

Boston's Summer Jobs Ecosystem

Bringing Youth Employment to Scale with a Mayor's Youth Jobs Guarantee

In the spirit of building back better after COVID, the City of Boston and the other SYEP intermediaries that comprise the Boston Summer Jobs Consortium recognized the importance of increasing coordination and alignment across the ecosystem. The goal was to develop a more holistic and inclusive workforce development system to provide a range of high quality, skill building opportunities that support youth as they transition from high school to postsecondary education/training and careers. To lead this effort, the Office of Youth Employment and Opportunity (OYEO) deepened its research- practice partnership with the Northeastern University under a multi-year project funded by the William T. Grant Foundation. That work included the following multi-year agenda with the ultimate goal of bringing the program to scale under a Mayor's Youth Jobs Guarantee (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Agenda for Building a More Holistic Workforce Development System for Boston's Youth

Year 1: Process Evaluation and Feasibility Study

- Perform an ecosystem mapping analysis of intermediaries and partners
- Conduct an efficiency and equity audit of the City's systems and processes for placing youth into summer opportunities
- Develop a set of feasible recommendations for increasing coordination and alignment across the Boston SYEP ecosystem

Year 2: Strengthening Program Features

- Diversify job types by industry, occupation and sector (public versus private positions)
- Improve job quality through skills mapping, employer-partner training, and use of work-based learning plans for student assessment
- Develop job laddering over summers and across intermediaries to further development
- Create digital badging system for skills that are recognized by schools and employers

Year 3: Expanding Opportunities for Youth

- Expand post-secondary opportunities that are connected to careers in occupations and industries in high demand in Greater Boston (e.g., Learn and Earn program)
- Expand year-round work-based learning opportunities for youth that can be aligned with BPS curriculum
- Connect the youth development pipeline across stakeholders (e.g., Boston SYEP, BPS, community colleges) and programs (e.g., Tuition Free Community College, apprenticeship)

Source: Modestino, Alicia and Rashad Cope. 2020. "[Building a More Holistic Youth Workforce Development System for Boston's Youth](#)." Institutional Challenge Grant Proposal, William T. Grant Foundation, submitted September 4.

This case study describes the culmination of these activities which included extensive data collection, rigorous analyses, and a strategic planning effort that focused on the City’s summer jobs program and the role it plays in the broader SYEP ecosystem. During this process, the research team analyzed youth application and hiring records; interviewed youth, parents, employer-partners, and staff; and conducted several small-scale pilots aimed at increasing program access, efficiency, and equity. Our findings informed a set of recommendations that spurred the collective efforts of Boston SYEP stakeholders to implement the program at scale and ensure every Boston Public School student who wants a summer jobs can have one.

I. LOCAL CONTEXT

Boston is the third-most densely populated large U.S. city of over half a million residents, serving as the cultural and financial center of New England. It has a population of 675,647 as of the 2020 census, making it the third-largest city in the Northeast after New York City and Philadelphia. Following the American revolution, the city played an important national role as a port, manufacturing hub, and education and culture center. Boston's many firsts include the nation's first public park (Boston Common, 1634), the first public school (Boston Latin School, 1635), and the first subway system (Tremont Street subway, 1897).

Early on, manufacturing was an important component of the economy, and the city's industrial manufacturing base of mills and factories overtook international trade in economic importance by the mid-19th century. Boston later emerged as a global leader in higher education and research and is the largest biotechnology hub in the world as of 2023. The economy relies heavily on the “eds and meds” sectors of world-class universities and hospitals, fueling nearly 5,000 start-up companies in scientific research, medicine, engineering, information technology, law, and finance.

Although Boston became a majority-minority city in 2000 with whites accounting for only 47% of the population as of 2023, the city consists of 23 officially designated neighborhoods, with boundaries that reflect a persistently high degree of racial segregation due to historical redlining mortgage practices. Neighborhoods such as Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan and Hyde Park remain predominantly Black while Jamaica Plain and East Boston have large Hispanic populations. The influx of higher-income residents into historically lower-income neighborhoods has led to displacement and demographic shifts, particularly in areas like the South End, leading Boston to have some of the consistently highest rents and housing prices in the nation.

During the early 1990s, Boston experienced a large reduction in violent crime, credited to the Boston Police Department's collaboration with neighborhood groups and church parishes to prevent youths from joining gangs. According to the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program in 2022, Boston had a violent crime rate of 608.7 per 100,000 people and a property crime rate of 1772.0 per 100,000 people. While Boston has seen a significant reduction in overall crime, including homicides and shootings, recent reports indicate a concerning increase in youth violence. This includes a rise in juvenile gun arrests and incidents involving weapons in schools.

Table 1. City and Youth Characteristics, 2024

A. Demographic Characteristics	Boston	U.S. Average
Population	675,647 ^a	334,914,896 ^a
Poverty rate	15.6% ^a	11.1% ^a
Youth pop 14-24	16.7% 112,717 ^a	13.5% of total pop. ^a
Percent Female	53.6% ^a	50.5% ^a
Percent Asian	11.3% ^a	6.0% ^a
Percent Black	20.6% ^a	12.1% ^a
Percent White	47.1% ^a	60.5% ^a
Percent American Indian / Native Alaskan	0.42% ^a	1.0% ^a
Percent Two or More Races	10.5% ^a	12.8% ^a
Percent Other	10.1% ^a	7.4% ^a
Percent Hispanic	18.7% ^a	19.4% ^a
B. Potential Youth Outcomes, 2024	Boston	U.S. Average
Overall crime rate	2,421 incidents per 100,000 ^b	2,331.1 incidents per 100,000 people ^c
Violent crime rate	619 incidents per 100,000	363.8 offenses per 100,000 people ^c
Violent crime rate for youth age 14-24	Not publicly available	35.2 per 1,000 persons ^c
High school dropout rate	4.5% (2022-2023) ^c	5.7% (2022) ^e
High school graduation rate	~80.5% (2022-2023) ^c	87.4% (2022-23) ^e
College enrollment rate	62% (2020) ^c	~50% ^e
Number of opportunity youth	7,00 (2023) ^d	10.9% (2022) ^g

Source: ^a U.S. Census, 2023, ^b FBI UCR, ^c MA DESE, ^d Youth.Gov, ^e NCES 2022-23, ^f Aspen Institute, ^g Measure of America of the Social Science Research Council.

Table 2. Labor Market Characteristics, 2024

Labor Market Conditions	Boston	U.S.
Labor force participation rate	60%	62%
Unemployment rate	3.8%	4.0%
Employment to population ratio	57%	60%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024.

II. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Introduced in the early 1980s, the Boston SYEP currently relies on approximately \$28 million in city, state, private sector, and philanthropic funding to connect roughly 11,000 youth each summer with about 900 local employers. All Boston city residents aged 14 to 24 years are eligible for the program. Participants work a maximum of 25 hours per week for a six-week period from early July through mid-August and are paid the Massachusetts minimum wage. Youth may be placed in either a subsidized position (e.g., with a local nonprofit, community-based organization, or city agency) or a job with a private-sector employer where the employer pays the youth directly. In the Boston SYEP requires 20 hours of job-readiness training using a hands-on, competency-based work-readiness curriculum. Modules include evaluating learning strengths, developing soft skills, and practicing job readiness. Table 3 compares the basic components of the Boston SYEP relative to the SYEP model program that has yielded significant reductions in youth violent crime. Each component is discussed in detail below.

