Youth CareerConnect (YCC) Program
Frequently Asked Questions
U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration

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KEY

- **Questions 1 through 13 published 12/06/2013**
- **Questions 14 through 23 published 12/19/2013**

1. **Question: Can I be a partner on more than one grant application?**

   Answer: Yes, organizations may partner on more than one grant application. An organization (based on its Employer Identification Number) may only be awarded one grant as a result of this competition, but this would not preclude an organization from being the lead applicant on one proposal and a partner on another, or serving as a partner on multiple applications.

2. **Question: How can I verify that my proposed industry/occupation field is one for which employers are currently seeking H-1B Visas?**

   Answer: Although the YCC SGA provides two links for additional information on industries/occupations for which H-1B visas have been issued, the links can be difficult to navigate. You can access a public disclosure file that contains administrative data from employers' Labor Condition Applications (LCA) and the certification determinations processed by the Department's Office of Foreign Labor Certification (OFLC), Employment and Training Administration, between October 1, 2012 and September 30, 2013, at http://www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov/performancedata.cfm (click on the link or type the URL into your browser). Please select the Disclosure Data tab, and then FY 2013 Disclosure File *H-1B_FY2013_Q4.xls* that corresponds to the LCA OFLC program. The file will download as an Excel spreadsheet which can then be sorted, first by "Certified" status and then by LCA Case SOC Code. Any of the occupations approved under an H-1B petition are acceptable to propose in an application to this SGA provided that the proposed occupations meet the requirements as described in Section IV.B.3.a.iv of the SGA.

3. **Question: How is this grant program funded?**

   Answer: Funding for the YCC program initiative is authorized under Section 414(c) of the American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act of 1998 (ACWIA), as amended (codified at 29 U.S.C. 2916a).

4. **Question: Will students who enroll in YCC program models that extend beyond high school be required to pursue the same career pathway after high school?**

   Answer: YCC programs should continue to provide the integrated academic and career-focused curriculum in the identified H-1B industry or occupation throughout the program model, which

may extend one or two years beyond high school. After program completion, program participants are encouraged but not required to continue on the identified career pathway.

5. **<u>Question:</u> The YCC SGA mentions several populations of students who should be supported and encouraged to participate. Is a program expected to enroll a minimum percentage of students in each specific population?**

   Answer: No, the YCC solicitation does not require minimum percentages of certain populations of youth for this initiative. But, the solicitation requires program enrollment be open to all students currently enrolled in high school. Applicants are required to describe how they will seek to ensure that program participants reflect the full diversity of the overall school population and community, and how they will encourage and support the participation of low-income students and students who are traditionally underrepresented in the selected H-1B industry/occupation, such as females, minorities, students with disabilities, and English language learners. Programs may not exclude a student on the basis of the student's prior level of academic achievement.

6. **<u>Question:</u> Are job shadowing and exposure to classroom speakers considered work experience?**

   Answer: The solicitation requires applicants to describe the work-based learning opportunities that will be offered. This includes describing both work experience opportunities and career awareness activities that will be provided in each academic year. While job shadowing is a type of work experience, programs are strongly encouraged to provide internship opportunities in addition to job shadowing in order to provide maximum exposure to the world of work. Exposure to classroom speakers is not work experiences as it does not take place in the workplace, but this would be an example of a career awareness activity.

7. **<u>Question:</u> The YCC SGA references "small learning communities." In order to apply for this grant, is our district expected to be or have been a Department of ED Small Learning Community grant recipient?**

   Answer: No. This is a new grant initiative and does not require prior or current participation in the Department of Education's Small Learning Community grant programs to be considered an eligible applicant.

8. **<u>Question:</u> Are programs proposed under the YCC solicitation required to offer more than one H-1B industry or occupation program of study?**

   Answer: No, applicants are not required to design a program(s) that focuses on more than one H-1B industry or occupation. Programs are encouraged to offer courses that support the education and training of participants, preparing them for immediate or future careers in an H-1B occupation or industry post-graduation.

9. **<u>Question:</u> Is there a list of Federal funds school districts receive that can be used as part of the match?**

   Answer: As specified in the SGA, under the definition of match described in Section III.B., other Federal funds may NOT count toward the required match *unless* the statutes governing those Federal funds explicitly allow them to be used as match. Applicants currently receiving Federal funds should review the statutes governing those funds to determine if they are eligible to count toward the required match.

