YOUTHFORCE NOLA
A Career Readiness Initiative for New Orleans Students

Request for Proposals: Explore, Pilot + Plan, and Implementation Application

Executive Summary

The YouthForce NOLA Steering Committee seeks proposals from schools interested in exploring, piloting and planning, or implementing high-quality career and technical education school models.

Purpose	*Eligible Applicants*	*Funding*	*Critical Deadlines*
Provide grants to build the capacity of schools to offer the coursework and experiences necessary so that students may develop the knowledge and skills to pursue high-wage, high-demand career pathways.	Open enrollment New Orleans public high schools.	Applicants will apply for grants to Explore ($10,000), Pilot+Plan ($40,000), or Implement ($300,000) Career and Technical Education programming. All grantees will also receive technical assistance.	Applications due Wednesday, November 4, 2015. Implementation applicant interviews will take place November 11, 12, 16, or 17.

Multiple grant rounds are anticipated over the next three to five years. A limited amount of funding is available for this first round; applicants not selected will be invited to re-apply in future rounds.

Background

YouthForce NOLA was launched in summer 2015 as a collaboration between a group of partner organizations[1] fueled by a vision of New Orleans becoming a proof point for career and technical education, with thriving, regional industry-aligned training pathways that prepare students for high-wage, high-demand careers and rigorous post-secondary options. YouthForce NOLA's mission is that every high school student will have access to the information, training, and experiences necessary to prepare for high-wage, high-demand careers aligned to regional industries. Our primary guiding belief is that this work – when done well – will prepare an increasing percentage of New Orleans graduates for success in both college and career. Educate Now! serves as the convener and fiscal agent for YouthForce NOLA.

YouthForce NOLA has identified four key goals to focus our efforts over the next five years:
- 20% of the Class of 2020 will earn industry-recognized culminating credentials that will place them on high-wage, high-demand regional career pathways.
- 10% of the Class of 2020 will complete YouthForce internships.
- Citywide, more students will demonstrate employer validated, career-ready soft skills.
- Citywide, more students will be employed.

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[1] YouthForce NOLA Partner Steering Committee member organizations: Baptist Community Ministries; City of New Orleans; Educate Now!; GNO, Inc.; New Orleans Business Alliance; New Schools for New Orleans; Orleans Parish School Board; Louisiana Recovery School District, United Way of Southeast Louisiana, and Urban League of Greater New Orleans.

A key component of the YouthForce NOLA plan is to build the capacity of schools to offer, or partner externally to offer, the coursework and experiences necessary so that students may develop the knowledge and skills to pursue high-wage, high-demand career pathways. View the full YouthForce NOLA plan, with supporting context on regional high-wage, high-demand industries.

Definitions

A Framework for Career and Technical Education (CTE)

A high-quality CTE program offers each of the following:
- Rigorous academics – Academic program prepares students effectively in core subject areas.
- Real-world technical skills – Technical program builds student awareness of industries and jobs, enables exploration of specific careers, and ultimately prepares students with specific skills in a particular industry.
- Work-based learning – A continuum of work-based learning connects students to the world of work early and often; from early awareness experiences such as guest speakers and business tours, to later, more intensive practicum experiences such as internships.
- Personalized supports – Students receive guidance and counseling throughout their school experience – helping them identify interests, connect with experiences, enroll in coursework, and plan for post-secondary.

