under this program may be used to support the salaries of existing permanent staff at any agency or facility at which youth are employed other than for that portion of their time which these staff spend supervising youth who are assigned directly to them; all such time allocations must be fully documented and are subject to approval by Commonwealth Corporation.
- All line items must be described in the budget narrative worksheets in the budget template.

Financial Match Expectations

Grantees are assigned financial requirements equal to 10% of their approved budget. To be considered, ***match must come from employer commitments or other non-public sector sources –*** and not from other public funds that may be used to support the program. Match can be documented as paid placements. Additional details on the match requirements can be found below.

- Financial Match Expectations and documentation: Grantees are required to provide a cash match as outlined by the YouthWorks appropriation, which specifies that funds provided by the Commonwealth shall be matched by employers or other non-public sector sources. All match obligations must be fully documented and satisfied by the end of the contract year, and reporting at the following times:
    - Match Report 1: Due October 8, 2027
    - Match Report 2: Due July 8, 2028
- The match must not be derived from public dollars. It may be achieved through grants or in-kind contributions, or through wages paid directly by employers to youth who are eligible for YouthWorks. Eligible employers include private enterprises and non-public entities such as nonprofit organizations, hospitals, colleges, universities, and similar institutions. Please note:
    - Budgets submitted must include stipends/wages within the approved wage range (MA minimum of $15–$20 per tier, and the maximum total amounts per cycle per participant; see page 10). Programs expecting to provide stipends/wages higher than the approved wage through a match should incorporate that information in their match report, not in the budget narrative.
- Grant recipients with a history of difficulty meeting match requirements or failing to fulfill their match obligations may be required to submit more frequent match reports to ensure compliance. Failure to secure and report sufficient employer or non-public sector matching funds in a timely manner may be considered by Commonwealth Corporation as a cause for disallowing expenses in the current year's contract and/or a factor in establishing award levels for the following year’s YouthWorks program.

Period of Performance

The contracts for programs that submit complete applications in a timely manner will be issued with a period of performance of **April 1st, 2027, through June 30, 2028**. Expenditures charged to the grant must be for programming activity and services rendered during this period. All such contracted funds must be expended by June 30, 2028. Funds unexpended after that date will be reverted to Commonwealth Corporation

Publicity

Commonwealth Corporation receives a great number of requests for publicity, particularly youth programs. To respond to these requests and to ensure that we have the most current information, contracted agencies are required to submit copies of any publicity regarding youth programs funded under this grant – newspaper stories, newsletter articles, etc. – to Commonwealth Corporation.

Fiscal Reporting and Invoicing

Payments under this contract are on a cost-reimbursement basis. All payments to the Contractor are contingent upon receiving funds from the Commonwealth Corporation. MNWB reserves the right to modify the payment schedule should situations arise, or changes are made by the funder that warrant such modification.

All invoices that include staff costs must be accompanied by relevant backup documentation verifying disbursement of funds and staff charges to the funds covered under this contract. MNWB will commence the payment process upon receipt of complete and accurate invoices. Missing and/or incomplete invoices will delay the payment process. MNWB will accept requests for reimbursement from the President/CEO/Executive Director of the Contractor or an authorized fiscal representative. The Contractor shall submit requests for reimbursement on a monthly basis, in accordance with the deadlines in the table below:

Table F2. Fiscal Status Report Schedule

Expenses Associated with the following period	Invoice Due Date
May 1 – May 31, 2027	Not later than June 7, 2027
June 1 – June 30, 2027	Not later than July 7, 2027
July 1 – July 31, 2027	Not later than August 7, 2027
August 1 – August 31, 2027	Not later than September 7, 2027
September 1 – September 30, 2027	No later than October 7, 2027
October 1 – October 31, 2027	No later than November 7, 2027
November 1 – November 30, 2027	No later than December 7, 2027
December 1 – December 31, 2027	No later than January 7, 2028
January 1 – January 31, 2028	No later than February 7, 2028
February 1 - February 28, 2028	No later than March 7, 2028
March 1 - March 31, 2028	No later than April 7, 2028
April 1 – April 30, 2028	No later than May 7, 2028
May 1 – May 31, 2028	No later than June 7, 2028
June 1 – June 30, 2028	No later than July 7, 2028

