



EMPOWERING YOUTH PROGRAM  
EMPLOYER TOOLKIT

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## Empowering Youth Program Overview

The hotel industry's workforce was severely impacted by the pandemic. To help address the industry's immediate hiring need for entry-level talent, the AHLA Foundation's Empowering Youth Program (EYP) brings together hoteliers and local community-based organization (CBO) partners to work with Opportunity Youth—identified as young people aged 16 to 24 who are disconnected from school and work.

In 2017, the AHLA Foundation (AHLAF) began partnering with CBOs to help young people reach their full potential. After pausing the program during the pandemic, AHLAF relaunched EYP in 2022 and awarded \$175,000 in grants to organizations in Los Angeles, Orlando, New Orleans, and Washington D.C. The Foundation is committed to building on these initial investments and expanding the program nationally later this year. A partnership with the National Job Corps is helping to shape this market expansion, with access to talented youth throughout the country who are studying culinary arts, hospitality, maintenance and more. With over 120 Job Corps centers, and direct access to center operators, thousands of Job Corps graduates will be available for diverse roles and with the requisite skills and knowledge to be successful in the hospitality industry.

We are paying more attention to the types of jobs our industry has to offer. With the help of work-based experience programs, young people will get to see, sometimes for the very first time, what life is like inside a hotel. AHLAF provides funds to CBOs for certificate training to help ensure candidates build the skills to meet employer talent needs. CBOs recruit, screen, and train these young adults and work with employers to provide on-the-job exposure, workplace training and ultimately full-time employment.

With each hire, we add to our sector-level impact on this societal challenge. And by enabling more Opportunity Youth to rise, we too will rise and build on the diversity and inclusivity this industry offers. Thank you for joining us on this critical journey.



Rosanna Maietta

President and CEO, AHLA Foundation

## ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND

Thank you for joining the Empowering Youth Program! This toolkit outlines the key goals, roles, and activities of this initiative, along with how your property can play an active role in its success. It is your guide for how to tap into an often-overlooked talent source - Opportunity Youth.

## VISION STATEMENT

The AHLA Foundation (AHLAF) will work with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and hoteliers across the country to help Opportunity Youth (OY) launch and sustain careers in hospitality. Our process helps ensure that young people are prepared and set up for success, and that you benefit from higher rates of retention. We will build a diverse workforce by upskilling and hiring OY and supporting their personal and professional development as the next generation of leaders in the hospitality industry.

## EMPOWERING YOUTH PROGRAM GOALS

- Build a collection of solutions that will enable an industry-wide commitment to hire OY
- Strengthen the hospitality sector’s connections to community-based organizations that can source and train candidates
- Provide Opportunity Youth with industry-specific skills and certifications to prepare them for the workforce
- Place 75% of program graduates in hospitality jobs with upward career mobility
- Identify and apply best practices to scale the program nationwide

## KEY PLAYERS & RESPONSIBILITIES

**AHLAF relies on its partnerships with CBOs and engaged hotel employers to bring the Empowering Youth Program to life.** Below is an overview of each party’s main responsibilities; the rest of this toolkit will outline hotelier responsibilities in greater depth.

<p><b>AHLAF</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve to connect CBOs and hoteliers</li> <li>• Select CBOs and manage relationships</li> <li>• Plan for and convene with community-based organizations at least twice per year to set forth strategy, deliverables, and deliberate on program experience and scope of work.</li> <li>• Connect OY graduates to hoteliers through our <a href="#">hiring portal</a></li> <li>• Share best practices among all markets participating in this initiative</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hoteliers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify an internal dedicated staff member to work with the CBOs and AHLAF.</li> <li>• Communicate number of open roles and hiring timelines to AHLAF liaison</li> <li>• Engage with the OY training cohort via volunteer opportunities</li> <li>• Host and provide hands-on experiences for young adults to learn about the hospitality industry</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure clear career pathways for entry-level OY hires</li> <li>• Provide reporting data on OY hired from the EYP training program.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Based Organizations (CBOs)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify an internal dedicated staff member to work with the hoteliers and coordinate with the AHLAF liaison</li> <li>• Provide schedule of events for class training, graduation dates, and other key dates</li> <li>• Primary recruiting of OY</li> <li>• Train OY with workplace skills based on hoteliers' needs</li> <li>• Match OY to hotelier using hotelier criteria including background qualifications and availability</li> <li>• Host interview day to connect OY to hoteliers</li> <li>• Provide reporting data on trainees to ensure successful completion of the training program.</li> </ul>

**UNDERSTANDING AHLAF**

The AHLA Foundation will connect employers with the appropriate CBO contacts and maintain communications with employers and CBOs to provide relevant Empowering Youth Program updates.

