March 10, 2026

Youth To Work

Cincinnati Recreation Commission

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city of CINCINNATI

Agenda

- Mission & Vision
- Why Youth Employment is Important
- Program Overview & Outcomes
- Demand vs. Capacity
- Funding
- Outlook for 2026
- Y2WK Partners
- Participant Success Story
- Timeline and Funding Challenges

Mission

To connect Cincinnati youth with paid work experiences, career exploration, and workforce readiness training that build financial literacy, develop life skills, and prepare them for long-term success in the workforce.

Vision

To ensure every young person in Cincinnati has access to meaningful work experience, financial literacy, and career pathways that prepare them to become productive members of the workforce and leaders in their community.

Why Youth Employment is Important?

- Youth employment reduces juvenile crime.
- Early work experience increases lifetime earnings.
- Youth with summer jobs are more likely to graduate high school.
- Workforce exposure helps fill local talent pipelines.
- Youth employees become fulltime City employees and start their careers.

Program Overview & Outcomes

When fully funded, Y2WK is designed to support:

- CRC: 165 teens placed at rec centers, pools, and with city and community partners
- CPD: 45 teens hired in the cadet program
- CFD: 40 teens hired in the cadet program

In 2025:

- 199 Teens Employed
- Over 40,000 Total Hours Worked
- Over $530,000 paid directly to Cincinnati youth
- The City's Training Vendor (Catalyst Training) provided: Financial Literacy training, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) training
- Departments provided industry-specific training and onboarding for incoming youth.