Table 3. Comparison of Boston Program Components to SYEP Model Program

SYEP Program Components	Boston SYEP Program	Comparison to SYEP Model Program
Youth Population Served		
Eligibility requirements	All Boston residents aged 14-24 years	Meets Expectations: covers both younger teens and young adults
Targeting at-risk youth	Three out of the five intermediaries explicitly target either low-income (ABCD), Boston Public School (BPIC), or court-involved (YOU) youth; The City reserves 200 job slots for late applicants who are more likely to be at-risk. The other two (YEO and MLK) are universal.	Meets Expectations: Some targeting of youth at risk of criminal justice involvement but not exclusively so as to allow for positive interactions with other peers.
Number of youth served relative to demand	11,489 unique youth applicants yielding 11,132 participants in 2024	Meets Expectations: The Mayor’s Guarantee states any Boston Public School student who wants a summer job can have one; typically yields about 11,000 youth, representing 10% of Boston population aged 14-24 years;

<p>Composition of youth applicants/participants</p>	<p>Serves all 23 of the city’s neighborhoods with greater representation among low-income communities of color; similar gender and racial/ethnic composition as Boston youth population; about 50% are BPS students.</p>	<p>Meets Expectations: Serves a diverse population that is representative of Boston’s youth; about half are Boston Public School students.</p>
<p>Employment Experiences</p>		
<p>Types of job experiences</p>	<p>The Boston program includes a combination of both jobs and training. For younger youth aged 14 some of the opportunities are leadership programs, career exploration, or soft skill development. For older youth, aged 15-24, almost all of the opportunities are actual job experiences, except for 100 or so youth in the Learn and Earn college program.</p>	<p>Meets Expectations: Jobs for youth aged 15+</p>
<p>Number and composition of employer worksites</p>	<p>Over 900 worksites, including 200 private sector companies and institutions in Boston’s top industries including health care, financial services, life sciences, technology, architecture and law.</p>	<p>Meets Expectations: Sufficient number of work sites across the City to meet demand in both public and private sector firms across industries in high-demand.</p>
<p>Career readiness curriculum</p>	<p>The City provides workshops for all youth onsite at employer partners that cover executive functions, career exploration, resume writing, interviewing, and financial capability. The City also works with external partners to provide workshops on healthy relationships, job searching, and occupational health and safety.</p>	<p>Meets Expectations: Curriculum is high-quality and offered to youth on-site at all employer partners; also flexible enough to allow employers to adapt using their own materials and/or curriculum.</p>

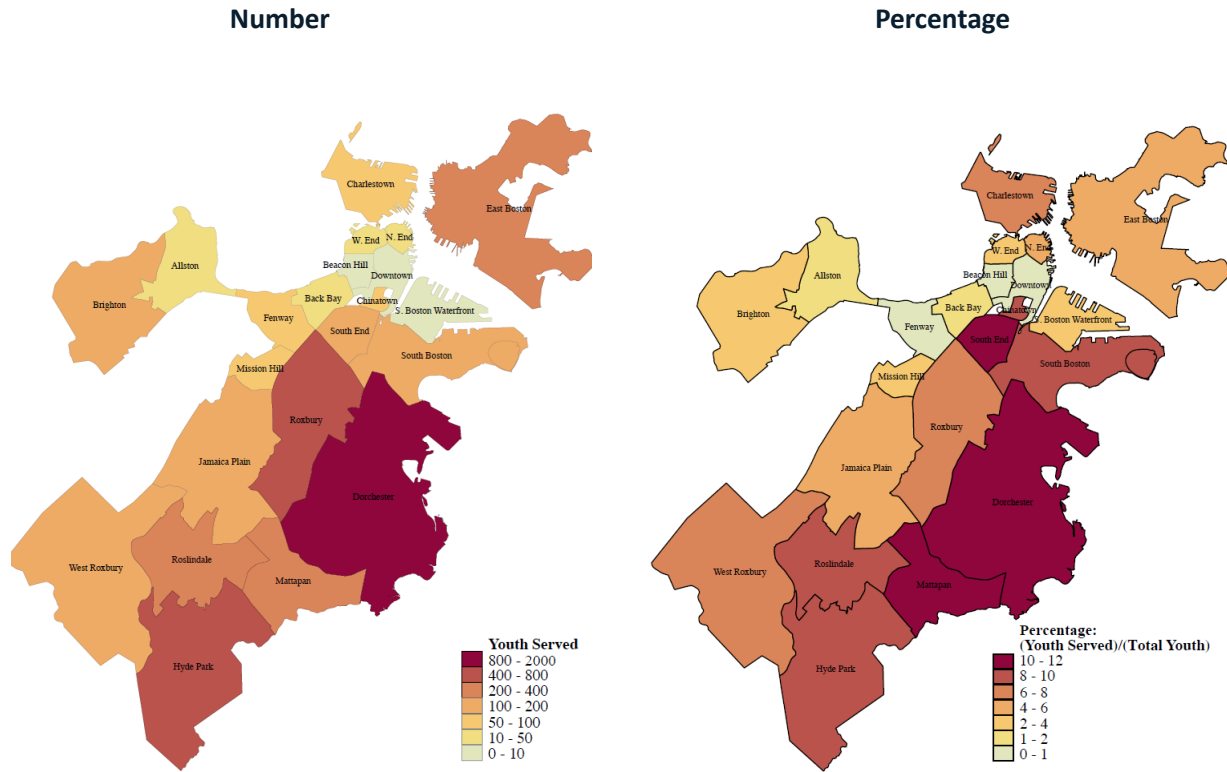
Program Logistics		
Application, selection, onboarding, and payroll process	Youth Application period: March – June, 2025 Worksite Application period: January – February, 2025 Selection period: Youth Requests due by May 15 th Youth are paid the Massachusetts minimum wage based on the number of reported hours each week.	Meets Expectations: Application and selection periods allow for multiple waves to accommodate at-risk youth who tend to apply later; Youth paid a meaningful amount that also requires accountability in terms of participation.
Assignment Mechanism	Combination of employer selections in round 1 followed by randomized placements in round 2 with 200 slots withheld from Round 2 to place late applicants in Round 3 right before the program starts.	Meets Expectations: Able to fill all job slots both efficiently (e.g., all jobs are filled before the start of the program) and equitably (e.g., the composition of youth who are hired reflects the composition of youth who apply).
Duration in weeks and hours	6-8 weeks; 25 hours per week	Meets Expectations: Youth work a meaningful number of hours and weeks.
Sustainability of impacts over time	Allows for repeat participation over multiple summers; Year-round initiative allows 200 youth to continue working during Fall and Spring;	Meets Expectations: There are mechanisms in place to provide an additional “dose” of summer or year-round employment for those who need it.

Source: Modestino, Alicia, Rashad Cope and Pieta Blakely. 2022. *Boston’s Summer Youth Employment Program: Building a More Holistic Workforce Development System for Boston’s Youth*. Community to Community Impact Accelerator, Northeastern University, Research Report 2023-01, pp. 1-52.
https://impactengines.northeastern.edu/files/2023/10/Building-a-Holistic-Workforce-Development-System-for-Bostons-Youth_101923.pdf

A. Youth Population Served

Figure 2 shows that the Boston SYEP serves a representative population of youth aged 14-24 years from all 23 of the city’s neighborhoods with greater representation among low-income communities of color such as Dorchester (about 33 percent), Roxbury (about 10 percent), and Mattapan (about 9 percent).

Figure 2. Geographic Distribution of Youth Served by the Boston SYEP, 2022

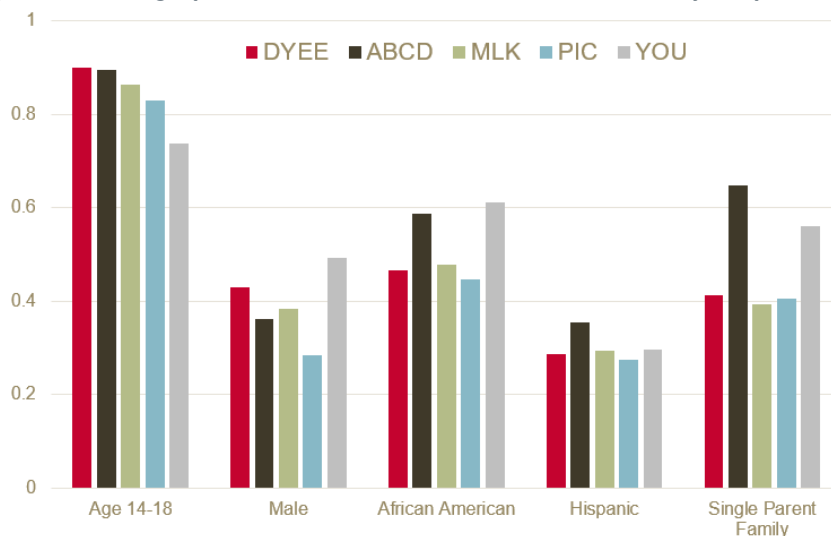


Source: Authors’ calculations based on data provided by ABCD, OYEO, PIC, MLK, and YOU.

