



## REAL SKILLS FOR YOUTH 2025 SOLICITATION QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**Posted: August 7, 2025**  
**UPDATED as of August 22, 2025**

\*This updated Q&A reflects a correction made to question 40 that was originally submitted regarding 501(c)4 organizations. Some questions have been shortened or rephrased for clarity and de-identified for anonymity.

- 1. The application requires a Letter of Good Standing. Are applicants required to provide a Letter of Good Standing from the Division of Taxation or a Certificate of Good Standing from the Secretary of State?**

It depends on the type of organization the Lead Applicant is.

For Lead Applicants that are 501(c)3 organizations, we are looking for the **Certificate of Good Standing** from the Secretary of State (Rhode Island Department of State). The website for this office/service is: <https://www.sos.ri.gov/divisions/business-services/order-certificates>.

If the Lead Applicant organization is NOT a tax-exempt organization (not a 501(c)3), we would like a **Letter of Good Standing** from the Rhode Island Division of Taxation. The website for this office is: <https://tax.ri.gov/tax-sections/compliance-collections/letter-good-standing-logs>.

We apologize for any confusion regarding this requirement.

- 2. Can you please clarify between the \$15/hour requirement and how activities can be otherwise incentivized via stipends or academic credit?**

It depends on the type of activity proposed. Please consult the chart below for additional clarification.

Activity Type		Wage/Incentive Requirements	Work Readiness Components
WBL	Summer Internship Programs (work authorized; ages 14-24)	MUST BE PAID ≥\$15/hour (W-2 employment)	REQUIRED
WBL	School Year, Year-Round, or After School WBL Programs (ages 14-24)	Must either be paid as above or incentivized via academic credit, business revenue, or stipends depending on the nature of the activity.	Preferred (not required)
CE	Career Exploration and/or Industry-Focused Skill Building Activities (ages 12-18)	Optional. These activities do not need to be paid or incentivized so long as participants receive exposure to critical industries and skills, however, the program must be structured so that	Preferred (not required)



		youth/families do not have to pay any participation costs.	
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- 3. It is emphasized in several places in the solicitation that interns must be paid a minimum of \$15/hour and classified as W-2 employees, is this correct?**

Yes. For work-based learning programs that are internships, participants must be paid an hourly wage of at least \$15/hour. They also must be classified as W-2 employees and not as 1099 independent contractors. Year-round work-based learning programs that are alternatively incentivized via academic credit or business revenue are exceptions (e.g. in-school industry projects, school-based enterprises, and entrepreneurship programs).

- 4. Up to this point, our existing partnership has leveraged a substantial amount of federal funding to supplement the operating costs behind our Real Skills for Youth programming. Due to current federal funding uncertainty, we are not yet sure whether that funding will be available going forward, which may impact the number of teens we can serve and our program budget. Should our projected participation numbers and budget assume best case scenario with federal funding available, or worst-case scenario?**

We cannot assist you with that decision.

- 5. Regarding wages, the solicitation states that participants must be paid a minimum of \$15/hour. With the minimum wage going to \$16/hour in 2026, and \$17/hour in 2027, should we use those numbers when calculating the cost of the paid internship experiences?**

Yes.

- 6. Our existing Real Skills for Youth program includes several “non-work” activities that make the experience more enjoyable, such as field trips. These program hours have typically been unpaid. Can we do this going forward?**

Our intent is to fund work-based learning programs that provide youth with real work skills and work experience. For paid summer internship programs, our preference is that all program hours will be paid. This includes any “classroom hours” during which youth participants will receive the required work readiness modules. A best practice is to have a paid boot camp/work readiness week where classroom components take place before interns begin reporting to job sites to perform work tasks.

- 7. Can external providers like the FLY Initiative take the place of the required financial literacy curricula? Or should we use them to supplement one of the choices provided here?**

Applicants may propose alternatives to the financial literacy tools recommended in the solicitation. The GWB will review the applicant’s proposed tool/provider/curriculum and either approve it or advise the applicant of any concerns.



- 8. On Appendix E – RSFY Employer and Partner Letter of Commitment Template, the template defaults to 'Employer Partner.' Many of our partners are educational institutions and not employer partners. May this letter template be used, and adjusted to “Educational Partner” or “Community Partner”?**

Yes.

- 9. What is allowable percentage for payroll costs for staff & interns?**

There is no set percentage. The budget proposal should be reasonable/justifiable.