**UNDERSTANDING OPPORTUNITY YOUTH**



Opportunity Youth (OY) are young adults ages 18-24 who are disconnected from school and work. OY possess incredible talent, are hard-working, dynamic, and have the grit and determination to succeed in the workplace. At the same time, OY frequently face challenges to advancing in their careers, including: a lack of skills and qualifications needed for available jobs; limited access to stable housing,

transportation, and childcare; previous involvement in the criminal justice system; and a lack of networks to access employment opportunities.

**UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS**

The CBOs participating in this initiative offer workforce development programs that prepare OY and other adults for jobs through classroom training, work experience, and coaching. CBOs match individuals with available job opportunities and may also provide support to help individuals overcome persistent barriers to employment including childcare, transportation, counseling, and financial assistance.

One goal of this initiative is to strengthen connections between CBOs and hoteliers. Over time, we hope CBOs become a trusted partner in supporting talent acquisition and employee development needs.

## **Getting Started**

Before beginning to collaborate with CBOs or hiring OY, complete the following steps.

### **ENSURE LEADERSHIP & HIRING MANAGER SUPPORT**

Ensure that property leadership is in full support of the Empowering Youth Program before work begins. Having the support of those with authority and resources is key to helping overcome roadblocks. Being aligned with leadership's overall strategy will also provide greater incentive for success. Similarly, educating hiring managers about this initiative and the importance of giving young adults an opportunity to prove themselves can help reduce obstacles to hiring. The AHLA Foundation has created a [flyer](#) with pertinent information to help reinforce support efforts.

### **DEDICATED STAFF**

Partnerships require ongoing management and attention. We recommend assigning 1-2 staff members whose job responsibilities explicitly include tasks related to collaboration with AHLAF and the CBOs.

### **SHARE YOUR HIRING NEEDS**

Once partnered in this initiative, it is important to share the current and upcoming hiring needs of participating properties with your CBO contact.

Employers should provide relevant requirements and qualifications for open entry-level positions.

This information will help CBO partner(s) shape their training program and give participants the appropriate skills, qualifications, and experience required for jobs at participating properties.

### **CREATE UNIQUE JOB REFERRAL CODE**

This initiative's purpose is to provide direct access to quality candidates. To differentiate candidates coming through partner CBOs from general applicants to your company, we encourage creating a specific option for Empowering Youth Program applicants in application tracking systems. This will allow for easy identification of OY trained through this initiative and allow for a quick pull of their applications in the system.

This may take the form of a code or writing in "Empowering Youth Program" as the referral source. Whatever is decided, inform your AHLAF liaison. When OY program graduates are ready to apply to partner hotels, the liaison will share instructions with CBOs partners who will instruct their graduates accordingly.

## UTILIZE THE AHLA FOUNDATION CUSTOMIZED HIRING PORTAL



The AHLA Foundation's customized hiring portal allows CBO partners to directly connect students to employers in the industry, explore career pathways, search for open jobs, and showcase their skills and certifications in a personalized online resume. Employers should post open jobs to the site so that the OY can find opportunities, learn about partner companies, and begin applying for open positions.

AHLAF also recommends use of the tool to search for CBOs in relevant markets to expand the pool of partners who will

refer quality job candidates to hiring managers for consideration. To access the portal, visit <http://ahlafoundation.hcareers.com/employers/>

# Best Practices for Effective CBO Partnerships

Creating an effective partnership requires time, dedication, and effort from all parties. The best partnerships have similar foundational principles:

## Consistent, open communication

Consistent, ongoing communication underlies any good partnership. At the start, the AHLAF liaison will make the connection between employers and CBO partner(s) through an introductory call. Together, this team will develop a communications cadence and determine how to share feedback so that eventually employers communicate directly with the CBOs and foster a long-term relationship.

## Shared goals

Every organization will have different objectives and motivations for establishing a partnership. Employers prioritize finding new and meaningful ways to meet their talent needs with the young adults and the CBOs' is to support Opportunity Youth to a quality role leading to a career pathway. These goals complement each other. Understanding these objectives is key to making sure that all members of the partnership are satisfied with the relationship.

## Clear expectations

All partners need to have a clear understanding of their own and others' roles and responsibilities. Read this toolkit carefully and speak with the AHLAF liaison to understand what is expected of property staff and what can be expected of others.