Each summer, youth are placed into jobs through one of five intermediary organizations, each of which serves a different target population based on their needs. These organizations include Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD), the Boston Private Industry Council (PIC), John Hancock’s MLK Scholars, City of Boston’s Office of Youth Employment and Opportunity (OYEO), and Youth Options Unlimited (YOU).

Figure 3 shows that each intermediary serves a different segment of the youth population. For example, ABCD serves younger youth from low-income families while YOU serves older youth, mostly males, who have been court-involved. Survey data reveal that more than half of SYEP youth use their earnings to pay some type of household bill, highlighting the importance of the program as a source of income for low-income households. Linkages to school record data indicate that about half of SYEP participants are BPS students.

Figure 3. Demographic Characteristics of Boston SYEP Survey Respondents



Source: Authors' calculations based on survey data collected by Northeastern University.

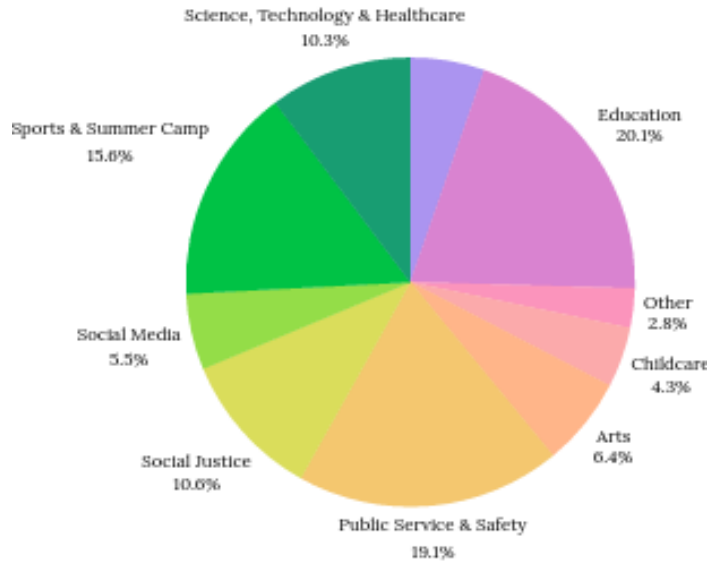
Moreover, data from the American Community Survey indicate that Boston SYEP applicants have similar gender and racial characteristics in comparison to the population of low-income Boston youth. Although SYEP applicants are more likely to be younger, within that younger age group (age 14 to 17 years), the breakdown by gender and race is very similar. In general, it is reasonable to expect that youth applying to summer jobs programs would be younger given the greater difficulty that less experienced youth have in finding a job on their own.

B. Employment Experiences

Although the Boston SYEP has a far higher share of private sector jobs compared to similar programs in other cities, the ecosystem is still heavily dependent on nonprofit partners for job placements. The jobs available within the Boston SYEP ecosystem differ from those available across the Boston labor market because they are designed to provide developmental opportunities for youth. However, it's useful to compare the industries represented by SYEP jobs to those that are in high-demand across the City of Boston to identify any sectors for future expansion. Categorizing jobs by 2-digit NAICS code, the broadest category of industry, Figure 4 shows that Boston's high-employment sectors such as healthcare and business are under-represented among the jobs available to youth through the program while other sectors such as camp counselor and human services are over-represented.

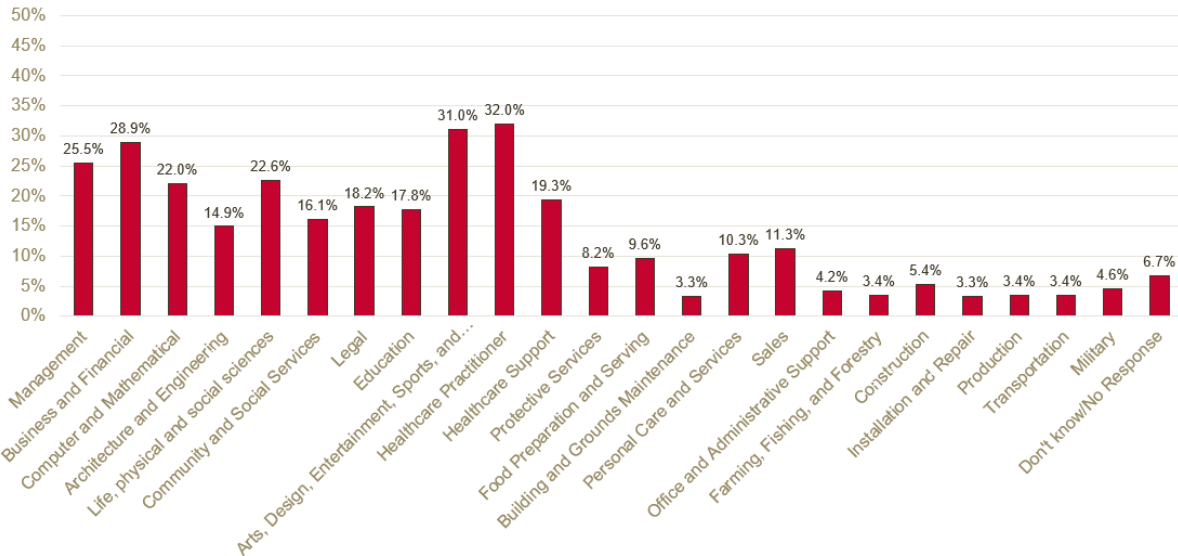
While it might not be possible to provide summer jobs opportunities across every industry, there are some key areas that youth have indicated that are of interest for future career development. Survey data shown in Figure 5 indicate that youth are interested in industries such as healthcare, business and financial, life/physical/social sciences, and IT—sectors that are currently under-represented in the Boston SYEP that present an opportunity for development.

Figure 4. Comparing Number of SYEP Job Openings to Boston Employment by Industry



Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by City of Boston.

Figure 5. Job Interests for Boston SYEP Youth by Industry, 2021

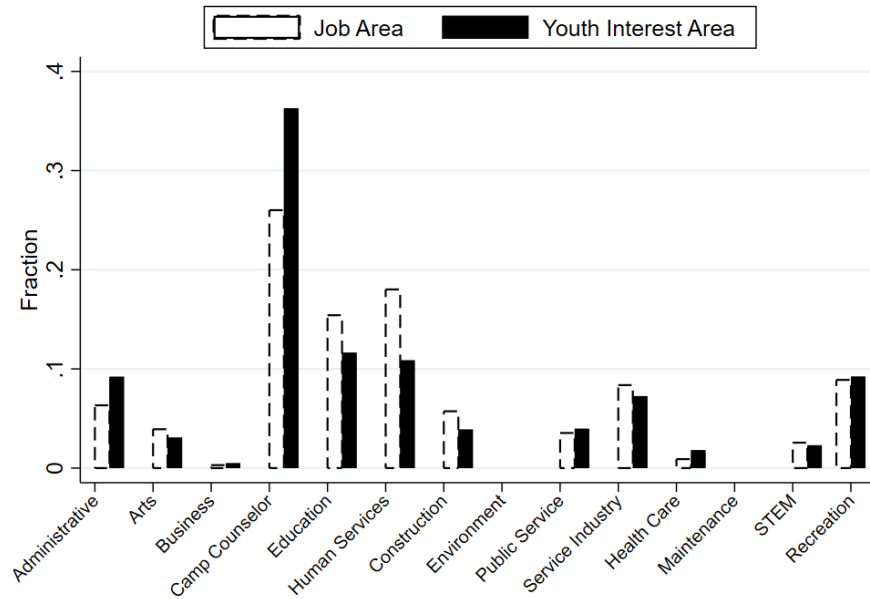


Source: Authors' calculations based on survey data collected by Northeastern University.

