

ASSEMBLY, No. 5582

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 8, 2023

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman LISA SWAIN

District 38 (Bergen and Passaic)

Assemblyman ERIK K. SIMONSEN

District 1 (Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblymen Sampson and McClellan

SYNOPSIS

Establishes grant program for NJ YouthBuild programs through DOLWD; makes appropriation.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 12/14/2023)

1 AN ACT creating YouthBuild programs, supplementing Title 34 of
2 the Revised Statutes, and making an appropriation.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6

7 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as “The New
8 Jersey YouthBuild Act.”

9

10 2. The purpose of the “The New Jersey YouthBuild Act” shall
11 be to:

12 a. Enable economically disadvantaged youth, especially youth
13 who have not finished high school, to obtain the education, job
14 skills training, personal counseling, leadership development skills
15 training, job placement assistance, and long-term follow-up leading
16 to economic self-sufficiency;

17 b. Provide communities the opportunity to establish or rebuild
18 neighborhood stability in economically depressed and low-income
19 areas, as well as historic areas requiring restoration or preservation,
20 while providing economically disadvantaged youth and youth who
21 have not finished high school an opportunity for meaningful
22 participation in society;

23 c. Allow communities to maintain and expand the supply of
24 affordable housing for homeless and other low-income individuals
25 by utilizing the energies and talents of economically disadvantaged
26 youth and young people who have not graduated from high school;
27 and

28 d. Foster the development of leadership skills and a
29 commitment to community development among youth.

30

31 3. As used in this act:

32 "Applicant" means a public or private not-for-profit agency
33 eligible to provide education and employment training under federal
34 or State employment training programs.

35 “Commissioner” means the Commissioner of the Department of
36 Labor and Workforce Development.

37 “Department” means the Department of Labor and Workforce
38 Development.

39 “Eligible entity” means a public or private nonprofit agency or
40 organization, including a consortium of public or private nonprofit
41 agencies or organizations, including but not limited to:

42 (1) a community-based organization;

43 (2) a faith-based organization;

44 (3) an entity carrying out activities under this act, such as a local
45 board;

46 (4) a community action agency;

47 (5) a State or local housing development agency;

48 (6) an Indian tribe or other agency primarily serving Indians;

- 1 (7) a community development corporation;
- 2 (8) a State or local youth service or conservation corps; and
- 3 (9) any other entity eligible to provide education or employment
- 4 training under a federal program (other than the program carried out
- 5 under this section).

6 "YouthBuild" means the program established by this act that
7 provides disadvantaged youth with opportunities for comprehensive
8 education, employment, leadership development, and training in the
9 construction or rehabilitation of housing for special needs
10 populations, very low-income households and low-income
11 households.

12

13 4. a. The commissioner shall, subject to appropriation, make
14 grants to applicants for the purpose of carrying out Youthbuild
15 programs as approved under this section. All programs funded
16 pursuant to the provisions of this section shall reflect strong youth
17 and community involvement. In addition, funding provided under
18 this section shall be used by each Youthbuild program to provide, at
19 a minimum, the following services:

20 (1) integrated education and job skills training services and
21 activities which are evenly divided within the program, with 50
22 percent of students' time spent in classroom-based instruction,
23 counseling, and leadership development instruction and 50 percent
24 of their time spent in service learning experiences at construction
25 sites. The programs shall include, at a minimum, the following
26 elements:

27 (a) an education component which includes basic skills
28 instruction, secondary education services, and other activities
29 designed to lead to the attainment of a high school diploma or its
30 equivalent. The curriculum for this component shall include math,
31 language arts, vocational education, life skills training, social
32 studies related to the cultural and community history of the
33 students, leadership skills, and other topics at the discretion of the
34 programs;

35 (b) a vocational learning experience and skills training
36 component apprenticeship program that includes the construction
37 and rehabilitation activities described in paragraph (4) of this
38 subsection. The process of construction shall be tied with skills
39 training and with close on-site supervision by experienced trainers.
40 The curriculum for this component shall contain a set of locally
41 agreed upon skills and competencies that are systematically taught,
42 with a student's mastery assessed individually on a regular, ongoing
43 basis. Safety skills shall be taught at the outset. The vocational
44 learning experience and skills training component shall be
45 coordinated to the maximum extent feasible with pre-apprenticeship
46 and apprenticeship programs. In order to receive grant funding,
47 programs shall offer vocational learning experiences that conclude
48 with the administration of assessments to obtain an industry-valued