## Mutual trust & respect

As in any relationship, having trust and respect for the credibility and capacity of partners establishes a strong foundation. Start by ensuring all parties have a clear understanding of goals, needs, and expectations.

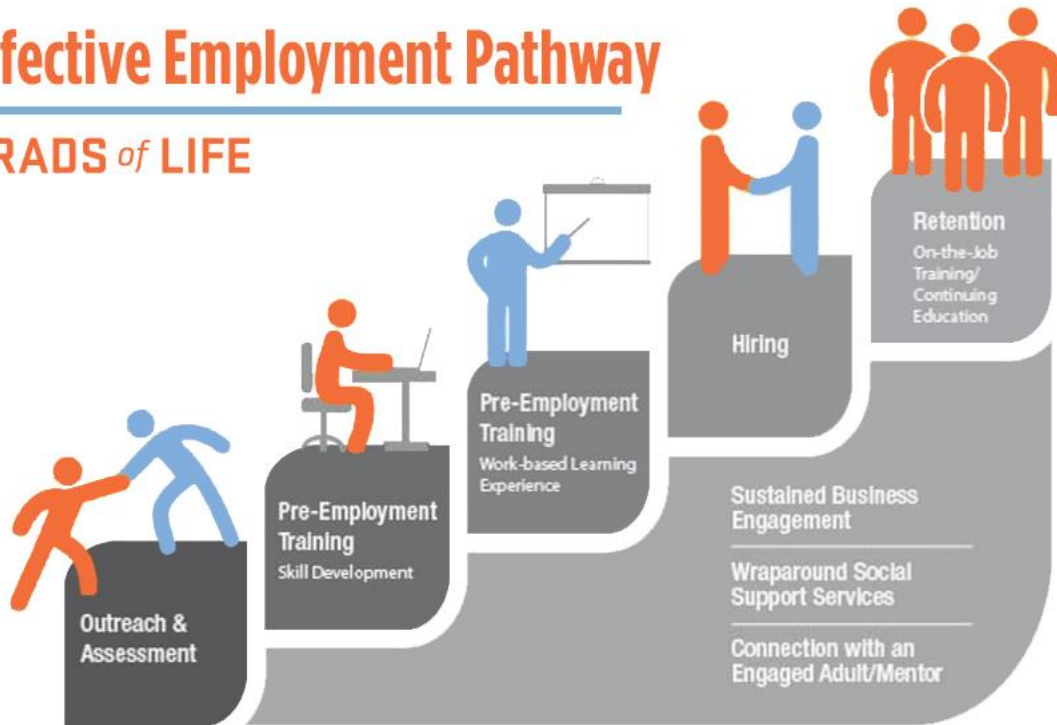


## Overview of Initiative Phases

The Empowering Youth Program is built on five major phases that lead to successful employment of OY. A deeper dive into the phases and adjoining activities can be found [here](#).

### Effective Employment Pathway

GRADS *of* LIFE



While each partnership will be unique, the Empowering Youth Program has specific recommended activities for engagement including, sending a property-level employee to be a guest speaker on the industry, hosting a behind the scenes property tour for program participants, conducting mock-interviews with candidates, and hosting interested youth for a job-shadow experience at a property. Ultimately, it will be up to you and the CBOs to determine how you want to partner.

## **PHASE 1: OUTREACH AND ASSESSMENT**

There are four key ways to support the successful recruitment of OY into CBO training programs – educate CBOs, provide input on training curriculum, attend meet & greets, and support reverse recruitment.

### **EDUCATE CBOS ON HOSPITALITY CAREERS, BRAND, ETC.**

As CBOs begin recruiting participants for the initiative, it is important to help them understand the benefits of the hospitality industry and the types of individuals that would be successful. Employers are experts and can provide much needed direction and instructions for a successful recruitment cycle. Although the hospitality industry offers a wide range of opportunities, most CBOs are not intimately familiar with the industry, differences in culture, and brands, to properly convey to young adults and will look to the employer for support here. The CBO partners will focus on career paths from entry-level roles into management across multiple departments, to help the young adults understand a potential career path. The AHLA Foundation is also helping to do this by equipping CBOs with information to talk about the ‘A Place to Stay’ ad campaign and navigate students through TheHotelIndustry.com website which outlines the various career pathways of the industry.