Given the jobs that are currently available through the Boston SYEP, we might be concerned that in the absence of simple random assignment, there might be a large degree of mismatch between youth interests and what is available. Figure 6 shows that there are certain types of jobs that are “oversubscribed” meaning that they have more applicants than positions available such as childcare (e.g., camp counselor). Other jobs are “undersubscribed” with fewer applicants than

positions such as human services. Because of this potential mismatch between the job types that are available and youth interests, intermediaries such as OYEO perform an important function each year to help match young people to open positions across the Boston summer jobs ecosystem.

Figure 6. Comparing Boston SYEP Youth Applications to Number of Openings



Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by OYEO.

Finally, the City has designed a series of developmentally appropriate curriculum tailored to the various needs of Boston youth. This curriculum is typically delivered during an orientation at the employer site right before the job begins or as a weekly on-site workshop during the summer. The City's Career Development Team offers a diverse curriculum with workshop series, including:

- **Executive Functioning**: Through workshops and interactive activities, this two-part series develops skills such as problem-solving, planning, decision-making, and task execution, all of which are crucial for personal and professional success.
- **Career Exploration**: This three-part series focuses on the purpose behind career exploration, navigation, and growth. During this series, youth will reflect on their strengths and challenges as they explore their aptitudes and learn how to translate them into actionable goals.
- **Resume Writing**: This crash course covers the essential aspects of youth-specific resume writing, highlighting ways to incorporate and organize personal, school-based, and limited work experiences into a well-structured and impressive resume.
- **Interviewing Skills**: This single-workshop crash course focuses on youth-centered interviewing skills, covering the full interview process, including preparation, day-of tasks, common procedures, and follow-up actions.

- Financial Capability: The City’s BankOnBoston team provides a one-hour workshop on budgeting and saving, including the use of various financial products, and will even help youth open their own bank account at one of the many banking institutions that they partner with.

The City also partners with various organizations to provide youth with unique development opportunities. Some of our partners include:

- One Love Foundation: One Love empowers young people with the tools and resources to recognize healthy and unhealthy relationship signs and bring life-saving prevention education to their communities.
- Tailored for Success - LinkedIn 101: LinkedIn is not only a social media platform, but also a useful tool to help prepare for an interview. Job seekers can use LinkedIn to research companies, learn about interviewers, and develop talking points.
- Mass Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health: coalition that unites workers and activists to end dangerous work conditions and advocate for healthy communities.
 - Workplace Sexual Harassment - This training provides an essential understanding of sexual harassment and abusive work environments.
 - Workplace Violence - By the end of this training, young people will understand the spectrum of workplace violence, learn de-escalation techniques, and know where to seek resources.
 - Working Teens’ Rights - This interactive presentation helps participants understand their basic rights as teen workers, recognize unsafe working conditions, and know what steps to take if their rights are violated.

C. Program Logistics

As of 2022, the City changed the way it supported program logistics to serve both “direct” partners such as City agencies and “grant” partners such as nonprofits. Direct partners can use the City’s hiring platform and Office of Human Resources (OHR) to verify all documents (e.g., onboarding) and then integrate youth hires into PeopleSoft (e.g. human capital management and payroll platform) so the City can manage payroll. Rather than relying on the City to operate the hiring and payroll process, “grant” partners instead receive funding to support wages for a pre-determined number of youth hired for a summer job through their organization. Youth applying to “grant” jobs follow a link off the City [FutureBos webpage](#) to apply directly to the employer partner. The “grant” partner is then responsible for managing the application, selection, onboarding, and payroll processes for those youth positions. Table 4 summarizes the number of youth, the population served, the types of jobs, and the funding sources for each intermediary. More details about each intermediary and specific funding amounts are described in the next section covering the civic infrastructure needed to bring the Boston SYEP to scale.

Table 4. Program Characteristics of Boston SYEP Intermediaries

SYEP Intermediary	Average Number of Participants	Funding Sources for Support	Youth Population Served	Types of Jobs Offered
Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD)	500	City of Boston, state, private philanthropy, other grants	Low-income youth typically aged 14-15 years	Subsidized jobs primarily in daycares and day camps as well as community-based organizations
Boston Private Industry Council (PIC)	2500	City of Boston, state, private sector employers	Youth aged 16-19 years who are Boston Public School students	About 500 subsidized jobs in daycares and day camps, non-profits, and healthcare. Nother 2,000 private sector jobs in biopharma, hospitals, finance, banking insurance.
Office of Youth Employment and Opportunity (OYEO)	6000	City of Boston	Youth aged 15-18 years, older youth aged 19-24 years serve as peer leaders	Subsidized jobs in daycares and day camps, non-profits, healthcare, and city government
John Hancock MLK Scholars Program (MLK)	500	John Hancock	Youth aged 15-18 years	Subsidized jobs in daycares and day camps, non-profits, healthcare, and business
Youth Options Unlimited (YOU)	150	City of Boston, other grants	Court-involved youth aged 14-24 years	Subsidized jobs in community based organizations
Boys and Girls Club of Boston (BGCB)	50	City of Boston, state, private philanthropy, other grants	Youth aged 15-18 years, older youth aged 19-24 years serve as peer leaders	Paid summer internships across healthcare (Boston Children’s Hospital), finance, culinary arts, and government (Suffolk County District Attorney’s Office).
Greater Boston YMCA	1400	City of Boston, state, private philanthropy, other grants	Youth aged 15-18 years, older youth aged 19-24 years serve as peer leaders	Subsidized jobs in daycares and day camps
Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development (OWD)	100	City of Boston, ARPA	Rising juniors and seniors	Learn and Earn program providing paid community college coursework including time spent in class, working with a tutor, attending enrichment

				activities and doing homework
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement (MOIA)	300	City of Boston,	Immigrant youth aged 14-24 years	Stipended summer internships at non-profit organizations
TOTAL	11,500			

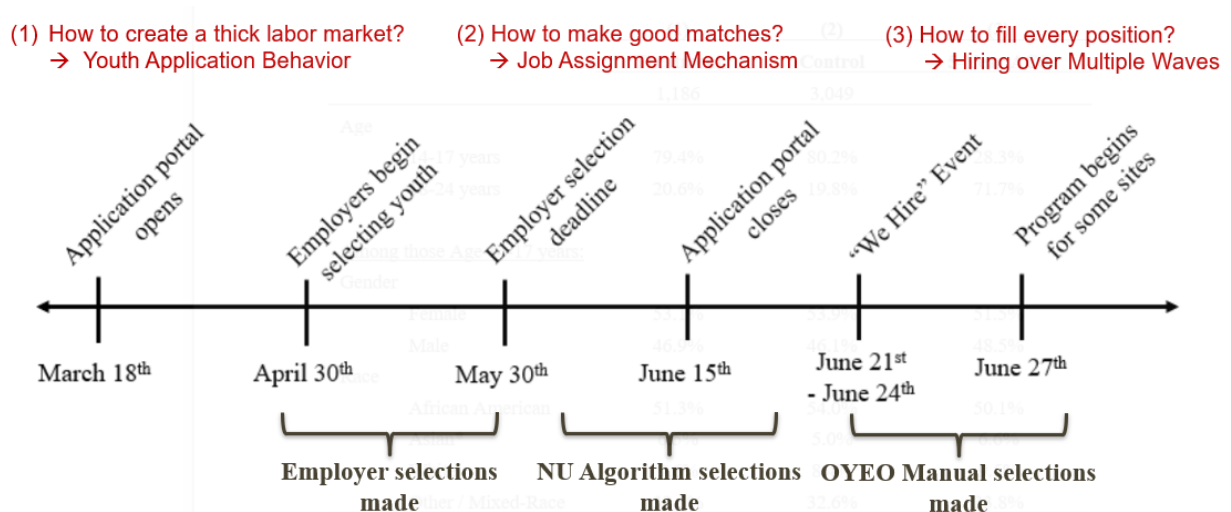
Source: Authors' categorization based on interviews with each intermediary.