- 1 credential, per the list provided by the Department of Labor and
2 Workforce Development; and
- 3 (c) assistance in attaining post-secondary education and
4 required financial aid to be made available to participants prior to
5 graduation;
- 6 (2) counseling services designed to assist participants to
7 positively participate in society, which should include all of the
8 following if necessary: outreach, assessment, and orientation;
9 individual and peer counseling; life skills training, drug and alcohol
10 abuse education and prevention; and referral to appropriate drug
11 rehabilitation, medical, mental health, legal, housing, and other
12 services and resources in the community;
- 13 (3) leadership development training that provides participants
14 with meaningful opportunities to develop leadership skills such as
15 decision making, problem solving, and negotiating. The program
16 shall also encourage participants to develop strong peer group ties
17 that support their mutual pursuit of skills and values. All programs
18 shall establish a youth council in which participants are afforded
19 opportunities to develop public speaking and negotiating skills, and
20 management and policy-making participation in specific aspects of
21 the program; and
- 22 (4) assistance with the acquisition, rehabilitation, acquisition
23 and rehabilitation, or construction of housing and related facilities
24 which will serve as the vocational training sites and then to be used
25 for the purpose of providing home ownership for disadvantaged
26 persons, residential housing for homeless individuals, and low-
27 income and very low-income families, or transitional housing for
28 persons who are homeless, have disabilities, are ill, are de-
29 institutionalized, or have special needs and rehabilitation or
30 construction of community facilities owned by not-for-profit or
31 public agencies.
- 32 b. A YouthBuild program shall provide a stipend to
33 participants to cover the costs associated with their full time
34 participation in the program. The stipend shall not be considered as
35 income in determining eligibility for other State or federal
36 assistance programs. Stipends may be distributed in a manner that
37 offers incentives for good performance.
- 38 c. Full-time participation in a YouthBuild program shall be
39 offered for a period of not less than six months and not more than
40 24 months.
- 41 d. A concentrated effort shall be made to find jobs for all
42 graduates of the program who have performed well. The skills
43 training curriculum shall provide participants with basic preparation
44 for seeking and maintaining a job. Follow-up counseling and
45 assistance in job-seeking shall also be provided to participants for
46 the 12 months following graduation from the program.

1 e. All programs serving 20 trainees or more are required to
2 have a full-time director responsible for the coordination of all
3 aspects of the YouthBuild program.

4
5 5. a. Eligible participants in a YouthBuild program shall be
6 youth, 16 to 24 years old, who are economically disadvantaged as
7 defined in 29 U.S.C. s.1503, and who are part of one of at least one
8 of the following groups:

9 (1) persons who are not attending any school and not received a
10 secondary school diploma or its equivalent;

11 (2) persons currently enrolled in a traditional or alternative
12 school setting or a high school equivalency testing program and
13 who are in danger of dropping out of school; or

14 (3) a member of a low-income family, a youth in foster care
15 (including a youth aging-out of foster care), a youth offender, a
16 youth with a disability, a child or incarcerated parents, or a migrant
17 youth.

18 b. Not more than 25 percent of participants in the program may
19 be individuals who do not meet the requirements of paragraphs (1)
20 or (2) of subsection a. of this section, but who are deficient in basic
21 skills despite having attained a secondary school diploma, high
22 school equivalency certificate, or other State-recognized equivalent,
23 or who have been referred by a local secondary school for
24 participation in a YouthBuild program leading to the attainment of a
25 secondary school diploma.

26
27 6. Eligible entities to be awarded funds under this act are not-
28 for-profit private agencies with experience operating a YouthBuild
29 program or entities that have received a federal Housing and Urban
30 Development (HUD) YouthBuild grant or have experience in
31 serving this population and have plans to incubate a YouthBuild
32 program. Priority in the awarding of funds under this act shall be
33 given to applicants with experience in operating YouthBuild
34 programs or organizations that have received HUD YouthBuild
35 funding. Only not-for-profit private agencies that are affiliates of
36 YouthBuild USA or have received a federal HUD YouthBuild grant
37 shall be eligible to use the term YouthBuild.

38
39 7. The commissioner shall require that an application for
40 YouthBuild funds under this act contain at a minimum:

41 a. A request for an implementation grant, specifying the
42 amount of the grant requested and its proposed uses;

43 b. A description of the applicant and a statement of its
44 qualifications, including a description of the applicant's past
45 experience running a YouthBuild program, and with housing
46 rehabilitation or construction and with youth and youth education,
47 youth leadership development and employment training programs
48 and other relevant community organizations;

