

**Submitted by the Campaign for Youth
for Consideration in the House Competitiveness and Innovations Legislation**

Engaging Disadvantaged Youth for a Competitive Future

Rationale

In the 21st century, emerging innovation initiatives designed to advance our nation's economy must engage all Americans, including youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are in danger of being left behind. Too often, attempts and investments in innovation exclude disadvantaged youth, including those who have left high school without a diploma, although they are a potentially valuable resource to our workforce and economy. If these youth remain on the margins, they will drain the economy of needed resources and energy. Their inclusion in opportunities and pathways – especially those leading to careers in science, technology, engineering and math, will contribute to the creation of a more competitive workforce.

A 2006 report issued by the US Chamber of Commerce noted that 30 percent of students who start high school in the US do not finish in four years. Rates are higher for African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans. The implications of this phenomenon are staggering. Some 75 percent of state prison inmates are high school dropouts, as are almost 60 percent of federal inmates. The earnings gap widens with years of schooling and formal training. In 2003, earnings of male dropouts fell to \$21,447; high school graduates earned an average of \$32,266; and college graduates earned about \$63,000 or triple that of dropouts. As a result, dropouts pay fewer taxes, are more likely to rely on public assistance or become part of the criminal justice system.

Furthermore, a report by The Conference Board, Corporative Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management, *Are They Really Ready to Work? Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century U.S. Workforce* cites employers seeking skills in oral and written communication, teamwork, leadership, and critical thinking, along with a commitment to social and civic responsibility. Along with sound education in STEM, these "applied skills" have been identified as a critical need in the workplace of the future.

The economic health of our nation depends on investments we make in young people, especially investments we make in education, workforce and training initiatives aimed at increasing their participation in a knowledge-based economy. We must engage all of our youth, including those who are disconnected from their school and their community, in order to maintain and grow America's competitive edge in the global economy. Below is a concept for a new program that would help to accomplish this goal.

Concept for Legislation

Purpose

To test, identify, and disseminate effective public/private strategies, coordinated by Mayors or appropriate chief executive officers of general purpose local government, for preparing young people in disadvantaged situations, including those who have left high

school without a diploma, to be competitive in the future workplace and to be contributing, civically engaged members of the community.

Definitions

Eligible Entity: The term “eligible entity” means a consortium of a mayor, or appropriate chief executive officers of general purpose local government, who shall serve as the lead applicant and fiscal agent for the grant, and at least one school district, and multiple schools, the workforce system, community based organizations, public and private agencies providing services to young people, businesses, and parents/caregivers.

School: The term “school” shall include any appropriate full-or part-time educational program including traditional and alternative public schools, charter schools, GED programs, adult basic education programs, community colleges, youth development or service program administered by a community-based organization, or other types of educational pathways described by the applicant that can lead to academic credentials and a pathway to higher education or careers.

Grants Authorized

The Secretary of Education, in consultation with the Secretaries of Labor, HHS, HUD, Justice, and the Federal Youth Development Council established under the Tom Osborne Federal Youth Coordination Act (Public Law 109-365; 120 Stat. 2594) shall award grants to eligible entities to develop and implement a strategy to identify young people in disadvantaged situations, including those who have left high school without a diploma and those who have a diploma but face barriers to employment or do not have the skills to obtain employment or enter post-secondary education, and provide them with the support needed to be successful in school, join the workforce, and become productive and civically engaged members of the community.

The Secretary of Education shall also seek the consultation of leaders in the field working with disconnected youth, including members of the Federal Youth Development Council (both federal and non-federal members).

Application

An eligible entity shall submit an application to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require. Applications must include a well developed education component (which may include an emphasis on the skills needed in science, technology, engineering, and math, in addition to basic literacy), a work preparation component, (including hands-on internships, work experience, or community service that promote the development of applied skills including oral and written communication, teamwork, leadership, critical thinking) and a youth development/support component. Additionally, the application shall include the following:

- (1) a needs assessment of the community, including an estimate of the number of young people aged 16 to 24 who do not have a high school diploma or GED and the number who are unemployed or face barriers to employment; and an assessment of resources available in the community that can help them return to an appropriate educational program, school, or community college; join the workforce; participate in various forms of national and community service; and become productive and civically engaged members of the community;
- (2) a description of the eligible entity applying for the grant;

- (3) a plan for identifying and engaging young people in disadvantaged situations, including those who are out of school and lack a diploma, and those with a diploma who lack access to a job or post-secondary education or face barriers to employment, and connecting them with a continuum of comprehensive and coordinated resources that can help them be successful in school, join the workforce, and become productive and civically engaged members of the community, that includes a description of
 - (a) the needs of the young people that will be met by the eligible entity;
 - (b) the identities, roles, and capacity of the partners in the consortia to fulfill the needs described in (a), including a description of the role to be played by business partners;
 - (c) plans to leverage non-federal (including in-kind) resources;
 - (d) the services to be provided;
 - (e) the research and evidence base indicating why the selected strategy and selection of services will be effective in meeting the comprehensive needs of the young people identified;
 - (f) the goals, intended outcomes, and performance measures of the consortium's strategy;
 - (g) memoranda of understanding between partners within the eligible entity and the appropriate chief executive officers of general purpose local government, outlining the specific roles and responsibilities of the participating organizations and businesses; and
 - (h) a plan for an advisory council composed of several young people from the target population in the locality, members of the local government including education, labor, social service and other agencies, and business and community leaders.

