

**Youth Program Requirements. With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in Section 129 of WIOA**

**(1) a. Identify the State-developed criteria to be used by local boards in awarding grants for youth workforce investment activities;**

Montana is a single-area state with the Statewide Workforce Programs Bureau in the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) acting as oversight of WIOA Title IB youth programs on behalf of the State Workforce Innovation Board. DLI follows the Department of Administration Procurement Bureau's Request for Proposal (RFP) process. The State Workforce Investment Board's ad hoc Youth Council developed the criteria for the selection of youth providers for the most recent WIA RFP. The decision was made to for-go the Request for Proposal process for the 2016 Program Year that starts July 1, 2016. The State Workforce Innovation will consider the following and possibly have additional criteria for awarding contracts to youth service providers in the next round of Request for Proposals.

**1. Agency profile and experience in providing services to disconnected youth;**

**2. Demonstrated Effectiveness:**

**3. Financial Systems:** Description of the offeror's financial systems in place for fiscal control and accounting procedures that are in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

**4. Work Plan and Method of Providing Activities and Services**

A. Description of how the provider will ensure that **WIOA youth services are provided** to youth who are:

1. **In-school** (attending any school, including secondary or post-secondary school) ages 14-21 and has one or more WIOA barriers; and

2. **Out-of-School youth** (not attending any school) is a youth who is not younger than 16 or older than age 24 at the time of enrollment:

- A school dropout
- within the age of compulsory school attendance, but has not attended school for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter. School year calendar quarter is based on how a local school district defines its school year quarters;
- A recipient of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent who is a low-income individual **and** has one or more WIOA barrier.

B. Provide a description of how the provider will ensure that **Priority of Service** is given to recipients of public assistance, free or reduced lunches, and other low-income individuals that are within the Lower Living Standard Income Levels as consistent with WIOA Law and Regulations.

**(1) b. Describe how the local boards will take into consideration the ability of the providers to meet performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance for the youth program as described in section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) of WIOA in awarding such grants.**

Performance scores and documented performance accountability will be one of the factors that the SWIB will take into consideration in awarding funding to providers. Youth service providers will demonstrate their ability to meet performance

accountability measures through the previous year's performance reports in their proposals to provide services to youth in 2017. Demonstrated effectiveness in meeting performance is a scored element in the RFP. WIOA youth performance measures will not have been in place long enough to use for demonstrated effectiveness therefore the performance in the next RFP will be for the WIA youth performance measures of Placement in Employment/Education; Attainment of Degree/Certificate; and Literacy/Numeracy Gains. Additionally competitors will be required to describe, for out-of-school youth, measureable skills gains. In the upcoming RFP competitors will be allowed to use literacy/numeracy for this because Montana currently does not have another mechanism in place for to track measurable skills gains.

The WIOA staff in the Department of Labor, Public Health and Human Services and Adult Education in the Office of Public Instruction have formed a workgroup that is working toward developing a common method of tracking performance.

WIOA performance youth primary indicators are:

- Percentage of program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the **2<sup>nd</sup> quarter after exit** from the program;
- Percentage of program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the **4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit** from the program;
- Median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the **2<sup>nd</sup> quarter** after exit from the program;
- Percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent during participation or within **one (1) year after exit** from the program.

**NOTE:** Program participants who have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent are included in the percentage counted as meeting the criterion only if the participant, in addition to obtaining such diploma or its recognized equivalent, have obtained or retained employment or are in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one (1) year after exit from the program.

**(2) Describe how the State will use funds to carry out Youth Program elements described in WIOA section 129 (c) (2).**

Twenty (20) percent, or more, of Montana's youth funding will be spent on work-based learning. Work Experience will be the majority of the work-based learning activities that will be provided to youth. Occupational skills training and pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeships will be utilized more as youth providers begin guiding the youth they are serving toward a career pathway.

Strategies for reaching the 20 percent requirement include working with partner agencies in accessing existing worksites; working with employment services to connect with and recruit potential employers for work experience worksites; utilizing existing worksites that have had positive outcomes in the past for both the youth and employer.

The remaining funding will be used to provide services to youth as determined appropriate by WIOA youth providers based on the youth's individual objective assessment and Individual Service Strategy.

Montana's WIOA youth funding goes to youth providers in each of the State's Montana Association of Counties (MACo) District. Montana determined that going through the Request for Proposal process for youth providers instead of bidding out each youth element better served Montana's rural nature and population of youth. WIOA youth providers are responsible for ensuring that all elements are made available to youth participants however they have the discretion of determining what specific elements may be provided to youth based on the youth's individual objective assessment and the Individual Service Strategy. Youth may receive the elements directly from the youth service provider or through a contract between the youth service provider and the entity providing the youth elements.

Montana youth service providers coordinate with partners in their areas whenever possible to coordinate and leverage funds to ensure youth are receiving the services they need. In some instances youth elements such as Financial Literacy are provided by area chambers and/or banking entities at no charge to the WIOA program. Also dropout prevention strategies is another element that is provided to in-school youth through the Jobs for Montana's Graduates' program (if the youth area in which the youth lives is attending a JMG school) at no cost to the WIOA program.

