DOL YouthBuild Technical Assistance Collaborative
Grantee Planning Period – Guidance & Best Practices TA Toolkit

About This Toolkit

The purpose of the **Grantee Planning Period – Guidance & Best Practices TA Toolkit** is to provide a handy resource for DOL YouthBuild programs and their effective use of the (4) month planning period prior to the launch of their first student cohort. The objective is to share some guidance and proven best practices, which can help YB programs to avoid pitfalls and increase performance outcomes in all areas. The Toolkit is <u>not</u> intended to convey the absolute strategy to use in <u>all</u> programs as local situations may warrant different approaches. This Toolkit shares some best practices and recommendations from several YouthBuild programs, YouthBuild USA, as well as the DOL mandated guidelines that should be followed. The Toolkit was actually developed by the DOL YouthBuild TA team with input from the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (DOL/ETA).

> ### Section 1 – Grant Compliance Guidance

A. Background and Context

2017 DOL YouthBuild grantees are required to conduct their initial planning and program launch activities as described in the 2017 DOL YouthBuild Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA), FOA-ETA-17-03, which details phases of the **period of performance** for grantees. This Toolkit is specifically written to help programs and TA coaches with guidance, tips and best practices for the four-month "planning period," which begins <u>immediately</u> after the effective date of the grant. Utilizing this time wisely or in accordance with the timeline of critical activities that were submitted with the grant proposal is essential to success.

B. Grant Award Period of Performance

The period of performance for current DOL YouthBuild grant awards is three years and four months from the effective date of the grant (40 months). This includes all necessary implementation and start-up activities:

- ☐ A planning period of up to four months;
- ☐ Two years of active program services (education, occupational skills training, and youth leadership development activities) for one or more cohorts of youth; and

☐ An additional twelve months of follow-up support services and tracking of participant outcomes for each cohort of youth.

C. Purpose of the Planning Period

To ensure grantees are prepared to begin program operations, all applicants have to submit a **timeline of critical activities** that they plan to complete <u>during</u> the planning period. Once the DOL grant has officially begun, programs should immediately begin their planning period activities so they are ready to begin their recruitment, orientation, and enrollment activities at the conclusion of the four-month planning period.

> *<u>Tip</u>: Instead of redeveloping start-up activities, grantees should go back to their original proposal or Statement of Work (SOW) to review what they said they were going to do during the planning period.*

D. DOL Planning Period Milestones

In the FOA, DOL details the milestones that must be reached during the planning period. These milestones can often fly "under the radar" of new grantees and TA coaches attempting to assist the programs get up and running. The FOA detailed the following milestones that, at a minimum, have to be achieved during the planning period:

☐ Hiring of or committing of additional core program staff (including the Project Director, Construction Trainer(s), Classroom Teacher(s), Case Manager(s), Job Developer(s) positions), as needed or required;

☐ Reaching out to the Local Workforce Development Board to discuss One-Stop partnership MOU requirements, such as the infrastructure costs, access or referral plan for YouthBuild services, and plans for collaborating with other required partners, including employers;

☐ Solidifying relationships with all necessary partners for the successful delivery of services;

☐ Initiating recruitment and outreach efforts for enrollment of participants;

☐ Reconfirming work site financing and access or submitting SOW mods to ensure approval for work sites; and

☐ Reconfirming match sources and amounts.

Additionally, grantees are required to address and resolve any specific Conditions of Award put on their grant in the grant award package within 30 days of grant award, where relevant.

> *<u>Caution</u>: Completion or non-completion of these milestones within the grant's planning period may be reviewed by the Federal Project Officer. Grantees who have <u>not</u> met milestones may be subject to a corrective action.*

