



DYS Bridging the Opportunity Gap: A Career Development Training Program for youth

FY20 Request for Proposals

An initiative to support the positive development of youth through community engagement by providing career awareness, career exploration, career preparation and career retention employment activities.

February 27, 2019

Commonwealth Corporation &
Massachusetts Department of Youth Services



Request for Proposals
FY20 DYS Bridging the Opportunity Gap Initiative
(July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020)

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Separate documents include resources that will be helpful in developing a response. These tools can be downloaded at <http://commcorp.org/available-funding>, and include:

- Part 3A – Budget and Part 3B – Budget Narrative (REQUIRED)
- Signature page for DYS Director of Community Services and District Manager (REQUIRED)
- *Bridging the Opportunity Gap Grantee Handbook*
- *Bridging the Opportunity Gap / EYF Curriculum Guide* (includes lessons and resources for use in career development components that are part of each tier)

Proposals *must* be submitted through Commonwealth Corporation’s Bridging the Opportunity Gap proposal submission portal, at <https://commcorp.tfaforms.net/328757>. See pages 3 - 4 for submission details.

One. Overview and Details of Funding

- A. Purpose of funding:** The Bridging the Opportunity Gap initiative provides funding for workforce development programming that supports youth committed to the Department of Youth Services (DYS). DYS is the juvenile justice agency for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; the agency's mission is to promote positive change for youth who are in their care.

The Bridging the Opportunity Gap initiative is based on a positive youth development model that is asset-based, culturally responsive, and delivered by personnel with experience in operating youth programs. Programming should be interactive and engaging to youth, and be delivered in a way that addresses a variety of learning styles. We have adopted a 'tiered' program model in which youth move to advanced levels of the program as they gain work readiness competencies and meet specific performance benchmarks. Within each tier, youth will experience a mix of career development activities (including classroom trainings) and a range of field experiences where they can gain exposure, test out new skills, and demonstrate a readiness to move up. The highest level, Tier Four, represents placement in unsubsidized employment, where the youth continues to receive post-employment supports. A full description of the new program model appears below on page 6.

Grantees work with Commonwealth Corporation staff to build and expand program services and resources that result in access to a variety of pathways for youth involved with DYS.

Focus of Services: We invite proposals from youth-serving organizations that can deliver programming for youth that builds pro-social behaviors, engages them in creative and productive activities, and that builds skills and attitudes that will improve each youth's ability to function productively in the workplace and community.

- B. Target Population:** These funds are targeted to youth committed to the Department of Youth Services who are transitioning from residential facilities or who are already living in the community.
- **Eligible Youth:** Grant funds must be used exclusively to support youth involved with the Department of Youth Services as committed youth, committed Youthful Offenders or youth accepting voluntary services from DYS as YES (Youth Engaged in Services).
 - **Pre-Work Documentation.** Youth are paid for their participation in all aspects of the program. Staff from a grantee organization must collect all relevant employment documentation (*i.e.*, birth certificate, SSN, etc.) for youth participants and complete Department of Homeland Security's I-9 form, and obtain work permits for youth ages 14-17. The work permit applications can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/lwd/docs/dos/youth-employment/youth-application.pdf>. All supporting documentation must be completed on or before the orientation day or before youth begin any career development activities or field experiences. More information on the I-9 form and other program tools can be found in the *Bridging the Opportunity Gap Grantee Handbook* available from Commonwealth Corporation at <http://commcorp.org/available-funding>.
- C. Eligible Applicants:** This RFP solicits proposals from any youth-serving non-profit or community-based organizations, including faith-based organizations, schools or vocational high schools, local Workforce Investment Boards, and One-Stop Career Centers in Massachusetts.