Additional Definitions

- High-wage, high-demand (HW-HD) – High-wage is defined in Louisiana as greater than $15 per hour or $31,616 per year. High-demand in Louisiana is defined as regional expanding industries.
- Industry Cluster: A group of similar and related industries that share common technologies and worker skill needs. Various career pathways can be grouped to align to a given industry cluster. YouthForce NOLA is focused on the following, three regional high-wage, high-demand industry clusters: Skilled Crafts, Bio/Health Sciences, and Creative/Digi/IT.
- Industry-recognized culminating credentials – Industry-recognized credentials are defined as a verification of an individual's qualification or competence in a subject or skill, as issued by a third party with the relevant authority to issue such credentials. The term credential encompasses educational certificates, degrees, certifications, and government-issued licenses.[2] Culminating credentials in Louisiana, and for YouthForce NOLA, are defined as those approved by the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council or the equivalent LCTCS Certificate of Technical Studies/Technical Diploma. Culminating credentials are listed by high-wage, high-demand aligned pathway on the state's Jumpstart website here.
- YouthForce Internships (YF Internships) – YouthForce Internships are defined as those including 60 hours of soft skills training and 90 hours of a compensated, work-based internship that includes adult employer interaction. YouthForce NOLA is scaling the YouthForce Internship program to serve an increasing number of students each year and to include school-year internships in addition to summer ones. In order to be eligible, students must have completed aligned coursework and demonstrate soft skills readiness.

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[2] ACTE Online

- Career pathway – A career pathway is defined as a series of structured and connected opportunities and supports such that an employee can advance over time to better jobs and higher levels of education and training.
- Diploma or graduation pathway – A diploma or graduation pathway is defined as the sequence of coursework and experiences a student must complete in order to graduate with a particular state-recognized high school diploma.

Funding

Between 2015 and 2020, YouthForce NOLA will support New Orleans open-enrollment, public high schools looking to refine and expand their school models around CTE. Schools will be eligible for the following grants:

- Exploration: up to $10,000, plus technical assistance
- Pilot + Plan: up to $40,000, plus technical assistance
- Implementation: up to $300,000 over three years, plus technical assistance

Multiple grant rounds are anticipated over the next three to five years. A limited amount of funding is available for this first round; applicants not selected will be invited to re-apply in future rounds.

Overview of Grant Program

This series of grant opportunities are available to schools so that they might move toward readiness, and pursue implementation of, rigorous CTE programming that will help students prepare for careers in high-wage, high-demand industries, learn the world of work, and make more informed post-secondary choices. The grant opportunities are structured so that schools not yet ready for whole-school implementation can move through the pipeline, building momentum and capacity, and ultimately, readiness. Exemplary schools will demonstrate a deep commitment to students' post-secondary success, the transformative power of high-quality CTE, and collaboration with other schools and partner organizations.

YouthForce NOLA seeks to invest school leaders who, over time, will operate high-quality, personalized, and career-focused public schools in New Orleans, with high-quality defined by the following criteria:
- School considered an A or a B on statewide accountability system OR earn a 0.2 effect size,
- A significant percentage of students in the school (approximately 30%) earn industry recognized credentials that will place them on high-wage, high-demand career pathways,
- A significant percentage of students in the school (approximately 20% of rising seniors annually) are eligible and selected for the YouthForce Internship program,
- An increasing percentage of students in the school demonstrate employer-validated, career-ready soft skills,
- An increasing percentage of students in the school earn and maintain employment, and
- Financial sustainability on public funding after three years.

Funding, applicant profile, purpose, deliverables, application length, and requirements by grant type are listed below.