10. **<u>Question:</u> Have there been previous rounds of the Youth Career Connect grant program, or is this the first time this grant opportunity has been offered?**

    Answer: Youth CareerConnect is a new grant program designed in collaboration with the Department of Labor and the Department of Education. There have been no previous iterations.

11. **<u>Question:</u> One of the Core Elements of the Youth CareerConnect program is "Individualized Career and Academic Counseling." Is there a recommended ratio of counselors to students or an expected ratio to be met?**

    Answer: While no specific ratio of counselors to students is required, programs must ensure that a sufficient ratio is maintained to ensure the level of service outlined in the SGA. To facilitate the comprehensive career and academic counseling described, the program should provide dedicated counselors for program participants. Counselors, and/or other designated staff/partners, must meet frequently with each participant individually to assess progress on their career and academic plans and to make adjustments as necessary. The Department encourages program models to use program partners, such as the American Job Centers, Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth services providers, and other community resources, to deliver direct career counseling services or augment services provided by the education partner.

12. **<u>Question:</u> Can you explain the Individual Development Plan described in the SGA? What does it entail?**

    Answer: An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a service and activity plan developed with each youth participant. It is a living document that identifies the needs and goals of the youth and sets a plan for addressing and achieving them. It should be regularly reviewed and revised throughout the student's participation in the program. Counselors must meet frequently with each participant individually to assess progress on their career and academic plans and to make adjustments as necessary. Students who may have started similar plans before enrolling in the program may incorporate the goals from those plans into the IDP produced through the Youth CareerConnect program; however, plans completed prior to entry into the Youth CareerConnect program may not be a substitute for the IDP established while the student is participating in the program.

13. **<u>Question:</u> Are non-profit Institutions of Higher Education eligible to apply for Youth CareerConnect as lead applicants?**

    Answer: Yes, an Institution of Higher Education may be able to apply as lead applicant if it is a non-profit organization. To be eligible to apply as a lead applicant, a non-profit organization must have experience implementing high school reform or a youth program that includes a small learning community approach, has integrated academic and career-focused learning around one or more industry themes, and incorporates multiple local partners such as employers. The non-profit must provide a letter on its organizational letter head attesting current non-profit status and affirming and documenting its experience with the described program model, including identifying the school(s), industry of focus, and employer partners. If an Institution of Higher Education fulfills these requirements, it may apply as a lead applicant.

14. **<u>Question:</u> How many cohorts of participants is my proposed program expected to serve?**

    Answer: Each YCC program will be expected to enroll at least one cohort of participants each year of the grant award until the end of the grant period of performance. Further, a plan for how the same level of program performance will be sustained for future cohorts beyond the life of the grant must be included in the program's sustainability plan.

15. **<u>Question:</u> How can I use the cost per participant per year to calculate the total number of participants my program will serve?**

    Answer: Since this is a 4 year grant program (including the upfront planning time of approximately 5 months), most cohorts of participants will be enrolled for multiple years. All grant programs are expected to enroll at least one cohort per year and the model must serve participants for 2 to 4 years. For example, a 4-year program model that enrolls one cohort per year would have 4 cohorts of participants over the life of the grant. The first cohort would have 4 years of per participant costs charged to the grant, the second cohort would have 3 years, the third cohort would have 2 years, and the fourth cohort would only incur 1 year of YCC grant fund costs. Using the minimum expectation of 100 participants per cohort a total of 400 individual participants would be served but there would be 1,000 total participants served counting each year an individual participant is in the program (i.e., 1,000 per-participant-per-year costs charged to the grant (100 in year 1, 200 in year 2, 300 in year 3, and 400 in year 4). Grantees total number of participants served over the life of the grant counting each year an individual participant is in the program should equal the total grant award divided by the number of per participant per year estimated costs charged to the grant (between $2000-3000). For example, a $2 million grant that has a cost per participant per year of $2,000 would serve a total of 1,000 participants counting each year an individual participant is in the program.