The partner is responsible for maintaining full backup documentation in alignment with all expenses for monitoring purposes and should be able to provide it to MassHire Metro North Workforce Board staff when requested within 48 hours of the request. Additional details for monitoring and backup documentation submission requirements are covered in the grantee guide.

Note: Final invoices will be held until all data and final reporting has been submitted to MNWB.

Fiscal Monitoring

Each grant cycle, MassHire Metro North Workforce Board will conduct Fiscal Monitoring of sub-grantees. This is to ensure that organizations receiving grants from MassHire Metro North Workforce Board:

- Have the fiscal systems, including operating internal controls, needed to meet select federal, state, and other (e.g. foundation) requirements, as applicable.
- Meet the terms of the grant award outlined in the contract with MassHire Metro North Workforce Board; and
- Expend grant funds only for allowable activities.

All grantees will be required to comply with MNWB fiscal monitoring protocols. If your grant is selected for more intensive Fiscal Monitoring, more information about the process will be provided.

SECTION G: PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND NOTIFICATION PROCESS

Proposal Evaluation and Review Process

Proposals submitted in response to this RFP will be reviewed by MNWB YouthWorks review committee. The proposal review will consist of the following steps:

- Threshold Criteria Screening: Submissions will be screened for completeness, conformity to the program requirements and timeliness of response. Incomplete or non-confirming responses may be returned for revision.
- Review Committee and Application Feedback: A review committee will review and provide feedback on all eligible submissions. Review and detailed feedback will be documented. MNWB reserves the right to request additional information from any applicant to ensure that the review committee has a complete understanding of the proposed program and applicant qualifications. Submitted proposals will be reviewed using MNWB's YouthWorks PY27–28 Evaluation Rubric, which outlines how each section will be assessed for completeness, clarity, and alignment with the requirements outlined in this RFP. Applicants are encouraged to review the rubric to understand how each feedback category below will be evaluated:

  Feedback Categories

  - Program Overview and Design: Assesses the overall clarity, design, and alignment of the proposed program model with YouthWorks goals, tiers, and required elements. Reviewers will evaluate both the online narrative and the completed Work Plan for flow, alignment, and implementation detail.

- Recruitment, Enrollment, and Placement: Assesses strategies to recruit eligible and underserved youth, engage employers, and align placements with participants' interests.
- Budget and Fiscal Readiness: Assesses whether the budget uses the templates provided, includes only allowable expenses and maintains the required 60/40 allocation (minimum 60% to participant wages and supports, maximum 40% to operations).
- Program Operations and Administration: Assesses the clarity and completeness of monitoring, payroll, data entry, and data security processes. Evaluates key staff roles and onboarding support described in the Work Plan.
- Supplemental Information: Assesses the description of leveraged funds and whether the applicant provides a detail that can be used for press releases or public announcements. Responses should clearly highlight the program's key outcomes, industries served, and participant reach.

Note: Applicants whose proposals meet the funding criteria and priorities will be prioritized for funding. Applications who do not meet the standard for funding will be provided with written feedback and may request a follow-up session to discuss resubmitting their application.

MNWB reserves the right to consider the applicant's past performance in operating grants administered by MNWB and factor this performance into funding decisions.

Notification of Grant Award Status

All applicants will be notified of their award status by email via a feedback letter.