Section 2 – Timeline for Planning Activities

E. Planning Period Suggested Activities

Month 1

Grantees should…

1) Make a public announcement and share the grant award news with community partners, possible stakeholders, and youth-related networks.
2) Take the time to review their DOL grant Statement of Work and grant award package as a reminder of what they have agreed to do.
3) Send YouthBuild points of contact information to youth.build@dol.gov.
4) Review all relevant statutory and regulatory information on YouthBuild (WIOA Sec. 171 and WIOA DOL-Only Final Rule Sec. 688) which can be found here.
5) Immediately reach out to their Federal Project Officer (FPO) with questions and concerns in order to keep the lines of communication open.
6) Review and reconfirm work sites to ensure adequate supply of work sites for the grant period, along with submitting any modifications as needed.
7) Discuss any identified grant and/or budget modifications that may be needed with their FPO as soon as possible. Modification approval process may take longer than anticipated.
8) Develop and set up their fiscal and overall grant management systems to begin planning period expenditures and reporting.
9) Review their anticipated program design and be certain it is the best strategy for them and their particular situation.
10) Revise or develop personnel policies, program operations manual, and the YouthBuild student handbook.
11) Assess their core staffing structure and make informed decisions about student and staff ratios as well as the staff positions needed. Job descriptions should be developed and the hiring process for the YouthBuild staff should begin.
12) Reach out to partners described in the grant application to update on the status of the grant and begin preparations for ongoing partnership work.
13) Ensure staff is registered on WorkforceGPS and the YouthBuild Community of Practice by going to www.workforcegps.org and selecting the "Join Now" link across the top. Once registered, you can select which communities you want to join. Aside from YouthBuild, ION (the WIOA-associated Innovation and Opportunity Network) is another good community to join.
14) Begin to develop a marketing plan for youth outreach and recruitment.

Month 2

Grantees should…

1) Participate on pre-New Grantee Orientation webinars.
2) Register for NGO and Management Information Systems (MIS) trainings. Make necessary travel arrangements.
3) Continue negotiations with Local Workforce Development Board on One-Stop partnership MOU.
4) Continue advertising the program to the community, partners and potential youth participants.
5) Continue with the hiring of YouthBuild staff.
6) Host an initial partnership meeting with community-based organizations, employers, apprenticeship and internship opportunities, post-secondary education institutions, and other key stakeholders.
7) Ensure that EVERYONE understands the DOL YouthBuild performance measures, including how and when they are calculated. *This creates shared responsibility among staff, partners, community, and other key stakeholders.*
8) Review Community of Practice (CoP) resources, conference materials, and e-Learning series.
9) Identify staff development and training needs of YouthBuild staff/partners to ensure success of program implementation.
10) Make decisions about construction skills training curriculum *(NCCER, HBI, Multi-Craft Core Curriculum, etc.).*
11) Ensure that construction staff is trained and certified in the construction curriculum.
12) Schedule a call with their assigned TA coach (who works in partnership with the FPO) to identify TA needs and link to additional resources to support program planning.
13) Determine and finalize arrangements for the YB program physical location and facilities, if necessary.
14) Develop the student application, eligibility determination, and selection process to be used.

Month 3

Grantees should …

1) Continue staff hiring and training, if needed.
2) Conduct ongoing program planning meetings with staff, partners, and other key stakeholders.
3) Refine construction plan with timeline and budget.
4) Line up OSHA training and complete safety plan and other required site notifications.
5) Develop orientation/Mental Toughness schedule and content. Here is a sample resource that may be helpful.
6) Draft program schedule.
7) Develop systems for keeping necessary files and records for each YB student. Here is a MIS roadmap that could be helpful.
8) Finalize MOUs/MOAs with partners.

9) Launch the open enrollment and intake process for the first cohort of YouthBuild students.
10) Actively begin to recruit new students through a variety of methods.

Month 4

Grantees should …

1) Attend the New Grantee Orientation and MIS trainings.
2) Finalize personnel policies, program operations manual, and the YouthBuild student handbook.
3) Review and finalize youth daily schedules.
4) With fiscal department, review match/process and develop or refine YouthBuild program budget. Be sure that the fiscal department is familiar with the program model.
5) Make determinations around wages/stipends/insurance.
6) Determine data collection process.
7) Train staff and partners on DOL outcomes and identify how they align with your program's outcomes.
8) Assure facility readiness for program activities.
9) Ensure that all upcoming program activities will be engaging, interactive, and well integrated with other program components.
10) Finalize youth transportation support.
11) Complete student outreach, recruitment and intake process
12) Finalize the Orientation/Mental Toughness process.
13) Create a Participant File for all students that officially apply and turn in their enrollment paperwork/packet and accompanying eligibility documentation. Here is a [sample](#) that may be helpful.
14) Send out written letters to each prospective new student notifying them of the orientation schedule and plan (or a rejection/referral/need more info letter).

Here is a link to a [planning period timeline tool](#)!

