

SENATE, No. 3781

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 8, 2023

Sponsored by:

Senator JOSEPH A. LAGANA

District 38 (Bergen and Passaic)

Senator JOSEPH P. CRYAN

District 20 (Union)

SYNOPSIS

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

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 11/27/2023)

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 Jersey
8 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 skills
14 training, personal counseling, leadership development skills training,
15 job placement assistance, and long-term follow-up leading to
16 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 commitment
29 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 studies
32 related to the cultural and community history of the students,
33 leadership skills, and other topics at the discretion of the programs;

34 (b) a vocational learning experience and skills training
35 component apprenticeship program that includes the construction
36 and rehabilitation activities described in paragraph (4) of this
37 subsection. The process of construction shall be tied with skills
38 training and with close on-site supervision by experienced trainers.
39 The curriculum for this component shall contain a set of locally
40 agreed upon skills and competencies that are systematically taught,
41 with a student's mastery assessed individually on a regular, ongoing
42 basis. Safety skills shall be taught at the outset. The vocational
43 learning experience and skills training component shall be
44 coordinated to the maximum extent feasible with pre-apprenticeship
45 and apprenticeship programs. In order to receive grant funding,
46 programs shall offer vocational learning experiences that conclude
47 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 required
4 financial aid to be made available to participants prior to graduation;
5 (2) counseling services designed to assist participants to
6 positively participate in society, which should include all of the
7 following if necessary: outreach, assessment, and orientation;
8 individual and peer counseling; life skills training, drug and alcohol
9 abuse education and prevention; and referral to appropriate drug
10 rehabilitation, medical, mental health, legal, housing, and other
11 services and resources in the community;
12 (3) leadership development training that provides participants
13 with meaningful opportunities to develop leadership skills such as
14 decision making, problem solving, and negotiating. The program
15 shall also encourage participants to develop strong peer group ties
16 that support their mutual pursuit of skills and values. All programs
17 shall establish a youth council in which participants are afforded
18 opportunities to develop public speaking and negotiating skills, and
19 management and policy-making participation in specific aspects of
20 the program; and
21 (4) assistance with the acquisition, rehabilitation, acquisition and
22 rehabilitation, or construction of housing and related facilities which
23 will serve as the vocational training sites and then to be used for the
24 purpose of providing home ownership for disadvantaged persons,
25 residential housing for homeless individuals, and low-income and
26 very low-income families, or transitional housing for persons who
27 are homeless, have disabilities, are ill, are de-institutionalized, or
28 have special needs and rehabilitation or construction of community
29 facilities owned by not-for-profit or public agencies.
30 b. A YouthBuild program shall provide a stipend to participants
31 to cover the costs associated with their full time participation in the
32 program. The stipend shall not be considered as income in
33 determining eligibility for other State or federal assistance programs.
34 Stipends may be distributed in a manner that offers incentives for
35 good performance.
36 c. Full-time participation in a YouthBuild program shall be
37 offered for a period of not less than six months and not more than 24
38 months.
39 d. A concentrated effort shall be made to find jobs for all
40 graduates of the program who have performed well. The skills
41 training curriculum shall provide participants with basic preparation
42 for seeking and maintaining a job. Follow-up counseling and
43 assistance in job-seeking shall also be provided to participants for the
44 12 months following graduation from the program.
45 e. All programs serving 20 trainees or more are required to have
46 a full-time director responsible for the coordination of all aspects of
47 the YouthBuild program.

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

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

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

10 (3) a member of a low-income family, a youth in foster care
11 (including a youth aging-out of foster care), a youth offender, a youth
12 with a disability, a child or incarcerated parents, or a migrant youth.

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

21
22 6. Eligible entities to be awarded funds under this act are not-
23 for-profit private agencies with experience operating a YouthBuild
24 program or entities that have received a federal Housing and Urban
25 Development (HUD) YouthBuild grant or have experience in serving
26 this population and have plans to incubate a YouthBuild program.
27 Priority in the awarding of funds under this act shall be given to
28 applicants with experience in operating YouthBuild programs or
29 organizations that have received HUD YouthBuild funding. Only
30 not-for-profit private agencies that are affiliates of YouthBuild USA
31 or have received a federal HUD YouthBuild grant shall be eligible to
32 use the term YouthBuild.