In general, youth typically apply to the particular organization that serves their neighborhood but there is some overlap across intermediaries in terms of where youth are applying. The greatest overlap is typically between OYEO and the other intermediaries, especially ABCD and PIC. Anecdotally, younger youth often apply to OYEO not realizing that there are few job opportunities for 14 and 15 year olds, so they are then referred to ABCD. On the other end of the age spectrum, older youth applying to PIC hope to get a private sector placement but also apply to OYEO as a back-up in case they are not selected by a private sector employer. Note that YOU has typically no overlap with the other intermediaries due to the highly specialized nature of their program but anecdotal evidence suggests that those referrals do happen on occasion.

Assignment Mechanism

Direct employer partners select which youth to extend offers to from among those that apply through the City's job application, selection, and hiring process as shown in Figure 7. In early spring the City begins its outreach efforts, choosing employer partners and allotting program slots to partners. The application portal typically opens by mid-March and youth are able to apply to multiple jobs, with each job requiring a separate application. Partner organizations start selecting youth in late March and are required to finish their selections by the end of May. After being selected, the hiring process includes upwards of 10 different steps, including uploading multiple documents to prove age, residency, and school status such as a social security card, household utility bill, and a school report card.

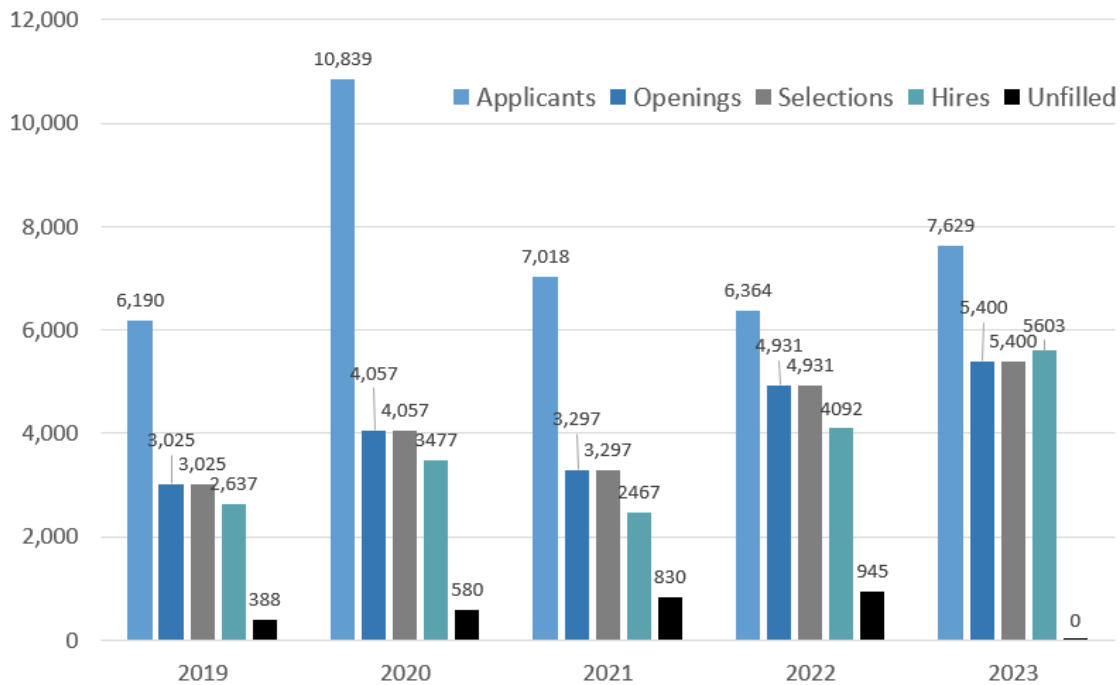
Figure 7. Boston SYEP Job Application, Selection, and Hiring Timeline



However, not all selections are successfully converted into hires. A position can be left unfilled for three reasons: at the time the partners selected there were more open slots than applications, or slots opened up because youth declined positions, or youth failed to complete the hiring paperwork by the deadline. Any remaining openings are back-filled by OYEO directly placing youth into jobs, typically as part of several in-person hiring events that take place just before the start of the program. In some years this could mean placing upwards of 1,000 youth manually to fill all of the remaining job openings before the start of the program. This was a herculean task given the limited number of staff, and as a result there are often jobs that went unfilled.

During the summer of 2023, the Northeastern research team implemented a job matching algorithm to place youth into unfilled positions in both May and June prior to the in-person event to reduce the burden on OYEO staff. From among the remaining applicants for each position, we randomly selected youth to be placed into jobs that were yet to be filled. We stratified these placements by race and school type so that the resulting overall distribution would match the characteristics of youth in the applicant pool. Figure 8 shows that the implementation of the job matching algorithm ensured that no jobs were unfilled by the start of the program. This is in comparison to prior years when upwards of 1,000 jobs were left unfilled meaning funding left unspent, community organizations without workers, and youth unemployed.

Figure 8. Number of Boston SYEP Applicants and Hires versus Job Openings



Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by OYEO.

Sustainability of Impacts

There is some evidence from interviews and focus groups that suggests youth move through the Boston SYEP ecosystem on an informal basis as they age. For example, youth aged 14-15 years often gain their first job experience through ABCD as a camp counselor which is one of the few positions open to youth under age 16 years. The following summer, they often work for a community-based organization through OYEO or MLK Scholars. As rising juniors and seniors, they may land a private sector internship through the PIC. Where possible and when time permits, the intermediaries will also refer youth to each another based on the population they serve (e.g., OYEO will refer youth aged 14 years to ABCD).

Based on this progression, it's not surprising that ABCD participants would be the least experienced in terms of work. Table 5 shows that only 22.5% of ABCD participants were employed during the prior summer. In comparison, 40-60% of participants through OYEO, MLK, and PIC had at least one summer of prior employment. OYEO also had the highest rate of repeat participation, with roughly half of youth working for a second summer through OYEO and one-third working at the same job site.

Table 5. Prior Program Participation and Employment among Boston SYEP Youth

	OYEO	ABCD	MLK	PIC	YOU
Percent employed at all last summer	39.8%	22.5%	57.7%	47.1%	31.4%
If employed, repeat participant in the program	51.1%	19.4%	14.2%	17.2%	12.7%
If repeat participant, employed at same job site	33.7%	32.2%	59.7%	19.1%	26.3%

Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by ABCD, OYEO, PIC, MLK, and YOU and survey data collected by Northeastern University.

This quantitative data doesn't provide enough information to determine whether youth are experiencing career progression within the Boston SYEP ecosystem. However, interviews with employers suggest that there are opportunities for advancement either formally or informally with employers giving youth who return for a second summer more responsibility, sometimes even paying them at a higher rate by using other sources of funding to increase their pay. A system-wide data sharing system would help the City understand how youth move between employers, intermediaries, and funding sources. Efforts are currently underway to ladder these job experience more formally from one summer to the next both within and across these intermediaries.

III. CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND FUNDING

Compared to the New York or Chicago model, the Boston SYEP's strength lies in its decentralized system which proved highly resilient during COVID. This was a key factor in ensuring that Boston could pivot its summer jobs program during the summer of 2020 and continue to serve the same number of youth, with the same number of hours, at the same rate of pay whereas other cities like New York shut their programs down leaving thousands of young people unemployed.

The Boston SYEP ecosystem is held together by a civic infrastructure built on long-term relationships formed with city departments, private sector employers, small businesses and community-based partners. During the pandemic, this civic infrastructure helped develop and implement new models like hybrid jobs, completely virtual internships, and a Learn and Earn program—all of which have since become a part of the summer jobs ecosystem. Since the pandemic, the Boston SYEP ecosystem, led by OTEO, has been an incubator for innovative program changes and a repository for sharing knowledge across the Boston SYEP ecosystem.