- Audited Financial Statements and Verification of Fiscal Management Capacity: All applicants selected for an award may be required to submit a copy of the organization's most recent audited financial statement prior to the execution of a final contract. In addition, prior to the grant award, Commonwealth Corporation staff may review an organization's fiscal systems and internal controls to verify that the organization has the capacity to manage public grant funds and administer the program. Please note that Commonwealth Corporation and all award recipients of the SLFRF must follow the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR Part 200) and the Terms and Conditions of the SLFRF assistance. Your organization should review the Uniform Guidance requirements applicable to your organization's use of SLFRF funds, and SLFRF-funded projects. Recipients should consider how and whether certain aspects of the Uniform Guidance apply. This procurement will comply with applicable laws governing the use of these funds. Additional guidance may be provided upon contracting.
- Additional Evaluation Notes: MNWB reserves the right to review all submissions for completeness and alignment with the requirements outlined in this solicitation. Applications missing required components may be returned for revision or clarification. This RFP does not commit MNWB to award any contracts. Upon submission, all applications become the property of MNWB. MNWB is not responsible for electronic submissions that are not received. We reserve the right to use funding sources other than the YouthWorks PY'27-28 appropriation to support proposals submitted in response to this solicitation, if available. The MNWB also reserves the right to extend grant award amounts in accordance with funding source allowances.

Project Terms and Conditions

Grantees will be required to abide by MNWB's Standard Contract Terms and Conditions, as well as CommCorp's Standard Contract terms and Conditions, which will be provided during contract negotiation and the Program Administration and Management Guide. Applicants may review these terms and conditions prior to applying by contacting rfp@masshiremetronorth.org to request a copy. In addition, all final contracts are subject to negotiation of a final statement of work.

SECTION H. APPLICATION AND PROGRAM PLAN SUMMARY

2027-2028 Application and Program Plan Summary

Please carefully review the Gen AI Guidance outlined on page 8 before completing this application.

For each question, please provide details of programming as it relates to each cycle. If information varies from one cycle to the next, please clearly indicate those differences in your response. If an additional table is needed to distinguish cycles, copy, and paste an additional table for use and label it to indicate the programming cycle; if the additional table is not needed, delete, or skip it.

Responses should align with the Gen AI Guidance clause to ensure clarity, consistency, and transparency across all programming cycles.

1. **Recruitment (10 Points):** Should include a defined recruitment process for participants.

    - Which target populations will you serve, and how will you ensure services are responsive to their needs (e.g., age, socioeconomic background, language, or accessibility)
    - How will your program collect, verify, and document eligibility information to ensure participants meet at least one required risk factor before beginning programming begins?
    - How will you recruit new participants this year and ensure access for disconnected or underrepresented groups (e.g. housing insecure, justice-involved youth)?
    - How will you recruit new employer partners and/or strengthen existing partnerships?
    - How will you align your placement to match participants' needs? (Describe how your approach varies by tiers and how you connect your employers to participants' skills and interest)

    Note: Programs are encouraged to maintain a 1 to 12 ratio – one Peer Leader for every 12 participants.

2. **Program Overview (20 Points):** Should include a strategic blending of work-related experiences and an outline of career exploration activities that rationalize prioritization.

    - **The Service and Project-Based Learning Tier (Tier 1):**
        - Please discuss how these placements will be different from subsidized placements for older youth. How were employers identified for this tier of services? What will be the industry and career focus for participants in this tier?
        - Provide details about any service-learning models that your program intends to offer. Please discuss how the program will be structured and include information about the project or projects that youth will complete. What skills will the participants learn? How will the program be structured to include assessment and growth? How will the project connect with specific careers?
        - In what ways will this program foster stronger career awareness and career exploration?
        - Provide a description of any additional career exploration activities (job shadowing, career panels, informational interviews, career mentoring, industry events, etc.).
        - What are the key outcomes you aim to achieve with this tier?