#### What the Industry Offers

This is the first professional work experience for many of the youth participants, and they might not understand what a comprehensive benefits package truly entails. Work with the CBO partner to help them understand a complete view of the standard medical and retirement benefits hotel companies might offer including any additional benefits such as complimentary hotel stays, tuition reimbursement, free on-site dry cleaning for uniforms, and free or low-cost meals. Helping young adults understand the short-term and long-term benefits of working in the industry could help increase retention.

### **PROVIDE INPUT ON CBO CURRICULUM**

In the spirit of collaboration, CBO partners are encouraged to share their training curriculum with AHLAF for industry feedback. Employers can provide valuable input on any enhancements suggested to better prepare candidates for a long-term hospitality career. The AHLAF liaison will collect employer feedback and share with CBO partners for them to review and incorporate and strengthen the training.

## ATTEND MEET & GREETs

CBO partners will host various events throughout the course of training to meet potential candidates. At these events, prospective students learn about the hospitality industry, potential career paths, and the benefits and rewards of being a part of the industry. It is important to attend



these events to show participants a high level of engagement even prior to training and to help promote the hospitality industry in the way only a hotelier can.

## SUPPORT REVERSE RECRUITMENT

To support CBO partners' recruitment efforts, we recommend that unsuccessful, but high potential, candidates are redirected to CBO partners' workforce development programs. These would be candidates who applied for entry-level positions and who did not make the cut but could be successful with a little bit of additional training. This is a fantastic opportunity as these individuals have already demonstrated an interest in the hospitality industry and can typically participate in training at no cost to them.

Reverse recruiting is also beneficial because it:

- Enables a tangible option for people with high potential rather than the standard decline
- Encourages candidates by having employers show interest in their professional development
- Creates a viable option for candidates to expand their skills with additional training to gain employment and succeed in the company and industry
- Gives candidates an opportunity to demonstrate initiative

To reroute candidates, connect with CBO partners to find out to whom to send referrals. Instruct hiring managers to follow up with high potential, declined candidates using this [template](#). If a hiring manager/recruiter refers a candidate, follow up with the CBO to inform them of the referral. Ultimately, the candidate themselves will have to be the one to follow through on whether to attend the training program.

## PHASE 2: SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

CBO partners have successfully recruited a class to begin training for the Empowering Youth Program, and these participants have indicated their interest in a hospitality career. The CBO partner will now handle the day-to-day training and engagement with the candidates, honing their workplace skills.

During this period, an employer's primary role is to support the CBO partner through volunteer opportunities and to learn about the AHLAF certifications each student will obtain during their training.

### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

The more engagement with the cohort of students, the more likely they are to feel connected and committed to the industry because they feel like an employer has also invested in them. Volunteering is a fantastic way to get engaged:

- **Visit the Classroom:** CBO partners will send out dates requesting employers to visit the training cohort; take CBO partners up on these invitations. When visiting, deliver a Hospitality 101 presentation, discuss potential career paths, and explain what makes the participating property unique. To better connect with the young adults, where possible, send speakers with backgrounds and experiences similar to those of Opportunity Youth. Junior employees or managers who have worked their way up in the company make great presenters.
- **Participate in Mock Interviews:** Halfway through the training program, CBO partners may host mock interviews. This is an effective way to get to know potential candidates and provide the participants with on-the-spot feedback. Connect with the CBO afterwards to provide overall feedback about the participants' readiness. This allows CBOs to make improvements and adjustments accordingly.
- **Host Hotel Property Visit:** With support from the CBO welcome participants to the hotel for a property visit. This is a fantastic way for participants to see firsthand what working in a hotel is like and get a quick behind-the-scenes view of the industry. Involve staff from various departments and make the experience as hands on as possible to make the day interesting, engaging, and fun!



MAKE HOTEL SITE VISITS AS INTERACTIVE AS POSSIBLE BY HAVING STUDENTS SHADOW STAFF FROM DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS AND PARTICIPATE IN THE WORK LIKE SETTING UP A ROOM OR A BANQUET TABLE.

## THE AMERICAN HOTEL & LODGING ASSOCIATION CERTIFICATIONS

The hospitality industry prides itself on providing exceptional service and a personal connection for their guests, to go above and beyond the call of duty to deliver a personal touch. To help participants become more capable of delivering excellent customer service, AHLAF generously provides scholarship funding for program participants to receive the AHLA Certified Guest Service Professional (CGSP)®, the highest acknowledgement of award-winning guest service for employees in the hospitality & tourism industry.