Table 6. Assessment of Civic Infrastructure to Support SYEP Scaling

SYEP Civic Infrastructure Component	Boston SYEP Ecosystem	Comparison to SYEP Model Program
Senior leadership	Primary Lead: Boston City Mayor’s Office of Youth Employment and Engagement; Intermediary Leads: Action for Boston Community Development, Boston Private Industry Council, John Hancock, Youth Options Unlimited.	Excellent = senior leadership from Mayor’s Office currently leads a robust ecosystem of intermediary organizations that provides a strong, diversified backbone for the program
Funding capacity	Braided together from city, state, federal, and philanthropic sources across the Primary and Intermediary lead organizations	Excellent: currently spends approximately \$28 million in city, state, private sector, and philanthropic funding to connect 11,000 youth each summer with about 900 local employers
Employer engagement	Includes a mix of City departments, community based organizations, educational institutions, and private sector firms.	Excellent: diversity of employer partners; supports employers with monthly meetings, clear process and communication, supervisor trainings, career workshops, and conflict resolution.
Public school partnerships	Includes all Boston Public Schools (open enrollment, charter, and prestigious exam schools)	Good: Conducts school-based workshops for outreach; developing work-based learning for Innovation Pathways.
Non-profit and city agency coordination	Includes youth-based nonprofits such as One Love as well as City agencies such as MOIA to support vulnerable populations	Good: Conducts employer site visits to ensure youth needs are met and connects supervisors to appropriate youth resources as needed.
Logistical capacity	YEO staff has been expanded to include an Executive Director and 4 FTE to support SYEP including a Data and Evaluation Manager	Excellent: Staff has been added to the permanent City budget

Monitoring and evaluation	Ten-year research-practice partnership with Northeastern University	Excellent: Research and evaluation led to increased efficiency, equity and Mayor's Youth Jobs Guarantee.
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A. Senior leadership

Compared to other cities, the Boston SYEP operates as a coordinated ecosystem that proved highly resilient during COVID and was a key factor in ensuring that the Boston SYEP could pivot to a hybrid format. During summer 2020, the intermediaries came together to develop four new tracks of programming to enable youth to safely engage in meaningful activities. This included a Learn and Earn program which enrolled students in college-level courses to earn credit and gain certifications; as well as a Virtual Internship program which supported businesses and community-based organizations with a platform of ready-made projects, collaboration supports, and dashboard to manage youth workers. As a result, the City invested an additional \$4.1 million of CARES Act funding into the SYEP to employ the same number of youth, at the same number of hours, and the same rate of pay during summer 2020. This collaboration helped set the stage for the current Mayor's Youth Jobs Guarantee which ensures that every Boston Public School student who wants a summer job can have one.

B. Funding capacity

Like most workforce development programs, funding for the Boston SYEP ecosystem is a complex mix of local government (state, county, city, school systems), foundation, and corporate philanthropy sources. Despite young employees requiring more developmental programming, mentorship, and supervision than adults, there is minimal federal funding targeted to support youth employment. Boston provides one example of how the lead entity has developed an extensive public, private and nonprofit infrastructure to financially support this ecosystem. The table below provides an overview of funding sources supporting Boston's SYEP, and the distribution of funds across major implementing partners.

Table 6. Boston SYEP Funding Sources and Distribution (2024)

Funding Stream	ABCD	Boston PIC	John Hancock (MLK Scholars)	City of Boston Programs (YEO + YOU + OWD + MOIA)	Other Partners (BGCB + YMCA)	Total
Massachusetts	\$342,336	\$442,220	-	\$1,300,544	\$1,608,631	\$3,693,729
City of Boston	\$250,000	\$750,000	-	\$7,055,683	\$8,500,000	\$16,555,683
Foundations	\$800,000	\$821,995	-	-	-	\$1,621,995
Corporate Philanthropy	-	-	\$866,250	-	-	\$866,250
Employer Directly Pays Wages		\$5,320,440	\$50,000	-	-	\$5,370,440
TOTAL FUNDS	\$1,392,336	\$7,334,655	\$916,250	\$8,356,227	\$10,108,631	\$28,108,097
YOUTH SERVED	500	2,500	500	6,550	1,450	11,500

Source: Boston Office of Youth Employment and Opportunity.

Funding Streams

Massachusetts: State funding for youth employment is administered by the quasi-public agency Commonwealth Corporation (CommCorp) as part of the state's YouthWorks program. In Boston, the Office of Workforce Development (OWD) allocates YouthWorks funding to a network of youth employment providers including YEO, Boston PIC, ABCD, YOU, and other nonprofit partners. All YouthWorks programs use the Commonwealth's Signal Success curriculum to help young people learn and practice bringing together skills for work, school, and life.

City of Boston: Funding from the City's internal budget is derived from local tax revenue that supports the internal operations of the Office of Youth Employment and Opportunity (YEO) and wages for youth jobs across the City of Boston. In recent years, YEO has issued a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) to distribute youth jobs and wages across hundreds of nonprofit employer partners and worksites.

Foundation/Corporate Philanthropy: Nonprofit partners in Boston's SYEP ecosystem leverage approximately as much private funding from philanthropy and foundations to support summer jobs as is invested by public revenue. This includes a range of funding from individual donors, corporate giving, small family foundations, and larger foundations and intermediaries (ex: United Way). John Hancock's corporate philanthropy stands out in Boston, operating their own competitive RFP process to provide \$1M in support to smaller nonprofits to host summer youth employees. This level of financial investment from a local anchor institution is likely an important factor in effectively scaling and sustaining Boston's SYEP.

Employer-Paid: A portion of investment in youth jobs comes in the from employer partners who directly pay their summer employees and invest time and resources to train and mentor young people. These employer partners primarily recruited and coordinated by Boston PIC and include large companies across the City's finance, insurance, life sciences, high-tech industries as well as institutions such as hospitals and universities.

C. Employer engagement

The Office of Youth Employment and Opportunity engages with a variety of employer partners including City departments, community based organizations, educational institutions, and private sector firms. Over the past several years Boston has expanded the pool of job opportunities to include more industries and occupations that are in high-demand in the private sector. These include areas such as healthcare, finance, IT and STEM occupations that align with careers in the green economy.

The City has also focused on improving job quality, holding a Learning Lab event this past spring to collaborate with employers in building career pathways for summer jobs that are connected to Boston Public School curriculum. The Northeastern University research team conducted a skills mapping to develop criteria and categorize jobs and employers worked in groups arranged by industry and occupation to develop job ladders across the ecosystem. Employer partners are also encouraged to make use of work-based learning plans for student assessment to measure skill growth. This information can be used in the future to develop job ladders and skills badging to guide youth development and connect to future opportunities.

The City also provides a [Partner Resource Hub](#) provides a centralized platform for partners to successfully run a youth jobs program including essential forms, guides, useful links, promotional materials, and other resources to support partners throughout the summer. Materials are organized by partner type for a more tailored experience, with general resources also available for all program sites. All key documents and tools are now housed in one place, making it easier to navigate onboarding, planning, and program management. The Hub is updated regularly with new tools, guidance, and seasonal reminders. OYEO also provides training to help employer-partners ensure that they are providing a meaningful job experience for youth. This includes how to design youth jobs, write better job descriptions, mentor youth employees, and navigate the City's hiring and payroll systems.

Finally, to improve efficiency and equity of youth placements, the City expanded the job algorithm pilot to allow employers to select 60% of their youth with the remaining 40% placed by OYEO using the matching algorithm developed by Northeastern University. The research team is working to refine the job matching algorithm to include interest areas, location, occupation/industry, and skill levels to inform the acquisition of a new hiring platform.

