

REQUIRED PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The following 14 components or activities are outlined in the WIOA law and must be available to youth participants. Service providers have the discretion of what specific services are provided to a youth, based on the individual's objective assessment and individual service strategy.

1. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or HSE or for a recognized postsecondary credential;
2. Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services;
3. Paid and unpaid work experiences that have a component for academic and occupational education;
4. Occupational skill training, with priority for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that are aligned with the MS Partnership Sector Strategy Plan;
5. Education offered concurrently and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
6. Leadership development opportunities, which may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors;
7. Supportive services;
8. Adult mentoring for the period of participation and subsequent period, for a total of not less than 12 months;
9. Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after completion of participation;
10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral, as appropriate.
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 postsecondary education and training.

The Mississippi Partnership has 2 locally required program elements that all Gateway Program youth should receive:

15. Access to WorkKeys Testing
16. Essential Job Skills Training

A description of each element, its related activities, and pertinent policies and procedures are provided in this section.

Documentation Requirements of Program Elements:

Gateway Youth Providers must fully and completely document the services that each Gateway participant receives. Providers must follow all of the Mississippi Partnership's policies and procedures. Documentation may include: attendance records, grade reports, proof of attainment of credentials/certificates, case notes, progress notes, or collateral contacts with agencies providing the program elements. When a participant file is reviewed, the case worker or monitor should be able to fully follow the participant's progression through the Gateway Youth Program.

1. Tutoring, Study Skills Training, Instruction & Dropout Prevention

- a. Tutoring, study skills, and instruction that lead to a high school diploma are reported under this program element. Such services focus on providing academic support, helping a youth identify areas of academic concern, assisting with overcoming learning obstacles, and providing tools and resources to develop learning strategies. Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction can be provided one-on-one, in a group setting, through resources and workshops.
- b. Secondary school dropout prevention strategies intended to lead to a high school diploma are also reported under this program element. Secondary school dropout prevention strategies include services and activities that keep a young person in-school and engaged in a formal learning and/or training setting. Strategies include, but are not limited to tutoring, literacy development, active learning experiences, after-school opportunities, and individualized instruction.
- c. Services that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials should be reported under program element 4, occupational skills training.
- d. Dropout recovery strategies that lead to completion of a recognized high school equivalency should be reported under program element 2, alternative secondary school services and dropout recovery services.
- e. Service providers are encouraged to coordinate the WIOA Gateway Program with other dropout prevention activities in their local areas. Activities should emphasize the linkages between academic achievement and preparation for employment.

2. Alternative Secondary School Services or Dropout Recovery Services

- a. The goal of alternative secondary school and dropout recovery services is to help the youth re-engage and persist in education that leads to the completion of a recognized high school equivalent.
- b. Alternative secondary school services, such as basic education skills training, individualized academic instruction, and English as a Second Language training, are those that assist youth who have struggled in traditional secondary education.
- c. Dropout recovery services, such as credit recovery, counseling, and educational plan development, are those that assist youth who have dropped out of school.
- d. Services aimed at getting a youth who has dropped out of secondary education back into a secondary school or alternative secondary/high school equivalency program and preparing them for high school equivalency attainment, should be reported under this program element.

3. Paid and Unpaid Work Experience

Work Experience is a planned, structured learning experience that takes place in a workplace for a limited period of time. A work experience workplace may be in the private for profit sector, the non-profit sector, or public sector.

WIOA requires that at least 20% of the funds allocated to the local area shall be used to provide paid and unpaid work experience. In order to meet this federal requirement, the Mississippi Partnership requires each Gateway provider to work diligently to expend all of the work experience funds allocated to each provider.

Unpaid work experience would include job shadowing. Job shadowing is a work experience option where youth learn about a job by walking through the work day as a shadow to a competent worker. The job shadowing work experience is a temporary, unpaid exposure to the workplace in an occupational area of interest to the participant. Youth witness firsthand the work environment, employability and occupational skills in practice, the value of professional training, and potential career options. A job-shadowing experience can be anywhere from a few hours, to a day, to a week or more.

Before a youth may receive paid work experience, the youth is required to complete the Essential Job Skills Training describe in Program Element 16 on page 14 of this section.

All youth providers will use the worksite agreement format developed by the Fiscal Agent, and the worksite supervisor and the youth provider will sign the agreement. All participants and worksite supervisors must attend an orientation session. The orientation sessions may be done as a one-on-one session or as a group session.