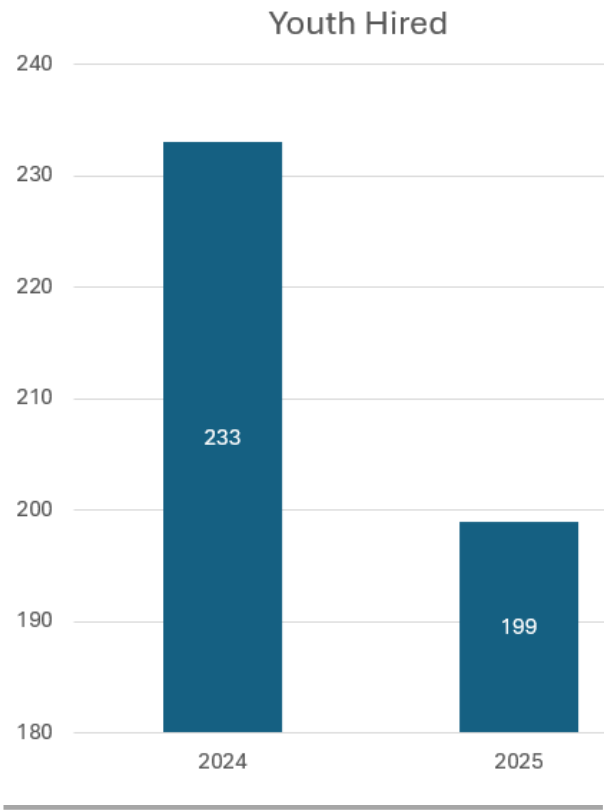
Demand Vs. Capacity

Only 6% of applicants received a job in 2025

CRC applicants:
- 708 youth applied
- 123 youth hired
- 585 youth not hired

CFD applicants:
- 289 applicants
- 40 youth hired
- 244 not hired

CPD applicants:
- 215 applicants
- 36 youth hired
- 179 not hired



Past Funding

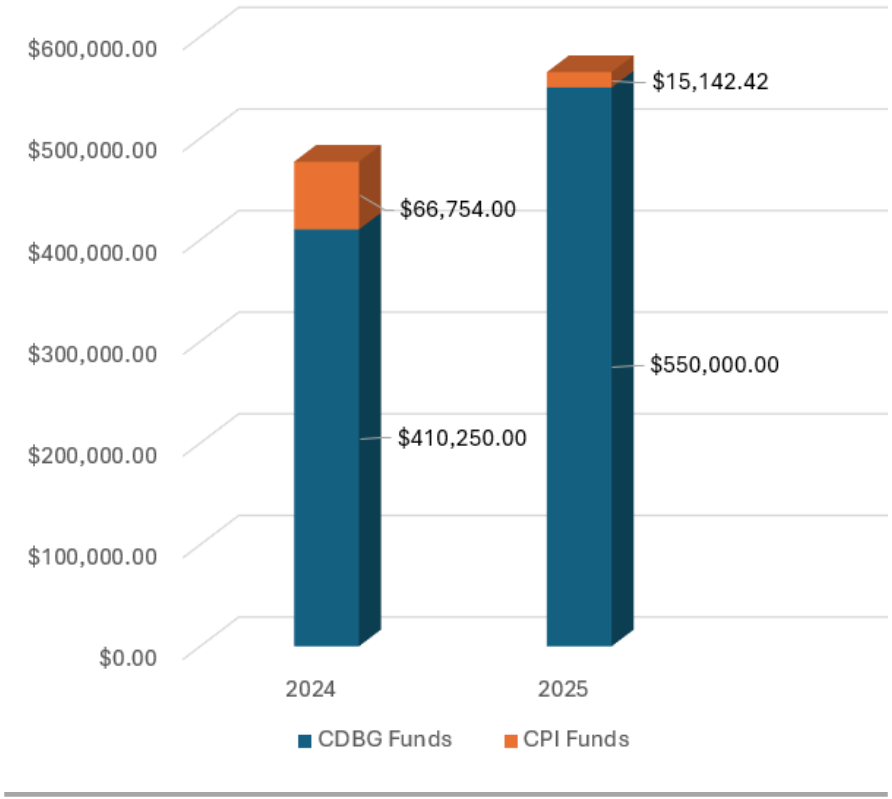
Federal Funds (CDBG):

- 2024: $410,250.00
- 2025: $550,000.00

City Funds (CPI):

- 2024: $66,754.00
- 2025: $15,142.42

**2025 CDBG Funds not received until the program conclusion*



Outlook for 2026

2026 Program Plan:

9 weeks, 25 hours per week

Teens earn $13.33/hour

**Average cost to employ a teen for the summer is $4800/teen*

Funding:

- CDBG from FY25 - $550,000
- City/CPI funding - $762,000

Hiring Goals:

- CRC – 165 teens
- CPD – 45 teens
- CFD – 40 teens

Council has expressed interest in expanding summer job opportunities for youth.

Y2WK Partners

- Cincinnati Public Schools
- City Departments
- Cincinnati Police and Fire
- CincySHRM
- Cincinnati Recreation Foundation
- Cincinnati Museum Center
- ARTE
- Voice of Your Customer
- Lord's Gym
- Ozie Davis & Associates
- FC Cincinnati

Y2WK and CPI Program Connection Example: Hunter Grace Career Pathway

- Began with the Cincinnati Recreation Commission in 2016 as a youth lifeguard at Hirsch Pool.
- Advanced through aquatics leadership roles, including Head Guard and Pool Manager at Oakley and Evanston Pools.
- Transitioned into recreation center operations at Clifton Recreation Center, supporting youth and senior programming.
- Returned during COVID and advanced from Recreation Leader to Recreation Specialist, overseeing school-age programming.
- Later became Community Center Director at Mt. Washington Recreation Center, leading afterschool, summer camp, and teen programs.
- Now serves as Community Center Director of Special Events, creating citywide experiences for Cincinnati residents.

Full-circle journey: What started as a summer job at 17 grew into a **13-year career serving Cincinnati's communities.**

Program Timeline & Funding Stability

- Program planning begins in January with applications opening the first week of the year, followed by recruitment at the Mayor's Career Expo in February and youth interviews in March.
- Stable funding is essential to effectively plan and deliver the program each summer.
- Uncertainty around ongoing CDBG funding makes it more difficult to plan and consistently deliver a high-quality program each summer.

THANK YOU!

Questions