Grant Program	Exploration	Pilot + Whole School PL Model Plan	Implementation
Funding	Up to $10K, plus technical assistance	Up to $40K, plus technical assistance	Up to $300K over three years ($150K, $100K, $50K), plus technical assistance
Applicant Profile	Schools grappling with student retention and graduate post-secondary readiness challenges, and with a desire to understand CTE, its components, exemplary models, and how the school might incorporate career education into their current programs.	Schools that already have a (possibly evolving) vision and theory of action for CTE, are familiar with its components, and have an interest in further familiarizing themselves with it through the implementation of a pilot program and detailed planning.	Schools with a robust vision and theory of action for CTE, have some career education programming under their belt, and the ability to scale said programming school-wide over the next three school years.
Purpose	Exploration Grants will provide funding to research and explore CTE and its components through workshops, conferences, and site visits, with expressed intent that schools will use these resources and experiences to help develop their vision. YouthForce NOLA will provide workshops, site visits, and expert consultants.	Pilot+Plan Grants will provide funding for schools to further explore career education through the implementation of a robust pilot. YouthForce NOLA will provide resources and support for all selected school teams, and school teams will be required to work with an approved technical assistance partner. Ideally, Pilot+Plan schools will apply for future Implementation Grant cohorts.	Implementation Grants will provide funding for schools to implement a comprehensive whole-school CTE plan over three school years. YouthForce NOLA will provide resources and support for selected schools. School teams will be required to work with an approved technical assistance partner.
Deliverables	Schools will submit an application that proposes a CTE exploration plan that identifies key research questions and supporting activities. (Complete Appendices 3 and 4.) At the end of the process, schools will submit their findings, and ideally, schools will apply for Pilot+Plan or Implementation Grants.	Schools will submit an application that outlines their vision for career education and includes a pilot proposal, a plan for pilot implementation, a plan for iteration and continuous improvement, and a method to capture lessons learned. (Complete Appendices 3 and 5.) At the end of the process, schools will submit a report on efforts and a plan for whole-school implementation.	Schools will submit an application that outlines their vision for career education and includes specific targets and outcomes, a plan for implementation, a plan for iteration and continuous improvement, a timeline for scaling, and a method to capture lessons learned. (Complete Appendices 3 and 6.)
Application Length	• 2 pages + cover sheet (see appendices for templates)	• 4-6 pages + cover sheet (see appendices for templates)	• 10-12 pages + cover sheet (see appendices for templates)

Requirements/ Eligibility Criteria	• **Open enrollment public school (participate in OneApp, no testing requirements for admission)** • **Identify a leader for this project, and prioritize his/her time accordingly** • **Agreement to participate in site visits, workshops, and industry awareness-building activities** • **501c3 status; prior to contract, all grantees must provide proof of status**	• **Open enrollment public school (participate in OneApp, no testing requirements for admission)** • **Identify a leader for this project, and prioritize his/her time accordingly** • **Agreement to participate in site visits, workshops, and industry awareness-building activities** • **Commitment to meeting a set of targets for students earning HW-HD credentials, eligible for YF internships, etc.** • **Participation in YF Community of Practice** • **Industry alignment – focus on at least one high-wage, high-demand regional industry** • **Data sharing and reporting** • **Work with an approved technical assistance partner** • **501c3 status; prior to contract, all grantees must provide proof of status**	• **Open enrollment public school (participate in OneApp, no testing requirements for admission)** • **Identify a leader for this project, and prioritize his/her time accordingly** • **Agreement to participate in site visits, workshops, and industry awareness-building activities** • **Commitment to meeting a set of targets for students earning HW-HD credentials, eligible for YF internships, etc.** • **Participation in YF Community of Practice** • **Industry alignment – focus on at least one high-wage, high-demand regional industry** • **Data sharing and reporting** • **Work with an approved technical assistance partner** • **Commitment to achieving financial sustainability over grant period** • **If grant awarded, board chair must sign grant agreement and YouthForce must be placed on board meeting agenda** • **501c3 status; prior to contract, all grantees must provide proof of status**

Application Process

Key Dates

Due Date	Item
10/9/15	RFP released
10/14/15	Q&A conference call, 5-5:30 p.m. and 5:30-6:00 p.m. • The session will repeat two times; attend one • Participant dial-in: 712-432-1500, passcode: 706047#

10/16/15	Letters of Intent due by 12 p.m. to YouthForce@educatenow.net.
	• Include "YouthForce LOI" in the subject line.
	• Include the following in the body of the email:
	  o School name,
	  o CMO name (if applicable), and
	  o Type of grant you plan to apply for.
	• LOIs are non-binding.