- **The Early and Career Trajectory Experience Tier (Tier 2):**
    - How were employers identified for this tier of services? What will be the industry and career focus for participants in this tier?
    - Do you provide returning participants with progressively challenging placements? If so, please describe your approach.
    - How does your programming provide mentorship opportunities for working professionals?
    - Provide a description of any additional career exploration activities (job shadowing, career panels, informational interviews, career mentoring, industry events, etc.).
    - What credentials, if there are any, will be offered to participants?
    - What are the key outcomes you aim to achieve with this tier?
- **The Career Pathway Training and Support Tier (Tier 3):**
    - What will be the industry and career focus for participants in this tier?
    - What credentials, if there are any, will be offered to participants?
    - What additional program components will you align to these offerings to develop a more comprehensive career pathway approach for this tier?
    - What are the key outcomes you aim to achieve with this tier?
- **(If applicable) The Career Pathway Credentialing and Certifications Tier (Tier 4):**
    - What are the start and end dates of this cohort?
    - What additional program components will you align to these offerings to develop a more comprehensive career pathway approach?
    - What career pathway(s) will be offered for this tier?
    - How will career specific mentorship be provided for this tier?
    - Which, if any, of the partnering organizations/businesses are looking to hire participants at the completion of the program?
    - How will you support participants in the identification of a part-time or full-time position or educational opportunity at the completion of the program?
    - Detail how case management will be similar and distinct from the case management approach used in other tiers of the program.
    - What are the key outcomes you aim to achieve with this tier?

3. **Signal Success & Alternative Career Readiness Alternative Curriculum (5 points):**
    a. Will your program be delivering at least 10 hours of Signal Success Curriculum? If not, a copy of program's alternative curriculum is required. Please submit a copy of your program curriculum for career readiness preparation along with your program proposal.
    b. Please provide training frequency (ex. weekly, biweekly), whether the Signal Success or alternative curriculum is used. In addition, indicate start and end dates for training

4. **Case Management (15 points):** This section should describe how your case management approach will help participants gain valuable work experience, credentials, and certifications that improve their marketability, while also outlining the wrap-around services available to support their success.
    - Detail your case management approach, specifying the tools and strategies you will use to connect with participants, assess progress, provide coaching, and how case

management records will be documented for the entire program duration. Be sure to highlight how the level and frequency of support will vary across different participant tiers. Provide a detailed overview of support services that you plan to provide to participants and how you will connect youth to appropriate supports when challenges arise.

5. **Employer and Partnership Outreach (10 points):** This section should include outreach to worksites that align with participants' fit, interests, skills, and workforce data specific to the region. Proposals that demonstrate robust employer partnerships will be considered more competitive. In particular, MNWB will prioritize applications that:

    - Emphasize partnerships with employers in industries critical to the region's economy, including those focused on climate, clean energy, life sciences, healthcare, human services, and advanced manufacturing jobs.
    - Clearly indicate whether employer partners are currently integrating AI or other digital technologies into their operations and describe how youth participants will gain exposure to these future-focused skills.
    - Show evidence of employer engagement that not only meets the required 10% employer (non-public sector) match, but also expands opportunities in high-demand, innovation-driven sectors.

    Applicants that align their outreach strategy with these priorities will be viewed as offering stronger pathways to meaningful work experiences, career readiness, and long-term economic mobility for Metro North youth.

    - How will you ensure employer engagement supports meeting the required 10% employer (non-public sector) match?
    - Provide a list of employers and other organizations that will serve as worksites and/or service-learning experience sites.
        - For industry focus, detail industry based off NAICIS code
        - For sector, indicate whether private sector (for-profit), nonprofit sector, or public sector.

Employer	**Industry Focus**	**Sector**

6. **Budget (5 points):** Complete the project budget template spreadsheet.

    Please use the budget template to indicate your projected spending. Budget template should mirror budget narrative. MNWB will work with Commonwealth Corporation to review program plans and budgets to support the expanding of capacity.

NOTE: Please use the budget template to indicate your projected spending, while at the same time taking into consideration regional allocation for 2027-28.