- 1 c. A description of the educational and job training activities,
- 2 work opportunities, and other services that will be provided to
- 3 participants;
- 4 d. A description of the proposed construction or rehabilitation
- 5 activities to be undertaken and the anticipated schedule for carrying
- 6 out those activities;
- 7 e. A description of the manner in which eligible youths will be
- 8 recruited and selected, including a description of the arrangements
- 9 which will be made with community-based organizations, local
- 10 educational agencies, public assistance agencies, the courts of
- 11 jurisdiction for status and youth offenders, shelters for homeless
- 12 individuals and other agencies that serve homeless youth, foster
- 13 care agencies, and other appropriate public and private agencies;
- 14 f. A description of the special efforts that will be undertaken to
- 15 recruit eligible young women (including young women with
- 16 dependent children) with plans for addressing appropriate supports
- 17 they may need, especially childcare;
- 18 g. A description of how the proposed program will be
- 19 coordinated with other youth serving agencies in the service area;
- 20 h. Assurances that there will be a sufficient number of
- 21 adequately trained supervisory personnel in the program who have
- 22 attained the level of journeyman or its equivalent;
- 23 i. A description of the applicant's relationship with any local
- 24 building trade unions, which may exist, regarding their involvement
- 25 in training, and the relationship of the YouthBuild program with
- 26 established apprenticeship programs;
- 27 j. A description of activities that will be undertaken to develop
- 28 the leadership skills of participants, including their role in decision
- 29 making;
- 30 k. A detailed budget and a description of the system of fiscal
- 31 controls and auditing and accountability procedures that will be
- 32 used to ensure fiscal soundness;
- 33 l. A description of any contracts and arrangements entered into
- 34 between the applicant and other agencies and entities including all
- 35 in-kind donations and grants from both public and private entities
- 36 that will serve to augment State YouthBuild funds;
- 37 m. The qualifications and past experience of the person who
- 38 will fill the full-time program director position; and
- 39 n. Other information or factors as deemed necessary by the
- 40 commissioner.
- 41
- 42 8. a. An applicant selected for funding under this act shall
- 43 provide to the department information on program and participant
- 44 outcomes, including but not limited to: attendance, retention, GED
- 45 attainment, high school diplomas issued, educational improvement
- 46 levels, placement, construction outcomes and community service
- 47 accomplishments.

b. The department shall prepare and submit annual evaluation reports to the Governor and the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1) on the progress of individual programs funded under this act. The department shall prepare and submit a final evaluation report to the Governor and the Legislature, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), on individual programs at the times of program completion. The final evaluation report shall include, but not be limited to, information on the effectiveness of the program, the status of program participants and recommendations on program administration at the State and local level. The Department shall submit the first evaluation report by July 1, 2024, and subsequent annual reports by July 1 of each year thereafter.

9. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to effectuate the provisions of this act:

- a. \$4,000,000 for fiscal year 2024;
- b. \$4,400,000 for fiscal year 2025;
- c. \$4,900,000 for fiscal year 2026;
- d. \$5,400,000 for fiscal year 2027; and
- e. \$6,000,000 for fiscal year 2028.

10. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill allows for the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to establish a grant program for YouthBuild programs throughout New Jersey. YouthBuild is a community-based pre-apprenticeship program that provides job training and educational opportunities for at-risk youth ages 16-24 through the United States Department of Labor. The bill would expand YouthBuild programs in the State by establishing a State program with funding that would work in coordination with the federal program.

In order for a YouthBuild program to be eligible to receive this grant funding, several program requirements must be met: (1) serving economically disadvantaged young people ages 16 to 24 who have not received a secondary school diploma or its equivalent; (2) offering integrated education and job skills training services and activities which are evenly divided within the program, with 50 percent of students' time spent in classroom-based instruction, counseling, and leadership development instruction and 50 percent of their time spent in service learning experiences at job sites; (3) curriculum culminating in an industry recognized credential, with the YouthBuild program being the entity administering the examination; (4) providing stipends to youth participants to cover

1 the costs associated with their full time participation in this
2 program.

3 Only not-for-profit private agencies that are affiliates of
4 YouthBuild USA or have received a federal Housing and Urban
5 Development YouthBuild award are eligible to use the term
6 YouthBuild and apply for this funding. The Commissioner of Labor
7 and Workforce Development will require all programs eligible to
8 receive YouthBuild grant funding to meet the specific application
9 requirements outlined in this bill. YouthBuild programs selected
10 for funding under the bill will be required to report outcomes to the
11 Department of Labor and Workforce Development, which will be
12 publicly available. The department will also complete an initial
13 evaluation report on the progress of individual programs funded
14 under the bill; this report will be available to the Governor and
15 appropriate legislative committees.

16 The bill makes an appropriation from the general fund to the
17 Department of Labor and Workforce Development in fiscal years
18 2024 to 2028 to fund this grant program.

19 The purpose of this bill is to increase accessibility and
20 sustainability of the evidence-based YouthBuild model. For more
21 than 30 years, the YouthBuild model, through YouthBuild USA,
22 has demonstrated positive outcomes for youth- supporting young
23 people in earning their high school diploma, or equivalent, and
24 acquiring the skills and credentials necessary to meet their
25 postsecondary goals. Over the years, the number of YouthBuild
26 programs throughout the State of New Jersey has fluctuated because
27 the federal YouthBuild appropriation from the federal Department
28 of Labor is not guaranteed. A Statewide YouthBuild appropriation
29 would help ensure that opportunity youth throughout New Jersey
30 are consistently served with an evidence-based model. It would
31 promote the sustainability of currently operating YouthBuild
32 programs and would also likely lead to an increase in YouthBuild
33 programs throughout New Jersey.