10/22/15	In-person information session, 9-10 a.m., location TBD • 9-10 a.m. • Location TBD • RSVP for the information session here • NOTE that this information session will occur immediately prior to the *What Works* Forum with MDRC. RSVP for the *What Works* Forum here
11/4/15	Proposals due by 4 p.m. to YouthForce@educatenow.net • Include "YouthForce application" in the subject line. • Attach all application materials as a PDF, utilizing the cover sheet and application templates provided. • Download Application/Proposal Cover Page and Templates as a Word doc.
11/18/15	Selection committee reviews proposals, and interviews school teams of select implementation applicants
12/1/15	Applicants informed of funding decision

Appendix 1: Support

Support Item	Description	Intended Audience
Site visits	Targeted trips to visit CTE models elsewhere – locally and nationally – in alignment with our regional, priority industry clusters.	• Explore grantees will be invited on site visit at no cost • Pilot+Plan and Implementation grantees may need to use grant funds to cover a portion of costs
Workshops	Targeted workshops led by national CTE experts and local industry experts to build school team understanding of models, options, and regional workforce context.	• Explore and Pilot+Plan grantees • Other grantees may find specific topics helpful
GNO, Inc., World of Work	Career awareness and exploration initiative, including Future Building Fridays, online industry leader connection platform, and technical skills expo. More components planned for the next few years.	• Future Building Fridays: educators (school leaders, counselors, teachers) • Nepris: classroom teachers, CTE leads (in planning for students) • Technical skills expo: students and educators
State and local policy navigation	Targeted support from OPSB, RSD, and LDE in navigating questions of policy and finance.	CTE leads, school leaders from all grantee types
YouthForce Community of Practice	Collaborative, facilitated group of CTE leads – sharing best practices and lessons learned, providing feedback, and accelerating mutual pace of growth	CTE leads from YouthForce NOLA and non-YouthForce NOLA schools
Work-based Learning Planning	GNO, Inc., and NOLABA have committed to cultivate employer champions and partners to support and/or host work-based learning experiences along the continuum.	Pilot+Plan and Implementation grantees
Soft Skills Standards and Measurement	YouthForce NOLA is collaborating with members of the EMPLOY Collaborative to a toolkit of employer-validated, youth-friendly soft skills standards and measurement tools.	All grantees, especially those in pilot+plan and implementation
YouthForce Internships	NOLABA, Educate Now!, and Juma Ventures collaborate in managing the YouthForce Internship program, which connects students to paid internships in high-wage, high-demand industry clusters (more on the YFI in the definitions, above).	Priority recruitment will be given to: Implementation grantees, followed by Pilot+Plan grantees, and then Explore grantees.

Appendix 2: Selection Criteria

Criteria	Explore	Pilot	Implement
CTE Vision & Strategic Objective Alignment: Applicant clearly articulates a strong vision for CTE, clearly describes how the CTE vision aligns with school's larger strategic objectives, and demonstrates a long-term interest in CTE *(pilot+plan & implementation grantees only).*	X	X	X
Leadership & Management Team: *School Leadership and CMO Management Team (where applicable) have the following critical elements in place:* 1. Roles and responsibilities between and within the CMO/school are clearly defined; 2. Staff members at all levels are invested in this project; 3. Project has a clear leader; 4. Project leader has CTE experience *(preferred)*; 5. Continuity of school leadership	X	X	X
Academic Track Record: Applicant is an A or B-rated school, or can demonstrate a positive effect size on student achievement.	X	X	X
College and Career Readiness: Applicant has a strong grasp of the current college and career readiness of the school's students and graduates.	X	X	X
Goals & Outcomes: Applicant has clear and measurable college and career goals and outcomes for their school and CTE programming that include student outcomes.		X	X
Work-Based Learning: Applicant has a clear understanding of the importance of work-based learning, and has strong plans to develop student awareness, facilitate exploration, offer or partner on training, and connect to practicums.		X	X
Thoughtful Research: Applicant has identified goals for the research phase and key CTE research questions that the team plans to explore.	X		
Exploration Plan: Applicant has developed a logical series of activities to conduct research, including key stakeholders who must be engaged, on a reasonable timeline.	X		
Pilot Design: The team clearly outlines a sound CTE pilot design, including a high quality instructional model that is integrated and aligned with critical operational elements (human capital, budget, etc.).		X	
Model Design: Applicant plans a high quality, whole-school implementation, whereby students will have access to the experiences and coursework that will enable them to earn industry recognized, high-wage, high-demand, culminating credentials.			X
Operational Planning: Scheduling, staffing, facilities, etc., will be arranged to best support the instructional model			X
Stakeholder Engagement and Change Management: Applicant has strong plan to (in pilot grants), or has previously engaged, and has plans to continue engaging moving forward (implementation grants), students, staff, families, and community members in the implementation and change management process.		X	X
Monitoring & Continuous Improvement: The team has a plan to monitor success and adapt/improve throughout the year.		X	X
Budget: Applicant presents a sound financial plan.	X	X	X
Student Support: Applicant has clear student support systems (e.g., advising, counseling) in place at all levels.			X
Pilot/Prior CTE Experience: Applicant is able to articulate lessons learned from prior CTE experience, and how those experiences influence the planned implementation model			X
Planning for Implementation: Applicant has a clear timeline and milestones identified for development of whole school implementation plan.		X	