- 10. If we propose a work-based learning program that has an instructional component in the spring, a paid summer internship component, and then additional training to prepare for industry licensing in the fall, can the spring and fall program components be unpaid?**

We are open to considering that if the program design is compelling and has clear benefit to participants, however, if you are designing a skills training program that is intended to lead to industry licensure and then immediate long-term job placement, you might want to alternatively look at the Real Jobs Rhode Island program solicitation.

- 11. Our high school has an education pathway for students where they gain college credits for courses taken in partnership with a local university. As part of this program, we would like them to do some work-based learning in out-of-school time to apply the principles they are learning. Would this be considered for an internship or work-based learning grant?**

If the proposal meets the requirements of the solicitation, it will be considered.

- 12. The solicitation indicates a 12-point font Calibri - please clarify document spacing - single or double? Are charts and graphs allowable? If so, please clarify the font size and spacing.**

Applicants may use single spacing. Please download Appendix B for the required template. The charts MUST be embedded within the proposal narrative (Appendix B) and DO count towards the page limit. Please keep the charts clear and legible (aim to use Calibri font for consistency).

- 13. For the proposal narrative (Appendix B), should there be an answer to each sub-question individually, even if it causes repetition or should an applicant provide a combined response under the main heading?**

Applicants must respond under each sub-heading to ensure accurate scoring. If the sub-headings are not utilized, the proposal may be considered non-responsive.



**14. Is there a minimum number of hours of programming that is required for Work Readiness Training?**

There is not a set minimum number of hours for work readiness training so long as all the required work readiness elements are incorporated in the proposed programming for summer work-based learning/internships.

**15. Can hours spent in classroom work readiness training be counted towards the minimum 80 hours of programming?**

Yes, however, we will not fund work readiness training as a stand-alone activity. The work readiness must be part of a proposed work-based learning or career exploration program.

**16. Can paid Work Readiness Training be combined with paid Summer Internships, with some of the Work Readiness Training occurring prior to participants starting their paid Summer Internships to properly prepare participants for their Paid Summer experience?**

It is common practice to have participants complete at least some of their work readiness training prior to reporting to job sites or beginning work tasks, however, the hours spent in work readiness training must be paid.

**17. Can students do field experience during the school day?**

Any field experience should be clearly explained and attached to a career exploration or work-based learning activity.

**18. Can participants be paid a stipend?**

This depends on the type of activity being proposed. For summer internship programs, stipends may not be utilized in lieu of participant wages (W-2 employment).

**19. Can there be a paid staff person(s) under this funding to coordinate the program?**

Yes, so long as the costs are reasonable and allocable.

**20. Can funds be used for administrative overhead?**

Yes, however, administrative costs must be reasonable/justifiable and indirect costs may not exceed 15% unless there is a federally negotiated rate in effect that we should consider.

**21. Can funds be used to pay a teacher/instructor to teach financial literacy?**

Yes.



**22. Can organizations apply for more than one initiative? For example, apply for funds for internships but also for an after-school youth-run business?**

Yes. Partnerships can request funding to implement more than one activity. A separate budget/budget worksheet should be completed for each unique activity.

**23. Can we apply to do activities in both our middle and high school or does it have to be just one location?**

Applicants may propose to implement more than one activity and/or can include multiple program locations.

**24. Can we stipend/pay guest speakers and presenters?**

Yes. Funds may be utilized to support curriculum including consultants, vendors, and/or training providers.

**25. Can funds be used for incentives for participation? What are the limits?**

This depends on the type of activity being proposed. For summer internship programs, incentives may not be utilized in lieu of participant wages.

**26. Can food be purchased?**

Yes, if it is reasonable and justifiable.

**27. What is the anticipated dollar amount/range of awards per organization?**

There is no set range. It is dependent entirely on the number, quality, and content of the proposals received as articulated in Section II. A. (page 6) of the solicitation.

**28. Will any application and/or post-award administrative assistance be provided for smaller, first-time applicant nonprofit organizations?**

There will be no application assistance provided. There will also be no post-award assistance provided beyond what is articulated in Section VII. A & B of the solicitation (pages 22-24).

**29. Are letters of commitment required from all employer partners, recruitment partners, and strategic partners?**

Yes.

- 30. Appendix A mentions that a minimum of three employer partners is needed. If we work with Providence Public Schools as our main partner, which includes multiple individual schools, should we list each school individually, or count the district as a single employer partner?**

Schools should only be considered employer partners if the target occupations are education-related (e.g., if you are preparing youth for careers in education/as teachers). If this is the case, we recommend obtaining a letter of commitment from each school that will be directly participating in the activity.

- 31. Can programs serve a particular age range within the 14-24, for example 14-18?**

Yes.

