



March 8, 2017

To: Valued Cook County employers

Re: Request for Information for potential summer youth program

In collaboration with private sector employers and the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership), Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle is seeking insight from the private sector to help develop a summer internship program for young people in targeted Cook County suburbs with high rates of unemployment. We know that when young people engage in summer training or employment they have a much higher likelihood of educational and professional success while making positive contributions to their communities and regional economies. We aim to create a program that contributes to the workforce pipeline for employers in Manufacturing, Transportation, Distribution and Logistics, and other high-growth industries, as well as provide area youth with the opportunity to gain career exposure and achieve paid work or training experience.

The Partnership is inviting business owners and hiring managers to submit a response to a Request for Information (RFI) by **Wednesday, March 29th**. Employers can respond to the RFI online, by email, or by phone. Your response to this RFI will be used to inform program development and will ensure that employers can connect to the program in a meaningful way. This RFI is being sought strictly for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of employer needs and potential work and training opportunities available to participating youth. Your response does not commit you to participate in the program in any way.

Thank you for your time and for your interest in fostering exposure to career pathways. We appreciate your response to this request. Inquiries regarding this RFI should be directed to Cory Muldoon at BuildingTalent@workforceboard.org or 312-603-7092.

Sincerely,

Karin Norington-Reaves
Chief Executive Officer

Request for Information: Potential Summer Youth Internship Program

Project Background:

In suburban Cook County there are over 45,000 young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are disconnected from work and school. In certain areas of the south and west suburbs, young people are out of school and work at rates as high as 40%. With this large number of disconnected youth, we are presented with an enormous opportunity to identify and develop the talents and skills of an underutilized and significant segment of the labor market. With the necessary support and training, these young people can help meet the growing demand for qualified workers in Cook County's Manufacturing and Transportation, Distribution and Logistics industries. However, many young people are unaware that these jobs are accessible to them. Summer employment and training programs are often the most effective way to introduce young people to unfamiliar jobs and opportunities and to get them on their first step in a career pathway. These initiatives benefit businesses, young people, and the regional economy.

Working in conjunction with private sector employers and President Preckwinkle, the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership) is seeking qualified employers to respond to this Request for Information (RFI) to inform development of a program that could help employers recruit and develop their future workforce. The Partnership is exploring the feasibility of creating a program that will provide young adults, ages 16-24, with a paid employment or training experience in the private sector with a focus on high-growth and/or high-demand industries, including Manufacturing and Transportation, Distribution and Logistics. The Partnership would provide training and supports to youth prior to being placed in private sector businesses. Employers would be asked to host young adults for up to six weeks, exposing them to career opportunities and pathways within the sector.

Similar programs have been successful when workforce development agencies provide youth with soft skills training, industry-recognized training (where possible and relevant), and wrap-around support services including a transportation stipend, career mentoring, and weekly workshops. The Partnership currently contracts with over 50 workforce development agencies that provide career planning, training and job placement services to youth and adults. Our proposed program design includes a minimum of one week of training and development at workforce development agencies. In addition, workforce development agencies would have the ability to serve as the employer of record and provide workers' compensation insurance to minimize risk for employer hosts. After the initial training, the employer would engage the youth in paid work or training at the worksite, with support from the workforce development agency as needed. The agencies would provide the youth with continued training and support throughout the program. The specific length and activities of the program will be driven by the employer feedback collected through this RFI.

Purpose of the RFI:

The Partnership releases this RFI to gather information from employers in high-growth, high-demand industries, with an emphasis on the Manufacturing, and Transportation, Distribution and Logistics industries. The RFI solicits information regarding the feasibility and potential scope of a youth summer employment and/or training program within these industries.

The Partnership will review the information obtained through the RFI to: 1) identify potential employer partners that could be matched with the workforce development agencies that would be responsible for recruiting and supporting youth throughout the program; 2) gain a better understanding of potential work/training assignments for youth in order to ensure that the program design is meaningful to participating youth and helpful for private sector employers; and 3) identify employers who want to support the program in other ways.

