



## Youth Work Experience Policy

**Effective:** July 1, 2019

**Revised:** June 1, 2020; December 15, 2021; May 25, 2022; November 30, 2022; January 1, 2024

**Background:** WIOA Section 129 (c) (2) (C) and 20 CFR 681.600 address work experience and define it as: planned, structured learning experience that takes place in a workplace for a limited period. Work experience may be paid or unpaid as appropriate. 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, as defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act or, where applicable, State law. Work experiences provide youth with opportunities for career exploration and skill development. Work experiences must include academic and occupational education to enhance a trainee's prospects for long-term labor market attachment.

### Policy:

The Oswego County Workforce Development Board will make available work experiences to provide opportunities for young adults (ages 16-24) to:

- Acquire skills, (including work readiness, transferrable and/or job specific skills)
- Explore career interests
- Improve work history and
- Develop local character references

Work experiences may be developed with a public, non-profit, or private employer. The program will provide opportunities for trainees to learn skills and interact with experienced workers in a structured work environment. Up to 100% of the wages paid to a trainee may be paid by the program. Wage payments may be paid directly by Oswego County to the youth, or as reimbursement to participating employers who pay wages directly to the youth (e.g., Internships or employer wage reimbursement programs).

Labor standards apply in any work experience where an employee/employer relationship exists, as defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act or applicable State Law. Effective May 25, 2022, trainees will be paid at an hourly rate of \$14.50 to remain competitive within the local labor market. This wage rate will be revised in the future to adhere to or exceed minimum wage requirements as the state minimum wage continues to increase to a more livable wage. Consistent with section 20 CFR 680.480 of the same chapter in the Federal Register, funds provided for work experiences may not be used to aid in the filling of a job opening directly or indirectly 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.

Work experiences may be:

- Summer employment opportunities and other opportunities available year-round, including, but not limited to:
  - Pre-apprenticeship programs
  - Subsidized or unsubsidized employment

- Summer youth employment
- Employer wage reimbursement programs
- On-the-Job Training\*

\*Trainees in on-the-job training will follow the agency On-the-Job Training policy.

Duration of training will be determined by the needs of the trainee and the skills required to prepare for labor market attachment as documented in the trainee's Individual Service Strategy (ISS).

A period of 13 weeks or 390 hours will be the standard work experience duration. However, waivers up to 26 weeks or 780 hours may be granted by the WDB Executive Director, or designee, to accommodate the following circumstances:

- Personal or family medical leave of absence
- An opportunity to transition to a private sector job
- Extra time needed to complete an employment prerequisite or job specific skill (e.g., OSHA or similar certification or licensure)
- A learning disability
- A physical disability
- To allow exposure to/acquisition of additional skill sets consistent with the employment goal identified in the ISS

At least 20% of the WIOA Youth program year allocation (less administrative funding) must be spent on Work Experience. Allowable work experience expenditures include the following:

- Wages/stipends paid for participation in a work experience
- Staff time working to identify and develop a work experience opportunity, including staff time spent working with employers to identify and develop the work experience
- Staff time working with employers to ensure a successful work experience, including staff time spent managing the work experience
- Staff time spent evaluating the work experience
- Trainee work experience orientation sessions
- Employer work experience orientation sessions
- Classroom training or the required academic education component directly related to the work experience. Virtual engagement services, at the discretion of the WDB Executive Director, Coordinator of Client Services, or designee, to administer work readiness skills, which may include occupational and/or academic components of work experience
- Incentive payments directly tied to the completion of work experience
- Employability skills/job readiness training to prepare youth for a work experience

To complete a work experience placement, youth provider staff will:

- Determine eligibility of youth under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Provide occupational and academic component to work experience using Job Zone, Career Zone, Metrix eLearning System and/or similar training modalities (e.g., workshops)
- Complete an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) documenting the employment goal, and work experience needs (e.g., work readiness, transferrable, and/or job specific skills)
- Identify an appropriate placement based on trainee needs as outlined in the ISS
- Refer the trainee to a work site. Referrals may include a pre-placement interview and/or orientation as appropriate to trainee needs and work site protocols

- Prepare a worksite agreement outlining roles, responsibilities, and expectations for the worksite supervisor, the trainee, and provider agency staff. The worksite agreement will include:
  - A job description and the transferrable (a.k.a. – “work maturity competencies”), work readiness, and/or job specific skills to be learned
  - General terms and conditions including evaluation and termination forms and procedures
  - A work schedule, sample time sheet, payroll schedule, and time sheet processing instructions
  - A job specific skills competency/training plan
  - A work maturity competency validation worksheet
  - Youth services provider contact information
  - A participant contract which outlines behavioral expectations for the trainee
  - Academic and occupational component and who will provide them
- Enter the start date and planned end date of service into OSOS within 5 days of the actual start of service

Waivers or variations to this process may be granted by the WDB Executive Director or designee in the following circumstances, and will be documented in the case notes in the One Stop Operating System (OSOS):

- Regulatory or legal changes from the State, Federal or local government
- Extraordinary or special needs of a trainee

Youth provider agency staff will monitor worksites periodically throughout the work experience and document in the OSOS case notes. Worksites will have the opportunity to complete an evaluation of work performance with the submission of each timesheet. Trainee performance will also be evaluated by the worksite supervisor and provider agency staff at the end of the 2nd week, midpoint, and end of the work experience assignment. Each evaluation will be reviewed by agency youth provider staff with the trainee and worksite supervisor to identify and address or correct any behavioral or performance concerns.

Worksite contracts may be terminated upon (a) mutual agreement of both parties, or (b) the unilateral action of the WDB Executive Director or designee, when and if the employer is not providing services in accordance with the training contract.

Concerns regarding worksite performance will be reported by youth provider agency staff to the WDB Executive Director or designee. In the event a worksite is not performing satisfactorily, a written report will be submitted to the worksite addressing the areas of concern, the corrective action needed and a timeframe for improvement. The work site will be given an opportunity to explain issues impacting their ability to meet established goals and discuss concerns, and to reach agreement on a plan for corrective action. In the event a worksite is not successful in meeting agreed on outcomes (e.g., work readiness, transferrable, or job specific skills acquisition by trainee), the youth provider agency may discontinue contracts with that provider. Trainees may be transferred to alternate worksites or placements may be suspended pending the outcome of corrective action plans at the discretion of the WDB Executive Director or designee.

Youth will be encouraged throughout the training program to seek conventional employment and/or educational opportunities.

Youth who do not enter conventional employment during or immediately subsequent to work experience will be re-engaged and encouraged to utilize the One-Stop Career Center services, and access additional employment and training resources to progress to greater socio-economic self-sufficiency.

Incentives may be provided to trainees for training achievements and benchmarks as outlined in the Youth Incentive policy (e.g., job specific skills mastery).

## **Definitions**

**Transferable skills**, or “work maturity competencies,” are qualities that can be transferred from one job to another. Work maturity competencies are behaviors associated with knowledge, skills and attitudes that result in positive work performance, and thereby enhance a youth’s potential to retain employment.

**Job specific skills**, or “hard skills”, are typically observable activities involving use of technology, tools, equipment, or the performance of activities specific to a particular workplace or job.

**Work Readiness Skills**, include a broad range of skills which demonstrate a higher level of socio-economic self-sufficiency. Work experience encourages and provides opportunities for exposure to and acquisition of work readiness skills. The scope and type of skills will vary depending upon the needs of the trainee.