- D. Funding Availability:** This solicitation is administered by Commonwealth Corporation and funding is provided by the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services. Grantee awards are dependent on (a) DYS receiving a fiscal year state budget appropriation and (b) DYS issuing a contract to Commonwealth Corporation that provides Bridging the Opportunity Gap program funds. Commonwealth Corporation anticipates awarding 15 to 20 grants (typical awards range \$25,000 – \$90,000, depending on number of youth served) through this competitive process. Commonwealth Corporation reserves the right to contact applicants for clarification or negotiation, to extend or revise any deadline, and to reject any and all proposals, or to accept any and all proposals, in whole or in part, if deemed to be in the best interest of the Commonwealth. Commonwealth Corporation may negotiate the terms of the contract prior to issuing the grant award.
- E. Funding Requests:** Applicants must submit funding requests that implement the ‘Bridging the Opportunity Gap Tier Program Design’. The applicant’s program design should be based on a positive youth development approach that is asset-based and is staffed with personnel that have demonstrated success working effectively with youth from a diverse range of backgrounds (economically, racially, culturally and ethnicity) and social identities. All programming should strive to support the development of pro-social behaviors that support healthy relationships with caring adults and peers; and provide training and experiences that develop the ‘soft skills’ necessary to be successful in the workplace.
- F. Duration of Grant Award(s):** Grant funds for the will be provided for a twelve-month period – July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020. All contracts will end no later than June 30, 2020; all funds must be expended by that date.
- G. Application Deadline / Funding Status:** The deadline for submitting an application to Commonwealth Corporation is April 3, 2019, at 4:00 p.m. (See below for further instructions regarding the submission process). Decisions regarding funding will be made by June 14, 2019.
- H. Clarification Period:** Questions about the DYS Bridging the Opportunity Gap Request for Proposals will be accepted in writing from February 27 – March 8, 2019. Please submit questions via e-mail to Danielle Brazeau, DYS Sr. Program Manager at dbrazeau@commcorp.org. Commonwealth Corporation will respond to all questions within three business days.
- I. Expectations for Grant Administration.** The *Bridging the Opportunity Gap Grantee Handbook* is accessible on the CommCorp website, at the **Available Funding** page at <http://commcorp.org/available-funding>. The Handbook describes administrative requirements and procedures that relate to the grant, and provides some useful templates that will help grantees manage grant resources.

J. Timeline for Grant Award Process

Request for Proposals Release	February 27, 2019
Webinar Session for Grantees	March 5, 2019
Submit application to DYS for review and signatures	March 22, 2019
Responses (applications) due to CommCorp	April 3, 2019
Applicants Notified of Grant Award	June 14, 2019
Anticipated Contract Start Date	July 1, 2019
Contract End Date	June 30, 2020

Two: Instructions for RFP Submission

Submission Deadline: Proposals are due on April 3, 2019 by 4:00 p.m. Applications that are not complete will be disqualified. Applications, or any parts thereof, received after the required date and time will be considered non-responsive and will not be considered.

Submission Process: Proposals **must** be submitted through Commonwealth Corporation's Bridging the Opportunity Gap portal, at <https://commcorp.tfaforms.net/328757>. Applicants will be asked to enter certain information about the applicant organization and key personnel who are affiliated with the proposal including signatory, fiscal contact, primary contact, and person responsible for program delivery. The portal provides links to upload your proposal narrative (in Microsoft Word format ONLY) and proposed budget (in Microsoft Excel format ONLY), and a separate signature page that must include the signature of the organization's executive director AND the DYS Director of Community Services and local DYS District Manager for the community or region where your organization is located.

The DYS Director of Community Services and the DYS District Manager should be consulted during the application process in order to ensure that your proposal meets regional and/or local DYS youth needs. In order to obtain these signatures, your proposal must be shared with the DYS Director of Community Services and the DYS District Manager by March 20, 2019, to allow ample time to review your proposal and discuss any changes to ensure your approach meets regional and local needs of the DYS youth. DYS reserves the right to withhold providing its signature approval on any proposal for any reason.

Use the portal to submit the following items:

Part 1: Project Narrative: Proposals must include a brief written narrative of no more than ten (10) pages of double-spaced text. The narrative must address all of the identified program elements (A-J) with clear headings. Upload your narrative using the appropriate button on the portal website. Submit it in Microsoft Word format (not PDF). Use the following naming convention: **OrganizationName_FY20BOG_Narrative.doc**.

