



Eileen Donoghue  
City Manager

Kara Keefe Mullin  
Assistant City Manager

TO: Eileen Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*  
FROM: Shannon Norton, Executive Director, MassHire Lowell Career Center  
DATE: January 27, 2022  
RE: C. Robinson - Req. City Mgr. Have the Proper Department Explore Any And All Grant Funding Mechanisms Available That Would Allow The City To Offer An Increased Amount of Summer Employment Possibilities For Our Youth.

The MassHire Lowell Young Adult Program has been running a Summer Youth Employment Program for decades. Over the last several years, the funding had been decreasing because of State budget cuts. However, in the past two fiscal years, we have seen an increase in funding.

Our primary funding source is YouthWorks, which is funded by Commonwealth Corporation under the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development's State budget line item. This fiscal year the legislature increased the budget by 20%. We have not received our allocation for this upcoming summer. However, last summer, we received \$722,200 in funding. If we were to get a 20% increase, we would be over \$860,000. We should know within the next few weeks what the City of Lowell's allocation will be.

Last summer, our goal was to hire 230 young adults ages 14-21 for the six-week summer employment program. However, only 155 young adults applied and were placed in the program. This was highly unusual, as we typically turn youth away because of the limits of our funding. Our evaluation of that situation was that most of the program was virtual due to COVID, which the young adults did not like, and jobs at local retail outlets like Walmart and Target had many openings that paid more per hour.

Our plan for this year is to enroll closer to the 300 mark and return to in person worksites. Worksites for the summer youth program include: the City's parks and recreation program, local non-profit summer programs, and placements at various City Departments, including the Water Department, DPW, the Library and the Assessor's office. We also have a "Van Crew" that at the direction of the DPW, goes to locations around the City in order to clean up and beautify those areas. In addition to those worksites, the staff have worked diligently at creating relationships with local small businesses such as "The Social Pup", "Powerhouse Juice" and "The Bike Connector". These opportunities offer private sector experience, while also supporting the revitalization of downtown small businesses.

Commonwealth Corporation has increased the age limit this year to 25 and they have granted us additional funds to plan for how we can recruit, engage and place in subsidized employment young adults aged 22-25. This will give us an opportunity to reach out to additional local businesses to sponsor slots for the summer so we can place these older young adults and expose them to more career opportunities. A goal would be to connect these older young adults to some of the training programs we have available, in particular the evening programs at the technical high schools and Middlesex Community College. Those training programs include, HVAC, Carpentry, Medical Assistant, Plumbing, Auto Tech, Welding and CNC Machining.

In closing, we are always on the lookout for new grant opportunities, and we will continue to apply for additional funding for young adult employment opportunities.

Please contact me with questions at [snorton@lowellma.gov](mailto:snorton@lowellma.gov) or (978) 805-4816.