

ABSTRACT  
Workforce Innovation Fund Application

**Applicant Name:** City of Los Angeles Workforce Investment Board (WIB)

**Applicant Category:** Consortium of WIBs

**Lead Applicant City/State:** Los Angeles, California

**Areas Served:** East, Northeast, South and San Fernando Valley areas of the City of Los Angeles (City)

**Project Name:** LA Reconnections Career Academy (LARCA)

**Funding Level Requested:**     \$11,100,000 **technical costs**  
  900,000 **evaluation costs**

**Project Type:** C

**Description of Proposed Project:** The LA Reconnections Career Academy (LARCA) is a career development collaborative that operates as a consortium of the LA City and County WIBs, and partnerships with the City of Los Angeles Mayor's Office, Community Development Department (CDD), the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD), the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, the Los Angeles Workforce Collaborative, the Los Angeles Public Sector Workgroup, and community partners such as LA Conservation Corps (LACC), the Coalition for Responsible Community Development (CRCD), and the Youth Policy Institute (YPI).

LARCA builds upon the successful model the City has established to re-align youth Workforce Investment funds in a redeployment of City and partner funding to combat the crisis proportion of high school dropouts in LA - approximately, 97,000 between the ages of 16 to 24 are out of school and out of work. The program will target out of school youth in six catchment areas, with the highest density, surrounding San Fernando High School (HS), Belmont HS, Roosevelt HS, Fremont HS, Santee HS, and South LA high schools.

**LARCA's five goals are:**

**Goal #1:** achieve better results for jobseekers and employers by recruiting 1,380 out of school

youth and young adults and enrolling 1,200 with a 15% attrition rate, ages 16 to 24, by providing supportive services in placement in employment and education, attainment of a degree or certificate, and/or demonstration of literacy and numeracy gains.

**Goal #2:** achieve return on public investment through aligning of public and private-sector services.

**Goal #3:** reflect greater efficiency in the delivery of quality services through braiding of multiple funding streams, including WIA Youth, LAUSD Diploma Project, LA Community College District and the City's FamilySource Center funds to out of school youth.

**Goal #4:** develop stronger cooperation across multiple funding streams that will lead directly to reduced program costs.

**Goal #5:** increase systems integration by working toward building a system of workforce development services for out of school youth.

The LARCA Leadership Team represents the workforce development, education, human services and business leadership in LA. The team and its partners share a unified theory of change to implement structured services to out of school youth. Each agency accepts that effective change can be most successful through a process of serving an entire well-defined neighborhood that target out of school youth and their families with services. Change is measured in common goals, objectives, and outcomes on the individual and family level across partners using a common data management system that captures all program data that is analyzed in program reports produced each quarter. This change is best achieved through a planned pipeline of workforce preparation and supportive services to help youth return to school and develop career pathways. This theory incorporates youth and family support services that target needs that provide assessment and counseling, educational services to facilitate return to school, bridge training and work readiness, occupational career training and placement in education and employment. Unified program data is combined and assessed to provide revision to meet yearly and final outcomes.

LARCA will target services to students in two cohorts. The *Fast Track Cohort* targets out of school youth and young adults who (according to a program assessment by Career Coaches upon entry when developing a Service Plan) are within 12 months of receiving their high school diploma or equivalency degree. The *Back on Track Cohort* will include youth and young adult clients needing over 12 months to receive their diploma or equivalency. In addition to education services, the program provides career pathways training in Construction, Green Technology and Healthcare that lead to industry recognized certificates and employment.

**Description of Proposed Evaluation Strategy:** Social Policy Research Associates will conduct the evaluation to further understanding of the supports and services necessary to facilitate young adults who have dropped out of school before completing their high school diploma or GED. This evaluation will rigorously assess how well the project achieves these objectives by conducting a Random Assignment (RA) study in which all eligible youth interested in receiving LARCA services will be randomly assigned either to the program group (which will allow them access to program services) or the control group (who will be ineligible to enroll in the program). By using RA, the evaluation will create two equivalent groups, and the outcomes for these two groups can be compared to provide an unbiased estimate of the impact of the LARCA model. Accompanying the impact analysis will be an implementation study to examine the organizational and partnership arrangements and service design and delivery strategies of the LARCA.

This evaluation will provide critical information on the effectiveness of this innovative program in re-engaging youth who face daunting odds to achieving educational and employment success. If the evaluation can document that LARCA has impacts on educational attainment, employment, earnings, or other outcomes of interest, the entire workforce community can benefit through adopting key elements of the LARCA model, or even taking the principles behind this model to scale in many other areas throughout the country.

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