Part 2: Signature Page: Applicants must submit a separate signature page, using the template provided, that contains the signature of the applicant's executive director, and the DYS Director of Community Services and local DYS District Manager for the community or region where your organization is located. After you obtain all necessary original signatures, scan it

and submit it using the appropriate button on the portal website using either JPEG or PDF format. Use the following naming convention:

OrganizationName_FY20BOG_Signature.pdf

Part 3: Budget (3A) and Budget Narrative (3B): Applicants must submit a detailed budget request using the provided forms. The budget will also become the financial basis for any grant award, and for making cost reimbursement payments over the course of the project. CommCorp reserves the right to modify application budgets prior to and/or after grant award. Upload your budget using the appropriate button on the portal website. Submit it in Microsoft Excel spreadsheet format (not PDF). Use the following naming convention:

OrganizationName_FY20BOG_Budget.xls.

Three: The Bridging the Opportunity Gap Tier Model – A Different Approach to Youth Employability

Bridging the Opportunity Gap represents one element in a larger effort to help youth committed to DYS be more prepared for the future – both education and work. DYS, together with Commonwealth Corporation and the Collaborative for Educational Services, has worked to incorporate a range of activities and experiences aimed at helping youth assess their own individual strengths and aspirations, learn more about options that exist in both school and work, and establish goals and plans that can give a direction for future success.

From the time that a youth begins involvement in the DYS system, classroom activities and other undertakings seek to help a youth become **Future Ready** – having the knowledge, skills and attitudes to complete whatever education and training is needed to achieve goals in school, work and life. In general, Future Ready is a learning process between students, educators, and other caring adults that involves each youth moving through three phases:

- **Future Ready Awareness** – youth build awareness of the variety of postsecondary options and careers available and begin identifying areas of personal interest;
- **Future Ready Exploration** – youth explore post-secondary and career options to provide motivation and inform decision making; and
- **Future Ready Immersion** – youth apply learning through practical experiences and develop transferrable 21st Century workplace and academic skills; youth complete training for employment in a specific occupation.

Grantees need to be aware that services delivered to youth committed to DYS through a Bridging the Opportunity Gap grant award are a critical part of this Future Ready process. Participants consist of youth who are DYS clients that have returned to their home community from residential treatment. These youth will already have been exposed to career awareness and development through the DYS *Empower Your Future* curriculum, and will have already begun a process of defining future career goals, including plans for education and training that will help them earn formal credentials necessary to obtain a first job in a career. From this perspective, grantees should craft their work with individual youth to build on an existing foundation of career exploration.

For programs that are delivered during the 2019-2020 program year, the core experience should itself be organized to move youth participants through a phased sequence of experiences that is designed to yield a job-ready youth. The design organizes experiences into levels or stages that youth move through as

they demonstrate mastery of specific work readiness skills and indicate they are equipped to advance into the next tier of activities. This design allows grantees to meet youth where they are and allow youth to move back and forth between tiers based on the unique needs and readiness of each youth.

Grantees are expected to tailor a range of activities that supports the needs of each participant – delivering a more individualized program of services and experiences to help each youth gain measurable ‘soft’ skills. The tiered approach builds on career readiness training by asking grantees to identify a range of community-based experiences such as job shadowing, volunteer activities, community service learning and other real-world exposures where youth can develop, apply, and demonstrate specific and measurable soft skills. And, youth are able to begin a program at any time during the year. This approach should help youth progress through the four tiers at a pace that reflects their developmental readiness to advance. A youth who ends a program year having achieved Tier Two: Career Exploration, for example, could pick up at that point in the sequence in the next available program year.

As each youth demonstrates they are ready – having advanced through Tier Three – they can begin unsubsidized employment (Tier Four) supported by post-employment services through which grantees help them retain employment, solidify soft skills, work through new workplace issues, and advance in the job or according to a career plan. If a youth is already employed when beginning the program and/or obtain employment at any point the youth can be enrolled in tier 4 in order to receive and record data for post-employment support.

