

August 5, 2026

To: Mayor and Members of City Council

From: Sheryl M.M. Long, City Manager 202602430

Subject: **Workforce Development Programs and Future Talent Readiness**

REFERENCE DOCUMENT #202601062

On March 9, 2026, the Economic and Cultural Opportunity Committee referred the following for a report:

MOTION, submitted by Vice Mayor Kearney, WE MOVE for the administration to prepare a report within 60 days on all City opportunities for workforce development including, but not limited to the Youth2Work Program, Career Pathways Initiative, Fire Cadets (youth), Police Cadets (youth), Buildings & Inspections Academy, internships with departments, and other opportunities. (BALANCE ON FILE IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between 2023 and 2025, the City of Cincinnati supported workforce development through more than 28 programs across 12 City departments, serving approximately 1,768 participants and investing more than \$7 million in workforce pipeline development. These initiatives ranged from youth employment and internship opportunities to specialized technical academies, public safety career pathways, cooperative education placements, professional certification programs, and leadership development efforts. Collectively, these programs provided participants with exposure to public service careers while helping develop technical, professional, and workplace readiness skills and supporting the City's long-term talent needs.

Key findings include:

- More than \$7 million invested in workforce development initiatives through a combination of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding, Career Pathways Initiative (Fund 308) resources, General Fund appropriations, enterprise utility funds, grants, foundation-supported internships, educational partnerships, and departmental operating budgets.
- Workforce development opportunities were available across a broad range of fields, including public safety, engineering, construction and inspections, utilities, information technology, planning, finance, law, and municipal administration.
- Significant youth engagement occurred through programs such as Youth2Work, the Police and Fire Cadet Programs, Police Department internships and job shadowing opportunities, and other youth-focused career exploration initiatives.
- The City expanded specialized workforce pipelines through innovative programs such as the Building Inspector Training Academy, a first-of-its-kind Ohio Board of Building

Standards-approved local training program designed to address recruitment challenges in a critical technical occupation.

- Departments strengthened partnerships with colleges, universities, nonprofits, foundations, workforce organizations, and educational institutions to create pathways into public service careers.
- Several programs now function as direct recruitment and talent-development pipelines supporting future employment opportunities within City government.

The Administration surveyed departments to identify workforce development activities occurring between 2023 and 2025. Programs included formal workforce academies, youth employment programs, internships, cooperative education placements, fellowships, job shadowing opportunities, educational partnerships, public safety career pathways, and professional development initiatives. The following report provides an overview of these efforts and the City's investment in preparing current and future generations for careers in public service.

Departments provided the best available information for the reporting period. Some departments noted limitations in historical demographic, ZIP code, participant outcome, or expenditure tracking due to record-keeping practices, staffing transitions, or the nature of educational partnership programs. Where demographic, geographic, expenditure, or participant outcome information was unavailable, departments provided the best information available at the time of reporting. To maintain the readability of this report, some departmental information has been summarized; however, the underlying source data used in the preparation of this report are available upon request.

KEY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS AND FUNDING SOURCES

The City's workforce development efforts are supported through a combination of federal funding, City resources, educational partnerships, nonprofit organizations, and departmental operating budgets. While individual programs vary by department, many initiatives share common funding sources and partnership structures that help create pathways into public service careers.

Several departments participate in the Cincinnati Recreation Commission's Youth2Work (Y2WK) program, which provides seasonal employment opportunities for Cincinnati youth. Youth2Work placements are primarily funded through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) resources and Career Pathways Initiative (Fund 308) support. Through these placements, participants gain workplace experience while supporting City operations across multiple departments.

Departments also partner with colleges and universities through internship and cooperative education programs. These partnerships provide students with practical work experience in engineering, information technology, public administration, finance, planning, law, environmental services, and public safety. Many internship positions are funded through departmental operating budgets or enterprise funds, while others are unpaid educational experiences coordinated through academic institutions.

Several departments reported participation in established workforce development partnerships, including the Murray & Agnes Seasongood Good Government Foundation Internship Program, Miami University's Ohio Public Leaders Program, the Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education (SOCHE), INTERalliance, Military SkillBridge, and various educational outreach and mentorship programs.

In addition to student-focused opportunities, departments also reported workforce development initiatives designed to strengthen the skills of current employees through leadership development, professional certification, technical training, and advancement programs.

The Career Pathways Initiative (Fund 308) serves as a central workforce development resource supporting youth employment, internships, cooperative education placements, workforce readiness training, and public-sector career pathways. During the reporting period, Fund 308 supported Youth2Work programming, Fire Cadet programming, CPD workforce development initiatives, cooperative education placements, paid internships, and Financial Literacy and Social Emotional Learning training for participants.