Appendix 3: Application/ Proposal Cover Page(s)

Download the Application/Proposal Cover Page and Templates as a Word document.

CMO/ Non-profit name (if applicable)	
School name	
CEO/Executive Director name (if applicable)	
School Leader/Principal name	
Name, title, phone number, and email address for CTE project lead	
Name, title, phone number, and email address for development (fundraising) contact	
School enrollment (Current and at full enrollment, if different)	
Grade levels served (2015-16 and at full enrollment, if different)	
% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch	
% of students designated English Language Learners	
% of students with special needs	
% of 2015 graduates: earning basic, career, and university diplomas	
# of and % of students participating in pilot or implementation (if implementation, list by grade level)	
Total funding requested through this grant	
For pilot+plan applicants only: Pilot per pupil funding requested (total funding request divided by estimated number of students to participate in the pilot)	
For implementation applicants only: Per pupil funding requested (total funding request divided by number of students enrolled in school)	
List the amount school received, or will receive, this school year from the following funding sources: Carl Perkins, SIG, US DOE CSP	
Industry clusters to be targeted through this grant	
Industry-recognized, culminating credentials students will be able to earn	
Please indicate the month and year when your school will begin participation in OneApp. If your school is already in OneApp, please write "N/A".	

Appendix 4: Application/ Proposal Template for <mark>Explore Grants</mark>

CTE Vision & Strategic Objective Alignment: Describe the growth plans for your school/CMO. Describe your current vision for CTE. (We understand that your current vision could be limited based on exposure.) Describe your organization's experience with and interest in further exploring CTE. *[Response]*
Leadership & Management Team: Describe which team members will be involved in the CTE exploration, what they will do, and why they were selected to participate. *[Response]*
Academic Track Record: List your 2015 school letter grade. If not an A or B, describe contextual data, including effect size, to substantiate the strength of your school's academic program. *[Response]*
College and Career Readiness: Describe the current college and career readiness of your students and graduates. *[Response]*
Thoughtful Research: Describe your goals for the research phase. List the CTE research questions you plan to answer. *[Response]*
Exploration Plan: Describe what you will do to answer your questions. Identify which stakeholders you will engage and why. List the milestones that will mark your exploration path. *[Response]*
Budget: Please attach an itemized project budget to your application. In this space, please answer the following questions: ▪ What is your total projected budget for this pilot? ▪ How much funding are you requesting through this proposal? Describe each expense category that these funds would be used to support. If your proposal request will not cover all projected costs, how will you fund the gap? *[Response]*

Appendix 5: Application/ Proposal Template for <mark>Pilot+Plan Grants</mark>

CTE Vision & Strategic Objective Alignment: Describe the growth plans for your school/CMO. Describe your current vision for CTE. Describe your organization's experience with and interest in further exploring CTE.
[Response]

Leadership & Management Team: Describe which team members will be involved in the pilot and planning, what they will do, and why they were selected to participate.
[Response]

