

REVEALING OPPORTUNITIES, PROVIDING PATHWAYS



# Hartford Summer Youth Employment + Learning Program





# Moving Forward Together

**The Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program (SYELP) has special significance in our community – giving young people the chance to earn a paycheck while building the experience and the skills that are necessary for success in college and careers.** The SYELP boosts graduation rates and college enrollment, providing know-how, confidence and tangible skills.

Our goals are straightforward: to provide summer employment opportunities in a variety of industries and vocations; to increase community engagement by recruiting a variety of business partners, sponsors, and educational institutions; to guide students in the transition from short-term summer employment to long-term employment; and to provide professional development and networking opportunities for participating students, increasing their college and career readiness.

As a city, we've made summer youth employment a priority. We're proud to partner with the Connecticut Department of Labor, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Capital Workforce Partners and many incredible business, organizations, and individuals who are working diligently to ensure that we can continue to give young people in Hartford this critical summer work experience.

We're inspired by the dedication of our young people and grateful for everyone involved in this collaborative effort. Thank you to everyone who makes this program a success.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luke A. Bronin', written over a white background.

**LUKE A. BRONIN**

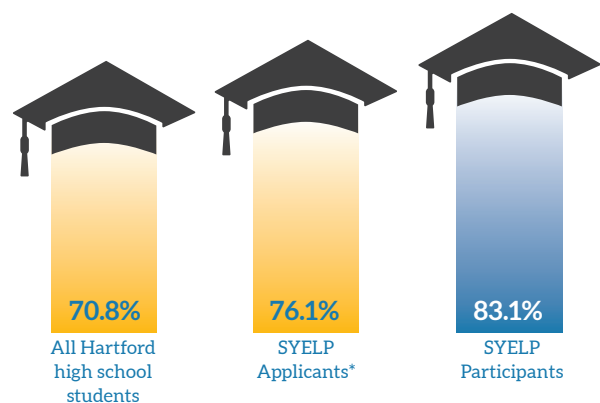
Mayor

# The Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program (SYELP) is a summer employment initiative and is part of Hartford's College and Career Readiness efforts. SYELP is for students and young people up to age 24, providing the ways and means to develop skills that will prepare our young people for long term success, both academically and professionally.

The program, implemented each summer, provides tiered career readiness development for youth between the ages of 14 and 24, through six-week summer jobs in high-demand sectors at several hundred worksites. **SYELP pairs participants with employers in the region, providing hands-on understanding of various employment opportunities and career pathways.** Importantly, SYELP encourages young people to remain in school by demonstrating the links between school completion and success in the workplace.

SYELP is strengthened by the indispensable support of area businesses - and their employees - who provide hundreds of worksites and adult-mentoring opportunities to paid summer interns, sharing their knowledge, experience and expertise, while contributing to a local talent pipeline responsive to employers' needs.

SYELP is a key component in Hartford's multi-layered approach - alongside the Hartford Youth Service Corps. and the Hartford Student Internship Program - which together provide comprehensive program initiatives specifically designed to help Hartford young people succeed.



**SYELP participants graduate from high school at a higher rate.**

\*Students who applied but were not program participants. Most recent data available.



# Yielding Real Results, Changing Lives



The SYELP has proven to have a winning formula on both sides of the equation, providing students with valuable experience that improves their future prospects and earning solid reviews from the businesses and organizations they're working with.

**The program helps young people develop work-readiness and education skills, such as time management, communication and teamwork in a professional setting.** It also helps young people build the confidence needed to work and communicate effectively in a professional environment as they prepare for life beyond high school.

In 2018, 84 percent of employers participating in the city's SYELP program indicated they would hire the young person again, up from 77 percent the previous year. SYELP successfully recruited a total of 240 employers across 13 industries across the for-profit, nonprofit and public sectors in 2018.

Through the years, job titles of participating students reflect many industries and career paths, such as Assistant Technician, Teacher's Aide, Data Entry and Analysis, Culinary Trainee, and Customer Service Representative. Others include Law Office Intern, Media Production Assistant, Public Safety Intern, and Survey Technician. A solid 76 percent of students successfully completed the program in 2018, a significant jump from 2017, and they performed better across required program components.

**240 employers. 13 industries.**

**84% of employers would hire a SYELP student again.**



“For me, it was a great experience, I learned so much and it was a great way for me to keep occupied in the summer and meet new people along the way.” -Karelis Morales

The growing success of the Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program is clear in the metrics that matter most.

**High school graduation rates and post-secondary enrollment rates are higher for students who participate in the program than for those who apply but do not participate.** Should future years sustain and grow the number of student applicants, and simultaneously increase the number of potential placements at for-profit, non-profit and government organizations, the data suggests that an even greater number of Hartford students will benefit.

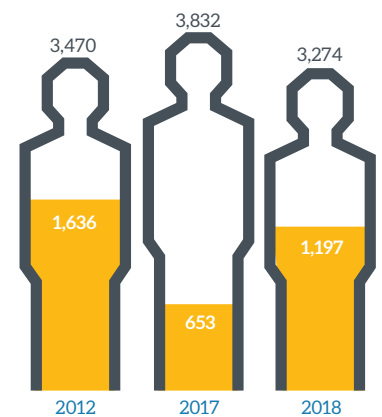
**Students participating in the program for two, three or four summers had a higher graduation rate than those that participated once.** Two-year participants, for example, graduated high school at a rate exceeding

85 percent. Overall, those who participated – regardless of how many summers – had a higher graduation rate than those who applied but were not able to participate because the number of students exceeded the number of worksite placements available.