BUILDINGS AND INSPECTIONS

The Department of Buildings and Inspections (B&I) administers the Building Inspector Training Academy, a 48-week workforce development program established in 2024 to prepare entry-level candidates for careers in building inspection. The Academy combines classroom instruction in construction fundamentals and building codes with supervised field experience, equipping participants with the skills required to pursue Ohio Building Inspector certification and potential employment with the City of Cincinnati. Designed to address workforce needs in a specialized field that is difficult to recruit through traditional methods, the program builds a pipeline of candidates with construction-related aptitude and an interest in public service through structured training, mentorship, and hands-on experience. B&I reported that the Academy is the first locally developed training program approved by the Ohio Board of Building Standards, marking a significant milestone in locally driven workforce development for technical roles.

B&I reported total program costs of approximately \$1.57 million for Cohort 1 (FY2024–FY2025) and approximately \$2.03 million for Cohort 2 (FY2025–FY2026), for a total reported investment of approximately \$3.6 million funded through General Fund resources.

Building Inspector Training Academy					
Report Period	Funding Source/Expense	Number of Participants	Race	Gender	Age
FY24-FY25 Cohort 1	General Fund \$1,571,025.00	22	14 Black 8 White	10 BM 4 BF 7 WM 1 WF	20-30: 3 30+: 14
FY25-FY26 Cohort 2	General Fund \$2,032,568.00	26	11 Black 15 White	9 BM 2 BF 15 WM	20-30: 3 30+: 23

CINCINNATI RECREATION COMMISSION (CRC)

CRC's primary workforce development initiative during the reporting period was the Youth2Work (Y2WK) program, a summer employment program that provides Cincinnati youth ages 14 to 24 with paid work experience, career exploration opportunities, and workforce readiness training. The program emphasizes early workforce exposure, workplace readiness, and civic engagement through supervised placements with public, nonprofit, and private sector partners. Participants develop essential skills in workplace etiquette, financial literacy, and foundational job competencies through a combination of workshops, presentations, and hands-on experience, while

gaining insight into potential career pathways. As an entry point into the workforce, Y2WK supports the development of life skills, builds early work experience, and strengthens the City's long-term talent pipeline by preparing youth for future employment opportunities.

According to information provided by the Office of Grants Administration, CRC-administered Youth2Work programming received approximately \$757,927 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Career Pathways Initiative funding between 2023 and 2025, including approximately \$138,122 in 2023, \$311,089 in 2024, and \$308,716 in 2025.

CRC Youth to Work (Y2WK) Program						
Report Period	Funding Source/Expense	Number of Participants	Race	Gender	Age	Zip code
2023 ¹	CDBG \$138,122.08	224	66% Black/African American, 25% White, 4% Black/African American & White, 4% Other, 1% Asian	50% male, 48% female, 2% non-binary/transgender	<18: 87% 18-30: 13% 30+: 0%	29.91% from outside the city
2024*	CDBG \$477,0004.00	140		62% female, 34% male, 1% non-binary, 3% other	<18: 93% 18-30: 7% 30+: 3%	7% from outside the City
2025	CDBG \$565,142.00	123	70% Black/African American, 27% White, 1% Black/African American & White, 1% Other, 1% Asian	53% female, 46% male, 1% non-binary-transgender		13.91% from outside the city

CINCINNATI POLICE DEPARTMENT (CPD)

The Cincinnati Police Department (CPD) reported a variety of workforce development and career pathway initiatives designed to expose youth, college students, military personnel transitioning to civilian careers, and emerging professionals to opportunities in law enforcement, public safety, technology, and victim advocacy services. During the reporting period, CPD offered workforce development opportunities through unpaid college internships, SOCHE-supported internships, the Seasongood Internship Program, INTERalliance technology internships, the Department of Defense SkillBridge Program, high school job shadowing opportunities, the Understudy Program, and social work internships supporting witness advocacy services.

¹ * The Cincinnati Recreation Commission (CRC) noted that, due to staff transitions within the Youth2Work program and financial management functions during the reporting period, certain detailed data elements were not readily available. Some demographic data for 2024 and budget data for 2023 could not be fully verified at the time of reporting. Reported expenditures may also be affected by the timing of summer youth employment activities, which span multiple fiscal years, and by CDBG allocation and reimbursement timing, particularly during May and June, which may result in reporting lags across fiscal years. CRC indicated that additional analysis may be conducted, including a review of internal systems, should more detailed information be required.

These initiatives provide participants with exposure to public safety operations, investigative and administrative functions, information technology, community engagement, and victim services while developing professional skills and increasing awareness of career opportunities within municipal government. CPD also reported several emerging workforce development initiatives outside the reporting period, including expanded job shadowing opportunities, drone technology internships, and additional social work internship placements.