Academic Track Record: List your 2015 school letter grade. If not an A or B, describe contextual data, including effect size, to substantiate the strength of your school's academic program.
[Response]

College and Career Readiness: Describe the current college and career readiness of your students and graduates.
[Response]

Goals & Outcomes: Describe your goals for your school and students, and your goals for the pilot. List any goals related to students earning HW-HD industry-recognized credentials and YF internships. Be sure all goals are specific and measurable.
[Response]

Work-Based Learning: Describe the work-based learning activities you plan to offer to help build awareness, facilitate student exploration, train students, and provide them a practicum.
[Response]

Pilot Design: Describe your planned pilot. Detail how many teachers, classrooms, and students will be involved. Describe specific adult roles and responsibilities in developing and running the pilot. Describe the instructional model. Detail what operational changes will need to be made to support the pilot. How do the various components fit together to form a cohesive model? Describe a day in the life of a student in the program.
[Response]

Stakeholder engagement and change management: Describe what you will do to engage students, staff, families, and community members in the pilot and planning processes.
[Response]

Monitoring & Continuous Improvement: Describe your plan for monitoring progress and improving the model during this school year.
[Response]

Budget: Please attach an itemized project budget to your application. In this space, please answer the following questions:
- What is your total projected budget for this pilot?
- How much funding are you requesting through this proposal? Describe each expense category that these funds would be used to support.
- If your proposal request will not cover all projected costs, how will you fund the gap?

[Response]

Planning for Implementation: Describe your timeline and milestones for developing your whole-school plan.
[Response]

Appendix 6: Application/ Proposal Template for <mark>Implementation Grants</mark>

CTE Vision & Strategic Objective Alignment: Describe the growth plans for your school/CMO. Describe your vision for CTE and how it aligns with your broader school vision and objectives.
[Response]

Leadership & Management Team: Describe which team members will be involved in implementation, what they will do, and why they were selected for this work.
[Response]

Academic Track Record: List your 2015 school letter grade. If not an A or B, describe contextual data, including effect size, to substantiate the strength of your school's academic program.
[Response]

College and Career Readiness: Describe the current college and career readiness of your students and graduates.
[Response]

Goals & Outcomes: Describe your goals for your school and students, and your goals for your new CTE programming. List your targets for students earning HW-HD industry-recognized credentials for each year of the grant. List your targets for students earning spots in the YF Internship program. Be sure all goals are specific and measurable.
[Response]

Work-Based Learning: Describe the work-based learning activities you plan to offer to help build awareness, facilitate student exploration, train students, and provide them a practicum.
[Response]

Model Design: Describe your planned model. Describe specific adult roles and responsibilities in both coursework and work-based learning experiences. Describe the instructional model. How do the various components fit together to form a cohesive model? Describe a day in the life of a student in the program. What requirements – if any – will there be for students to enter or stay in the program? Which industry recognized, high-wage, high-demand, culminating credentials will students be able to earn? How will you grow the model out over time?
[Response]

Operational Planning: Describe how scheduling, staffing, facilities, etc., will be arranged or changed to best support the CTE instructional model.
[Response]

Student Supports: Describe the student support systems you offer, or will offer, to support students throughout their years at your school.
[Response]

Stakeholder engagement and change management: Describe efforts to date to engage students, staff, families, and community members in piloting and planning. Describe efforts planned for moving forward.
[Response]

Monitoring & Continuous Improvement: Describe your plan for monitoring progress and improving the model during this school year and beyond.
[Response]

(Continued on following page.)

Budget: Please attach an itemized project budget to your application. In this space, please answer the following questions:

- What is your total projected CTE budget for the three years?
- How much funding are you requesting through this proposal? Describe each expense category that these funds would be used to support.
- If your proposal request will not cover all projected costs, how will you fund the gap?

[Response]

Pilot/Prior CTE Experience: Describe any lessons learned from prior CTE experience, and how those experiences influence the planned implementation model.

[Response]