Administering the supporting CGSP® training curriculum and exam is a required activity to successfully graduate participants for the Empowering Youth Program.

### What is the Guest Service Gold® Golden Opportunities Training Curriculum?

Guest Service Gold®: Golden Opportunities demonstrates how to provide a level of guest service that leaves a lasting impression on all guests, inspires coworkers, and enhances job satisfaction for managers. The curriculum features these seven elements:

<b>Recovery</b>	Turn it Around!
<b>Personalization</b>	Provide an Individualized Experience!
<b>Knowledge</b>	Be in the Know!
<b>Passion</b>	Inspire Others!
<b>Commitment</b>	Be All In!
<b>Inclusion</b>	Include Everyone!
<b>Personality</b>	Be Yourself!

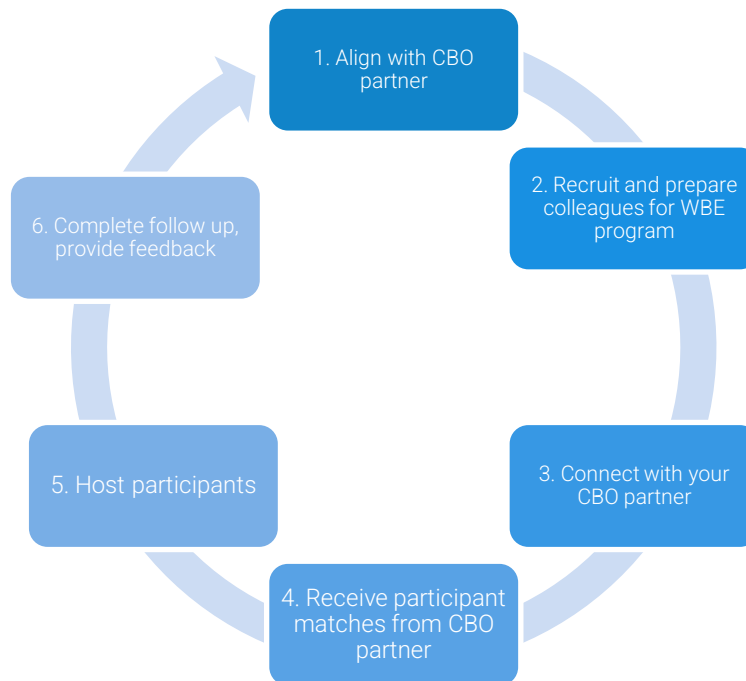


Candidates who are students with culinary-focused CBO partners will also receive a scholarship from AHLAF to complete the Certified Kitchen Cook® certification, in addition to the CGSP. The Certified Kitchen Cook® credential recognizes kitchen employees who are skilled in preparing food, using kitchen equipment properly, and ensuring that everything is kept safe and sanitary to put the highest quality food on each plate.


## PHASE 3: WORK BASED EXPERIENCE

A core part of the Empowering Youth Program is the work-based experience (WBE), allowing both hotels and participants to “try before you buy.” For hoteliers, it serves as a working interview, showing how participants may perform and fit in at the property. For participants, WBEs have been proven to increase their understanding of the hospitality industry and provide valuable hands-on experience.

CBO partner contacts will walk through the steps outlined below to successfully plan and implement a WBE at the property.



### STEP 1: DETERMINE INTEREST AND ALIGN WITH CBO REPRESENTATIVE (AT COHORT START)



ENGAGE WITH THE COHORT AND GET FIRST ACCESS TO QUALITY CANDIDATES FOR YOUR TALENT NEEDS

At the start of a cohort’s training, CBO representatives will reach out to determine the employer’s willingness and capacity to offer a WBE at the property.

1. Decide if and how many participants can be hosted and share this with the liaison. In making the decision consider:

- Are there dedicated staff to oversee planning and coordination?
  - Is there support from key decision makers to implement this program?
  - Are there staff who can support candidates during this experience? Staff who can act as a supervisor or a mentor? On average, hoteliers host 2-4 participants, though properties may host as many as they are able.
2. The CBO representative will reach out to schedule a 30-minute call including the AHLAF liaison. During this call, expected roles and responsibilities will be discussed for the work-based experience and the CBO liaisons will provide:
- Anticipated dates of WBE
  - Length of WBE (ranges from 3 days – 2 weeks)
  - Number of participants who need to be placed
  - Ideal roles the participants would like to experience

## STEP 2: RECRUIT AND PREPARE COLLEAGUES FOR WBE (5 WEEKS BEFORE WBE)

As the WBE program host, employers are responsible for creating structured and daily tasks for WBE participants. The WBE is meant to expose participants to the reality of working in a hotel environment; they are to be treated like other staff by following the same schedule demanded for their role. The WBE should also be a learning opportunity for participants; be sure to instruct staff to let the participants do as much as possible on the job so they can understand the demands and work environment.