Section 3 – Best Practices & Tips

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1) Start your planning and programming activities with the END in mind!

2) A <u>full-time</u> YouthBuild Program Director or Program Manager is recommended to provide the necessary leadership, direction and management on a daily basis. Many new YouthBuild programs mistakenly assign the leadership of the program to existing staff that have multiple other responsibilities.

3) Optimally, all YouthBuild <u>core</u> staff should be hired and on-board by the end of Month 2 or the beginning of Month 3 to allow for adequate training and preparation time for the first cohort launch.

4) When the YouthBuild program is implemented by collaborating organizations, there should be an MOU with a clear understanding of legal authority, decision-making, clear lines of accountability, roles, centralized record-keeping systems, and alignment with performance outcomes.

5) The YouthBuild program should aim to include diversity of the faculty and staff that reflects the ethnic, socioeconomic, or community background of the students.

6) To enable staff development and growth, staff development plans, along with training, should be systematically offered, provided, budgeted, and valued.

7) A program should strive to recruit as many as 2-3 times the number of applicants as there are spaces available in order to have a large enough group of youth from which to select.

8) The Program Design should comply with the 50/40/10 rule and incorporate contingency plans for on-site training in the case of inclement weather, permit delays, or supply delays. The 50/40/10 rule, which is part of the YouthBuild Final Rule, states that YouthBuild programs must be structured so that:
   - Participants are offered education and related services and activities during at least 50% of the time during which they participate in the program;
   - Participants are offered on-site construction training during at least 40% of the time during which they participate in the program; and
   - The remaining 10% of program time may be used on either education or construction or another allowable activity such as community service or leadership development.

9) In the Planning Period months immediately following receipt of a DOL YouthBuild grant, there are many policies and procedures a grantee will want to ensure are in place. If the program is a part of a larger organization, such as a city or county government, Indian tribe, or a community-based nonprofit, they may already have some of these policies and procedures in place. In this case, review and revise as necessary to ensure alignment with the grant expectations and requirements.

10) Additional policies and procedures that need to be put in place have to do with a YouthBuild program's compliance with the rules set forth by DOL. For example, they must make plans to meet all the **reporting requirements** of DOL. Like all programs that receive government funding, DOL YouthBuild programs are required to submit reports.

11) YouthBuild programs typically have one or more **Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)** in place with partners who will complete some aspect of the program components and they must have at least one MOU in place with the One-Stop system. Programs may need to develop MOUs in the first few months after they receive their DOL grant. MOUs are formal agreements between organizations that establish the structure and roles and responsibilities of a partnership and/or relationship.

12) Develop a staffing team that is competent, caring, and unified! A competent and caring staff is ensured through strong hiring, evaluation, and professional development processes. A unified staff requires attention to team building.

Section 4 – Teamwork is Essential

Dorothy Stoneman, YouthBuild USA's founder, shares some great advice to new Program Directors on the importance of a unified team in her timeless essay, ***The Art and Challenge of Being the Director of a YouthBuild Program***. These are some of her excerpts:

Many program directors come to the job with tremendous wisdom and energy but with little experience in managing the complex staff relationships found in a YouthBuild program. Any number of issues can break down a staff team, but in a YouthBuild program, the most common issues are:

- *Inconsistent application of rules for both staff and young people*
- *Establishing, supporting, and reinforcing a drug policy*
- *Decisions about letting go (or firing) a young person*
- *Differing values or strategies about youth development*
- *Different professional orientations, and thus relationships with young people*
- *Varying opinions about program participants and their worth*

Whatever strategies a director adopts to mitigate these issues and maintain or build a team, ***consistency*** *will be key. YouthBuild grantees should look for the following when assessing the current team or when staffing up:*
- *Is there an understanding of* ***common goals***, *or the program outcomes promised to funders, young people, and the community?*
- *Does staff have a* ***common approach*** *to what and how team goals are pursued?*
- *Is there* ***common accountability***, *including evaluation systems and processes that hold staff accountable to each other, program outcomes, and the young people?*

Program directors should become familiar with all staff job descriptions. If there are no job descriptions, or if the existing ones are not reflective of the work, program directors should begin developing or revising them in partnership with staff. Always ensure that staff responsibilities are aligned with and support program goals, and that the process reflects the human resources protocols of the larger host organization housing the YouthBuild program (if applicable).