**Resume completion among program participants climbed from 67% in 2012 to 94.5% in 2016; portfolio completion from 58.4% to 87.6% and successful completion of the program from 43.3% to 79.5%.**

In 2018, 56% of participants were female. The graduation rates are slightly higher for females than males, 85.7% vs. 80.1%. Among Black and Hispanic students who participate in SYELP, females enroll in college at higher rates – an 11 point gap among Black students; a 7 point differential among Hispanic students.

The average age is just under 16; in 2018, 44% of participants were age 15 or 16. Among the program goals is starting sooner and stressing readiness: increase the years of participation, with students joining the program as freshmen and staying through graduation.



## Participation

SYELP Total Applicants
  SYELP Total Participants



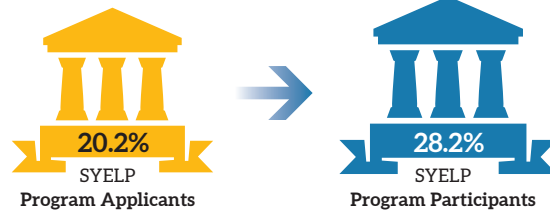


# Varied Workplaces, More Ways to Grow

## The return-on-investment

**is unmistakable.** High school graduation and post-secondary enrollment rates will be higher, if a student participates in SYELP. The high school graduation rate climbs 7 percentage points and the college enrollment percentage jumps eight points among students who spent a summer, or summers, in the SYELP. Both numbers are not only statistically significant, but strengthen students' foundation for realizing their potential in academic pursuits and beyond.

Worksites include an array of businesses in various industries, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies, including Hartford city departments. In 2017 and 2018, approximately 40 percent of workplaces were at for-profit businesses; the remainder at nonprofit organizations and in government.



## College Enrollment

By sector in 2016, the most prevalent locations were in retail, health care and social services, educational services, and arts, entertainment & recreation. Fewer locations were in the areas of financial services, information and manufacturing, suggesting areas for future growth of the SYELP program on the employment side of the student-workplace equation.

Expanding participation has many elements, intertwined and interdependent. The number of applicants and participants had been fairly stable until 2016 and 2017, when participation dropped dramatically due to

fiscal constraints at the State level. Funding was largely restored in 2018, and the number of participants rebounded. The demand for program slots has consistently outpaced available resources, causing substantial waiting lists.

The rate of post-secondary enrollment increases among students who participate in two, three or four summers of SYELP placements – including nearly one-third of those who participate for four years. **Overall, SYELP participants are more likely to enroll in college than applicants to SYELP, by a margin of 28.2% to 20.2%.**

## Best Outcomes.

- > Retail
- > Health Care & Social Services
- > Educational Services
- > Arts Entertainment & Recreation

# Looking Ahead, Building Futures

**Developing direct employer financial support and additional funding, and growing the number of participating employers, will help ensure the sustainability and growth of the SYELP. The data demonstrate how powerful the SYELP is and can be.**

Research indicates that skills needed to succeed in the 21st century workplace have changed dramatically in recent years. Summer programs geared to prepare young people for productive employment strive to fill the skills gap and help young

people acquire necessary competencies.

Rather than treating enrollment, building skills, and finding a job as discrete and sequential, summer jobs initiatives can engage across all three intersections. Employers, for example, “pre-hire” youth and oversee - and in some cases, even sponsor - their education, offering a full-time position at the conclusion of the program or end of term.

Moving forward, SYELP strives to identify young people with targeted risk factors and focus on including them in

the program, collaborate with participating employers to provide effective coaching and in-house training, and design a learning experience progression from summer to school year which will lead to a “talent bank.” Online social networks, assessment tools, and partnerships with higher education institutions can augment the program, enhancing networking and knowledge acquisition aimed at professional opportunities.

The SYELP has proven to be an effective means of enhancing the college and career potential of Hartford young people. While the program can be strengthened as it grows, highlighting its value to potential participants - both students and employers - must remain a city priority coupled with sufficient resources to sustain and advance its success.



**“The summer youth internship program was amazing. I had a great time and experience working at Pepsico.” -Jacob Feliciano**



Hartford's **Department of Families, Children, Youth and Recreation** promotes the successful lifelong learning opportunities of Hartford children, youth and families through early education, workforce development and recreation. These are responsibilities we take seriously, as this report highlights.

The commitment of the Hartford Public Schools and Capital Workforce Partners are indispensable in the Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program (SYELP). Providers serving Hartford young people include

Blue Hills Civic Association, Center for Latino Progress, Community Renewal Team, Our Piece of the Pie; their efforts are essential to the program's success. Also, the success of this program rests on the determination of our youth participants, some of whom are featured in these pages, and in the support of our Hartford leadership and residents.

SYELP receives financial support from the City of Hartford, Connecticut State Department of Labor, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and additional funders, for which we are grateful. Appreciation is also extended to Rich Pearson of Capital Workforce Partners, Della Hughes of Brandeis University and Ron Schack of The Charter Oak Group for their work in the preparation of analysis materials highlighted in this document.

No task is more important, or more imperative, than supporting and encouraging our young people. That is at the heart of the Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program. It is a valuable and meaningful collaboration, reflected in the faces and futures of our young people.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Kimberly D. Oliver". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**KIMBERLY D. OLIVER**, Director

Department of Families, Children,  
Youth & Recreation

# SYELP



In collaboration with our partners, The city of Hartford's Summer Youth Employment + Learning Program is making a difference for our young people.



Mayor Bronin, Judy McBride, Director of Grants & Partnerships, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and Alex B. Johnson, President & CEO of Capital Workforce Partners.



Department of Families,  
Children, Youth, and Recreation

City of Hartford  
550 Main Street, Rm 305  
Hartford, CT 06103  
860.757.9595  
[www.hartford.gov/dfcyr](http://www.hartford.gov/dfcyr)