D. Partnership with public school system

Since the pandemic, OYEO has intentionally strengthened its relationship with Boston Public Schools to improve youth outreach, enlist the help of teachers and guidance counselors, and connect SYEP jobs to BPS curriculum. This includes holding pop-up job fairs at schools, providing job application and onboarding workshops during advisory blocks, and piloting a green career pathway program (Boston Youth Climate Corps) to place youth in any of the BPS green career and technical education programs into a green summer job. In the coming years, City leaders hope to develop a city-wide badging system based on the skills and experience youth gain from their summer job that is recognized by all intermediaries, Boston Public Schools, community colleges, and employers with sites operating within the City of Boston.

In addition, the Boston PIC works with BPS to help young adults who have left school or do not attend regularly with dropout reduction, both prevention and re-engagement. The Re-Engagement Center (REC) reaches out to BPS students who have dropped out or are chronically absent, groups that are disproportionately Black, Latino, and low-income (both nationally and locally). The REC helps them re-enroll in a traditional school or alternative program and then supports them at their placement—often in the fall after having successfully placed them in a summer job. The results are very positive. 1,936 high school students left school without a diploma during school year 2015-16. That number fell to 791 during the pre-pandemic school year 2018-19.

E. Coordination with non-profit sector

The City coordinates with the nonprofit sector in two ways. First, OYEO collaborates with nonprofits to provide wrap-around services for youth throughout the summer. This includes organizations providing meals, public transportation passes, housing assistance, social-emotional support, and various types of training.

Second, as potential employer-partners providing mission-driven employment opportunities within organizations that are rooted in having a positive social impact that benefits communities and neighborhoods. These opportunities provide a youth with an inside perspective of what it looks like to fuel purpose driven work with passion and vocation to influence change.

Organizations who are able to support only fewer than 25 youth for the summer and/or do not have the infrastructure to manage City funds, are particularly encouraged to seek out one of several coalitions led by a large nonprofit as the Lead Administrator. The Lead Administrator is solely responsible for all financial and administrative aspects of the City grant funds such as managing the recruitment, onboarding and payroll of youth and young adults they will serve during the summer.

F. Logistical capacity

Adding the logistical capacity to bring SYEP to scale requires real resources that most resource-strapped cities are often not willing to provide without first seeing the program's return on investment. Fortunately, the research evidence from the past decade convinced City leaders that adding OYEO staff capacity was a worthwhile investment, yielding four new FTE positions including an Executive Director, a Youth and Career Development Coordinator, a Strategic Partnerships and Engagement Manager, and a Data and Evaluation Manager. In addition, YEO was allowed to expand its seasonal staff to provide youth with onboarding assistance to complete online forms and upload documents.

In addition, the City made the following logistical improvements, based on the recommendations of the Northeastern University research team:

- Removed re-enrollment barriers so that youth do not need to resubmit hiring paperwork and documentation every season.
- Made changes to the existing hiring platform to track youth and ensure that jobs do not go unfilled.
- Invested in a new job hiring platform to simplify the application process and improve the search features (by location, occupation, industry, and skill level) and easier for youth to apply to multiple jobs.
- Started the application process in February and involved BPS in outreach and marketing to encourage youth to apply earlier and to multiple jobs.

G. Monitoring and evaluation

Prior research conducted by Northeastern University in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development has demonstrated that the Boston SYEP reduces involvement with the criminal justice system, increases the likelihood of high school graduation and college enrollment, and boost employment and wages in the 12-18 months after youth participate in the program (Office of Workforce Development, 2017). The Boston SYEP produces these transformative long-term impacts by developing soft skills and work habits, boosting community engagement, and raising academic aspirations. The program's impacts are greater for youth of color and BPS students from open enrollment versus exam schools.

IV. KEY STAKEHOLDERS

A. SYEP Ecosystem Leadership

The Boston SYEP operates as a coordinated ecosystem where each summer, youth are placed into jobs through one of five intermediary organizations, each of which serves a different target population based on their needs. Led by the City of Boston’s Office of Youth Employment and Opportunity (OYEO), the other intermediary organizations include Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD), the Boston Private Industry Council (PIC), John Hancock’s MLK Scholars, , and Youth Options Unlimited (YOU). We describe each in turn below.

Office of Youth Employment and Opportunity (OYEO): OYEO’s mission is to engage and employ Boston’s youth through a variety of activities including the Mayor’s Youth Council, the Participatory Budgeting process for youth, and the SuccessLink employment program which provides both year-round and summer job opportunities. The SuccessLink summer jobs program serves anywhere from 3,000-7,000 young people every summer depending on the funding that is available, making it the largest Boston SYEP intermediary. The program typically serves youth aged 16-19 years across a wide variety of jobs, including positions within City departments. In addition, SuccessLink serves a smaller group of youth aged 19-24 years as peer leaders.

Through SuccessLink, youth are placed into jobs with employer partners either as direct hires through OYEO or as grant partners. Youth applying to “direct” jobs must create a profile and apply through the City’s iCIMS hiring platform. Direct partners select youth through the platform after which youth must go through the lengthy onboarding process to be hired by the City of Boston including verification of all hiring documents. In 2020, OYEO offered their employer partners the option to become “grant” partners and instead receive funding to support wages for a pre-determined number of youth hired for a summer job through their organization. Youth applying to “grant” jobs follow a link off the SuccessLink page to apply directly to the employer partner. The “grant” partner is then responsible for managing the application, selection, onboarding, and payroll processes for those youth positions.



Finally, OYEO is also responsible for granting out funding to other City of Boston summer youth programs. These include the Office of Workforce Development’s Learn and Earn program that supports youth enrolling in community college courses, the City’s Dreamers Fellowship that supports skill and leadership development for immigrant youth regardless of status, ABCD’s Summerworks Program, and YOU Boston’s Summer Youth Employment program.

Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD): ABCD is a large and established nonprofit that works in all of Boston’s 18 neighborhoods. Because of the high number of

applications it receives for the limited number of SYEP jobs available, ABCD uses a lottery to assign youth to jobs. The enrollment period typically spans February through June, and applicants are notified of their lottery status and job assignment in late June. Most youth are placed in subsidized jobs at community-based organizations, primarily in daycares and day camps, but also in other non-profits focused on human services, healthcare, and the arts. Of those selected by the lottery, almost all (about 85 percent) accept a job offer, with only a handful dropping out of the program. Only 25-30 percent of youth who are not selected find a job during the summer, indicating the difficulty for youth to secure jobs even with Boston's relatively low unemployment rate (JPAL 2022).



ABCD's high take-up rate stems in part from serving a predominately low-income school-aged population. Most youth learn about the ABCD summer jobs program because their families have received other support, such as fuel assistance, from the organization. ABCD applicants are typically aged 14-15 years and most (nearly 90%) were in school at the time they applied. Just over 50 percent are African American and 30 percent are Hispanic, with roughly 7 percent reporting limited English ability. More than half of youth applicants come from a single parent family and upward of 18 percent acknowledged receiving cash public assistance of some form. Nearly 7 percent report being homeless and less than 5 percent list themselves as having a disability (Modestino 2019).

Boston Private Industry Council (PIC): As Boston's Workforce Development Board and a school-to-career intermediary, the PIC also provides a variety of work-based learning activities for Boston Public School (BPS) students. Starting in the fall, PIC career specialists conduct outreach in 31 BPS high schools, working with roughly 2,500 students to prepare them for work through a series of work readiness workshops and career exploration activities. At the same time, the PIC employer engagement team secures hiring commitments from over 150 top employers, which range from Fortune 500 companies to hospitals to technology start-ups.



The PIC program includes both subsidized jobs in community-based organizations (about 500 jobs) as well as private sector internships where employers directly pay youth wages (about 2000 jobs). PIC staff coach students to apply to at least three private sector internships based on their interests and skillsets and all applicants are given the opportunity to interview before employers make their final selection. Students who are not placed in a private sector internship are offered subsidized employment with a nonprofit organization in the community or are coached to apply for jobs outside

of the PIC's network of employers.