Guidelines for Work Experience are as follows:

- a. Work experiences must include academic and occupational education. The educational component may occur concurrently or sequentially with the work experience and may occur inside or outside the work site.

The academic and occupational education component refers to contextual learning that accompanies a work experience. It includes the information necessary to understand and work in specific industries and/or occupations. This includes certifications earned; employability skills and employer expectations training that would make a participant successful on the job; or specific skills or knowledge needed to perform daily duties and tasks of a specific career

- b. Work Experience shall be designed to enhance the employability of individuals through the development of good work habits and basic work skills and provide the youth with opportunities for career exploration.
- c. Work Experience participation shall be for a reasonable length of time based on the needs of the participant, which shall be documented in the participant's ISS.
- d. Work experience funds 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.
- e. I-9s are required for Paid Work Experience employees since providers are establishing an employer/employee relationship.
- f. Labor standards apply in any work experience where an employee/employer relationship exists.
- g. Participant Benefits and Hours of Work:
 - i. Each participant will receive a maximum wage based on:
 - (1) applicable federal and state minimum wage; or
 - (2) the prevailing area rate for starting workers in like occupations or industries.
 - ii. Wages are subject to withholding for Social Security, Federal Income Tax, and State Income Tax. Transportation and/or

- supportive services, if paid, are over and above wages and are not subject to tax deduction.
- iii. Work Experience Wages – WIOA work experience participants shall be paid an hourly wage for hours worked, rounded to the nearest quarter hour.
 - iv. Participants are to be provided with Workers' Compensation, but because they are not considered employees participants cannot earn wage credits for Unemployment Insurance. Wages are considered a training or educational allowance.
 - h. Injury - Participants are to be covered provided by State Workers' Compensation Insurance or adequate injury insurance.
 - i. Wage Credits - Wage credits for Unemployment Insurance cannot be earned on employment funded under Work Experience.
 - j. Hours of Work - Work Experience may be full-time or part-time as appropriate to the needs of the participant. Full-time participation is defined as working 40 hours per week, or the same number of hours worked by regular employees at the worksite, not to exceed 40 hours per week. Neither overtime work nor overtime pay is allowable. Part-time Work Experience is encouraged, when appropriate, for participants who would otherwise be unable to participate in the work experience due to disability, single parent, or other.
 - k. Worksite Supervision:
 - i. Providers should visit participants and their supervisors at their worksites on a regular basis to assist in job-related or personal counseling and job coaching.
 - ii. The performance and progress of the participant is to be monitored on a regular basis to determine if continued participation, transfer to another activity, placement in unsubsidized employment, or other action is most appropriate.
 - l. Worksite Agreement
 - i. A Worksite Agreement must be completed for each cooperating agency prior to the placement of participants at a worksite.
 - ii. Only one agreement per worksite is required per program year and slots are open entry/open exit and can be refilled as participants are transferred to other activities.
 - iii. Union concurrence is to be completed for each agreement where a collective bargaining agreement covers the occupation in which the participant(s) are to be placed.
 - m. If you have a Gateway participant who is employed and you want to provide the youth work experience with the same employer, you must receive written permission from Three Rivers to do so. You should email

the request and include the youth's current job title and description and the job title and description of the proposed work experience job.

4. Occupational Skills Training

Occupational Skills Training is defined as an organized program of study that provides specific vocational skills that lead to proficiency in performing actual tasks and technical functions required by certain occupational fields at entry, intermediate, or advanced levels.

Out-of-School Youth ITAs may be written for this program element but must be approved by the Fiscal Agent prior to a youth receiving an ITA. In-School Youth may not receive a Youth ITA. The Youth ITA Policy must be followed. Consideration must be for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that align with the MS Partnership's Sector Strategy Plan.

- a. All Occupational Skills Training provided to participants must be identified through assessment and recorded on the Individual Service Strategy (ISS);
- b. Occupational Skills Training can take place at post-secondary institutions, trade schools, pre-apprenticeship training programs, industry specific/sponsored training, proprietary schools, correspondence courses, or service provider designed training programs.
- c. Occupational Skills Training must:
 - i. Be outcome-oriented and focused on an occupational goal specified in the individual service strategy;
 - ii. Be of specific duration to impart the skills needed to meet the occupational goal; and
 - iii. Lead to the attainment of a recognized post-secondary credential.

5. Education offered concurrently and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster

This program element reflects an integrated education and training model and describes how workforce preparation activities, basic academic skills, and hands-on occupational skills training are to be taught within the same time frame and connected to training in a specific occupation, occupational cluster, or career pathway.

