

## **GRWDB Youth Work Experience and Incentive Payments Policy, including the NJDOL Summer Youth Work Experience Program**

**Purpose:** A Youth Work Experience and Incentive Policy, required under Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I programs, per NJWIN 1-17 was approved at the Oct. 6, 2022, board meeting of the Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board (GRWDB). Policy updates were approved by the full board on April 9, 2026, to reflect additional required procedures as well as provisions for stipends for the GRWDB's Summer Youth Work Experience Program (SYWEP) funded by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL).

**Background:** WIOA Sec. 129 lists the 14 required program elements that every workforce development board must make available in their Local Area. Includes in these is the following: paid and unpaid work experiences that have academic and occupational education as a component of the work experience, which may include the following types of work experiences:

- Summer employment and work experience opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year
- Pre-apprenticeship programs
- Internships and job shadowing
- On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunities

WIOA Sec. 129 (C)(4) requires that local workforce development area expend at least 20 percent of the funds allocated to them to provide youth being served with paid and unpaid work experiences. Work experience is defined in 20 CFR 681.600 as a planned, structured learning activity that takes place in a workplace setting for a limited period of time. These programs are to be available to youth between the ages of 16 and 24.

A work experience may take place in the private for profit-sector, the non-profit sector, or the public sector. Labor standards apply in any work experience where an employee/employer relationship exists. Consistent with 20 CFR 680.840, funds provided for work experiences may not be used to directly or indirectly aid in the filling of a job opening that is vacant because the former occupant is on strike or is being locked out in the course of a labor dispute, or the filling of which is otherwise an issue in a labor dispute involving a work stoppage. Work experiences provide the youth participant with opportunities for career exploration and skill development.

**Policy:** Per WIOA, Local Area workforce developments boards are responsible for creating and directing policy and a service delivery strategy for administering youth work experience and incentive payments. An agency providing work experience as a result of a competitively procured contract for the GRWDB will utilize the following Youth Work Experience and Incentive Payments Policy. This policy also pertains to employers participating in the GRWDB's SYWEP initiative dependent upon the program's availability and funding from the NJDOL.

**Goal of work experience:** Work experience is designed to aid participants in a structured environment, learning good work habits with the focus on career exploration. Work goals and objectives, where possible should be reflective of career choices where youth have expressed interest.

**Duration of non-SYWEP work experience:** Work experience must be a minimum of 75 hours and a maximum of 150 hours. Youth that require less than 75 hours or more than 150 hours required GRWDB director approval. A youth who stops attending work experience prior to meeting the minimum hours required because of accepting employment or starting a training/education program, is considered a positive termination from work experience.

**Technology:** Emerging technologies, such as Virtual Reality (VR) may be used/leased by a vendor providing GRWDB-funded services for youth as a means to expand career exploration opportunities or enhance specific skill training for more advanced support in conjunction with in-person experience in local businesses.

**Wages/incentive/stipends for non-SYWEP work experience:** Any agency providing work experience as a result of a competitively procured contract is required to pay youth work experience at New Jersey's minimum wage. Unpaid work experience, incentive or stipends are not appropriate for work experience activities.

**Duration and population served by SYWEP:** Per the design of the state-funded program, SYWEP provides in-school and out-of-school youth, ages 16-24, who reside in Hunterdon and Somerset counties, with valuable summer work experiences to help the participants successfully transition into the world of work. While the program is open to all youth, priority enrollment is given to those youth who are receiving benefits through Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), General Assistance (GA), or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Youth within the program age requirements who meet WIOA Youth eligibility requirements also may apply to SYWEP. The work experience must be between 160 and 200 hours over any consecutive period during the timeframe in which SYWEP is stipulated to run by the NJDOL. Of the program's total hours, youth will participate in 20 hours of virtual skills-building work provided by a vendor competitively chosen by the GRWDB and three cohort in-person classes. The total number of annual SYWEP youth participants is based upon the NJDOL award and program requirements.

