

Empower Youth: Career Training and Development Program Frequently Asked Questions

General Program Details

Q: What is the Empower Youth program?

A: Empower Youth is a career training and development program for Illinois youth and young adults ages 16 to 24. Enrolled youth and young adults will receive job readiness training, skill building and support to be successful in the workplace.

Program participants will also have access to apply to permanent part- and full-time positions with local employers across a variety of growing industries throughout the Chicagoland area.

Q: How many youth and young adults will be placed through the Empower Youth program?

A: The program is currently focused on enrolling 75 youth and young adults to receive job readiness training, skill building and supportive services.

If program capacity is met, a Goodwill case manager will place interested youth and young adults who fill out the online interest form on a waitlist.

Q: When does the program start for participation in training, skill building and access to a work experience?

A: Illinois youth and young adults, ages 16 to 24, that reside in Cook and Lake County, Illinois can submit their interest online at goodwillsew.com/empower-youth. After interest forms are submitted, a Goodwill case manager will reach out by text or phone to set up a time to connect on program timing and next steps.

If considered eligible, enrolled program participants will complete required job readiness training, skills assessment, and job applications and interviews.

Q: What if I'm interested in part- and full-time permanent positions?

A: Eligible Illinois youth and young adults can submit their interest online at goodwillsew.com/empower-youth to participate in job readiness training and skill building and to be connected with Goodwill employment services to assist in finding permanent employment opportunities.

Q: Is the Empower Youth program free to join?

A: Yes, Empower Youth is free to join. Program participants will receive job readiness training, skill building and support. Illinois youth and young adults, ages 16 to 24, that reside in Cook and Lake County, Illinois can submit their interest online at goodwillsew.com/empower-youth.

Q: Where can someone learn more about the program?

A: For questions or to learn more, please fill out the online interest form at goodwillsew.com/empower-youth and a member of Goodwill's youth development team will reach out.

Program Eligibility

Q: Who qualifies for the program?

A: To be considered for the program, you must:

- Be 16- to 24-years old at time of interest form submission
- Reside in Cook and Lake County, Illinois
- Be interested in participating in job readiness training, skill building and interviewing for a part- or full-time permanent position
- Complete the interest form at goodwillsew.com/empower-youth
- Commit to participate and complete the required five, two-hour days of job readiness training
- If hired for applied role, be willing to complete 180 hours of work

If turning older than age 24 by the time of program start, a Goodwill case manager will connect you to Goodwill's staffing firm, TalentBridge, Workforce Connection Centers or to additional programs to assist in your job search.

Q: Will the program assist youth and young adults experiencing barriers to employment?

A: Goodwill is committed to eliminating barriers to employment. Illinois youth and young adults navigating challenges including but not limited to the following are encouraged to fill out the [online interest form](#) to discover how Goodwill can support:

- **Income:** There are no income requirements; however, the program focuses on assisting youth and young adults experiencing financial hardship from developing neighborhoods.
- **School Enrollment:** Enrollment in school is not required. Youth and young adults not in school, including recent graduates, will be considered for the program.
- **Justice Involvement:** The program will support youth and young adults with justice system involvement.

Q: What happens if not selected as a program participant?

A: At Goodwill, our mission is to *connect people to work and prepare them for life*. We are committed to creating access to inclusive and equitable opportunities for all to achieve the life they dream of through *The Power of Work*.

Illinois youth and young adults that are not eligible for the program will be notified by a Goodwill case manager who will connect them to Goodwill TalentBridge and our Workforce Connection Centers to receive free employment services that aid in preparing for and finding job opportunities with employer partners in Cook and Lake County. Case managers will also provide referrals to local organizations to help meet additional needs.

Individuals will need to complete a separate application when working with Goodwill TalentBridge to be connected with jobs in the community.

Program Enrollment Process

Q: What's next after submitting the online interest form?

A: Submitting the [online interest form](#) is the first step in joining the workforce of tomorrow, today. Please note that submitting the online interest form does not represent nor guarantee employment with Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin, Inc., its subsidiaries, partners, or any other third-party.

After an interest form is submitted, a Goodwill case manager will reach out by text or phone to set up a time to connect. During the conversation, the case manager will:

- Verify age. You must be 16 to 24 years old to be eligible for the program.
- Verify Cook or Lake County, Illinois residency.
- Learn more about the individual's needs and explore job opportunities based on skills and interests.
- Schedule the first in-person appointment to complete program enrollment and job readiness training.

Q: What can be expected once enrolled in the program?

A: After being enrolled in the program, participants will go through the following steps within the first few weeks:

- **Week 1:** Meet with assigned Goodwill case manager to complete skills assessment and enrollment information and schedule job readiness training.
- **Week 2:** Participate in five, two-hour days of job readiness training, complete a job application, prepare for and participate in an interview.
- **Week 3:** Receive notification of job status. The Goodwill case manager will work with the program participant's employer to create a plan that supports continued learning and growth.