- 32. The guidelines mention that alternative assessment tools may be used for Work Readiness Training. In cases where we collaborate with partner organizations to deliver certain components (e.g., financial literacy training), what are the expectations for documenting or proposing alternative tools in the application? Specifically, how should we address the use of partner-delivered content and any associated assessment methods?**

As stated in Section III. B. (3) 2. (page 11) of the solicitation, applicants can propose alternative financial literacy training tools for the GWB to review and approve. If you choose to propose a tool that is not listed in the solicitation, you must explain who will deliver the training, provide a copy of the curriculum, and explain why this tool or partner is preferred.

- 33. Could you share the rationale behind the stricter guidelines for Work Readiness Training this year?**

The new and more clearly defined minimum standards will help us ensure that all Real Skills for Youth program participants, specifically those aged 14 and older enrolled in paid summer work-based learning activities, are receiving high-quality work readiness modules.

- 34. Would it be possible to receive a summary of the main changes to this year's guidelines compared to the application process in 2022?**

No.

- 35. Is there flexibility for partnerships to evolve over the course of the grant period? For example, as we look ahead to programming in Summer 2026 and Fall 2026, some of our current partners may change depending on the needs and feedback of our participants.**

Yes, the partnership may evolve. We hope to see continuous improvement and partnership expansion, as appropriate, over time.



- 36. On page 7, the solicitation reads, "The Award Agreement that establishes the partnership with the GWB will be effective for three (3) years, from January 1, 2026, to December 31, 2028, with the opportunity to renew the agreement for up to two (2) additional one-year periods." Is this a one-year grant opportunity renewable for a total of three or up to five years?**

We will provide one year of funding, and, based on performance and other factors, we may be able to continue to provide funding for up to four (4) more program years. The initial Award Agreement will be for three (3) years and the initial Project Contract will be for one (1) year.

- 37. On page 17, the statement reads, "In any of these cases, youth must be paid  $\geq$ \$15.00 per hour as W-2 employees." However, on the "Work-Based Learning Program Details & Performance Targets" chart it reads "Wage or Stipend Amount." Can interns be paid with stipends or must they be W-2 employees?**

For work-based learning programs that are internships, participants must be paid an hourly wage of at least \$15/hour and must be classified as W-2 employees and not as 1099 independent contractors. Year-round work-based learning programs may be alternatively incentivized, as appropriate.

- 38. Referring to Section IV. D. Employer Partners on page 17, are employer partners the same as an industry representative? Would a Trade Association or Chamber of Commerce be considered an employer partner? What is the definition of an employer partner?**

It depends on the nature and design of the partnership's proposed activities and the way in which the organization is engaged. For example, if the Chamber of Commerce were taking on interns to do work (e.g. marketing and communications tasks), then yes, we would allow that organization to count as an employer partner.

- 39. For proposals focused on career exploration programming, in regard to the minimum number of hours, 40 hours, does each participant have to complete 40 hours or can we create a program design with 40+ hours that participants can choose to participate in, and some may or may not reach 40 hours?**

The solicitation requires that proposed Career Exploration programs be designed to offer at least 40 hours of programming per participant. While the program must provide sufficient opportunities for participants to meet this threshold, the solicitation does not explicitly require that every individual participant complete all 40 hours. Therefore, a program design that exceeds 40 hours and allows participants to engage in flexible participation may be deemed acceptable, if the overall structure meets the intent of providing meaningful, in-depth career exploration experiences.

**40. Is a 501(c)4 organization eligible to serve as the Lead Agency and Convener?**

Yes.

**41. Do youth participating in paid WBL need to be paid an hourly wage for workforce readiness and financial literacy training, or are stipends allowable for this portion of the program (understanding they will be paid hourly for the WBL placements)?**

For paid summer work-based learning activities, youth must be paid an hourly wage of at least \$15 per hour as W-2 employees for all components of their participation, including the work readiness modules.

**42. I have a question regarding Requirement #3 on page 11 of the solicitation, which addresses Health, Safety, and Rights on the Job training. The current wording suggests that the Rhode Island Institute for Labor Studies and Research (RIILSR) is the required training provider. While we are certainly capable of providing this training, we would like to know if an alternative training provider, such as a labor attorney, would be acceptable to fulfill this requirement.**

The GWB has a contract in place with RIILSR to provide this training for all Real Skills for Youth summer program participants. The Health, Safety, and Rights on the Job curriculum was designed in close collaboration with Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training and Governor's Workforce Board staff to ensure that certain workplace regulation and safety modules are covered since many Real Skills for Youth participants will be working for the very first time. For this reason, we are not entertaining alternative training providers or curriculum.