**Stipends for SYWEP:** The NJDOL program stipulates that SYWEP participants are to be reimbursed through stipends intended to incentive and support the participant's capacity to take part in the program. The GRWDB will set the stipend amount as per the NJDOL's direction. The mechanism for paying the stipend follows the policy and procedures of Somerset County, the GRWDB's fiscal agent. After official notification of the SYWEP award, the GRWDB will issue a Request For Applications from employers interested in taking part in the program. The county then will review and approve the employer as meeting county fiscal standards. The total number of employers participating in the annual summer program is based on the NDJOL award as well as

the number of employer applicants and youth applicants. If the employer participant is successfully matched with a youth participant, that employer will fully reimburse the youth participants for their hours worked on site and for the additional hours of virtual and in-person time. The employer may provide the stipend following its own payroll procedures – weekly or biweekly – or provide the stipend as a lump sum when the participant completes his or her hours. The employer must provide the GRWDB with an invoice and corresponding signed timesheet for the hours paid to the youth participant. The GRWDB then reviews and approves the invoice and requests payment for the employer following standard Somerset County fiscal procedures. Youth and employer SYWEP participants also receive written procedures for stipend payment and reimbursement. As examples, the [2025 employer Request for Applicants document](#) can be reviewed here, and the [2025 youth application packet can be reviewed here](#). As part of the application process, employer and youth participants are advised that while income tax is not to be withheld from the individuals payments, stipends are considered income and should be reported annually by the individual participant. If the youth participant is receiving public assistance, the GRWDB will consult with public assistance case managers to ensure the stipends do not negatively impact the individual’s public assistance.

**Worksite Agreements:** Agencies may use their own worksite agreement as long as it minimally contains the information in the worksite agreement sample in NJ WIN 1-17 and with the NJDOL requirements for its SYWEP program.

**Monitoring:** Youth progress towards meeting goals for non-SYWEP and SYWEP participants are regularly monitored by employment navigators. The GRWDB will monitor each work site at least once per contract year. (Attachment A)

**Work Experience for Participants Under the Age of 18:** Work experience programs offered throughout the year and through SYWEP are open to youth ages 16 to 24. For non-SYWEP programs, the vendor competitively procured to administer youth work experience and incentive payments must have a GRWDB-approved process in place for parental/guardian consent for participants under the age of 18. For the SYWEP program, participants under the age of 18 must have their application approved and signed by their parent/guardian in order to be considered to take part in the annual program. For both programs, participants under the age of 18 must follow New Jersey’s digital working papers process before beginning their work experience.

**Eligibility for SYWEP and Individual Training Account (ITA) or On-the-Job Training opportunities:** Neither WIOA nor NJDOL policy prohibit WIOA Youth program participants from taking part in SYWEP and an Individual Training Account or On-the-Job Training opportunity. Upon completion of SYWEP participation, a WIOA Youth program participant, as part of their regular program follow-up activities, may work with a career training navigator to explore eligibility for other training opportunities, including ITAs or OJTs.

**Attachment A**

**Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board  
 Youth Program Worksite Checklist**

Name of Work Site \_\_\_\_\_

Monitor Checklist

- The worksite agreement was available upon request and included a training plan.

Comments:

- The youth's worksite duties are for training purposes and not gainful employment.

Comments:

- The work experience did not aid, directly or indirectly, in the filling of a job opening that is vacant because the former occupant is on strike, or is being locked out during a labor dispute, or the filling of which is otherwise an issue in a labor dispute involving a work stoppage.

Comments:

- Attendance is documented and being signed by the worksite supervisor.

Comments:

- The worksite will not allow youth to participate in hazardous/prohibited activities.

Comments:

- Required postings are visible (child labor laws, EEO, employee rights and DOL minimum wage law).

Comments:

Worksite Supervisor	_____	_____	_____
	(Print Name)	(Signature)	(Date)

Program Monitor	_____	_____	_____
	(Print Name)	(Signature)	(Date)

GRWDB Director	_____	_____	_____
	(Print Name)	(Signature)	(Date)