

Boston Opportunity Youth Collaborative

Connection Center

Request for Proposals



Boston Collaborative for Opportunity Youth

Connection Center RFP

Background

Who We Are: Boston Opportunity Youth Collaborative

The Boston Opportunity Youth Collaborative (OYC) is composed of 80 different partners, including local community-based organizations, the Boston Public Schools, philanthropy, city and state agencies, and postsecondary institutions. The OYC seeks to 1) reconnect Opportunity Youth - young adults (16-24) who are out of school and out of work - to differentiated education and employment pathways, 2) catalyze the adoption of proven strategies to ensure that all youth have an opportunity to find meaningful career paths, and 3) strengthen our collaborative efforts to enact policy changes, remove barriers and scale our work. Of the 11,764 opportunity youth in Boston, only 3,288 young people are high school dropouts. The remaining 8,476 (72%) have at least a high school equivalency degree, more than 2,000 have some college experience, and most of these youth are 20-24 years old. This data reflects Boston's recent focus on reducing high school dropouts and our success in reconnecting them back to high school.

Problem

While there are many strong education and workforce programs serving disconnected young adults with a high school equivalency in Boston, young people find it difficult to find programs that meet their needs and interests and put them on the path to future success. At the same time, many programs that serve opportunity youth spend considerable financial and human capital finding, recruiting and connecting with youth who would benefit from the programming that they offer. As a result, good programs are underutilized while young people struggle to connect. For the past year, the OYC has worked to develop a strategy to meet these pressing needs.

Strategy

Central to our strategy is the creation of a connection center or centers where Boston's Opportunity Youth feel welcome and viewed as community assets, can obtain an understanding of the education and career opportunities available to them, connect with a program that is a good fit for their long term career aspirations and over time, with sustained support, create for themselves a pathway to work and career. The connection center will also be a place where nonprofits, colleges and workforce development programs can connect with young people who are a strong fit both in interest and ability for the programs that they offer as well as refer those who were not a good fit and desire other opportunities.

Building a Knowledge Base

The connection center is a critical piece of action research that will inform the implementation of career pathways for Opportunity Youth in development through the Opportunity Youth Collaborative. As such, we expect funded entities to become active members of the Opportunity Youth Collaborative. We will use data gathered from the connection center, tracking youth, and knowledge gleaned from the strategies that are employed for continuous improvement and expansion of existing and emerging pathways. Successful applicants will demonstrate a willingness to participate in the OYC process, integrate research and input from our Youth Voice peer leaders, learn from our collective success and challenges and document and share the connection

center learnings with the OYC. This knowledge and data will be shared as part of a national learning community led by the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions centered on strategies for re-engaging and serving opportunity youth.

Eligible Applicants

Applicant organizations must serve the Boston community and be physically located in the city. Preference will be given to 501(c)(3) organizations in operation for more than one year.

Scope of Work

We seek an organization or a partnership of organizations to establish a connection center or centers for young people with a high school credential (GED or diploma) between the ages of 20 and 24 who are out of school and out of work but desire to connect to education or job training.

We anticipate making one or two grants between \$40,000 and \$80,000 with a grant period of November 1, 2014 to October 31, 2015. The grant(s) may be renewable based on available funding and performance.

The grantee entity will be responsible for serving 75-100 Opportunity Youth through:

- Operating a visible center or centers where young people with a high school credential can connect with education, job training and workforce programs.
- Conducting strategic outreach to connect with and engage disconnected youth.
- Providing assessment protocols that assist youth in matching with the educational program that best meets their academic needs: bridge to college, post-secondary enrollment, etc.
- Providing assessment protocols that assist youth in matching with the workforce training program, internship or job opportunity that best meets their career aspirations.
- Providing financial counseling and planning.
- Providing supported referrals to postsecondary education and workforce training programs as well as internships and other pathway opportunities.
- Participating in the Opportunity Youth Collaborative and sharing the progress and to date as well as lessons learned from the Connection Center.
- Providing data on the number of youth referred, placement rates, and persistence rates.