Between 2023 and 2025, CPD reported 156 annualized participants across its workforce development programs. The largest workforce development initiative during the reporting period was the Understudy Program, which served 14 participants in 2024 and 24 participants in 2025. While several programs operated at no direct cost to the department through educational partnerships and external support, CPD reported expenditures associated with paid internship programs and the Understudy Program.

In addition to departmental resources, CPD workforce development initiatives received approximately \$405,029 in Career Pathways Initiative (Fund 308) support during the reporting period. CPD also reported approximately \$41,600 in SOCHE/Law Enforcement Reimbursement Fund (LERF) supported internship funding, \$5,760 through the Seasingood Internship Program, and approximately \$8,307 in General Fund support for INTERalliance internships, for a total reported workforce development investment of approximately \$460,696.

Report Period ²	Program	Funding Source/Expense	Participants	Race	Gender	Age
2023	Unpaid College Internship	No Cost	34	N/A	N/A	100% 18-30
2023	SOCHE Internship	SOCHE/LERF \$41,600	2	50% Hispanic, 50% Black	100% Male	100% 18-30
2023	Military SkillBridge	No Cost	1	100% Hispanic	100% Male	100% 18-30
2024	Seasingood Internship	\$5,760	1	100% White	100% Female	100% 18-30
2024	INTERalliance Internship	General Fund \$3,692	2	50% White, 50% Black	50% Male, 50% Female	100% Under 18
2024	Understudy Program	General Fund \$128,301	14	71% White, 14% Black, 14% Hispanic	36% Male, 64% Female	100% 18-30
2024	Witness Advocacy Internship	No Cost	5	N/A	20% Male, 80% Female	100% 18-30
2025	Unpaid College Internship	No Cost	31	N/A	N/A	100% 18-30

² CPD reported participant demographic information for certain workforce development programs only. Race, gender, and age percentages reflect available data and may not represent all program participants. ZIP code information was not consistently tracked for the reporting period. Several programs operated through educational partnerships and incurred no direct departmental cost. Data reflects the best information available at the time of reporting

2025	INTERalliance Internship	General Fund \$4,615	2	100% White	100% Male	100% Under 18
2025	CPS Job Shadow	No Cost	2	N/A	50% Male, 50% Female	100% Under 18
2025	Understudy Program	General Fund \$283,558	24	75% White, 25% Black	50% Male, 50% Female	100% 18-30
2025	Witness Advocacy Internship	No Cost	8	N/A	13% Male, 87% Female	100% 18-30

CINCINNATI FIRE DEPARTMENT (CFD)

The Cincinnati Fire Department (CFD) reported two workforce development initiatives during the reporting period: the Fire Cadet Program and the CFD Paramedic Program. Together, these programs support recruitment, workforce readiness, and career advancement within the fire and emergency medical services professions.

The Fire Cadet Program provides teens and young adults with hands-on exposure to fire service and emergency response careers through mentorship, physical training, career exploration, and experiential learning opportunities. The program serves as an early talent pipeline into public safety careers and helps build awareness of employment opportunities within the Cincinnati Fire Department.

The CFD Paramedic Program provides advanced emergency medical training for Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), firefighters, and individuals pursuing careers in emergency medical services. By supporting professional certification and technical skill development, the program helps expand the pool of qualified paramedics while supporting the department's long-term staffing and succession planning needs.

Fire Cadet programming received approximately \$626,903 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Career Pathways Initiative-supported funding between 2023 and 2025, including approximately \$245,004 in 2023, \$157,105 in 2024, and \$224,793 in 2025. The department did not separately report expenditures associated with the CFD Paramedic Program.

Report Period	Program	Funding Source/Expense	Number of Participants	Race	Gender	Age
2023	Fire Cadet	CDBG/Career Pathways Initiative Funding ³	34	Black, Hispanic, and White participants reported	56% Male, 38% Female**	91% Under 18; 9% Ages 18-30

³ Fire Cadet programming received approximately \$626,903 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Career Pathways Initiative-supported funding between 2023 and 2025, including approximately \$245,004 in 2023, \$157,105 in 2024, and \$224,793 in 2025. CFD did not separately report annual expenditures by program year. Race/ethnicity data were reported as categories only and were not available at a level sufficient to calculate percentage distributions. ZIP code information and age data for the CFD Paramedic Program were not reported. Some participant totals may not reconcile precisely due to departmental reporting practices.