NOTE: Please **do not** include Unemployment Insurance in the line item on the YouthWorks budget form called "Fringe for youth work experience." In addition, please indicate in the YouthWorks budget narrative what your youth fringe rate (up to 15%) includes (e.g., FICA, Workers Compensation, tax withholding, etc.).

7. **Workplan (5 points)** Complete the workplan for Metro North available on the MNWB website at https://masshiremetronorth.org/about/fundingprocurement/.

8. **Storytelling (5 points)** Telling the story of your work is more important than ever. We aim to effectively communicate the impact of your programs to the public and highlight the value they bring to youth, employers, and communities across the Commonwealth. If we were to feature your program, what aspects would you want us to highlight in a press release or public announcement?

9. **Past Performance & Experience (15 points):** This section is designed to offer the MassHire Metro North Workforce Board (MNWB) a comprehensive understanding of your program's effectiveness, quality, and overall impact.

   For organizations that have previously received YouthWorks funds:

   - Summarize your past performance under the grant, focusing on key outcomes such as the number of youths enrolled, the number of youth who completed the program, and the number of private-sector placements achieved.
   - Highlight how your organization met program goals and addressed challenges.
   - Describe the process and timeline used for determining youth eligibility
   - Share what changes or improvements your organization would implement if selected to receive YouthWorks funds again.

   For organizations that have NOT previously received YouthWorks funds:

   - Describe your organization's experience delivering youth programs, emphasizing key outcomes such as enrollment numbers, completion rates, and placements in employment or internships. Provide your past experience determining participant eligibility for programming.
   - Provide supporting performance data that demonstrates your organization's success and ability to deliver results.

   For all applicants:

   - Explain your organization's approach to meeting deadlines and addressing any past compliance challenges, if applicable.
   - Detail the steps your organization has taken to enhance program efficiency, ensure compliance, and support continuous improvement.
   - Describe procedures and protocols in place for ensuring data security and confidentiality (hard copy files and electronic storage).

Attachment 1

Appendix A: Federal Poverty Guidelines 2026-2027

No. of people in my household/family	Annual Income Less than:	Monthly Income Less than:	Hourly Wage Less than:
1	$31,920.00	$2,660.00	$15.35/hr
2	$43,280.00	$3,606.67	$20.81/hr
3	$54,640.00	$4,533.33	$26.27/hr
4	$66,000.00	$5,500.00	$31.73/hr
5	$77,360.00	$6,446.67	$37.19/hr
6	$88,720.00	$7,393.33	$42.65/hr
7	$100,080.00	$8,340.00	$48.12/hr
8	$111,440.00	$9,286.67	$53.58/hr
Each additional family member:	$11,360	$917.00	$5.46

Source: 2026 Poverty Guidelines: 48 Contiguous States (all states except Alaska and Hawaii)

COMMONWEALTH CORPORATION

Attachment 2

Sample Youth Participant Agreement

By joining this program, I understand I am expected to complete the outlined hours of completion in the program. I understand that I am making a commitment to participate, learn, and show up ready to grow. I agree to take part in the program activities and effectively communicate regularly with program staff to stay in touch.

As a YouthWorks participant, I agree to the following:

1. **Participating in the Program**

- Complete my required program hours, including worksite hours and career readiness training/Signal Success.
- Take part in Service Based Learning/Group projects, workshops, and other learning activities.

2. **Career & Skill Building**

- Participate in career activities that help me learn about jobs and build skills, such as:
  - Work-based learning and skill-building opportunities

3. **Showing Up & Being Professional**

- Arrive on time and be ready to participate at worksites, workshops, and meetings.
- Treat staff, peers, and supervisors with respect.
- Follow workplace and program rules, including dress code and behavior expectations.

4. **Communication**

- Stay in touch with program staff and respond to messages in a timely way.
- Let staff know as soon as possible if I am going to be late, absent, or need time off.
- Speak up if I'm facing challenges so staff can help support me.