1. **Inform staff:** Reach out to the supervising managers of relevant departments and inform them of the upcoming WBE. Ensure the managers and department staff will be able to dedicate a staff member who can train the participant(s) during this time.
2. **Create a schedule:** A WBE is successful when the participant has a structured environment and feels like staff are welcoming and have anticipated their arrival. Creating a schedule will provide the participant with the needed guidance and instructions to navigate the experience successfully. Sample WBE schedule:

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation</li> <li>• Introduction to designated supervisor</li> <li>• Facility tour</li> <li>• Work-based experience assignment</li> <li>• End of day check in with supervisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check in with supervisor</li> <li>• Meet and Greet with leadership</li> <li>• Work-based experience assignment</li> <li>• End of day check in with supervisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check in with supervisor</li> <li>• Lunch with colleagues</li> <li>• Work-based experience assignment</li> <li>• End of day check in with supervisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check in with supervisor</li> <li>• Work-based experience assignment</li> <li>• End of day check in with supervisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job Assignment</li> <li>• Exit meeting with supervisor</li> </ul>

3. **Make assignments:** Either by email or via meeting, confirm the designated supervisor



INCLUDE THE PARTICIPANT(S) IN AS MANY ACTIVITIES AS POSSIBLE THAT OTHER EMPLOYEES WILL BE PRIVY TO, (E.G., A STAFF LUNCH). IF POSSIBLE, HAVE THEM MEET LEADERSHIP SO THEY CAN TRULY FEEL WELCOMED AT THE PROPERTY

from each department that will host participants.

4. **Follow up:** Once all internal staff are confirmed, aligned, and ready to host, follow up with the AHLAF and CBO liaisons and inform them of the roles and number of participants the company would like to host.

### STEP 3: SHARE WITH YOUR CBO PARTNER (3 WEEKS BEFORE WBE)

Employers are responsible for working directly with the CBO to coordinate a successful WBE. Please share the following information:

1. **Confirmed roles:** Roles that can be shadowed during the WBE
2. **Hotel point of contact:** This will be the specific staff person designated to coordinate the WBE, it might also be the person overseeing the entire initiative
3. **Arrival logistics:** This includes the property's address, directions via public transit or car, where to go when arriving at the property, and parking details
4. **Shift times:** Times will be different depending on the role (*This experience is meant to reflect an actual employee's schedule so hours will reflect the property's standard hours for each role*)
5. **Training details:** The participant's daily assignments and designated supervisor
6. **Dress code:** Each role might require different attire, including grooming standards as well
7. **Background restrictions:** This will help the CBO partner match participants accordingly if the individual has a justice involved background

### STEP 4: RECEIVE PARTICIPANT MATCHES FROM CBO (2 WEEKS BEFORE WBE)

You are now confirmed to host the WBE. Your CBO has been working hard to match candidates to your property based on the information you provided (e.g., preferred skills, qualifications, and background requirements). Once the matching process is complete, you will receive:

1. **Participant name and phone number:** This is for security purposes, so you know who to expect for the program and their contact information
2. **Overview of the participants:** The CBO might share a few sentences telling you about the participants so you can learn more about them
3. **Last minute updates:** Anything relevant that you might need to know

### STEP 5: HOST PARTICIPANTS (DURING WBE)

During the WBE, participants will travel directly to their assigned property and work like any other employee. For some candidates, this might be their first professional experience, which can understandably come with anxiety and nerves. Be a supportive and welcoming host as would be expected of the hospitality industry.



1. **Be available:** Welcome the participant for their first day. Conduct a light orientation, show them around the property and introduce them to all the staff before handing them to their designated supervisor. Check in during the experience with both the supervisor and the participant to lend a hand as needed.
2. **Make an offer:** This is the perfect opportunity to hire a participant from the training program into the company. If the property team is impressed with a participant and there is an open role in the department, make an offer to the candidate to apply and join the company. Don't forget to provide a referral code.

