



County of Mercer Workforce Development Board

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Mercer WDB Policy: Work Experience, Stipends, Incentive Payments Adopted: 11/1 /2022

Background: The Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) Sec. 129 lists the 14 required program elements that every Workforce Development Board must make available in their local area. Included in these is the following paid and unpaid work experiences that have academic and occupational education as a component of the work experience, which may include the following types of work experiences:

- Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year.
- Pre-apprenticeship programs
- Internships and job shadowing
- On-the-job training (OJT) opportunities

WIOA Sec 129 (C) (4) requires that local areas expend at least 20 percent of the funds allocated to them to support work experience activities. Work experience is defined in 20 CFR 681,600 as a planned structured learning activity that takes place in a workplace setting for a limited period of time.

A work experience may take place in the private for profit-sector, the non-profit sector, or the public sector. Labor standards apply in any work experience where an employee/ employer relationship exists. Consistent with 20 CFR 680.840, funds provided for work experience may not be used to directly or indirectly as 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. Work experiences provide the youth participants with opportunities for career exploration and skill development.

Policy: The Mercer WDB recognizes the need to provide policy and guidance on how work experience and incentive payments should be designed and administered in our local area. The guidelines listed below will be followed by MCOTES and any agency providing work experience as a result of a competitively procured contract.

Goal of work experience: Work experience is designed to partner with businesses, community, and faith-based agencies to prepare participants to enter or re-enter the workforce. More specifically Work Experience is designed to:

- Provide employers with the opportunity to impact a young adult's employability and consequently their future
- Provide job readiness skills training enabling young adults to acquire knowledge on how to successfully obtain and retain employment
- Provide young adults with exposure to the world of work

- Provide young adults with relevant valuable work experience
- Strengthen partnerships with the private sector as well as community/faith-based organizations in Mercer County
- To strengthen the local economy by providing job opportunities

Duration of work experience: Work experience can be for a 3 – 9 month period based on the individual’s need as defined in their training plan. It can also be combined with occupational training to reinforce the skills learned in the classroom.

Wages/incentive/stipends: Work Experience/internships will be paid at no less than the minimum wage. Whenever possible wages paid will be comparable to the prevailing wage rates for that occupation.

Worksite Agreements: Worksite agreements will be utilized in accordance with guidelines outlined in NJ WIN 1-17. All worksite agreements must be signed by the host sites prior to the participant’s start. The host site agrees to consider the participant for unsubsidized employment if a vacancy exists at the completion of the work experience period, or, at a minimum, agree to be listed as a reference if a successful outcome was achieved.

Monitoring: Youth progress towards meeting goals are regularly monitored by employment counselors. The host site is required to complete performance evaluations at least twice during the duration of the work experience and communicating the outcomes to the participant. All worksites will be monitored at least once per contract year.

Stipends: Training allowances may be paid to participants for their successful participation in classroom activities to offset the daily expenses of the youth while attending the program and must be detailed in the youth’s Individual Service Strategy (ISS) to document the need for the stipend. The training allowance must be tied to attendance and should be complemented with financial literacy training.

Incentives: Incentives paid to participants must be based on specific achievements and not attendance. If they are provided by a contracted agency approval must be obtained from MCOTES prior to implementation.