Organization Background:

The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership's mission is to create, promote, and effectively manage a network of workforce development organizations that:

- Designs innovative solutions to address business needs, and
- Prepares individuals for, and connects them to, career opportunities

Questions related to this opportunity should be directed to:

Cory Muldoon, Program Developer
Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership
69 W. Washington Street, Suite 2860
Chicago, IL 60602
BuildingTalent@workforceboard.org or
312-603-7092

Pertinent Dates: Project collaborators will accept responses to the RFI beginning March 8, 2017 and ending Wednesday, March 29, 2017 at 5pm CT.

Summary: THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) ONLY to identify potential placement sites for a summer youth employment/training program and to improve the program development team's understanding of the needs in the target industries. The information provided in the RFI is subject to change and is not binding on the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership), nor on the employer. The Partnership has not made a commitment to place youth with employers that complete the RFI. However, employers that complete the RFI may be eligible to host youth interns. The RFI should not be construed as intent, commitment, or promise to engage services, supplies, or solutions offered. No contract with The Partnership will result from any response to this RFI. Information submitted in response to this RFI will become the property of the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership. The Partnership will not pay for any information herein requested nor is it liable for any costs incurred by an employer in completing the RFI. The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership encourages responses and/or participation by small, disadvantaged, minority, women-owned and veteran-owned firms.

Submitting a response to this RFI does not obligate an employer to provide youth with an internship, to provide The Partnership with financial support for the program, or to participate in the program in any other way. Employers who express interest in participating in or supporting the program via the RFI will be contacted by The Partnership to further explore their potential involvement. Employers would have the opportunity to review a written agreement that outlines specific responsibilities and obligations prior to making a commitment.

Summer Youth Private Sector Employment Program – Requested Information:

Business Name: _____

Contact Person: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Industry: _____

Are you interested in hosting youth interns? What information or support would you need to make a commitment?

If your business hosted youth interns or trainees for the summer, what work could they do?

If a youth is not able to be assigned to work due to certification, experience or liability concerns, what type of training or other activities could they be engaged in?

Are there any safety, liability or insurance requirements we need to be aware of? If so, please describe:

How many summer interns or trainees could you potentially host? _____

In what town or community would they be placed? _____

Is there anything that would automatically disqualify a young person from working, interning or training with your firm? (i.e. failed drug test, or criminal record)

How many employees work for your business? 1-9 10-49 50-99 100-499 500+

What, if any, certifications do you find necessary or valuable for your entry-level employees to possess?

What skill sets or assets do you seek when hiring new employees? What qualities are essential?

When hiring or hosting young people, what have been your experiences?

Have you hosted youth interns in the past? If so, do you have a formal internship program? Please describe the internship structure.

What are your expectations for youth interns? What qualities are essential to youth interns?

What program supports would be most likely to increase the helpfulness of youth interns/trainees in meeting the demands of your business and/or completing a successful internship/training experience? (check top 3)

- Transportation
- Soft skills training (i.e. Workplace communication, showing up on time, etc.)
- Sector specific training/certification
- Career Mentorship
- Shop Math
- Other: _____

Are you able to identify a dedicated staff person to provide workplace guidance and mentorship to youth intern(s)?

- Yes No Unsure

If subsidized summer interns provide value to your business, would you be able to hire them after the program has ended?

- Yes No Unsure

Are you willing to pay wages of summer youth interns placed at your site?

- Yes No Unsure

Are you willing to make a tax-deductible contribution to invest in the success of this program?

- Yes No Unsure

Are you willing to identify staff at your business to serve as guest speakers at youth events?

- Yes No Unsure

Are you willing to host youth in short-term (1-5 day) job shadowing assignments?

- Yes No Unsure

Do you have any initial questions about the program or ideas to make it successful?
