

Update on the CWP Summer Youth Employment & Learning Program

The Need

Young people need early work experience—whether through summer jobs, college work-study, entry level jobs out of high school, working at family-owned businesses, or volunteering—to gain readiness for future jobs and explore careers.

The COVID-19 Public Health Crisis has led to high urban youth unemployment and disconnected youth issues. Heightened concerns include high school seniors leaving with a significantly reduced capacity to enter a successful post-secondary college/career pathway. COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting communities of color where economic disparity already exists in low-income families, youth, and less-educated workers.

This year's SYELP program has been redesigned to provide a comprehensive virtual venue of summer youth employment options, given the "social distancing" requirements by the State of CT, which reduces the availability of in-person work experience for youth. Limited community service projects, with mental health services are being planned.

Summer Youth Employment & Learning Targeted Ages

CWP serve as the intermediaries that receive state, municipal, and philanthropic funds to coordinate and oversee the SYELP. In 2020, the CWP SYELP program plans to serve 1,500 14-21-year-old, predominantly in-school youth, who typically complete 120 hours of paid work experience, plus work readiness training.

14-21-Years-of-Age/Projected Number of SYELP Positions

<u>AGES</u>	<u>PROJECTED SYELP POSITIONS</u>
14-15-Year-Old:	300
16-18-Year-Old:	800
18-21-Year-Old:	400
Total	1500¹

Projected Funds include: State of CT (\$1.4 million) and presently being considered for cuts; City of Hartford (\$1-million) and likely to be funded; Philanthropic: Hartford Foundation (\$300,000); Travelers Foundation (\$100,000); Other Philanthropic (\$150,000).

***** Potential state decrease would decrease to 800 SYELP, and eliminate the regional funding.***

SYELP Targets Regional Low-Income Youth, with about 17,000 low-income youth between 14-21 years of age living in the Capitol Region with about 47,000 living at the ALICE household level.

Applications Received to Date: Hartford, New Britain, East Hartford, West Hartford, Bloomfield, Manchester, Vernon, Windsor, Bristol, Enfield, Newington, Glastonbury, Southington, Avon, East Windsor, Plainville, Rocky Hill, South Windsor, Wethersfield, & Other Municipalities.

Regional Response to SYELP Needs

The most immediate recommendation is to sustain summer youth employment and hold the line on cutting funding for critical SYELP programs. The Connecticut Youth Employment Program is being considered for cutting, and must be retained. State, regional, local resources need to be invested in SYELP virtual training between the workforce and education systems. The support of community service and revitalization programming can be implemented to support local municipal humanitarian and environmental remediation. New innovative referrals should support mental health and support services.

1 Comparable SYEP Numbers: ~1990: 4,000 SYEP with Summer Federal Funds, State \$10-million Distressed Cities; ~2000 SYEP Federal Funds Eliminated, State Decreases SYEP Funds; ~2010 3,000 Federal ARRA Program, State Funds Slightly Increases; 2015-2020: average of 1500 SYEP in Region.

Key Points

Prior to COVID-19, while the economy was seemingly strong, the statewide young adult unemployment rate was high. Since the statewide PAUSE order in late March, youth and young adults have experienced a disproportionate share of job loss and are likely to remain unemployed even after the shutdown ends.

The April 2020 unemployment rate of adults without a high school diploma was over 21%; 2.5 times higher than the 8.3% unemployment rate among their counterparts with a bachelor's or higher college degree. The COVID-19 shutdowns have also had outsized impacts on youth. Over the mid-March to mid-April period, employment fell by 31% among teens (16-19) and 25% among young adults between 20- and 24-years-old, compared with 13% among those 25 and older.²

Young people need early work experience—whether through summer jobs, college work-study, entry level jobs out of high school, working at family-owned businesses, or volunteering—to gain readiness for future jobs and explore careers. SYELP positively impacts the socioeconomic gaps in academic performance that take root early on in children's lives tend to persist throughout high school, into postsecondary school, and continue to have an impact as students enter the workforce.

- Increased work readiness skills (“soft skills”) due to work experience and work readiness training that expose youth to the “world of work” and familiarize them with the skills and competencies that employers need.
- Better-defined long-term career goals due to work experience, job shadowing and tours, and career interest inventories.
- Increased earnings due to paid work experience.
- Improved grades, attendance, standardized test scores, and behavior among in-school youth participating in the CYEP.
- Decreases in criminal behavior, social isolation, and risky, deviant, and delinquent behaviors during and immediately following participation (per a 2013 study by the Northeastern University Center for Labor Market Studies).

SYELP addresses the needs to address the SKILLS GAP. Connecticut must cultivate its future talent pipeline – the supply of young people with the soft skills and technical skills needed to respond to the COVID RECOVERY, in industries including healthcare, manufacturing, construction, and information technology, among others. SYELP supports the state's future talent pipeline by providing low-income, disengaged, and disconnected youth who might otherwise lack the skills and credentials to fill these job openings with work experiences that will increase their educational attainment and work readiness.

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² COVID-19 Shutdowns Are Hitting Low-Income Workers Especially Hard, May 18, 2020, by Neeta P. Fogg and Paul E. Harrington