If not offered a position, the Goodwill case manager will continue to support program participants in their job search.

Q: Is job training required?

A: All program participants must complete five, two-hour trainings to prepare and feel confident in starting their new job.

Q: Is the job training paid?

A: No. All enrolled program participants must complete the required five, two-hour days of job readiness training.

Program Job Opportunities & Benefits

Q: What types of jobs are available?

A: Qualifying program participants will have access to the following opportunities:

- Part-time jobs at Goodwill Store & Donation Centers located in Chicago, North Riverside, Melrose Park, Lombard and Lake Zurich. Positions include cashier, donation attendant, production associate, and custodial roles.
- In-demand part and full-time permanent positions in growing industries including:
 - Retail, including with Goodwill Store & Donation Centers
 - Healthcare
 - Manufacturing
 - Business
 - And more

Q: What benefits will program participants who gain employment at a Goodwill Store & Donation Center receive?

A: Benefits are dictated by the employer. At Goodwill Store & Donation Centers, participants will have access to the following benefits:

- Flexible schedule (select holidays off; no extended hours for the holiday season)
- 20% employee discount
- Monetary bonus for perfect attendance
- Specialized training and development for continued career growth

Q: What is the pay range for positions?

A: Pay varies by location, job and experience. Goodwill will work with program participants to identify their needs and interests and find the best match.

Program Participant Support

Q: Why join Empower Youth?

A: Program participants will receive support through every step of the process – from being assigned a personal case manager that will assist in navigating employment challenges to providing guidance through job training, frequent check ins and continued support throughout employment.

At Goodwill, we know life can change at any moment. Case managers will help program participants in need of transportation assistance with getting to and from training and work as well as provide Goodwill Cares vouchers to purchase clothes for school, interviews, or their new job up until their first paycheck or while resources are available.

Q: What does the job readiness training entail?

A: The required five, two-hour trainings will focus on building soft skills such as communication, time management and problem-solving as well as financial literacy including budgeting and money management, plus interview preparation.

Q: What is Goodwill TalentBridge?

A: Goodwill TalentBridge is a full-service staffing and recruiting firm that helps meet critical workforce needs by providing sourcing, hiring and job placement solutions across a variety of roles and industries.

Goodwill's TalentBridge offices are located in both Cook & Lake Counties. They will work with local employers and community partners to connect program participants to employment opportunities and provide job readiness skills and training for successful placement.

Contact the Chicago office at 224-257-8080 or visit goodwilltalentbridge.com for additional information on TalentBridge services.

Q: What are the Workforce Connection Centers and what services do they provide?

A: Goodwill's [Workforce Connection Centers](#) will support program participants by providing resources throughout the job process, including access to computers and job preparation workshops and skills training for resume writing and interviewing.

Workforce Connection Centers offer free in-person and virtual employment services and access to the tools, technology and support to identify positions that meet each person's unique employment needs.

Partnering with Goodwill

Q: Are you looking for program partners?

A: Yes, Goodwill is always looking for referral and program partners across our territory of southeastern Wisconsin and metropolitan Chicago. Nonprofit 501(c)(3) and community-based organizations focused on supporting youth and young adults in job readiness and placement that are interested in learning more or becoming a program partner can contact Goodwill's Director of Youth Engagement, Diana Muñoz, at Diana.Munoz@goodwillchicago.com or 773-627-5775.

If you work with adults 25 years or older, please contact any of Goodwill's three Illinois-based Workforce Connections Centers located in Lombard, Englewood and North Riverside to see how we can support your client's job search.

Q: What are the benefits to partnering with Goodwill to place program participants at our workplace?

A: Goodwill is a workforce development leader that has served communities for more than 100 years by providing quality job training, coaching and support services. We continually evolve our programs and services to meet the needs of the dynamic workforce and labor market of today and into the future.

Program participants will receive quality training and support to confidently join and contribute to your workplace.

When you partner with Goodwill, you support the local workforce, advance racial equity and create more equitable opportunities for successful employment outcomes.

Q: Why should I refer my clients for this program?

A: The program increases access to inclusive and equitable work opportunities for young adults to achieve the life they dream of through *The Power of Work*.

At Goodwill, we know life can change at any moment, that's why we'll provide program participants with the following support for sustained employment and self-sufficiency:

- Assign a personal case manager that will assist in navigating employment challenges and provide guidance through job training, frequent check ins, and continued support throughout employment
- Help program participants in need of transportation assistance with getting to and from training and work as well as provide Goodwill Cares vouchers to purchase clothes for school, interviews, or their new job up until their first paycheck or while resources are available
- Connection to community resources to help with food or housing insecurity and other challenges

In addition, the program is a great starting place to gain skills and advance. Program participants will have access to apply to positions with Goodwill.