Programming across all Tiers is designed to help youth acquire and demonstrate core soft skills, or work readiness skills. The nine core work readiness skills we are focusing on are:

- | Nine Core Soft Skills for Work Readiness | |
|---|---------------------|
| • Perseverance | • Communication |
| • Optimism | • Confidence |
| • Self-Control | • Discipline |
| • Tolerance | • Critical Thinking |
| | • Collaboration |

Bridging the Opportunity Gap Tier Program Outline

Tier One: Career Awareness	Tier Two: Career Exploration	Tier Three: Immersion For Career Preparation	Tier Four: Career Retention
Learning Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth identify a field of interest to explore Youth can define one example of how each soft skill is important Youth can articulate education/training needed for field of interest Youth give examples of accepted workplace etiquette 	Learning Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth use field experiences to identify a career to pursue Youth demonstrate soft skills they have learned Youth understand importance of career portfolio Youth demonstrate workplace norms Youth give examples of individual skills and interests related to a career choice 	Learning Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth identify future education and career opportunities Youth demonstrate soft skills in workplace Youth actively apply for jobs – to transition to unsubsidized employment 	Graduation Tier: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth able to connect all career readiness training to his/her work experience Youth able to demonstrate coping skills to overcome barriers in the workplace Youth have opportunity demonstrate leadership skills
Career Awareness Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program Expectations Workplace documentation Workplace Etiquette Work Assessment – soft skills Research Jobs Career Interest Inventory/assessment 	Career Exploration Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career Portfolio Workplace Etiquette Job Success Mock interview Work Assessment – soft skills 	Career Preparation Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work Assessment-soft skills Connections to other caring adults involved with youth for additional education and career opportunities Job search-submitting resume/applications 	Career Retention Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 6 months post-employment support Financial Planning Coping in the workplace Workplace Safety Job retention Leadership opportunities
Field Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workplace tour/guest speaker/career fair Informational interview 	Field Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career Fair, Job Shadows, Volunteer Days or other Civic Engagement Mini-subsidized employment experience 	Field Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subsidized employment Internship Apprenticeship Career Fair Certification training 	Field Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grantee checks in with employer at least bi-weekly Checking in with youth to support success and brainstorm obstacles
Career Awareness Benchmarks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75% attendance 75% punctuality 75% engagement 75% professionalism 	Career Exploration Benchmarks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 85% attendance 85% punctuality 85% engagement 85% professionalism 	Career Preparation Benchmarks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90% attendance 90% punctuality 90% engagement 90% professionalism 	

Classroom learning through the Bridging the Opportunity Gap / EYF career readiness curriculum is focused on these core soft skills. Field experiences should be provided that build these skills and give youth the opportunity to demonstrate how these core skills relate to successful completion of a community field experience. And, youth will be expected to articulate how these core skills relate to their employment or career goal.

We expect that every youth can benefit from this tiered approach. The overall goal of the program should still be to help each youth find and keep unsubsidized employment – a first step on a career pathway. Using ‘tiers’ helps youth meet this goal because:

- Programming can build on a foundation of career decision making that began when the youth was in residential treatment;
- moving through the tiers is based on both experience and demonstration of competencies – so a youth who is developmentally ready for the next step can display the behaviors and attributes necessary to move to the next level;
- youth will be expected to have a variety of field experiences, including volunteer days, community service, job shadowing, or mini-internships – a rich mix of exposures that can be used to test out new skills, reflect on a wider range of experiences, learn more about different organizational cultures and expectations, and demonstrate soft skill competencies in a variety of settings;
- youth can receive post-employment supports that can lead to job retention – helping youth build a longer tenure on jobs and build a resume of accomplishment;
- youth don’t artificially move through a sequence that starts in the beginning of a fiscal program year and stops at the end of the fiscal (grant) year – instead, youth move through tiers that could span grant periods in ways that are more in harmony with their own developmental capacity;
- progressing to the next tier is the result of meeting objective benchmarks – youth know that they are being assessed on their behaviors and performance and own their ability to progress.

