

Youth Program Elements Definitions

In order to support the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, entry into postsecondary education and career readiness for participants, the WIOA Youth Program is charged with providing 14 program elements. Definitions and clarifications of the elements are as follows.

Element 1: Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and dropout prevention

This element includes tutoring, study skills training, instruction and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent or for a recognized post-secondary credential.

Any tutoring, study skills training and/or instruction that lead to a high school diploma are reported under this program element. Such services focus on providing academic support, helping a youth identify areas of academic concern, assisting with overcoming learning obstacles, and providing tools and resources to develop learning strategies. Services may be provided one-on-one or in a group setting, through resources and workshops.

Secondary school dropout prevention strategies intended to lead to a high school diploma are also reported under this program element. Secondary school dropout prevention strategies include services and activities that keep a young person in-school and engaged in a formal learning and/or training setting. Strategies include, but are not limited to tutoring, literacy development, active learning experiences, after-school opportunities, and individualized instruction.

Element 2: Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services

Alternative secondary school services, such as basic education skills training, individualized academic instruction, and English as a Second Language training, are those that assist youth who have struggled in traditional secondary education. Dropout recovery services, such as credit recovery, counseling, and educational plan development, are those that assist youth who have dropped out of school. While the activities within both types of services may overlap, each are provided with the goal of helping youth to re-engage and persist in education that leads to the completion of a recognized high school equivalent.

Element 3: Paid and unpaid work experience

Defined as a planned, structured learning experience that takes place in a workplace for a limited period of time. Work experience may be paid or unpaid, as appropriate. Work experience must have academic and occupational education as a component. The educational component may occur concurrently or sequentially with the work experience; the academic and occupation education component may occur inside or outside the work site; the employer can provide the academic and occupation component or they can be provided separately. The academic and occupational education component refers to contextual learning that accompanies a work experience. It includes the information necessary to understand and work in specific industries and/or occupations.

Categories of work experience:

- Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year
- Pre-apprenticeship programs designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in an apprenticeship program and includes the following elements:

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- training and curriculum that aligns with the skill needs of employers in the economy of the State or region involved;
- access to educational and career counseling and other supportive services, directly or indirectly;
- hands-on, meaningful learning activities that are connected to education and training activities, such as exploring career options, and understanding how the skills acquired through coursework can be applied toward a future career;
- opportunities to attain at least one industry-recognized credential; and
- a partnership with one or more registered apprenticeship programs that assists in placing individuals who complete the pre-apprenticeship program in a registered apprenticeship program.
- Internships and job shadowing
 - Job shadowing is designed to increase career awareness, help model youth behavior through examples, and reinforce in the youth and young adult the link between academic classroom learning and occupational work requirements. Youth learn about a job by walking through the work day as a shadow to a competent worker. The job shadowing work experience is a temporary, unpaid exposure to the workplace in an occupational area of interest to the participant. Youth witness firsthand the work environment, employability and occupational skills in practice, the value of professional training, and potential career options. A job-shadowing experience can be anywhere from a few hours, to a day, to a week or more.
- On-the Job training opportunities

Element 4: Occupation skills training

Defined as an organized program of study that provides specific vocational skills that lead to proficiency in performing actual tasks and technical functions required by certain occupational fields at entry, intermediate, or advanced levels. Priority is given to training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that align with in- demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area. The training must

- be outcome-oriented and focused on an occupational goal specified in the individual service strategy
- be of sufficient duration to impart the skills needed to meet the occupational goal; and
- lead to the attainment of a recognized postsecondary credential

Element 5: Education offered concurrently with workforce preparation and training for a specific occupation

This element reflects an integrated education and training model wherein services are delivered concurrently. It also describes how workforce preparation activities, basic academic skills, and hands-on occupational skills training are to be taught within the same time frame and connected to training in a specific occupation, occupational cluster, or career pathway.

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Element 6: Leadership development opportunities

Opportunities that encourage responsibility, confidence, employability, self-determination, and other positive social behaviors such as:

- exposure to postsecondary educational possibilities
- community and service learning projects
- peer-centered activities, including peer mentoring and tutoring
- organizational and team work training, including team leadership training;
- training in decision-making, including determining priorities and problem solving
- citizenship training, including life skills training such as parenting and work behavior training
- civic engagement activities which promote the quality of life in a community; and
- other leadership activities that place youth in a leadership role such as serving on youth leadership committees, such as a Standing Youth Committee

Element 7: Supportive services

Services that enable an individual to participate in WIOA activities. These services include, but are not limited to, the following:

- linkages to community services;
- assistance with transportation;
- assistance with child care and dependent care;
- assistance with housing;
- needs-related payments;
- assistance with educational testing;
- reasonable accommodations for youth with disabilities;
- legal aid services;
- referrals to health care;
- assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire and work-related tools, including such items as eyeglasses and protective eye gear;
- assistance with books, fees, school supplies, and other necessary items for students enrolled in postsecondary education classes; and
- payments and fees for employment and training-related applications, tests, and certifications.

