WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §5b-2Q-4

§5B-2Q-4. Creation of West Virginia Youth Summer Employment and Career Readiness Program.

(a) Program created. – The West Virginia Youth Summer Employment and Career Readiness Program is hereby established within the Department of Commerce's Division of Workforce Development. The department shall administer the program to provide youth who are at least 14 and not more than 20 years of age at the time of participation in the program with paid summer employment, structured work-based learning, and career exploration opportunities aligned with workforce needs of the State of West Virginia.

(b) Grant placements. – In awarding grants and approving placements in the program, the department shall direct funding across all regions of the state and shall emphasize training and exposure to employment opportunities that include apprenticeships, internships, and paid employment experiences that prepare participating youth for emerging and essential job growth sectors.

(c) Program design. – The department shall, in administering the program, prioritize the facilitation of work experiences that emphasize:

(1) High-demand and emerging industries identified through labor market data and workforce development plans;

(2) Opportunities that provide foundational skills for long-term employment and career advancement;

(3) Public service opportunities that provide participating youth with the chance to assist and improve their local community and to be exposed to the rewards and benefits of public service;

(4) Exposure to entrepreneurship, self-employment, and small business development, including skills relevant to starting and operating a business; and

(5) Career pathways that align with regional economic development strategies.

(d) Coordination. – In administering the program and awarding grants, the department shall coordinate with the West Virginia Department of Education and with individual county boards of education to identify the types of training opportunities currently being provided in the state and in individual counties. The department shall further coordinate with the Division of Labor and with its economic development partners to identify emerging job growth trends and to communicate those trends to employer partners and program participants. The department shall actively engage with employers, industry associations, public and private educational institutions, and economic development partners to identify

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current and projected employment trends and to inform, recruit, and encourage employer partners to offer placements aligned with those trends.

(e) Participation. – In administering the program, the department shall provide equal access to all eligible youth.

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