



DEPARTMENT OF
CAREER SERVICES

Workforce Issuance

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☐ Policy ☒ Information

To: MassHire Workforce Board Chairs
MassHire Workforce Board Directors
MassHire Career Center Directors
MassHire Fiscal Officers
MDCS Operations Managers

cc: WIOA State Partners

From: Beth Goguen, Director
MassHire Department of Career Services

Date: August 6, 2025

Subject: **Youth Employment Gateway Cities Learning Community Pilot:
Request for Information**

Purpose: To notify MassHire Workforce Boards, MassHire Career Center Operators and other local workforce partners of a Request for Information (RFI) to participate in the Youth Employment Gateway Cities Learning Community Pilot.

Background: The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) invites applications from MassHire Workforce Boards in partnership with their fiscal agents and at least one of the Massachusetts Gateway Cities in their region interested in participating in the Youth Employment Gateway Cities Learning Pilot. Workforce Boards and their city partner(s) are asked to form a team that includes at least one anchor employer committed to increasing summer employment opportunities. Additional details about the specific team members are described below. This initiative aims to build local capacity to scale youth employment strategies, align with the Commonwealth's

workforce priorities, and develop recommendations for further system development to increase the number of work-based learning opportunities for youth.

This pilot will engage up to four (4) teams comprising a MassHire Workforce Board and up to two Gateway Cities along with at least one anchor employer to work with EOLWD and its partners to:

- Participate in a learning community that explores how cities can provide leadership to improve vision and coordination,
- provide data infrastructure, and
- harness cross-sector collaboration—with a particular emphasis on employer engagement and supervision of work-based learning experiences for youth.

Teams will attend quarterly convenings alongside the other cohort teams, stakeholders, community, and employer partners. These convenings will serve as opportunities to share progress, exchange strategies, discuss challenges, and collaborate on solutions to support youth employment efforts. Teams will also participate in individual monthly team check-in meetings to review progress, receive technical assistance, identify any challenges, and plan next steps for implementation efforts.

EOLWD is launching this project in partnership with the City of Boston and the Boston MassHire Workforce Board. During 40+ years and under the leadership of four different mayors, Boston has institutionalized a robust summer employment strategy that is held up as a model replicated nationally by other cities. This pilot seeks to elevate innovations and best practices happening not only in Boston, but also in Gateway cities. Collectively, the goal of this pilot is to support community teams to (1) commit to a collective placement goal for Summer 2026, (2) create and execute a workplan to achieve that goal, and (3) identify areas of opportunity for greater investment, coordination, and leverage across the state to ensure that youth can access summer jobs as part of a broader career pathway.

Vision and Purpose

Youth employment is a critical component of Massachusetts' overall workforce strategy, contributing to early skill development, providing career exposure, fostering talent retention, and promoting equity in access to future economic opportunities. Yet, cities often face persistent challenges, including fragmented data systems, inconsistent coordination across partners, and insufficient business involvement.

This pilot seeks to learn more about barriers for implementing robust youth employment opportunities. Selected workforce boards and city leaders will be provided financial resources and state and peer-led technical assistance to expand local youth workforce systems and inform program and policy needs that are common across the state.

Key Focus Areas of the Pilot

The pilot aligns with the Commonwealth's workforce development framework, with particular attention to:

- Connecting youth with local economies to encourage long-term workforce participation.
- Building skills and career pathways through paid, supervised, and meaningful work experiences.
- Modeling collaborative workforce development rooted in businesses and community partnerships.
- Aligning with current youth employment initiatives, including YouthWorks and Connecting Activities.

The following provides information about team participation in the pilot including roles, available supports, expectations, timelines, and application instructions.

1. Selected teams in the pilot will benefit from:

- Stronger Employer Networks - Cities and local and state partners will develop new or enhanced partnerships with employers who offer paid, supervised positions, not just as a public service, but as a long-term talent investment strategy.
- Sustainable Partnership Models - Cities and local and state partners will learn from Boston's nationally recognized approach to youth employment, gaining insight into how public and private sectors can co-invest in young people's success, while also collaborating to tackle new challenges endemic to the current work environment: tighter budgets, use of AI to create efficiencies, and the prevalence of remote work
- Youth Employment Infrastructure - Cities and local and state partners will receive support to build or strengthen systems for coordinated outreach, onboarding, supervision, and employer supports.
- Peer-Led Innovation- Cities and local and state partners will engage in a learning community that supports real-time feedback, shared tools, and collective problem-solving, leading to innovations informed by data and practice.