Element 8: Adult mentoring

Adult mentoring must last at least 12 months and may take place both during the program and following exit from the program and be a formal relationship between a youth participant and an adult mentor that includes structured activities where the mentor offers guidance, support, and encouragement to develop the competence and character of the mentee. While group mentoring activities and mentoring through electronic means are allowable as part of the mentoring activities, at a minimum, the local youth program must match the youth with an individual mentor with whom the youth interacts on a face-to-face basis. Mentoring may include workplace mentoring where the local program matches a youth participant with an employer or employee of a company.

Element 9: Follow-up services

Follow-up services are defined as “critical services provided following a youth’s exit from the program to help ensure the youth is successful in employment and/or postsecondary education and training.

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Follow-up services may include regular contact with a youth participant's employer, including assistance in addressing work-related problems that arise.” Follow-up services may begin immediately following the last expected date of service in the Youth program when no future services are scheduled. Follow-up services do not cause the exit date to change and do not trigger re-enrollment in the program. Follow-up services for youth also may include the following program elements:

- supportive services;
- adult mentoring;
- financial literacy education;
- services that provide labor market and employment information about in- demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services; and
- activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training

Provision of these program elements must occur after the exit date in order to count as follow-up services. All youth participants must be offered an opportunity to receive follow-up services that align with their individual service strategies. Furthermore, follow-up services must be provided to all participants for a minimum of 12 months unless the participant declines to receive follow-up services or the participant cannot be located or contacted.

Element 10: Comprehensive guidance and counseling

This element provides individualized counseling to participants. This includes drug and alcohol abuse counseling, mental health counseling, and referral to partner programs, as appropriate. When referring participants to necessary counseling that cannot be provided by the local youth program or its service providers, the local youth program must coordinate with the organization it refers to in order to ensure continuity of service. When resources exist within the local program or its service providers, it is allowable to provide counseling services directly to participants rather than refer youth to partner programs.

Element 11: Financial literacy education

This program element may include the following activities:

- support the ability of participants to create budgets, initiate checking and savings accounts at banks, and make informed financial decisions
- support participants in learning how to effectively manage spending, credit, and debt, including student loans, consumer credit, and credit cards
- teach participants about the significance of credit reports and credit scores; what their rights are regarding their credit and financial information; how to determine the accuracy of a credit report and how to correct inaccuracies; and how to improve or maintain good credit
- support a participant’s ability to understand, evaluate, and compare financial products, services, and opportunities and to make informed financial decisions
- educate participants about identity theft, ways to protect themselves from identify theft, and how to resolve cases of identity theft and in other ways understand their rights and protections related to personal identity and financial data
- support activities that address the particular financial literacy needs of non-English speakers, including providing the support through the development and distribution of multilingual

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financial literacy and education materials

- support activities that address the particular financial literacy needs of youth with disabilities, including connecting them to benefits planning and work incentives counseling
- provide financial education that is age appropriate, timely, and provides opportunities to put lessons into practice, such as by access to safe and affordable financial products that enable money management and savings
- implement other approaches to help participants gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence to make informed financial decisions that enable them to attain greater financial health and stability by using high quality, age-appropriate, and relevant strategies and channels, including, where possible, timely and customized information, guidance, tools, and instruction.

Element 12: Entrepreneurial skills training

This program element provides the basics of starting and operating a small business. Such training must develop the skills associated with entrepreneurship. Such skills may include, but are not limited to, the ability to:

- take initiative;
- creatively seek out and identify business opportunities;
- develop budgets and forecast resource needs;
- understand various options for acquiring capital and the trade-offs associated with each option; and
- communicate effectively and market oneself and one's ideas

Approaches to teaching youth entrepreneurial skills may include, but are not limited to:

- Entrepreneurship education that provides an introduction to the values and basics of starting and running a business. Entrepreneurship education programs often guide youth through the development of a business plan and also may include simulations of business start-up and operation.
- Enterprise development which provides supports and services that incubate and help youth develop their own businesses. Enterprise development programs go beyond entrepreneurship education by helping youth access small loans or grants that are needed to begin business operation and by providing more individualized attention to the development of viable business ideas.
- Experiential programs that provide youth with experience in the day-to-day operation of a business. These programs may involve the development of a youth-run business that young people participating in the program work in and manage. Or, they may facilitate placement in apprentice or internship positions with adult entrepreneurs in the community.

Element 13: Services that provide labor market information

This element includes “services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services.” Workforce and labor market information is defined as “the body of knowledge that describes the relationship between labor demand and supply.”

Numerous tools and applications that are user-friendly exist, which can be used to provide labor market and career information, as appropriate to each youth.

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Labor market information (LMI) identifies in-demand industries and occupations and employment opportunities; and, provides knowledge of job market expectations including education and skills requirements and potential earnings. LMI tools also can aid in facilitating youth awareness of the career fields that are likely to provide long-term employment and earnings in local labor markets.

Element 14: Postsecondary preparation and transition activities

Postsecondary preparation and transition activities and services prepare In School Youth (ISY) and Out of School Youth (OSY) for advancement to postsecondary education after attaining a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent. These services include exploring postsecondary education options including technical training schools, community colleges, 4-year colleges and universities, and registered apprenticeship. Additional services include, but are not limited to,

- assisting youth to prepare for SAT/ACT testing;
- assisting with college admission applications;
- searching and applying for scholarships and grants;
- filling out the proper Financial Aid applications and adhering to changing guidelines;
- connecting youth to postsecondary education programs