

## FY2020 Bridges to Employing Youth (Bridges) Technical Assistance Q & A

All clarifications provided in this Q&A are for the FY20 Bridges funding opportunity. Rules and regulations for any other funding source are not governed by this opportunity.

The most current FY20 Bridges NGO can be found on NJDOL's website at [this link](#). Please note that this document, in conjunction with the posted NGO and its attachments, constitute the final rules that govern the parameters to be met in FY20 Bridges applications.

### Important Dates

1. The application due date is now Monday, December 2, 2019 by 5:00pm.
2. The grant duration is now anticipated to be 16 months, starting March 1, 2020 thru June 30, 2021. Infrastructure building is allowed March 2020 thru May 2020, with implementation of program services required to begin no later than June 1, 2020.

### Amendments to the NGO

The amendments detailed below supersede their respective sections of the posted NGO, and are considered the final rule.

1. Partnership agreements forms, mentioned on page 8, no longer require signatures. However, applicants are encouraged to secure those signatures or signed letters of support from their proposed partners as a means of demonstrating organizational commitments.
2. The second bullet under section G on page 6 of the NGO has been revised to read as follows:  
"For participants without a high school diploma at time of enrollment:
  - 70 percent must obtain a measurable skill gain if their grade level equivalent (according to CASAS GOALS) is below 9th grade level in **either** Math **or** Reading..."

### **Youth with Disabilities**

1. Supported employment has been removed from the chart on page 5 of the NGO, and is no longer considered a Bridges program service. It still remains as a qualified placement option.
2. Due to clarifications from NJDOL's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS), supported employment as a placement outcome listed on page 6 of the NGO has been revised to read as "DVRS supported employment". Placements into supported employment are expected to meet DVRS standards, and those placements should be coordinated through the local DVRS offices.

3. The language on page 3 of the NGO regarding CARF accreditation has been removed.
4. For youth with disabilities only, pre- and post-tests must be administered using CASAS GOALS, unless the participant's disability requires an alternate standardized academic assessment.
5. For youth with disabilities only, the performance language on page 6 of the NGO regarding measurable skill gains and high school diploma attainment has been revised and replaced to read as follows:

“For participants without a high school diploma at time of enrollment:

  - 70 percent must obtain a measurable skill gain (according to pre- and post-test results using the established standardized academic assessment appropriate for the participant)
    - i. A measurable skill gain is defined as a.) Growth of one grade level in either subject of reading or math, based on CASAS GOALS post-test, or a recognized growth if using an alternate standardized assessment; or b.) Successful passing of a high school equivalency exam, resulting in a high school diploma
6. The language on page 6 of the NGO concerning mandated partnerships has been revised and replaced to read as follows:

“Successful proposals will, at a minimum, partner with their local School District(s) in order to aid in identifying and recruiting eligible youth, and with their local county Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) in order to make appropriate referrals **to** DVRS services as needed.”
7. NJDOL's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (and their local offices) will not sign partnership agreement forms or letters of support. However, it is expected that applicants' narratives demonstrate plans to establish processes with local DVRS offices to refer participants **to** DVRS as needed, particularly as it relates to placements into supported employment.

### **Youth in or Aging Out of Foster Care**

1. Youth who are in or have aged out of foster care must now be between 18 and 24 years of age at time of enrollment, per the Division of Children and Families' recommendation.
2. The language on page 6 of the NGO concerning mandated partnerships for youth who are in or have aged out of foster care is revised and replaced to read as follows:

“Successful proposals will, at a minimum, partner with stakeholders that serve or are most familiar with the population of older youth in or aging out of foster care (e.g. life skills programs, housing programs, mentoring programs, out of home treatment programs, and academic and career coaching programs) to aid in identifying and recruiting eligible youth”.

### **Justice-Involved Youth**

1. The Juvenile Justice Commission will not sign a partnership agreement form, but has provided a forms process to request an optional letter of support. Please see the forms [linked here](#).

## Questions and Answers

### **Application Procedures**

**Q1: For the application documents requiring signatures, is it acceptable to sign by hand and then scan and attached the files as part of the application submission?**

A: Yes, it is in fact expected that documents requiring signature be signed by hand and attached as scanned copies.

**Q2: Can an agency be a partner on one application and also submit an additional application as the lead agency?**

A: Yes. The expectation would be that the agency would be serving distinct individuals between the two applications.

**Q3: Can the applicant partner with an organization that has the required experience, even if applicant does not have the experience?**

A: Yes. The application in its totality, including the applicant agency and the partner agencies, must demonstrate adequate experience in the organizational commitment and capacity section of the application.

**Q4: Are there any formatting requirements for the application, such as font type and size, header/footer, page numbers, etc.?**

A: No.

### **Applicant Eligibility**

**Q1: Can a school district (or special services school district) apply for this grant?**

A: Yes. A school district falls under the category of municipal and county government, listed in section D of the NGO.

**Q2: Can a family court apply for this grant?**

A: Yes. A family court falls under the category of municipal and county government, listed in section D of the NGO.