- (4) A description of the system that will be put in place to provide case management, counseling, adult advocacy and/or mentoring to help youth and their families access the various systems, resources, and supports necessary to assure their success.

Allowable activities

Funds may be used for a comprehensive array of coordinated activities that will support the educational, vocational, social, emotional, and civic needs of young people who lack a diploma or a GED and/or are unemployed or face barriers to employment, allowing them to return to school, join the workforce, and become productive and civically engaged members of the community. Allowable activities include:

- (1) workforce preparation, youth entrepreneurship, technological and vocational skill building, and meaningful internship opportunities developed in partnership with the business community
- (2) education programming including assessment, instruction, curriculum development that promotes contextual learning, tutoring, and technology supports to academic instruction
- (3) compensation for employment opportunities, including summer employment opportunities, community service and work experience
- (4) strategies that will expose young people to, and prepare them for, careers in areas that require the use of science, technology, engineering, and math skills.

- (5) strategies that promote the development of applied skills, including oral and written communication, teamwork, leadership, critical thinking, and a commitment to social and civic responsibility, including service-learning activities
- (6) health services
- (7) mental health services
- (8) drug treatment services
- (9) child care services
- (10) mentoring activities, including one-to-one relationship building and tutoring
- (11) family support services
- (12) financial assistance for education support services and for higher education
- (13) coordinating the overall effort of the consortium

Eligible Participants

Eligible participants will include young people between the ages of 16 and 24 inclusive, and 75 percent must have left high school without a diploma.

Grant Period

Each grant awarded shall be for a period of 5 years.

Priority

In awarding grants to eligible entities, the Secretary shall give priority to applications from eligible entities proposing:

- (1) to serve areas with disproportionately high numbers of youth who are out of school and lack a diploma or GED
- (2) to serve areas with high concentrations of young people in families whose income is no more than 200 percent of the poverty level
- (3) strategies rooted in documented best practices or research that integrate multiple services into a comprehensive, coordinated continuum that meets the holistic needs of young people, including health, mental health, housing, civic, job readiness, work experience, school readiness, or actual re-enrollment in school or post-secondary education, and connections to family and community
- (4) a strategy that demonstrates the leadership and substantive involvement of the business community in addition to the Mayor or appropriate chief executive officers of general purpose local government and the public and non-profit sectors.

Reports and Evaluation

(a) Eligible entities receiving grants awarded under this part shall submit a report annually to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and providing such information as the Secretary may require, including information on the characteristics of those served, the services and supports provided, and the education and labor market outcomes resulting from the activities funded under this part.

(b) The Secretary shall provide for an external study of the grants awarded under this part that shall—

- (1) include an analysis and documentation of the strategies implemented and the key lessons learned related to program design, systems coordination, and implementation

- (2) measure the outcomes, and progress toward the outcomes, of the strategies implemented in terms of enrollment in various school settings, academic gains (including literacy and numeracy gains), academic and employment credentials earned, job and college placement, wages, and job and college retention over two years.
- (3) document the incremental progress of young people over time on the measures above
- (4) begin at the initiation of the grants to the eligible entities, so that the plans developed under section X are informed by and conducive to the external study.

Best Practices

The Secretary shall provide technical assistance to grantees who request assistance and shall disseminate best practices that emerge from this initiative in identifying young people in disadvantaged situations, including those who lack a high school diploma or GED, or are unemployed or face barriers to employment, and implementing effective public/private strategies for preparing them to be successful students, workers, and citizens both during and after implementation in consultation with the Federal Youth Development Council established under the Tom Osborne Federal Youth Coordination Act (Public Law 109-365; 120 Stat. 2594) and the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, established under section 206 of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. 5616).

Matching Funds

- (a) In general - An eligible entity receiving funds shall provide matching funds from non-Federal sources equal to 25 percent of the annual cost of the initiative.
- (b) Waiver authority – The Secretary may waive the match requirement for grantees, such as those in high poverty rural and urban areas, that demonstrate an inability to provide a match.

Authorization of Appropriations

- (a) In general- there are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section \$100,000,000 for fiscal year 2008 and such sums as may be necessary for each of fiscal years 2009 through 2012.
- (b) Allocation- of the amounts appropriated to carry out this section for each fiscal year—
 - (1) 90 percent shall be for grants to eligible entities
 - (2) 10 percent shall be for evaluation, technical assistance, and dissemination of best practices