## **STEP 6: COMPLETE FOLLOW-UP, PROVIDE FEEDBACK (48 HOURS TO 1 WEEK AFTER WBE)**

To wrap up the experience, employers are encouraged to:

1. **Provide participant performance feedback:** Please provide candid feedback for each participant; this information will be shared with the participant directly. Feedback allows the CBO partners and the students to work towards achieving their professional goals.
2. **Encourage participants to apply:** After debriefing with the property team, if there is still interest in any of the participants be sure to follow up with the CBO partner. Tell the CBO which candidate(s) are of interest and have them encourage the participant to apply. Conversely, if a participant had a positive experience, they might have applied for a role at the property. If the property declines to move forward with interviewing, please inform them promptly. If there is interest, follow up accordingly and bring them in for an interview.

## PHASE 4: HIRING AND ONBOARDING

At this stage, participants have finished their workplace skills training and are now employment ready. To successfully hire from this eager and qualified talent pool, we have learned that **speed is essential**. Together, we can ensure the greatest number of OY land jobs in the hotel industry by following the hiring fair and fast track processes outlined below.

### STEP 1: CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AND OPEN ROLES (2-3 WEEKS BEFORE COHORT TRAINING ENDS)

After a training cohort graduates, each CBO will host a hiring fair and employer attendance is requested. Hiring fairs or interview days bring together hoteliers participating in the Empowering Youth Program and provide a chance to meet and interview graduates. Sharing open roles in advance can further expedite the process and provide a seamless interview schedule.

1. **RSVP:** The CBO contact will send out an invitation including the date, time, and location of the hiring fair. Please confirm staff attendance.
2. **Indicate open roles:** This information enables CBOs to match graduates to a property based on interests and qualifications.

### STEP 2: CREATE A FAST-TRACK HIRING PROCESS

For OY, a speedy hire is particularly important so that they are not lost to competing industries; too often employers have lost OY to jobs in other industries by the time their application has moved through traditional lengthy hotel hiring processes. To increase hiring conversions, we recommend:

1. **Utilize the AHLAF Hiring Portal to review candidate resumes before the training program concludes:** The portal has been customized specifically for the Empowering Youth Program to expedite and simplify the hiring process for all. It can be accessed by visiting <https://ahlafoundation.hcareers.com/employers>.
2. **Be prepared to make provisional or on the spot job offers at the job fair:** By now, the hiring manager should be familiar with the training graduates, based on visits to their classroom or their visits/WBE at the hotel. We encourage the set-up of a fast-track hiring process so that if a graduate is impressive during their interview, a provisional or on the spot offer (dependent on a successful background check) can be made.
3. **Involve hiring managers:** If there are openings in different departments, reach out, inform those hiring managers, and request their attendance at the hiring fair. Bring the necessary managers to the interview day so that they can approve hires on the spot. This will save applicants from having to make multiple trips to the hotel location and potentially accepting an offer elsewhere. This will also speed up the process to begin a background check so that the participant can begin working almost immediately after completing their training.



*BRING AS MANY HIRING MANAGERS AS YOU CAN SO APPLICANTS CAN DO NEXT STEP INTERVIEWS ON THE SPOT AND RECEIVE AN OFFER. IF IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO BRING THE HIRING MANAGERS, BLOCK OUT TIME IN THEIR SCHEDULE OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS AND SCHEDULE A FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW WITH APPLICANTS IMMEDIATELY.*

### STEP 3: PREPARE FINAL DETAILS (1 WEEK BEFORE COHORT TRAINING ENDS)

1. **“Know before you go”:** Your CBO liaison will send a final email with all necessary logistics of the hiring fair. Bring any recruitment materials, a table cloth, and applications. If the employment application is online, feel free to bring a laptop and have high-priority graduates complete applications on the spot.
2. **Application links:** If the application links are already active for the target positions, send them to the CBO now. This way the graduates can apply ahead of time and will already be in the system once interviewed.

### STEP 4: ATTEND HIRING FAIR AND INTERVIEW

It's the day of the event! The program participants are the stars of the hiring fair and are eagerly looking forward to their interviews and job opportunities. They have undergone robust training at their training center, including improving their communication skills and being team players.

1. **Arrive early or on time:** The CBO will make careful plans for the employers' arrival, including providing enough time to set up and be ready to interview candidates.
2. **Conduct interviews:** The CBO will create an interview schedule that will provide 20-30 minutes to interview each candidate. The interviews will be run in one of two ways, depending on what the CBO deems best:
  - a) The CBO create a schedule and direct employers to the participant waiting room where graduates are seen during their designated interview time.
  - b) The CBO will have employers remain at the table and each graduate will be escorted at their designated interview time.
3. **Wrap up:** Once all interviews are complete, CBO staff will meet with hoteliers for a 5-10 minute debrief. Mention any candidates identified for follow up or to whom an offer was made.