### **Partnerships**

**Q1: Do you consider the employer or referring school a service partner?**

A: If an entity is providing one of the services listed under section F of the NGO, they are considered a service partner.

**Q2: Do you require Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) in addition to the partner agreement forms?**

A: No.

**Q3: Can the partners proposed in the application change during the timeframe for infrastructure building?**

A: Yes. Any change in partners should accompany revised or new partner agreement forms.

**Q4: Can an applicant seek partnership agreements with a bank for the financial literacy education requirement?**

A: Yes.

**Q5: Do we have to work with multiple One-Stops if serving multiple counties?**

A: Yes. Partnerships should be established with each county's One-Stop if serving more than one county.

**Q6: Is a partnership agreement form required with a One-Stop/Workforce Development Board?**

A: Yes. All participants must complete intake and registration into the AOSOS system through their local county One-Stop Career Center.

## **Participant Eligibility**

**Q1: What is the definition of in-school?**

A: For the purposes of this grant, youth are considered to be in-school and therefore ineligible to participate in Bridges if they meet one of the following criteria:

- a. Have *NOT* attained a high school diploma/GED and are currently attending or committed to return to any school listed on the NJ Department of Education's NJ School Directory ([linked here](#)); or
- b. Have attained a high school diploma and are currently attending or committed to return to any institution of higher learning.

**Q2: Must the participants be citizens, have green cards, or no?**

A: The NGO does not require proof of citizenship to satisfy Bridges eligibility.

**Q3: Is selective service documentation required to determine eligibility?**

A: No.

**Q4: Are homeless youth eligible?**

A: As long as the youth falls under one of the existing targeted populations.

**Q5: What is the standard for youth eligibility self-certification forms?**

A: At a minimum, a self-certification should include the youth's name, a written statement attesting to the eligibility criteria, and signature from the youth (or parent/legal guardian if under 18).

**Q6: Is it possible to further refine participant eligibility requirement for a proposed program (i.e. requiring a certain reading level at time of enrollment)?**

A: This is allowable.

## **Youth in or Aging out of Foster Care**

**Q1: Where can I find child welfare data?**

A: NJ Child Welfare Data Hub at [www.njchilddata.rutgers.edu](http://www.njchilddata.rutgers.edu).

**Q2: Where can I find local services for youth in foster care?**

A: NJ Youth Resource Spot [www.njyrs.org](http://www.njyrs.org).

**Q3: If a foster care youth is 18, aren't they already aged out?**

A: In NJ, foster care youth can extend to 21.

**Q4: Does the Dept. of Children and Families (DCF) have an organized system for recruiting youth aging out of foster care to participate in our program?**

A: Applicants are expected to partner with local stakeholders that are serving youth in or aging out of foster care. DCF and Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P) will not be responsible for recruiting eligible youth for this program. However, awarded agencies may contact CP&P Local Offices in their service area to market the program and encourage CP&P staff to share programming with eligible youth they are serving. Contact information for CP&P Local Offices statewide can be found at <https://www.nj.gov/dcf/contact/dcpplocal/index.html>. Ask for the Resource Development Specialist in the Local CP&P Office contacted.

### **Justice-involved Youth**

**Q1: What tool must be used to provide the risk and needs assessment for justice-involved youth?**

A: The applicant must decide which tool will be used.

### **Pregnant or Parenting Youth**

**Q1: Must parenting fathers and mothers have physical custody of their child/children?**

A: No.

### **Youth with Disabilities**

The questions received for this targeted population prompted significant NGO amendments, which are detailed in the “Amendments to the NGO” section of this document.

### **Program Design**

**Q1: Can funds be used to expand services or add additional participant slots to an existing program where current capacity is insufficient to meet the need?**

A: Yes. An applicant seeking to do so should ensure the program they are expanding or adding slots to is not prohibited from doing so by any other non-Bridges regulations governing that program.

**Q2: Is there a minimum or maximum time in program for each participant? Is how long each participant is in our program dependent on how long it takes to provide all of the services?**

A: Participation duration is to be decided by the applicant’s program design, and should be clearly laid out in the application’s narrative. The expectation is that youth be afforded adequate time to participate in and complete all necessary services within the timeframe of the grant.

**Q3: Are there guidelines or specific regulations governing the work experience?**

A: Only what is written in the Programs Services Guidelines.

**Q4: Is there a minimum/maximum # of hours for the paid or unpaid work experience?**

A: No.

**Q5: Can participants be enrolled on a rolling basis?**

A: This is allowable.

**Q6: Do follow-up services have to be completed by 6/30/21?**

A: No. Follow-up is required to be conducted for 90 days after a participant's date of exit. If a participant's exit date is 6/30/21, follow-up is still expected.

**Q7: Can the service provider do the WIOA eligibility and then send a completed determination to the one-stop?**

A: The process for determining eligibility must be established with your local One-Stop partner(s).

**Q8: Can we start serving youth prior to June 2020 if we do not need the 3 months to gear up?**

A: Yes. Services can be provided between March 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.

**Q9: Can youth be engaged or referred prior to graduation?**

A: Yes, but the youth must be out-of-school at the time of program enrollment. It is not the intention of the Bridges program to encourage disconnection from school.

