

Funding for Workforce Development in Mayor Peduto's Proposed 2021 Budget



The COVID-19 pandemic and recession have highlighted how quickly the job market can change and the need for training, job-search assistance, and wraparound services as many workers are unlikely to return to their old jobs. The existing racial inequalities in the workforce have increased as the COVID-19 recession is hurting more vulnerable groups, women and people of color, who are concentrated in jobs with high unemployment (e.g. restaurants, hospitality, and retail). These communities are also overrepresented in low-wage essential work, and workers who put their lives on the line to deliver services in health care settings, supermarkets, and delivering take-out. The city provides limited funding towards workforce development but should leverage its power in developing partnerships around industry best practices.

The city funds a small portion of workforce development initiatives. Most workforce development funding for the city comes from the federal government, with smaller amounts in state grants. The Pittsburgh summer jobs program, or “Learn & Earn Summer Youth Employment Initiative,” is funded by community development and block grant (CBDG) funds. While the city itself manages the summer jobs program, it now provides Partner4Work (P4W) with \$1.5 million annually to convert the summer jobs program to a year-round jobs program targeting youth. Given the limited funding, the city’s—and county’s—most important workforce responsibility is overseeing the programs funded by the federal government.

Disjointed workforce programs. A common critique of workforce programs is that they are fragmented and siloed from each other, and have weak connections to the demand side of the job market. On this front, the city supported the hiring of Earl Buford to head P4W in 2018. Mr. Buford is a national workforce development leader known for implementing industry-specific approaches to meeting employers’ skill needs and helping workers access family sustaining jobs. P4W has strengthened an industry-driven workforce initiative in construction which has enabled 50 residents to obtain registered apprenticeships and employment, 44 of them Black. P4W is strengthening industry-specific initiatives in health care, manufacturing, and hospitality/janitorial work—sectors hit hard by the pandemic.

Recommendations: There are steps the city can take to build upon existing relationships and support workforce development, including

- Develop a joint city-Partner4Work plan to integrate all the city’s workforce development efforts around the use of sector partnerships and the delivery of workforce services to help populations with barriers obtain family-sustaining employment in partnership employers.
- Develop an innovative recruitment plan for new city hires that incorporates best industry partnership practices and that considers expanding innovative apprenticeships to onboard more city employees.
- Include the county, and anchor institutions in collaborative recruitment and placement efforts that enable more low-income people to access family-sustaining careers in the city.
- Form a city-union-community task force to mitigate the impact of any layoffs due to cuts in city departments on workers and low-income and other vulnerable families and communities.

For the full report, please go to: https://krc-pbpc.org/research_publication/budgeting-our-values-analysis-pgh-2021-budget-proposal/.