Grantees track and report each youth’s participation, attendance, range of field experiences and classroom workshops. Financially, youth are provided with an hourly wage for their participation. Together, the costs of program management and the payment of youth wages represent the expenses covered by a grant award. Grantees who are considering submitting a proposal to Commonwealth Corporation to deliver services using the Tier design will have to carefully estimate the costs that are necessary for individualizing programming for different youth participants, delivering career activities through workshops and direct training, identifying field experiences like job shadows, volunteer days, and community service projects that youth can use to develop new skills, providing the oversight and reflection necessary to make a range of community exposures into valuable learning opportunities, and the tracking necessary to show how youth are moving through the tiers.

Four: Bridging the Opportunity Gap Proposal Narrative Components

- A. Lead Applicant:** Describe the qualifications of the lead applicant and the capacity the organization has to successfully implement the programmatic and fiscal requirements of this grant. In particular, provide information on your organization's experience in providing:
- outcomes that speak to your agency's success in working effectively with DYS clients;
 - effective youth workforce development services;
 - If you have previously received a Bridging the Opportunity Gap program grant, describe the changes that you anticipate making based on your experience and learning from previous grant.
- B. Program Operations and Administration:** Commonwealth Corporation expects that all applicants will have adopted core operational and management policies and procedures that guide the effective administration of the organization. Please briefly describe the following:
- effective program practices including organizational means of maintaining program records (e.g., grant-specific forms for youth attendance, timesheets and rewards/incentives) and ability to include a range of youth on your agency's payroll (youth with prior criminal or sex offending history);
 - procedures and protocols for ensuring data security and confidentiality (i.e., maintaining and protecting hard copy files and electronic storage);
 - effective fiscal practices, including your organization's capacity to (a) administer a cost-reimbursement grant, (b) submit accurate monthly invoices, (c) comply with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, and (d) maintaining appropriate fiscal expense documentation for payroll, youth stipends, staff time, and other cost allocations;
 - whether your organization requires a CORI/SORI background check of its employees, has a Code of Conduct and/or ethics policy regarding relationships between employees and youth clients; and a transportation policy related to the procedures for transporting youth in private cars or vehicles operated by the organization (if youth are transported through the Bridging the Opportunity Gap program).
- C. Staffing and Facilities:** The proposed program should have dedicated staff to oversee, manage and administer the program. Please describe:
- How staff will support youth in the development of pro-social behaviors and self-advocacy skills that support healthy relationships with caring adults and peers and serve as a catalyst for youth being able to obtain unsubsidized employment;
 - your organizations practices to hire staff who have experience working with a diverse group of young people and who reflect the demographic profile of the youth, as much as possible
 - the staff responsible (by name, position and organization) for implementing the proposed Bridging the Opportunity Gap program (including supervisory and direct program services staff);
 - the experience and qualifications each identified staff has for implementing the program (e.g., direct service experience with youth, career readiness training/facilitation, any relevant

experience in organizing a range of community field experiences; strategy for employer outreach and developing and maintaining employer relationships; or other experience related to the proposed program services).

D. Program Design: Please include information that summarizes the target numbers of youth and the geographic location of emphasis for participating youth. Address how your project will implement the tiered approach as outlined in pages 4-7:

- a. provide classroom and workshops in career activities that follow the tiered approach;
- b. identify volunteer events, career fairs in the community, and community service opportunities that can serve as field experiences;
- c. work with employers to organize authentic field experiences including job shadows, mini-subsidized employment, subsidized employment, and other similar work experiences that will be a part of delivery in a 'tiered' program environment;
- d. provide post-employment support to youth who are in unsubsidized placements;
- e. provide regular and ongoing assessments related to the acquisition of work readiness competencies that are featured in the Bridging the Opportunity Gap program model.
- f. as a result of ongoing assessments how you will provide supports that reflect youth learning styles and needs

