

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT SECURITY
State Policy 26, Revision 2
YOUTH WORK EXPERIENCE POLICY
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on Work Experience (WEX) for the youth program under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs), subrecipients, and other entities that provide WIOA youth activities and services shall have the appropriate policies and procedures in place that are consistent with the guidance provided herein.

II. BACKGROUND

Work experience is a planned, structured learning experience that takes place in a workplace for a limited period of time. 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.

III. REQUIREMENTS

Under WIOA, paid and unpaid work experience is an allowable activity and one of the fourteen (14) youth program elements. The primary intent of work experience is to help youth understand proper workplace behavior and what is necessary in order to attain and retain employment. Work experience should help youth acquire the personal attributes, knowledge, and skills needed to obtain a job and advance in employment.

A. Work Experience Categories:

Work experience must be based on identified needs of the individual youth. The use of work experience must be based on an objective assessment and identified on the youth's individual service strategy (ISS).

Paid and unpaid work experience must include academic and occupational education. The types of work experience include the following categories:

- Internship and job shadowing;
- Summer employment opportunities;
- On-the-Job Training;
- Pre-Apprenticeship programs; and
- Virtual work experience

LWDAs should ensure that virtual work experiences continues to be a viable option beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. When virtual work experience is available and approved by the LWDA, the guidelines for monitoring work experience should apply as with traditional work experience.

B. Work Experience Expenditures:

Local Workforce Development Areas must expend at least twenty percent (20%) of their annual WIOA Youth formula allocation on paid and unpaid work experience for in-school youth (ISY) and out-of-school youth (OSY). LWDAs cannot count leveraged resources toward this expenditure requirement. Subrecipients must incorporate work experience in their budget.

Funds provided for work experience may not be used to directly or indirectly aid in the filling of a job opening that is vacant because the former occupant is on strike, or is being locked out in the course of a labor dispute, or the filling of which is otherwise an issue in a labor dispute involving a work stoppage. Participants enrolled in a paid WEX shall be compensated at an hourly rate not less than the State or Federal minimum wage, whichever is greater.

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;
- Participant work experience orientation sessions;
- Employer work experience orientation sessions;
- Classroom training or the required academic education component directly related to the work experience;
- Incentive payments directly tied to the completion of work experience;
- Employability skills/job readiness training to prepare youth for a work experience;
- Supportive services that enable WIOA youth to participate in work experience can count toward the 20 percent WEX expenditure requirement (i.e., transportation to get to the work experience, tools, uniform, boots, etc.); and

- Food may be provided as a supportive service: on a limited basis and in certain situations, food at a reasonable cost may be provided to youth-serving program participants as a supportive service.

Note: The use of grant funds for food should be limited to reasonable and necessary purchases that are coordinated, when possible, with other community, state, or federal services that provide food for low-income individuals. Local areas should have written policies and procedures in place for purchasing and distributing food to ensure consistent treatment of these types of expenses. When developing written policies and procedures, please review the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200.403.

C. Participant Eligibility:

Work experience participants must meet WIOA program eligibility requirements, be enrolled into the respective WIOA program, and have received an assessment resulting in the development of an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) that documents the participant's need and benefit from work experience. In addition to need and benefit, LWDA and subrecipients of WIOA funds must clearly document the location of the work experience and whether it is paid or unpaid.

D. Work Experience Employer Eligibility and Agreement:

Local Workforce Development Areas and subrecipients are responsible for inspecting and approving all WEX employers and worksites before participants begin training. A WEX agreement must be developed and used for all assignments. The WEX agreement should include specific details and guidelines that must be followed by the employer and the participant. The agreement should be signed by the LWDA or subrecipient, and employer,

E. Emergency Payments:

In the event of a declared emergency or disease outbreak that impacts a significant number of active youth participants where in-person attendance may place participants' health and/or safety at risk (for example, the Coronavirus/COVID-19 Global Pandemic of 2020), LWDA and subrecipients may request prior approval from MDES to continue payments for work experience payments, stipends, internships, and on-the-job training (OJT) activities.

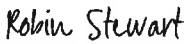
The ISS must provide documentation that the participant's time commitment, paid work experience, stipend structure, and academic or work terms were established prior to the national health emergency declaration.

F. Monitoring:

Local Workforce Development Areas and subrecipients must ensure regular and on-going monitoring and oversight of WEX. Monitoring may include on-site visits, phone/email, and virtual communication with the employer and the participant.

IV. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy shall be effective immediately. This policy will be revised as additional DOL/ETA guidance is received.

DocuSigned by:

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Robin Stewart
Deputy Executive Director

Date