This program element refers to the concurrent delivery of basic academic skills, workforce preparation activities that occur as part of a work experience and occupational skills training services which make up an integrated education and training model.

6. Leadership Development Opportunities

Leadership development opportunities are opportunities that encourage responsibility, confidence, employability, self-determination and other positive social behaviors such as:

- a. Exposure to postsecondary educational opportunities;
- b. Community and service learning projects;
- c. Peer-centered activities, including peer mentoring and tutoring;
- d. Organizational and team work training, including team leadership training;
- e. Training in decision-making, including determining priorities;
- f. Citizenship training, including life skills training such as parenting, work behavior training and budgeting of resources;
- g. Civic engagement activities which promote the quality of life in a community.

Gateway youth providers should design programs that offer leadership development opportunities for youth, and should make every attempt to integrate the WIOA youth program with local non-WIOA youth resources. Leadership development opportunities may be provided in a variety of settings such as workshops, one-on-one, or non-WIOA youth group activity.

7. Supportive Services

Supportive Services should enable an individual to participate in WIOA activities. The use of supportive services is encouraged to enable the hard-to-serve population to participate in longer-term interventions, and the provision of supportive services must be determined on an individual basis. All supportive services must be provided in accordance with the Mississippi Partnership Youth Supportive Services Policy.

- a. The provider is responsible for documenting that the payments for the service are not available from any other source before authorizing WIOA needs-related payments.
- b. The Mississippi Partnership allows the following types of supportive services for youth:
 - i. Transportation Hardship Supportive Services
 - ii. Childcare Hardship Supportive Services

- iii. Other Hardship Related Supportive Services
- iv. Work-Related Supportive Services
- v. Educational Related Expenses

8. Adult Mentoring

The purpose of mentoring activities in the WIOA Youth programs is to help youth succeed in the school or the workplace, facilitate positive social behaviors and learn leadership and citizenship skills. Gateway programs should ensure appropriate processes are in place to adequately screen and select mentors.

- a. Adult mentoring for youth must:
 - i. Last at least 12 months and may take place both during the program and following exit from the program;
 - ii. Be a formal relationship between a youth participant and an adult mentor that includes structured activities where the mentor offers guidance, support, and encouragement to develop the competence and character of the mentee;
 - iii. While group mentoring activities and mentoring through electronic means are allowable as part of the mentoring activities, at a minimum, the local youth program must match the youth with an individual mentor with whom the youth interacts on a face-to-face basis
- b. Mentoring may include workplace mentoring where the local program matches a youth participant with an employer or employee of a company.
- c. Service providers are encouraged to develop local mentoring programs. Community members, service club members, employers, former youth participants or others may provide support, guidance and encouragement. Mentoring can take place at the worksite (employer-based), in group settings (community-based or peer) or one-on-one. Mentors may offer counsel in the following areas:
 - i. Problem solving and coping skills;
 - ii. Stress management;
 - iii. Time management;
 - iv. Financial management;
 - v. Imparting and receiving constructive criticism;
 - vi. Maintaining professional work habits;
 - vii. Managing family issues (e.g., sick children, child care, elderly parents); and
 - viii. Getting along with co-workers.

9. Follow-Up Services

Follow-up services are critical services provided following a youth's exit from the program to help ensure the youth is successful in employment and/or post-secondary education and training. Follow-up services must be provided to all participants for a minimum of 12 months unless the participant declines to receive follow-up services or the participant cannot be located or contacted. Follow-up services must be documented in the case file.

If at any point in time during the program or during the 12 months following exit a youth requests to opt out of follow-up services such request must be documented in the case file. If follow-up services are being discontinued because the youth cannot be located or contacted, it must be documented in the file that all means of contact available (including all known phone numbers, e-mail addresses, mailing address, social media messages, etc) for the youth have not been valid for at least 3 consecutive months.

- a. The purpose of follow-up services is to provide continued support to enable the youth to succeed once the youth has completed the WIOA youth program. Gateway Program providers should be willing to furnish whatever assistance is necessary to accomplish that end.
- b. Regular contact with youth after their exit from WIOA must be documented by letter, phone call, office visits, etc., but only making contact with youth who have exited does not necessarily constitute the provision of services.
- c. Follow-up services must include more than only a contact attempted or made for securing documentation in order to report a performance outcome.
- d. The type and intensity of follow-up services may differ for each participant and should be determined based on the needs of the individual.
- e. Follow-up services for youth may include:
 - i. Regular contact with a youth participant's employer, including assistance in addressing work-related problems that arise;
 - ii. Supportive Services;
 - iii. Adult Mentoring;
 - iv. Financial Literacy Education;
 - v. 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;
 - vi. Assistance in securing better paying jobs and career development;
 - vii. Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to post-secondary education and training;

- viii. Tracking the progress of youth in employment after completing the program.