2. Participating teams will work toward the following:

- Identify opportunities and strategies to engage more businesses in hiring youth.
- Establish dedicated local leadership focused on youth workforce development and employer engagement.
- Assess current youth summer employment efforts including capacity to engage and support employers, prepare and refer youth, and track outcomes.
- Develop an implementation plan for Summer 2026 and lay the groundwork for scale through 2027 and 2028.
- Engage employers, youth, educators, and community partners in collaborative planning.
- Demonstrate a strategy to strengthen youth workforce development through active collaboration with private sector employers and provide support from preparation through post-placement.
- Identify a plan to ensure youth are job-ready and employers are supported (e.g., Connecting Activities staff or other supports to reduce placement risks and provide ongoing guidance).
- Participate in a structured peer learning community with EOLWD and the City of Boston.

3. The selected teams will receive \$50,000 – \$75,000 to support:

- Strategies for data collection, analysis, and tracking outcomes
- Employer and youth engagement activities
- Supervisory toolkits and onboarding materials for employers
- Participation in quarterly and monthly peer learning sessions (virtual and in person)
- Planning and implementation of strategies to scale both subsidized and employer-paid job placements

4. Considerations for the use of funding and contracting terms:

- Funding may be used for contractor support or for in-house staff. Local procurement procedures must be followed for contractor support. Should funding be used for in-house staff a workplan for hours/time must be developed.
- Selected teams will sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as part of the Scope of Work for funding with signatories from representatives on the team.
- All funds must be spent by September 30, 2026.

5. Required team elements:

- MassHire Workforce Boards must be the lead applicant and conveners of their team.
- Up to two Gateway Cities may be included in a team.
- Commitment from Mayors or their designees to serve as engaged leaders of the team and work collaboratively with and supported by the MassHire Workforce Board.
- Work Collaboratively to develop a workplan to expand employer engagement.
- At least one anchor employer who has experience hiring youth and is willing to engage with a cohort of at least 5 youth.
- Each Gateway City must have at least one anchor employer that is willing to hire/fund a cohort of at least 5 youth (e.g., Kimbal Farms, State Street).
- Team members must have, or be committed to building partnerships with local employers, schools, MassHire Career Centers, and youth-serving organizations.
- Commit to full team participation in learning sessions and convenings.

6. Selected teams will be expected to:

- Develop a Statement of Work that outlines the specific tasks, deliverables, and the work the team will engage in as part of the pilot.
- Submit quarterly progress updates against stated goals.
- Participate in monthly learning community meetings to share local best practices and receive peer support.
- Track employer engagement strategies – articulate what was yielded in terms of relationship development and ultimately job placements.

7. Youth Employment Gateway Cities Learning Community Pilot Timeline:

Activity	Date
RFI Release	August 6, 2025
Application Submission Deadline	September 5, 2025
Selection Announcement	September TBD 2025
Pilot Kick-off	October TBD 2025
Quarterly Learning Sessions & Monthly Check	October 2025 – August 2026

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Final Convening	September TBD 2026

8. RFI Application Submission Instructions

How to Submit:

- Applications are due September 5, 2025, by 5:00PM.
- Email your completed application to Sarah Joseph at Sarah.Joseph@mass.gov.
- Include in the subject line (Local Board Name) – Youth Employment Gateway Cities Learning Community Pilot.

Formatting Requirements:

- Application must be submitted in PDF or WORD format.
- Use standard formatting: 12-point font, single spacing, and 1-inch margins.
- Please limit your narrative responses to no more than 7 pages, excluding budget and attachments.

Attachments:

- Budget and Budget Narrative (Template provided as an attachment.)
- Letter(s) of commitment from City and Employer Partners.

An application evaluation rubric has been provided as an attachment. Applicants can use the rubric to understand how their responses will be evaluated and ranked to identify the teams selected for the pilot.

Action

Required: Please share with managers, staff, partners, and employers as appropriate.

Effective: Immediately

Inquiries: Please contact [Sarah Jospheh](#) or [Alysia Ordway](#) with questions related to this RFI.

Attachments: A: RFI Application
B: Budget Template and Budget Narrative Form
C: Application Evaluation Rubric

References: [Gateway Cities in Massachusetts](#)