2023	CFD Paramedic Program	Not Reported	38	Black and White participants reported	82% Male, 18% Female	Not Available
2024	Fire Cadet	CDBG/Career Pathways Initiative Funding	40	Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian participants reported	55% Male, 45% Female	78% Under 18; 23% Ages 18-30
2024	CFD Paramedic Program	Not Reported	47	Black and White participants reported	87% Male, 13% Female	Not Available
2025	Fire Cadet	CDBG/Career Pathways Initiative Funding	40	Black, Hispanic, and White participants reported	60% Male, 40% Female	92% Under 18; 8% Ages 18-30
2025	CFD Paramedic Program	Not Reported	53	Black and White participants reported	81% Male, 19% Female	Not Available

ADMINISTRATIVE, FINANCIAL, AND LEGAL CAREER PATHWAYS⁴

The **City Solicitor's Office** provides legal internships, fellowships, clerkships, and educational placement opportunities that expose participants to municipal law, legal research, litigation support, and public administration. The department reported approximately \$298,303 in workforce development expenditures during the reporting period, including support for the Law Fellow Program, Summer Law Clerkships, and DePaul Cristo Rey placements. Funding was provided through a combination of General Fund resources, educational partnerships, \$146,000 from the Career Pathways Initiative/Fund 308 and Seasongood-supported internship opportunities. These programs support workforce pipeline development for legal and public-service professions.

The Finance Department reported internship opportunities supporting exposure to accounting, budgeting, procurement, financial reporting, and municipal administration. The department reported approximately \$75,000 in workforce development expenditure funded through departmental operating resources, providing students with practical experience with public-sector financial operations and accountability functions.

The Office of Budget and Evaluation participated in the Ohio Public Leaders (OPL) Internship Program, the Seasongood Good Government Foundation Internship Program, and City-funded internship opportunities. The Office reported approximately \$24,963 from a combination of general operating and Seasongood Grant Funding.

⁴ The Administration collected detailed workforce development information from participating departments, including participant counts, funding sources, expenditures, age ranges, and, where available, demographic and geographic data. Because reporting methodologies and data availability varied across departments and programs, the level of detail reported was not uniform. To maintain the readability of this report, departmental information has been summarized. The underlying source data and supporting documentation provided by departments are available upon request.

PLANNING, ENGINEERING, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND UTILITY WORKFORCE PIPELINES

The **Department of City Planning and Community Engagement** reported internship and cooperative education opportunities supporting workforce exposure in urban planning, zoning, development review, and community engagement. The department reported approximately \$28,800 in workforce development expenditure supported by CDBG Funding and Seasongood Grant Resources. These experiences provide students with practical exposure to long-range planning and community development functions.

The **Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE)** reported internships and cooperative education opportunities supporting civil engineering, transportation planning, surveying, infrastructure maintenance, and construction management. DOTE reported approximately \$280,501 in workforce development expenditures, including approximately \$274,453 supporting cooperative education opportunities and approximately \$6,048 associated with Seasongood internship placements. These experiences help develop future engineering and infrastructure professionals while supporting City capital improvement and transportation initiatives.

Greater Cincinnati Water Works (GCWW) reported approximately \$298,000 in workforce development expenditures during the reporting period, including approximately \$70,000 supporting Youth2Work participants and approximately \$228,000 supporting internships and cooperative education opportunities. Funding was provided through utility operating resources and workforce development partnerships. Programs included youth employment opportunities, internships, educational outreach activities, and leadership development initiatives designed to strengthen both external workforce pipelines and internal employee development.

The **Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD)** reported one of the City's largest internship and cooperative education programs, providing workforce exposure in engineering, environmental compliance, laboratory services, information technology, finance, and infrastructure management. MSD reported approximately \$627,869 in workforce development expenditures funded through enterprise utility resources during the reporting period. The program supports direct workforce pipeline development for critical wastewater and stormwater utility operations.

Enterprise Technology Solutions (ETS) reported internship and student technology opportunities supporting workforce exposure in information technology, cybersecurity, infrastructure support, customer service, and municipal technology operations. ETS reported approximately \$92,000 in workforce development expenditures funded through departmental operating resources. Participants assist with technology initiatives supporting multiple City departments while gaining practical experience that may lead to future municipal technology careers.

SUMMARY

Between 2023 and 2025, the City supported workforce development through youth employment opportunities, internships, cooperative education placements, educational outreach initiatives, public safety career pathways, leadership development programs, and specialized workforce development academies. These programs provided participants with exposure to public-service careers while developing technical, professional, and workplace readiness skills.

Departments reported workforce development investments of more than \$7 million during the reporting period. Major investments included the Building Inspector Training Academy, Youth2Work, Fire Cadet programming, CPD workforce development initiatives, utility-based internship and co-op programs, and specialized technical workforce pipelines. Funding sources included Community Development Block Grant resources, Career Pathways Initiative funding, General Fund appropriations, enterprise utility funds, departmental operating budgets, grants, educational partnerships, foundation-supported internships, and unpaid educational placement models.

Collectively, these efforts support the City's workforce pipeline, strengthen recruitment and retention initiatives, expand access to public-sector careers, develop future technical and professional talent, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of municipal operations and service delivery.

cc: Latisha A. Hazell, Director, Department of Human Resources