

Western Avenue Community Center Transition Services Program Abstract

Contract # OSY-2024-07

Career Link wishes to engage Western Avenue Community Center (WACC), to provide staff to assist Drop Out Recovery program participants in successfully completing the GED and to transition to employment, post-secondary or the military. The contract begins July 1, 2024 and will terminate on June 30, 2025, but may be extended for two additional years if mutually agreed to. The funding amount is \$85,060. The enrollment goal is 30 students.

WACC will provide the intensive education and employment skills program for youth served by McLean County GED subcontractors. It is envisioned that the staff would be similar to a mentor. Although not exactly a mentor, that word will be used hereafter for ease of reference. A key component will be for the mentors to build a relationship with the student. Both the GED provider and Career Link will facilitate the establishment of this relationship. Mentors will provide support and guidance to the student. The mentor will be familiar with additional resources to help address these barriers. The mentor will be actively engaged during the GED preparation phase and for at least six months after the student receives their GED. Further participation will depend on the circumstances that the student finds himself or herself in. The Career Link Career Planner and the mentor will discuss the need for further involvement. Typically, if the student enrolls in post-secondary training there would be an expectation for at least one semester of continued contact.

The subcontractor will assist students in dropout recovery programs to successfully complete the GED and transition to work, post-secondary or the military.

The subcontractor's staff will regularly communicate with students to build a relationship and provide them with support and guidance through their transition to work, post-secondary or the military after they have completed their GED. Providing consistent communication will be a key factor to aid students in their completion of the program and future success. The subcontractor's staff will also be involved in the process of the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) to assist the students in achieving their benchmarks and will assess the Individual Service Strategy for each student on a quarterly basis.

As staff work to build this positive relationship with youth, they will identify factors that motivate the student, potential barriers to their success, and work alongside the student to break down their long-term ambitions into short and mid-term goals. While youth are obtaining their GED, Transition Services staff will focus on providing group lessons and individual coaching to help them gain the knowledge, as well as building a relationship and rapport with them. As the youth completes their GED, monthly conversations between them and Transition Services staff will turn toward goals and planning for the upcoming transition to follow up.

Every youth who exits into follow up without a clear plan for furthering education or employment will be referred to Goodwill Employment Services for help and support with starting their career. This will allow students to receive assistance and incentives from a non-WIOA program so they are not abruptly cut off from those resources. Employment and Transition Services staff share case notes on dual-enrolled students so both programs can collaborate to support the individual.

The subcontractor will provide a comprehensive transition program to support GED graduates in their pursuit of post-secondary education or employment, including but not limited to career assessments, job placement

services, and referrals to local education and training providers. The subcontractor will work collaboratively with Career Link to identify and address barriers to successful transition, and shall provide regular updates on its progress towards achieving these goals.

Some supportive services will be available to the youth, such as childcare, transportation allowance, and emergency needs. These supportive services will be arranged and paid for directly by Career Link unless other arrangements are established with the Service Provider.

A financial incentive system will be offered to encourage perseverance and participation in goal-directed activities. Incentives may be modified, with prior approval from Career Link, as the need arises to make them more effective and appropriate in promoting program successes. The subcontractor will issue incentives directly to students. Incentives must be awarded throughout the year and may not be withheld from students until completion of the program. Every award will be fully documented and receipt of each incentive will be signed for by the student and the records saved by the subcontractor.

Incentives will be provided as a check and/or gift card from the subcontractor to the student. The subcontractor will issue incentives directly to students. Incentives may only be provided to participants prior to their exiting the program.

- Student incentives may not be incurred after 30 days upon attaining a GED.
- Maximum incentive awards per student from Western Avenue Community Center may not exceed \$500 for the duration of the student's enrollment with Career Link.

The program will be divided into five (5) sections (The Elevator Speech, Cover Letter Creation, Resume Writing, Dress for Success, and Mock interviews). Each month will be designed to focus on one of these skills for the students. Once these skills have been mastered by the students in the program, then it is expected that each one will be placed in a job shadowing experience to get first-hand knowledge as to the type of career they want to pursue. This will also be done in conjunction with the United Way's Workforce 180 program.

Students will meet with subcontractor staff on a bi-monthly basis to provide effective case management and transitional mentoring support. This first interaction with the students will be a one on one, during this session the students will identify their plan for transitioning into post-secondary education, the military or workforce. The second meeting will be in a support group with all participating students, and this will be conducted seminar style to address issues that are affecting the students. During this meeting, **WACC** will offer additional motivational support to the students by bringing in members of the business community that will serve as additional mentors or job shadowing sites for the participating students. At the completion of every student interaction, the students will be asked to complete a short survey so staff can evaluate the effectiveness of their services and support. With this feedback, the subcontractor will make any necessary program changes for each individual or the entire group. Monthly goals will be established for all participating students. The goal is for participating students to complete each professional skill set and, at the conclusion of them all, create a personal professional portfolio.

WACC agrees to ensure that at least 80% of participating students in the program will meet the following program requirements: (i) attend a minimum of three job fairs, (ii) create a resume, cover letter, and portfolio, (iii) complete a minimum of three post-secondary education applications, (iv) prepare for and complete a minimum of three mock interviews, and (v) participate in a minimum of three mentorship meetings. By meeting these requirements, **WACC** is committed to providing students with the skills and resources necessary to succeed in their post-secondary education and future careers.

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