## STEP 5: FOLLOW UP AND FEEDBACK (48 HOURS TO 2 WEEKS AFTER INTERVIEW DAY)

The days following interviews are critical for participants to make their final decisions.

1. **Provide feedback:** The CBO partner will reach out to solicit and compile employer feedback. Be candid. Did the graduates/applicants meet company expectations? Why or why not?
2. **Make offers or decline accordingly:** Days and weeks after the hiring fair, the applicants will be expecting employers to follow up, especially if interviewers said they would reach out. If there are no plans to make an offer, let the applicant know immediately. This lets them move on to other employers who might be interested. If there is interest in hiring an applicant, communicate this clearly and provide them with all the necessary information to make an informed decision, including their potential wage and schedule.

## STEP 6: ONBOARDING

Success! A graduate has been offered a position at the property, their background check has cleared, they have received their start date, and they are ready to begin their career in hospitality. It has been an exciting journey for everyone. However, this is only the beginning. As a company, it's understood how important it is to onboard and support new employees to provide a sense of stability as they join.

1. **Ensure comprehensive onboarding:** Make sure all new hires receive a thorough orientation to their property, brand, norms, and guidelines. Also, make sure their supervisor is prepared to spend time providing hands-on training so they can feel comfortable and competent in their new role.
2. **Make them feel welcome:** OY are often extremely nervous when they begin. Take the time to make new hires feel at home and part of a bigger family.

## PHASE 5: RETENTION

As a team, employers and CBOs will work together to help new hires adjust to their workplace, thrive, and grow. Equally important is collecting data to prove the success and impact of the Empowering Youth Program.

### ONGOING SUPPORTS

Many of the young adults going through this initiative will have faced immeasurable difficulties. Some are housing and food insecure, others struggle with accessing reliable transportation, while others are unable to find appropriate childcare. A new job will not immediately address these challenges.

#### CBO responsibilities

CBOs will continue to provide their graduates with support in the following ways to support their success in the workplace:

- Continuing bi-weekly check-ins with graduates for the first 3 months of employment
- Connecting graduates to the appropriate social services
- Creating a partnership with the employer. If the graduate begins to struggle on the job, it is highly likely external factors are the root cause. Reach out to the CBO partner as a resource to correct the graduate/new hire and help them transcend in their role.

#### Hotelier responsibilities

In addition to the traditional resources each property offers, we recommend providing the following support to Opportunity Youth:

- **Mentoring:** Mentorships are an effective method of building relationships. The process can either be formal or informal, nevertheless it will provide the new employee with additional resources to navigate their new position. It can help the employee build confidence and has been shown to help veteran employees become more engaged with their company.

### DATA COLLECTION

#### Why is this important?

Our shared goal is to get more OY into hospitality careers. Tracking hires and retention is the primary way we can demonstrate the program's effectiveness. To help us build the case for ongoing investment in the Empowering Youth Program, we request employers share a small amount of critical data with AHLAF. The goal is to have the ongoing data collection be convenient, while gathering the information AHLAF needs to continue demonstrating value for employers and CBO partners and therefore elevate funding to support. Reports will be requested at **3 months, 6 months, and 12 months post hire:**

- Title of role at time of hire
- Whether person was hired for full time or part time role

- First day of employment
- If no longer employed, last date of employment
- Reason for leaving/termination, or if this info can't be shared then 'Voluntary or Involuntary'
- Current job title
- If job title changed, date of job change
- If job title changed, reason for job title change

## How is data shared with AHLAF?

To ensure data consistency across employers and to protect the privacy of employees, please review and follow these instructions when sharing OY employee data.

1. The AHLAF representative will reach out only if candidates have been hired and request to be connected to the employee in charge of hire data
2. The AHLAF representative will send a data tracking spreadsheet with names of the hired candidates to make the "fill in the blank" process easier
3. Complete the missing information under the candidate indicated in the spreadsheet

Thanks in advance for sharing data that allows us to demonstrate the effectiveness of this initiative and to continue securing necessary funding. The excel template sheet is [here](#). All data will be held in strict confidence.

## CONCLUSION

The AHLA Foundation looks forward to an impactful and productive partnership with our Empowering Youth employer partners in the months ahead! With the help of the property team, we can change the lives of our nation's youth while simultaneously supporting the hotel industry.