5. **Time & Pay**

- Fill out and submit my timesheets honestly and on time.
- Understand that I will only be paid for hours I complete and submit correctly.

6. **Taking Responsibility**

- Follow all program guidelines and expectations.

- Understand that not meeting program expectations may lead to missed pay for hours not worked or removal from the program.

Participant Acknowledgment

I understand the expectations of the program and agree to do my best to meet them.

Participant Signature: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian if under 18 years old: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

YouthWorks

Attachment 3

Income Eligibility Self-Attestation Form

Applicant Name: _____
Date of Birth: _____
Address: _____

No. of people in my household	Annual Income Less t han:	Monthly Income Less than:	Hourly Wage Less than:
1	$31,920.00	$2,660.00	$15.35/ hr
2	$43,280.00	$3,606.67	$20.81/ hr
3	$54,640.00	$4,533.33	$26.27/ hr
4	$66,000.00	$5,500.00	$31.73/ hr
5	$77,360.00	$6,446.67	$37.19/ hr
6	$88,720.00	$7,393.33	$42.65/ hr
7	$100,080.00	$8,340.00	$48.12/ hr
8	$111,440.00	$9,286.67	$53.58/ hr
Each additional f amily member:	$11,360	$917.00	$5.46

Please indicate the total # of people in your household
(For each additional family member, add $11,360 for annual income, $917 for monthly income, and $5.46 for hourly wage)

Total # of people in my household		**Annual/Monthly/Hourly Income or W age used:**	

☐ I certify that my household and I meet the income eligibility guidelines for the YouthWorks Program.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian if under 18 years old: _____

Date: _____

Attachment 4

YouthWorks Guidance on Stipends and Incentives

A **stipend** payment is given to people who are participating in an internship, project-based learning opportunity, apprenticeship, or a fellowship, and represents a payment to help the recipient defray living expenses. **A stipend is typically not based on the number of hours worked in a week, but rather on a prearranged set of factors regarding the type and amount of work that is expected to be completed in a period.** It represents a payment that enables somebody to be exempt from waged or salaried employment to undertake a role that is normally unpaid.

- ✓ Program staff are responsible for documenting the project assignments and successful completion of project/learning program components.
- ✓ Program staff may assign youth to classes, learning sessions and/or workshops for completion for a stipend to be awarded.
- ✓ If the participants are not employees, the program will **not** be responsible for social security taxes, nor any payroll withholdings.[1]
- ✓ Often programs will not use payroll to manage this system as there is no tax responsibility.
- ✓ The program WILL issue a 1099 MISC to the student/ young person at year-end tracking payments made. A 1099 MISC should be issued for any stipend above $600 annually.
- ✓ Students and sites are encouraged to seek tax advice regarding the 1099 MISC and student income tax, specifically the student's eligibility for the earned income tax credit.
- ✓ When programs offer a stipend as part of learning program, the student/ young person is not an employee and therefore will not be eligible for worker's compensation insurance coverage; instead, programs should be sure to have a clear student/intern accident policy.

Incentives are often used by youth programs to encourage certain behavior by program participants – a $50 gift card in exchange for good attendance; a ticket to an amusement park to recognize program completion; $100 gift card for completing a diploma or job certification.

- ✓ Incentives are not wages, since they do not represent the value transferred in exchange for services performed within an employer-employee relationship.
- ✓ Use of incentives should be tracked by the youth-serving program with documentation on the type of incentive, amount of incentive, and program recipient name.
- ✓ If the amount of the gift cards alone or the gift cards combined with the stipends exceeds $600 annually, the value of the gift cards also need to be documented in the 1099 MISC.

[1] The SS-8 form from the IRS allows organizations or workers a formal process for establishing payments that are not subject to employment taxes and income tax withholding. To access the form: https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fss8.pdf and to view a completed sample: https://tinyurl.com/y2o7mcyc