16. **<u>Question:</u> The solicitation states that participants must be enrolled in high school upon program enrollment, but allows program models starting in 9th grade. Is a middle school/junior high student in the 9th grade eligible? Are grades below 9th grade eligible?**

Answer: Eligible participants are students enrolled in high school; students enrolled in middle school are not eligible for the program. Applicants may propose program models that serve high school students in grades 9-12, 10-12, 10-13, 11-12, 11-13, or 11-14 and must include industry-specific classes available only to program participants.

17. **Question: For a program model that serves grades 13 and/or 14, does the grant need to pay for all of the associated tuition and fees?**

    Answer: All grant-funded program services must be provided at no cost to participants. Grantees may propose to cover costs using any combination of grant funds, match funds leverage funds, or other arrangements.

18. **Question: Are organizations based in outlying areas (Guam, Virgin Islands, etc.) eligible to apply?**

    Answer: Yes. The language in the Solicitation does not prohibit organizations based in outlying areas from applying for this grant opportunity. Assuming such organizations meet the eligibility requirements of one of the lead applicant categories (as discussed in Section III.A.i) and can fulfill all of the other eligibility requirements listed in Section III, they are free to apply for this grant.

19. **Question: Can schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs apply as a Local Education Agency?**

    Answer: Yes. The Solicitation states that as defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, a "local educational agency" includes schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

20. **Question: Are 501c(3) college Foundations, which support the college, eligible to apply for the Youth CareerConnect grant as a lead applicant as outlined in Section III. A. of the funding announcement.**

    Answer: To be eligible to apply as a lead applicant, a non-profit organization must have experience implementing high school reform or a youth program that includes a small learning community approach, has integrated academic and career-focused learning around one or more industry themes, and incorporates multiple local partners such as employers. The non-profit must provide a letter on its organizational letter head attesting current non-profit status and affirming and documenting its experience with the described program model, including identifying the school(s), industry of focus, and employer partners. If a non-profit organization fulfills these requirements, it may apply as a lead applicant.

21. **<u>Question:</u> All grantees will have to demonstrate a strong public/private partnership, and must include, at a minimum, a local education agency, a local workforce investment system entity, an employer, and an institution of higher education. If we are a rural area that does not have an institution of higher education in our local area, how can we meet the partnership requirement?**

    Answer: While an applicant must include an institution of higher education (IHE) as part of their partnership, there is no requirement in the SGA that the IHE must be in the local area where the grant is proposed. Local areas that do not have IHEs could partner with IHEs outside of their local area to fulfill the role of the IHE partnership. IHE roles can include activities such as, distance learning activities, ensuring that academic content is aligned with college-level content and developing articulation agreements to award all participants with academic credit towards a post-secondary degree or credit-bearing post-secondary certificate, most of which can be contributed by an IHE partner without residing in the local area.

22. **<u>Question:</u> May applicants use county-level poverty and income data from the American Community Survey (as described on pages 25-26) rather than highlighting individual city or township data? Our proposed project may reach several counties within our region. Using county data will allow us to capture information to more accurately reflect unincorporated/rural service areas.**

    Answer: If you are serving participants from an entire county (i.e., there are not specific cities or towns within the county that will not be served) it is acceptable to use county-level poverty and income data from the American Community Survey. However, if there are cities or towns within the county that would not be able to access the program model for any reason, county-level data is not sufficient, and the applicant must provide the poverty data for each city or town that the program will serve.

23. **<u>Question:</u> Are we required to demonstrate there are H-1B visa holders in my local area in my chosen industry focus?**

    Answer: There is no requirement within the SGA for an applicant to provide data on the current number of H-1B applications and visas in their geographic area, urban or rural. For example, rural areas that may have few H-1B visas in their area are not impacted in the SGA scoring due to having fewer H-1B visa holders. The SGA, in Section IV.B.3.a.iv., does require applicants to: 1) cite evidence that demonstrates that the selected high-growth industry(ies)/occupation(s) is one for which employers are currently seeking H-1B visas and/or is an occupation(s) along the career pathway in the relevant industry, although not specifically within a local area; 2) provide local labor market data demonstrating that the selected H-1B industry(ies)/occupation(s) is high-growth; and 3) provide evidence that the local or regional employers face a gap in skills of the available workforce and in the training available to the workforce.