Refer to the Youth Contact and Follow-Up Policy for further explanation.

10. Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling

- a. Drug and alcohol abuse counseling, mental health counseling, and referral to partner programs are all included in this program element. When referring participants to necessary counseling that cannot be provided by the local youth program or its service providers, the local youth program must coordinate with the organization it refers to in order to ensure continuity of service.
- b. Career and employment counseling includes the provision of career and occupational information. (See Program Element 13 for additional details)
- c. Personal counseling involves building participants' self-confidence, helping them articulate interests and aspirations, and asking them to begin planning for themselves. Counseling also identifies barriers to employment and brokers the services necessary to address the barriers. Some of the goals of case management may include, but are not limited to, helping the participant:
 - 1. Move into unsubsidized employment by building self-confidence;
 - 2. Cope with personal problems that could cause him/her to drop out of the program;
 - 3. Develop good work habits;
 - 4. Resolve common work-related problems, such as difficulties in relationships with supervisors and peers;
 - 5. Cope with the new environment (the work place);
 - 6. Understand and deal with values that are new or may seem alien;
 - 7. Assign participants to appropriate WIOA activities or refer to other employment and training programs or community resources; or
 - 8. Authorizing supportive services based on the participant need.

11. Financial Literacy Education

The financial literacy education program element may include activities which:

- a. support the ability of participants to create budgets, initiate checking and savings accounts at banks, and make informed financial decisions;
- b. support participants in learning how to effectively manage spending, credit, and debt, including student loans, consumer credit, and credit cards;

- c. teach participants about the significance of credit reports and credit scores; what their rights are regarding their credit and financial information; how to determine the accuracy of a credit report and how to correct inaccuracies; and how to improve or maintain good credit;
- d. support a participant's ability to understand, evaluate, and compare financial products, services, and opportunities and to make informed financial decisions;
- e. educate participants about identity theft, ways to protect themselves from identify theft, and how to resolve cases of identity theft and in other ways understand their rights and protections related to personal identity and financial data;
- f. support activities that address the particular financial literacy needs of non-English speakers, including providing the support through the development and distribution of multilingual financial literacy and education materials;
- g. support activities that address the particular financial literacy needs of youth with disabilities, including connecting them to benefits planning and work incentives counseling;
- h. provide financial education that is age appropriate, timely, and provides opportunities to put lessons into practice, such as by access to safe and affordable financial products that enable money management and savings;
- i. implement other approaches to help participants gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence to make informed financial decisions that enable them to attain greater financial health and stability by using high quality, age-appropriate, and relevant strategies and channels, including, where possible, timely and customized information, guidance, tools, and instruction.

12. **Entrepreneurial Skills Training**

- a. Entrepreneurial skills training provides the basics of starting and operating a small business. Such training must develop the skills associated with entrepreneurship. Such skills include, but are not limited to, the ability to:
 - i. Take initiative;
 - ii. Creatively seek out and identify business opportunities;
 - iii. Develop budgets and forecast resource needs;
 - iv. Understand various options for acquiring capital and the trade-offs associated with each option; and
 - v. Communicate effectively and market oneself and one's ideas.

- b. Approaches to teaching youth entrepreneurial skills include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. Entrepreneurship education that provides an introduction to the values and basics of starting and running a business. Entrepreneurship education programs often guide youth through the development of a business plan and may also include simulations of business start-up and operation.
 - ii. Enterprise development which provides supports and services that incubate and help youth develop their own businesses. Enterprise development programs go beyond entrepreneurship education by helping youth access small loans or grants that are needed to begin business operation and by providing more individualized attention to the development of viable business ideas.
 - iii. Experiential programs that provide youth with experience in the day-to-day operation of a business. These programs may involve the development of a youth-run business that young people participating in the program work in and manage. Or, they may facilitate placement in apprentice or internship positions with adult entrepreneurs in the community.

13. Labor Market and Employment Information Services

Gateway youth providers must make available services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services. Career and employment counseling includes the provision of career and occupational information.