33
34 7. The commissioner shall require that an application for
35 YouthBuild funds under this act contain at a minimum:

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

38 b. A description of the applicant and a statement of its
39 qualifications, including a description of the applicant's past
40 experience running a YouthBuild program, and with housing
41 rehabilitation or construction and with youth and youth education,
42 youth leadership development and employment training programs
43 and other relevant community organizations;

44 c. A description of the educational and job training activities,
45 work opportunities, and other services that will be provided to
46 participants;

- 1 d. A description of the proposed construction or rehabilitation
- 2 activities to be undertaken and the anticipated schedule for carrying
- 3 out those activities;
- 4 e. A description of the manner in which eligible youths will be
- 5 recruited and selected, including a description of the arrangements
- 6 which will be made with community-based organizations, local
- 7 educational agencies, public assistance agencies, the courts of
- 8 jurisdiction for status and youth offenders, shelters for homeless
- 9 individuals and other agencies that serve homeless youth, foster care
- 10 agencies, and other appropriate public and private agencies;
- 11 f. A description of the special efforts that will be undertaken to
- 12 recruit eligible young women (including young women with
- 13 dependent children) with plans for addressing appropriate supports
- 14 they may need, especially childcare;
- 15 g. A description of how the proposed program will be
- 16 coordinated with other youth serving agencies in the service area;
- 17 h. Assurances that there will be a sufficient number of
- 18 adequately trained supervisory personnel in the program who have
- 19 attained the level of journeyman or its equivalent;
- 20 i. A description of the applicant's relationship with any local
- 21 building trade unions, which may exist, regarding their involvement
- 22 in training, and the relationship of the YouthBuild program with
- 23 established apprenticeship programs;
- 24 j. A description of activities that will be undertaken to develop
- 25 the leadership skills of participants, including their role in decision
- 26 making;
- 27 k. A detailed budget and a description of the system of fiscal
- 28 controls and auditing and accountability procedures that will be used
- 29 to ensure fiscal soundness;
- 30 l. A description of any contracts and arrangements entered into
- 31 between the applicant and other agencies and entities including all
- 32 in-kind donations and grants from both public and private entities
- 33 that will serve to augment State YouthBuild funds;
- 34 m. The qualifications and past experience of the person who will
- 35 fill the full-time program director position; and
- 36 n. Other information or factors as deemed necessary by the
- 37 commissioner.
- 38
- 39 8. a. An applicant selected for funding under this act shall
- 40 provide to the department information on program and participant
- 41 outcomes, including but not limited to: attendance, retention, GED
- 42 attainment, high school diplomas issued, educational improvement
- 43 levels, placement, construction outcomes and community service
- 44 accomplishments.
- 45 b. The department shall prepare and submit annual evaluation
- 46 reports to the Governor and the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of
- 47 P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1) on the progress of individual
- 48 programs funded under this act. The department shall prepare and

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

10
11 9. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the
12 Department of Labor and Workforce Development to effectuate the
13 provisions of this act:

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

19
20 10. This act shall take effect immediately.

21
22
23 STATEMENT

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

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

46 Only not-for-profit private agencies that are affiliates of
47 YouthBuild USA or have received a federal Housing and Urban
48 Development YouthBuild award are eligible to use the term

1 YouthBuild and apply for this funding. The Commissioner of Labor
2 and Workforce Development will require all programs eligible to
3 receive YouthBuild grant funding to meet the specific application
4 requirements outlined in this bill. YouthBuild programs selected for
5 funding under the bill will be required to report outcomes to the
6 Department of Labor and Workforce Development, which will be
7 publicly available. The department will also complete an initial
8 evaluation report on the progress of individual programs funded
9 under the bill; this report will be available to the Governor and
10 appropriate legislative committees.

11 The bill makes an appropriation from the general fund to the
12 Department of Labor and Workforce Development in fiscal years
13 2024 to 2028 to fund this grant program.

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