**Q10: What are acceptable types and providers of basic skills instruction (i.e. Learning Link, Literacy Volunteers, on-line learning providers, etc.)?**

A: Minimum requirements for basic skills instruction are written in the Program Services Guidelines attachment of the NGO.

**Q11: Can TABE be used for academic pre- and post-testing?**

A: No. The NJDOL workforce system is now using the CASAS GOALS assessment only.

**Q12: Is there a maximum amount of funding that can be sub-contracted?**

A: No, but the applicant agency, if awarded, will be the legally contracted and responsible entity.

**Q13: Can we serve all one county or multiple counties?**

A: Service area is not restricted in NGO.

**Q14: Are youth already receiving WIOA support eligible to continue with additional support for the same services (i.e. work readiness & work experience)?**

A: In order to use multiple funding streams, services must not be duplicated.

## **Budget**

**Q1: What is the definition of administrative/indirect costs?**

A: Administrative personnel are staff not directly working with participants. Non-personnel administrative costs are expenses that do not directly benefit participants. (i.e. copy machines, payroll services, etc.)

**Q2: What is the definition of program/direct costs?**

A: Program personnel are staff directly working with participants. Program services costs are expenses that directly benefit participants. (i.e. stipends, supportive services, promotional items, classroom supplies, etc.)

**Q3: What are allowable costs?**

A: Unless otherwise noted in the NGO and its attachments, costs that are necessary to the implementation of the listed program services and are within a reasonable amount are considered

allowable. Any ineligible, inappropriate, or undocumented costs will be removed from the funding request and may result in budget revisions during the time of pre-contract negotiations.

**Q4: Are travel expenses for participants allowed?**

A: Yes, reasonable transportation costs for participants are considered to be supportive services and are allowable, per the Program Services Guidelines.

**Q5: Can the grant funds be utilized to pay for the work experience?**

A: Yes.

**Q6: Is there are a minimum or maximum cost per participant?**

A: The cost per participant is not defined in the NGO, and will be based on the proposed number to be served and the proposed total cost of the application.

**Q7: Are funds allowed to provide professional development?**

A: Yes.

**Q8: Are incentives allowed? Will we be required to have a budget for incentives for the participants?**

A: Yes. If incentives are to be funded by Bridges, they must be included in your budget details and budget narrative.

**Q9: Is food an allowable budget item?**

A: No. An exception to this would be if food items are being funded as part of a training.

**Q10: Can costs for CASAS GOALS assessment be included in the application's budget?**

A: Yes.

**Q11: Is the budget narrative a separate document in addition to the budget detail forms?**

A: Yes, a budget narrative is required to accompany the budget detail forms in order to provide cost justifications for line items in the context of the program design.

**Q12: Is facility rent an allowable cost?**

A: Yes, and the cost should be justified by square foot.

**Q13: Is there a financial match requirement?**

A: No.

## **Program Outcomes and Reporting**

**Q1: Regarding measurable skill gains – What happens when a youth has a HSD or GED, and is above 9th grade level in Math & Reading? What would be the measurable skill gain?**

A: Youth who enroll into a Bridges program with a high school diploma are NOT required to receive academic instruction nor attain a measurable skill gain, and will therefore not contribute to the measurable skill gain performance measure.

**Q2: Is it required that the stated outcomes are achieved during the period of enrollment/program operation, or is within 6-month follow-up period okay?**

A: Outcome attainments may be recorded for each individual participant up to 90 days after that participant's exit from the program. The follow-up period for each participant is 90 days, not 6 months.

**Q3: What happens if the contracted level of service is not met?**

A: Consideration for continuation may be negatively affected.

**Q4: How is full-time employment defined?**

A: For the purposes of this grant, 25 hours per week or more.

**Q5: Is there a minimum retention time in a placement in order to count in placement performance measures?**

A: No, there is no retention measure.

**Q6: Are the monthly activity & fiscal report due on the same date?**

A: To be determined.

**Q7: Is fiscal reporting and reimbursement tied to benchmarks/milestones?**

A: No. Reimbursement will be based on monthly expenditures.

**Q8: Is there a required number to be served?**

A: Applicants set their own number to be served in their application. The required contracted number to be served will be based on the application and any necessary pre-contract revisions.

## **Grant Awards**

**Q1: How many vendors/agencies will be awarded the grant per section/category/county?**

A: It is anticipated that \$900,000 will be awarded per targeted population. The number of awards is to be determined, and is dependent upon the number of applications, panel review and selection, and the availability of funds. The NGO has not limited the number of awards per county.

**Q2: When is the notice of award given?**

A: The notice of award is anticipated to be given mid-February 2020.

**Q3: Would receipt of a Bridges grant award preclude the applicant from involvement in other grants or programs?**

A: No, but non-Bridges funding is subject to the regulations of that specific non-Bridges funding source and may have their own preclusions.

**Q4: Is the maximum \$450,000 per year? How many years? Are applicants allowed to apply for less than the \$450,000?**

A: The maximum grant award is \$450,000 for the specified grant period (March 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021). Applications may be received in any amount up to the maximum.