- a. Career awareness will be provided to Gateway participants about the Mississippi Partnership Sector Strategy target industries which include: (1) Advanced Manufacturing, (2) Healthcare, (3) Information Technology, and (4) Logistics – warehousing, transportation, and distribution. Gateway participants will be strongly encouraged to pursue careers in one of the target industry sectors.
- b. Labor Market Information (LMI) tools should be provided to Gateway participants to help them make appropriate decisions about education and careers. LMI tools also can aid in facilitating youth awareness of the career fields that are likely to provide long-term employment and earnings in local labor markets. Some of the LMI electronic tools that are available includes:

- (1) Mississippi Department of Employment Security (www.mdes.ms.gov)
- (2) Mississippi Pathfinder (<https://mspathfinder.org/>)
- (3) My Next Move (<https://www.mynextmove.org/>)
- (4) Get My Future (<https://www.careeronestop.org/getmyfuture/>)
- c. Career awareness begins the process of developing knowledge of the variety of careers and occupations available, their skill requirements, working conditions and training prerequisites, and job opportunities across a wide range of industry sectors.

Career awareness may be provided to participants in a variety of ways, including: guest speakers; “Career Days;” tours of business/industry and educational institutions; discussions with worksite supervisors and others; counseling; job sampling or job shadowing; films and filmstrips; class/group discussions; newsletters or news articles; peer counseling; and career information systems.

- d. Career exploration can be described as the process in which youth choose an educational path and training or a job which fits their interests, skills, and abilities.
- e. Career counseling or guidance provides advice and support in making decisions about what career paths to take. Career counseling services may include providing information about resume preparation, interview skills, potential opportunities for job shadowing, and the long-term benefits of postsecondary education and training (increased earning power and career mobility).

14. **Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to post-secondary education and training**

The Gateway youth provider must make available activities, as needed, that prepares youth for advancement to postsecondary education after attaining a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent. These services include but are not limited to:

- a. Exploring postsecondary education options including technical training schools, community colleges, 4-year colleges and universities, and registered apprenticeship;
- b. Assisting youth to prepare for SAT/ACT testing;
- c. Assisting with college admission applications;
- d. Searching and applying for scholarships and grants;

- e. Filling out the proper Financial Aid applications & adhering to changing guidelines; and
- f. Connecting youth to postsecondary education programs.

15. **Access to WorkKeys Testing**

This is a Mississippi Partnership Board approved locally required program element. More and more employers throughout our workforce area are requiring the attainment of the ACT Career Readiness Certificate (CRC). Therefore, all Gateway programs must provide access to WorkKeys Testing if the youth is in need of obtaining a ACT CRC.

To earn an ACT CRC, an examinee must successfully complete three ACT WorkKeys assessments: Applied Mathematics, Graphic Literacy, and Workplace Documents. These assessments measure a range of essential work skills and cognitive skills, including the ability to:

- Perform basic mathematic operations relevant to the workplace
- Read and understand documents commonly found in the workplace
- Find information presented in common workplace graphics
- Set up and solve complex work-related math problems
- Determine the relevance of written information to work-related tasks
- Apply information derived from graphics to work-related problems
- Problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Reading and using work-related text
- Applying information from workplace documents to solve problems
- Applying mathematical reasoning to work-related problems
- Setting up and performing work-related mathematical calculations
- Locating, synthesizing, and applying information that is presented graphically
- Comparing, summarizing, and analyzing information presented in multiple related graphics

There are four levels of the CRC, based on the scores achieved on the component assessments.

- Platinum: Scores of Level 6 or higher on all three exams
- Gold: Scores of Level 5 or higher on all three exams
- Silver: Scores of Level 4 or higher on all three exams
- Bronze: Scores of Level 3 or higher on all three exams

The CRC addresses how the core skill levels achieved meet the essential foundational job skill requirements. Below is a chart that shows how each CRC relates to the essential foundational skills required of jobs.



16. Essential Job Skills Training

This is a Mississippi Partnership Board approved locally required program element. All Gateway youth are required to receive Essential Job Skills Training. A youth may not receive work experience without completing Essential Job Skills Training first.

Once the participant completes the essential job skills training modules, the participant will receive a certificate of completion. Participants will be eligible to receive a paid work experience/internship after completing essential job skills training. Topics to be included in the essential job skills training are:

- Appearance/Dress
- Attendance and Punctuality
- Getting Along with Others & Teamwork
- Communication
- Attitude
- Problem Solving & Critical Thinking
- Financial Awareness
- Completing I-9 & Tax Forms