



YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY:

Key Provisions for a New Federal System

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We envision our country's economic future at its best—a nation of thriving communities with economic opportunity for all. To that end, we propose a new federal Youth and Young Adult Development and Economic Opportunity (YYADEO) system to replace the youth workforce development system currently mandated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The YYADEO system will be driven by and accountable to young people, provide support through the transitions of adolescence, and invest in long-term economic opportunity that benefits whole communities.

THE YYADEO SYSTEM WILL:

- Communicate the inherent worth of youth and young adults by normalizing the idea that large-scale, sustained public investment in their development is a core element of the social contract.
- Institutionalize youth leadership and systemic accountability to youth and young adults.
- Support youth development and access to economic opportunity by helping youth build on their existing knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience, scaffolding their development as they work toward their own visions of success.
- Contribute to improving community-level indicators such as income inequality, occupational segregation, and poverty rates.
- Prioritize appropriation of resources to reverse historical disinvestment and directly benefit youth of color and others whose communities are most directly harmed by racism and other oppressive systems of power.
- Improve cross-agency collaboration to support effective community-level systems of care that work efficiently across agencies and community partners.
- Guarantee paid economic opportunities and employment to all youth who seek it through a legislative entitlement and jobs guarantee.

Unlike existing WIOA youth programs, which are governed locally by politically appointed business leaders, the YYADEO system is led by and accountable to young people. With leadership from those most familiar with the challenges of entering the workforce, communities can build on the achievements of the current system. This new model will:

- Create YYADEO boards, staffed by youth development professionals, to govern the system at the local workforce development area and/or tribal level. Youth and young adults would hold the majority of board seats, including the chair, and lead in partnership with adult members. The model includes intensive supports to scaffold young people's success in governance and facilitate effective youth-adult partnership.
- Fund paid work experience and preserve federal dollars for programmatic purposes by distributing funding directly to local YYADEO boards.
- Streamline program administration to prioritize access to opportunity rather than compliance with exclusionary enrollment, participation, and reporting rules.
- Increase the Department of Labor's capacity to provide timely, user-friendly data, disaggregated by race and other relevant markers, to guide local strategy and monitor progress on local trends in youth employment, wages, and occupational segregation.

Programmatically, the YYADEO system aligns with the science of adolescent development, addresses the concerns of many youth and youth-serving program providers, and builds in equity strategies with community-wide impact. This new model will:

- Expand eligibility to begin at the seventh grade and continue through age 26 so the system can support young people through major transitions of adolescence, starting before many begin to disengage from school and continuing as they enter adulthood.
- Hold providers accountable for participant-level outcomes defined by the interests and needs of youth themselves, not negotiated levels of performance determined by traditional, standardized measures.
- Guarantee paid training, including credentials and career skills appropriate to participants' fields of interest, and meaningful work experience through earn-and-learn models with fair pay rather than stipends or other sub-minimum wages.
- Incentivize employers to eliminate discriminatory hiring and management practices, pay living wages, invest in employee development, and ensure that work sites are safe, inclusive, youth-friendly, and accessible to young people with disabilities and English language learners.
- Provide local leaders with technical assistance, research, data, and practical resources that support locally driven initiatives rather than imposing prescriptive guidance.

The model for the YYADEO system emerged from conversations with youth, program providers, workforce board and city agency leaders, and national partners. We especially thank members of the Communities Collaborating to Reconnect Youth Network (CCRY) for their inspiration and many rounds of feedback.

Excited about this vision? Wondering how it would work? Look out for the full blueprint expected later this month. To learn more, please contact Kathy Tran at ktran@clasp.org.