Relative to the BPS student population, PIC participants are typically older with a greater share of students in grades 11 or 12, in part because employers tend to select more experienced students. These are typically rising juniors and seniors who may have already had a summer job experience with either ABCD or OYEO, but are still disproportionately non-white (about 40% Black and 25% Hispanic) and low-income (70% receive free or reduced price lunch) compared to the overall BPS student population (Modestino, Paul, and McLaughlin 2022). To ensure that private sector firms provide meaningful employment experiences for youth, the PIC encourages employers to assess students across six skill categories using the Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan (WBLP). Youth typically show large improvements in critical thinking and problem solving; teamwork and collaboration; and understanding workplace policy, culture.

MLK Scholars: MLK Scholars, funded by John Hancock, is a mid-sized program that serves a similar population and partners with many of the same organizations as OYEO. The program typically supports nearly 600 youth at 50 local non-profit and corporate organizations while also directly employing about 30 youth directly at John Hancock. John Hancock also provides online financial education and mental wellness content available to all Boston summer jobs participants through EVERFI. To supplement the experience, John Hancock supports their employees who are involved in mentoring and supervising the students with DEI training and tools to ensure a diverse talent pipeline of Boston youth.



agency, or non-profit organization.

Youth Options Unlimited: YOU is a small yet powerful program serving about 100-150 court-involved youth, many of whom are referred by the Boston Police Department through the work of the Boston Regional Intelligence Center (BRIC). YOU participants are typically older, Black and Hispanic males, often living in low-income households. The program is designed exclusively for youth that have had some involvement with the justice system. Typically, youth work collaboratively in small teams at jobs sites outside the city with an on-site YOU Boston supervisor. There are also some individual level placements for young people to work onsite with either a private sector employer, municipal agency, or non-profit organization.

B. Government Partners:

- *City Leadership:* Mayor's Office, Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture, Mayor's Office of Early Childhood, Equity and Inclusion Cabinet, Office of Workforce Development, Boston City Councilor At-Large Erin Murphy
- *City of Boston Departments:* Department of Innovation and Technology, METCO: Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, Office of Human Resources, Boston Center for Youth and Families, Hennigan Community Center, Jackson Mann Community Center, Boston Parks & Recreation, Boston Public Library, Boston Fire Department, Boston Transportation Department, Boston Housing Authority, Boston Public Health Commission
- *City Public Safety:* Boston Police Department, Boston Police Bureau of Community Engagement, Boston Police - C-6 Youth leaders, Boston Regional Intelligence Center, Police Accountability and Transparency
- *State:* Commonwealth Corporation, Massachusetts Department of Transportation/MBTA

C. Funding Partners:

- *State Agencies:* Commonwealth Corporation
- *Local Philanthropy:* Barr Foundation, The Boston Foundation, Boston Children's Collaboration for Community Health, Boston WINs, Charles Hayden Foundation, Hideo Sasaki Foundation, Global Youth Philanthropy, Josephine and Louise Crane Foundation, Paul and Edith Babson Foundation, Red Sox Foundation, Schultz Family Foundation, SIM Boston, United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley
- *National Philanthropy:* Angell Foundation, Aspen Forum for Community Solutions, Hyams Foundation, Klarman Family Foundation, Lloyd G. Balfour Foundation, SkillWorks
- *Private Foundations:* Bank of America Charitable Foundation, EdVestors/Bloomberg Philanthropies, JP Morgan Chase Foundation, Liberty Mutual Foundation, Starbucks Foundation, State Street Foundation, Verizon Foundation, Vertex Foundation

D. Educational Institutions:

- *Secondary:* Boston Public Schools, Eliot School of Fine & Applied Arts, Epiphany School, Kwong Kow Chinese School
- *Post-Secondary:* Boston Architectural College, Boston College, Boston University, Harvard University, Northeastern University, Bunker Hill Community College, Roxbury Community College, Suffolk University, Tufts University, University of Massachusetts Boston

E. Private Sector Partners:

The following partners pay directly for the youth wages out of their budgets:

- *Finance and Insurance:* Bank of America, Bloomberg, Citizens Bank, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, Fidelity Investments, Liberty Mutual M&T Bank, Metro Credit Union, Putnam Investments, Santander, State Street Corporation

- *Healthcare and Life Sciences:* Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Boston Children's Hospital, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Faulkner Hospital, Mass Eye and Ear, Massachusetts General Hospital, Optum, Sanofi Genzyme, Tufts Medical Center, Vertex Pharmaceuticals, Wallgreens
- *Real Estate:* Beal, Boston Properties, Cruz Companies, DTCC, Goody Clancy, Hilco Redevelopment Partners (HRP), HMFH Architects, Oxford Properties
- *Services:* Aramark (Fenway Park), Boston Red Sox, Starbucks, Boston Bar Association, John J. Moakley Federal Courthouse, American Student Assistance
- *Tech:* ABCorp, Analog Devices Inc., General Electric, Resilient Coders, Wayfair

F. Nonprofit Partners:

- *Arts and Culture:* Artists For Humanity, Inc., Aashka Dance, Boston CyberArts, Boston Music Project, Boston Youth Symphony Orchestras, North End Music & Performing Arts Center, OrigiNation Cultural Arts Center, New England Aquarium, Showstoppers, Spoke Art Inc., The Wang Center for the Performing Arts (Boch Center), Transformative Culture Project, Veronica Robles Cultural Center, Zoo New England
- *Children and Youth:* Children's Services of Roxbury, Friends of St. Stephen's Youth Programs, East Boston Social Centers, Beat the Odds Beat the Streets New England, Bikes Not Bombs, BOLD Teens, Judicial Youth Corps, Salesian Boys & Girls Club, Partners Uplifting Our Daughters and Sons, The Center for Teen Empowerment, Youth Guidance (BAM/WOW); Sisters Unchained, Inc.; Someone Else's Child, OneLove
- *Education and Workforce:* Digital Ready, Learn2Teach/Teach2Learn, Mattapan/Greater Boston Technology Learning Center, Inc., Greatest MINDS, Madison Park Development Corporation, MassCOSH, No Worker Left Behind, Apprentice Learning, Boston Outdoor Preschool Network, Future Chefs, STEAM Ahead Team, New England Youth Academy, The Calculus Project, The City School, WriteBoston; Phillips Brooks House Association; The Pathway Initiative Inc.
- *Ethnic:* Afrimerican Culture Initiative Inc., American Chinese Christian Educational & Social Services, Inc., Asian American Resource Workshop, Boston Asian: YES, Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, Chinatown Main Streets, Cape Verdean Association, ICNA Relief Immigrant Family Services Institute, Inc., Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción, Somali American Youth Parents Association, Sociedad Latina; VietAID
- *Faith-Based:* Boston Project Ministries, Catholic Charitable Bureau of the Archdiocese of Boston, Inc., St Martin de Porres Parish
- *Housing and Human Services:* Castle Square Tenants Organization Inc., Health/ Field Corner Crossroads Collaborative, Hyde Square Task Force, Roxbury Tenants of Harvard Association, Inc., The Food Project, Next Leadership Development Corporation; South Boston Neighborhood House; Southwest Boston Community Development Corporation

- *Public Safety*: LEAP Self-Defense, Inc., MissionSAFE, Mothers for Justice and Equality
- *Sports and Recreation*: A Sporting Chance - Boston Baseball Camp, All Dorchester Sports & Leadership (ADSL), All Dorchester Sports League, Boston United Track and Cross Country, Courageous Sailing, Piers Park Sailing Center, Friends of the Kelly Rink, Boston Harlem Lacrosse and Leadership, Boston Common Frog Pond, Emerald Necklace, Soccer Unity Project, Lena Park Level Ground Mixed Martial Arts, Sportsman's Tennis Association, Thompson Island Outward Bound, Timothy Smith Network Inc., United Somali Youth, Inc.; Maverick Landing Community Services; Speak for the Trees; Save the Harbor/Save the Bay
- *Other*: 617Peak, ACEDONE, Boston's Higher Ground, DotHouse, Freedom House Inc., Tenacity; Trinity Boston Connects; Urban PowerHouse; ZUMIX, Inc.