Timeline

September 19, 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM	Bidders' conference Boston Private Industry Council office 2 Oliver Street, 3 rd floor, Boston, MA
October 15, 2014, by 5:00 PM EST	Proposals Email to austin.kupke@bostonpic.org
October 27, 2014	Grantee notification Contracting immediately thereafter
November 1, 2014 - October 31, 2015	Grant period

Questions may be directed to Austin Kupke at austin.kupke@bostonpic.org.

Instructions

Please describe your plans for the following; responses for Sections 1-4 should not exceed 7 single spaced pages. If you are proposing a partnership among multiple organizations, please ensure that you articulate in your responses which organization is responsible for each portion of the activities described below. Complete submissions include the following:

- Program Narrative (*see pages 3-4 of this RFP*)
- Budget
- Audit or 990s
- Completed RFP Information Sheet (*page 5*)
- Chart or graphic depiction of your proposed model (*optional*)

Program Narrative

1. Vision for this project and its fit with the mission of your organization (10 pts)

2. Program design (20 pts)

- How will you set up the center so that you are able to fulfill the scope of work as outlined above?
- What is your year one time line for establishing the center?
- What tools will you use to assess young people and ensure that they are prepared for the opportunity to which they are connected?
- How will you ensure a strong program match and smooth and supported referrals to the opportunity to which the young person is matched?
- How will you ensure tracking and continued support of youth success beyond the first referral and possible subsequently needed referrals?
- How will you collect and integrate youth feedback into your program model?
- How will you differentiate the center from your other organizational programs so that all young people understand the types of service that is offered? For example, if you are an educational organization how will a young person clearly understand that they can learn about workforce opportunities at the connection center?
- At the same time, how might your other programs build on the connection function at the center of this RFP?

3. Program operations (20 pts)

- How will you staff the connection center to ensure that youth have a positive experience that connects them to the right next step in their education and work life?
- How will your staffing and space accommodate the foot-traffic and dropping- in that a connection center will bring?
- How will you market the connection center to ensure robust participation from youth across Boston?
- How do you envision participating in the Collaborative and sharing what you are learning?

- How will you collect the data and information necessary to identify programmatic successes, continuous improvement points, and to share knowledge broadly?

4. Organizational qualification and experience (30 pts)

- Who are your team members and what are their roles? What expertise do they bring to this center?
- Describe your existing network and/or partnerships with other education and workforce programs and institutions. Who are your key partners?
- What will be done to ensure a physically and socially accessible location?
- How does your organization ensure a diverse, culturally competent staff who reflect the community served?
- How do/will you involve young people in shaping the program's activities and operation? How do you plan on gathering and using participant feedback?
- What is your Youth Development expertise?
- What is your organizational experience with the services that connect youth with strong pathways including assessment, intake, and navigation?

5. Project budget (20 pts)

- Submit a budget, outlining staff, space and materials costs.
- Appropriate costs include, but are not limited to, staff time and materials for the grantee entity.
- Include as an attachment the most recent copy of your organizational audit or 990s.

RFP Information Sheet

Part One: Organizational Overview

This information applies to the organization(s) applying for the grant. For multiple organizations applying to work collaboratively, please list details for each organization.

Name of organization(s):	
Address(es):	
Name of Executive Director(s):	
Name of primary contact for the grant: <i>(if not the Executive Director)</i>	
Email:	
Phone:	
Year organization(s) established:	
Total organizational budget:	
Total number employed by the organization:	

Part Two: Program Overview

The following questions relate specifically to the Connection Center.

Name/title of person leading the development of the Connection Center:	
Proposed budget for the Connection Center: <i>(total cost of implementing the Connection Center, including both the grant request and what the organization might provide)</i>	
Grant request amount:	
Key partners in the areas for education and employment:	
Proposed number of employees in the Connection Center:	