E. Coordination with DYS: [Note: A directory of DYS Directors of Community Service appears on page 11 of this RFP. These DYS staff can also identify the appropriate local DYS district managers to include as signatories and collaborators in your project.] A Bridging the Opportunity Gap program requires extensive collaboration between the applicant organization and the DYS district and regional office staff to effectively provide services to youth who are in the care of DYS. Prior to submitting a proposal your organization should meet with DYS staff in the region you are submitting for to learn the needs and number of youth to be served and collaboratively write your proposal. Describe:

- a. the relationship the applicant has with the DYS district office staff currently **or** how the applicant will develop that relationship to maintain regular coordination with DYS district and regional office staff.
- b. the process that your agency undertook to develop this project's design in collaboration with DYS district office staff.
- c. the specific DYS staff who will serve as a regular point of contact for this grant.
- d. describe how youth will be recruited, oriented and transported to the program and to any field experiences. These details must be discussed and coordinated with DYS staff from the local district office.
- e. describe how you will coordinate with DYS staff to meet youth referred prior to transition to the community

F. Recruitment and Retention Strategy:

- a. How will you work with DYS staff to create transportation plans for youth to attend programming;
- b. How you will prepare returning youth to gain unsubsidized employment and transition from programming

Five: Budget and Budget Narrative

Each proposal must include a Line Item Budget (Part 3A) and a Budget Narrative (Part 3B). The budget narrative must provide detail showing the assumptions and calculations for all items included in each line item. For each staff position charged to this grant, the budget narrative should indicate the number of hours worked per week, specifying whole or fractional full time equivalents. The narrative should, in as specific detail as possible, separate costs for transportation, food, supplies and other related costs.

Instructions for Using the Line Item Program Budget Template. The Line Item Program Budget template is an Excel workbook developed for use by organizations that are applying for a FY20 Bridging the Opportunity Gap grant. The template can be found on the CommCorp website at <http://commcorp.org/available-funding>. Applicants are required to submit a program budget using this budget template, and must use the template even if not all of the built-in line items will be used.

There are two separate worksheets in this workbook – the first is titled **Line Item Budget** on the worksheet tab, and the second is titled **Budget Narrative** on the worksheet tab.

When you first open the spreadsheet, click **Save As** and give the document a new name and save it on your computer. Then, **add your organization's name in Row 3** on the worksheet appearing on the Line Item Budget tab. Entering your organization name is the **only** edit or change you can make on that worksheet. The rest of the worksheet is locked (password-protected) and cannot be changed by an applicant. **Focus your budget preparation on the worksheet titled Budget Narrative.** As you can see, the amounts you manually enter for individual line items (in the cells on Column D of the Budget Narrative) will automatically be transferred to corresponding cells on the Line Item Budget worksheet. You don't need to re-enter those amounts.

The Budget Narrative worksheet serves two purposes: it explains how the costs were estimated and it justifies the need for the cost. Please be aware that:

1. The line items that are detailed in this Budget Narrative are the same as the subcomponent details listed on the Line Item Budget worksheet.
2. Use the cells in Column C, titled Description of Assumptions and Calculation Methodology to show how you arrived at the cost for each item. Make sure that your explanation for each cost item results in the dollar amount you enter in the cells in Column D.
3. Your entries in Column C will automatically word-wrap. Increase the row heights as necessary to display all the text that you enter in the line item cells.

If you have questions about how the budget template workbook works, or need assistance in completing your budgeting, please call Danielle Brazeau at (413) 584-3627 extension 6803.

Six: Directory of DYS Regional Contacts

DYS Region	Contact Person	Contact Information
Metro Region	Kenetha Moore, Director of Community Services	P: 617-740-0324 E: kenetha.moore@state.ma.us
Southeast Region	Christian Mitchell, Director of Community Services	P: 781-710-5285 E: christian.j.mitchell@state.ma.us
Northeast Region	Barbara Richards, Director of Community Services	P: (978) -857-4217 E: barbara.richards@state.ma.us
Western Region	Lorrie Bobe, Director of Community Services	P: (413) 731-4907 E: lorrie.j.bobe@state.ma.us
Central Region	Alisa Padavano-Deveau, Director of Community Services	P: (508) 475-2702 E: alisa.padavano-deveau@state.ma.us