



Hiring Guide

This guide provides a roadmap for any company, no matter the size of the business or the industry—whether you're just getting started or already have a hiring program that you want to expand for opportunity youth.

Get Started

- 1 If this is a new effort, it's okay to start small. Regardless of scope, creating hiring opportunities can be a win for both your business and young adults.
- 2 Partner organizations can significantly help you develop successful initiatives in many key areas, such as finding opportunity youth.

Hiring Definitions and Benefits

While some employers will want to develop mentoring, school-to-work and internship pathways for opportunity youth, others may prefer to pursue a more direct route to hiring talent.

For example, if your business is expanding exponentially due to customer demand or if you are opening additional facilities in your area, you'll need to quickly fill a large number of open entry-level positions. Tapping into a large talent pool of available opportunity youth sooner might be the most strategic option for your business needs.

Hiring Definitions

We've defined "hiring" as an employment pathway in this guide. As the skills gap in America continues to widen, employers need to develop innovative recruitment and retention strategies. Those that use employment pathways to expand their hiring pool will have a competitive advantage in the war for talent.

This guide is designed to encourage you to expand your company's hiring practices by working with opportunity youth. We'll explore some of these practices here, along with tips for finding these young adults and assessing them in new ways in order to hire them to fill entry-level positions.

Worth Noting: Other Pathway Models

Although this guide is devoted to a hiring pathway, there are best practice models in other employment pathways, such as school-to-work and internships, that also include hiring as a major outcome/goal. These include Southwire, Gap Inc. and Expeditors.

The business benefits of a hiring pathway:

Hiring opportunity youth gives employers greater access to a large talent pool that competitors may overlook. Additional benefits include:

- 1 **Cost-effective Talent Development**
Build your pipeline with more qualified and motivated workers
- 2 **Increased Retention**
Increase retention among newly hired and existing employees by developing loyal, more fulfilled workers
- 3 **More Diversity**
Connect to a talent pool with diversity of experience, background and fresh thinking
- 4 **Stronger Community Impact**
 - Boost visibility with your community, your consumers, future leaders, and potential talent
 - Get your products and work in front of young, in-touch consumers

“Fifty-three percent of business leaders report facing challenges in recruiting non-managerial employees with the skills, training and education their companies need.”

Step 1: Define Your Open Positions

The first step to developing a hiring pathway for opportunity youth is to carefully define the requirements for your open positions. It’s a good idea to identify the skills and competencies that are necessary up front, as well as those that can be developed on the job (e.g., a good cashier requires basic math skills but can learn the ins and outs of a cash register fairly quickly).

You should also define an ideal candidate’s professional skills, attitude and personality traits. The key is to think about all of the required skills—not just the more traditional ones. There are many valuable traits for workplace success that opportunity youth can contribute, many of which have little to do with a diploma or degree, such as the following.

Professional skills

Technical or applied skills might be easier to quantify and confirm by degrees, but it’s vital to recognize the importance of other skills required for workplace success that opportunity youth can bring to the table. These include critical thinking, reliability and conflict resolution.

Values and mindset towards work

Attitudes such as personal initiative and drive are revealed through interactions and behaviors and are relatively difficult to teach. The most successful opportunity youth in training-to-hire programs have a strong work ethic. They're loyal, punctual, good communicators and motivated to be in the workplace.

"Year Up employees are better prepared professionally than some of the graduates from Yale we're hiring."

– Corporate Leader

Success Story: City of Albuquerque

The City of Albuquerque, in partnership with Innovate+Educate, is using a job skills assessment tool called ACT's WorkKeys to increase job opportunities for its young citizens without a high school or college degree.

Step 2: Outreach and Recruitment

Now that you've defined your open positions, you're ready to identify potential candidates and gauge their skills level and work history. A community based partner organization can significantly help your efforts in this phase. Partners play varying roles, including recruiting participants, providing life and work skills training and securing wraparound supports. A local partner organization, such as a vocational or technical school, can help you create a strong hiring pathway.

Set up your company's recruiting process.

Together with your partner align on answers to questions such as:

- What assessments will be administered?
- Who will interview candidates?
- What are good interview questions?
- How many references will be checked?
- Do existing barriers exclude opportunity youth? How could they be changed?

Spotlight: skills-based hiring

Many innovative employers, such as the City of Albuquerque (in partnership with Innovate+educate), are embracing a skills-based hiring method to identify and sustain high-quality talent that's often been overlooked by traditional hiring practices.

Because the majority of jobs across the U.S. require skills not always identified by a college diploma, skills-based hiring can create a more effective match between employer and employee. Research suggests that skills-based hiring includes benefits such as:

- Lower turnover
- Reduced employee training time, and
- Reductions in cost-to-hire

Research has shown that employers who hire by skill scores ("skills-based hiring) experience a 25 to 75 percent reduction in turnover, a 50 to 70 percent reduction in time to hire, a 70 percent reduction in time to train and many other benefits.

Innovate & Educate

Headquartered in New Mexico, Innovate+Educate uses a skills-based hiring approach to increase job opportunities for young people without a high school or college degree.

Keep an open mind while evaluating youth.

If given the chance, opportunity youth can rise to the challenge. Your partner organization can help by providing a valuable reference for the opportunity youth candidates you are considering.

“You’re dealing with candidates that are sometimes nontraditional. They come from different cultures. English is sometimes their second language. And a lot of them leave work and they either go to a second or third job or they have children, which is not the traditional entry-level individual that has come into the past.”

- Richard Curtis, vice president of talent acquisition, State Street

Maximize your outreach

Once you start hiring opportunity youth, your best source of additional candidates will likely come from that same pool of talent. You can also leverage social media, referrals from existing employees and local advertising.

Success Story: UPS

UPS worked with education providers to create Metropolitan College, which serves as a recruitment and retention strategy for the company. The college also gives its employees access to continuing education—a move that resulted in a 50 percent decrease in turnover and a greater number of educated, skilled employees with long-term career pathways ahead of them.

Step 3: Onboarding & Management

When onboarding opportunity youth, keep in mind that they might need some additional support in the early days.

Clearly spell out expectations.

Work with your hiring managers and partner to provide the best orientation program for young entry-level workers. Decide how new opportunity youth employees will be supported to optimize their time-to-productivity and ensure retention.

Consider school-to-work or mentoring.

Together with your partner, consider a school-to-work training pathway and/or leveraging your company's own training programs to maximize talent potential. A mentoring pathway is another consideration for enhancing skills and boosting employee engagement.

Hiring pathways in action

- In Summer 2012, in response to the Presidential Call to Action, Bright Horizons committed to adding at least 1,000 summer jobs in its centers and summer camps and to providing life skills programming for students in local high schools, community colleges and social service agencies
- Goodwill Industries committed to hiring 1,200 youth, providing 3,200 youth with life skills services and more than 2,300 with work skills services
- The U.S. Department of Interior, through a partnership with Service and Conservation Corps, committed to providing 12,000 young Americans with work opportunities on public lands, tribal lands, national parks, wildlife refuges and environmental restoration projects nationwide.

Success Story: Stepping Up

Stepping Up, an employer-led partnership comprised of healthcare, labor, education and community organizations, created a track of underemployed adults, including opportunity youth, who are placed in entry-level health care positions. More than 70 percent graduated from the community pipeline program and received jobs

Success Story: PG&E

By connecting with industry and higher-education partners, Pacific Gas & Electric Company's (PG&E) PowerPathway™ is a network of education and training programs that customizes its workforce and has generated a 3-to-1 return on investment.