Elements that will be made available to all youth include:

1. Tutoring, study skills training and instruction leading to secondary school completion, including dropout prevention strategies;
2. Alternative secondary school offerings;
3. Paid and unpaid work experiences that have academic and occupational education as a component of the work experience:
  - > Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year;
  - > Pre-apprenticeship programs;
  - > Internships and job shadowing; and
  - > On-the-job training opportunities;
4. Occupational skill training with priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized post-secondary credentials that align with in-demand industry sectors or occupations;
5. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
6. Leadership development opportunities, including community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors;
7. Supportive services;

8. Adult mentoring for the duration of at least 12 months that may occur both during and after program participation;
9. Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation;
10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse counseling, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate to the needs of the individual youth;
11. Financial literacy education;
12. Entrepreneurial skills training;
13. 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
14. Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to post-secondary education and training.

**(3) Provide the language contained in the State policy for “requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment” criterion specified in WIOA sections 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and 129(a)(1)(C(iv)(VII).**

***Out-of-School Youth (16-24):***

A low-income individual who requires additional assistance to:

- (1) complete an educational program; a youth who is in need of a high school diploma or equivalent; or has dropped out of a post-secondary educational program during the past 12 calendar months; or has a diploma but requires additional education in order to obtain or retain employment.

**OR**

- (2) secure and hold employment: a youth that is **not currently attending** any school (including a youth with a diploma or equivalent) who has not held a full-time job for more than three consecutive months; or has a poor work history, to include no work history; or has been fired from a job in the last 6 calendar months; or lacks work readiness skills necessary to obtain and/or retain employment;

**AND**

**Includes at least one of the following characteristics:**

- Child of Incarcerated Parent(s)
- Lacks occupational and/or educational goals/skills
- Migrant Youth
- Chronic behavior problems at school
- Native American
- Youth at-risk of court involvement
- Refugee
- Substance abuse
- Family Illiteracy
- Victim/witness of domestic violence or other abuse

***In-school youth (14-21):***

An in-school youth who is either low-income or enrolled under the 5% low-income exception and requires additional assistance to:

- (1) complete an educational program: a youth who is at risk of dropping out of high school as documented by his/her school; or had previously dropped out of an educational program but has returned to school (including an alternative school); has below average grades; or a youth with poor attendance patterns in an educational program during the last twelve calendar months; or has previously been placed in out-of-home care (foster care, group home, or kinship care) for more than 6 months.

**OR**

- (2) secure and hold employment: an in-school youth who has not held a job for more than three consecutive months; or has a poor work history to include no work history; or has been fired from a job in the last 6 calendar months; or lacks work readiness skills necessary to obtain and/or retain employment.

**AND**

Includes at least one of the following characteristics:

- Child of Incarcerated Parent(s)
- Lacks occupational and/or educational goals/skills
- Migrant Youth
- Chronic behavior problems at school
- Native American
- Youth at-risk of court involvement
- Refugee
- Family Illiteracy
- Victim/witness of domestic violence or other abuse

***Enrollment using the additional assistance barrier is limited to 5% of in-school youth.***

**4. How does Montana define alternative education? Discuss.**

**Alternative Education programs** is defined as a separate program within a K-12 public school district or charter school established to serve and provide youth a choice or option whose needs are not being met in the traditional school setting. Montana's goals for alternative schools are to:

1. Facilitate academic growth through career exploration and cross-curricular activities within a diverse learning community;
2. Encourage students to attend by choice;
3. Be responsive to unmet local needs; and
4. Ensure the student body reflects the racial and socio-economic mix of the community. An alternative school is one example of such schools, other examples include:
  - Specialty boarding schools
  - Residential treatment centers for substance abuse
  - Behavior modification centers
  - Wilderness treatment schools
  - Juvenile boot camp schools

Youth attending an alternative school in Montana are considered in-school youth. WIOA providers work closely with alternative schools in their areas through: (1) coordinating re-enrollment of drop-out youth back in the school system in a setting that may be more conducive to the youth's academic success; and (2) working together to ensure youth enrolled in an alternative school are receiving services and assistance as needed to meet the goals established on their Individual Service Strategy (ISS).

**5. How does Montana define “attending school” and “not attending school?”**  
***“Attending School”***

Montana defines attending school as youth 7-16 that are enrolled in and attending school full-time. Youth that are home schooled or enrolled in a private school are considered to be “attending school” if they have registered or provided notification to the Superintendent within their county of their intent to be considered a school.

***“Not Attending School”***

Youth under 16 and not attending school are considered to be truant; youth 16 and over and not attending school is considered to be a “drop out”.

**6. How does Montana define basic skills deficient?**

Montana adopted the definition of basic skills deficient from **WIOA Law Sec. 3 (5)**

**Basic Skills Deficient** (Youth Eligibility Barrier) – means a youth:

- that has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test

**Grade level scores below 9.0 (e.g., 8.9) is considered as “at or below the 8th grade level”.**

Assessment instruments must be valid and reliable and provide reasonable accommodations to youth disabilities in the assessment process in making this determination. Montana uses the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) as the acceptable basic skills assessment. Basic skills assessments are generally done through Adult Basic Education however WIOA Title IB programs have permission to administer the TABE in some instances. WIOA participants testing at 8.9 or below are required to have a specified number of hours of remediation and WIOA providers work closely with Adult Basic Education to ensure they are receiving remediation in preparation for the post-tests.