

Green Applied Projects for Parks



Program Overview

The Green Applied Projects for Parks (GAPP) serves young adults ages 18 to 24, in particular recruiting from youth who have had involvement with the criminal legal system. The program provides paid work experience in horticulture, maintenance, and operations. GAPP Corps members work four days per week at NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks) work sites. One day per week, members engage in career coaching, employment readiness workshops, occupational certifications, and, when relevant, high school equivalency (HSE) test preparation classes. Participants gain formal work experience and assistance achieving educational and career goals.



Agency	Start Date	FY24 Budget	FY25 Budget	FY25 # Served
NYC Parks	April 2012	\$400,000.00	\$400,000.00	16

Problem Statement

In 2022, there were over 138,000 young adults in New York City who are not in school and not engaged in the labor market.¹ The experience of disconnection often has long-term negative effects on an individual's employment prospects, earning power, and health.² As of 2023, 12.6% of New Yorkers ages 16 to 24 were not enrolled in school and not in work, with disproportionately higher rates among Black and Latinx young adults, as well as those who live in the Bronx and Brooklyn – populations and communities that are heavily impacted by the criminal legal system.³

¹JobsFirstNYC and Community Service Society, “[Reversing Nearly a Decade of Positive Trends](#),” July 2023

²Disconnected Youth Task Force Report, “[Connecting our Future](#)” 2020

³Equity NYC website, as of June 2025: <https://equity.nyc.gov/domains/education/out-of-school-and-out-of-work-youth>

Context and Evidence

Young people are more likely than people of other ages to become involved in the criminal legal system, which can have lifelong consequences for well-being and success. Emerging adulthood, the years between ages 16 and 26, is a period of discovery and transition that can reinforce patterns established in adolescence or, alternatively, serve as a turning point for change.⁴ Programming that is offered at this crucial time of growth and transformation can have an important impact later in life. Being able to get and maintain stable employment is one of the most important milestones of a young person's transition to adulthood.⁵ Additionally, early work opportunities are positively associated with job quality in adulthood.⁶

Workforce development programs can help young people gain a foothold in the workplace by providing access to formal work experience as well as to opportunities to explore different jobs. This is especially true for young people of color, who face structural barriers in accessing early work opportunities.⁷ Having access to community-based workforce development resources and supports can help facilitate a stable transition to adulthood.⁸

Program Details

GAPP provides young adults ages 18 to 24 with paid work experience through a cohort-based model, which supports them in developing their educational and employment readiness skills. Since 2016, GAPP has prioritized enrollment of legal system-involved youth, to help address the workforce development and educational attainment needs of this population. The program runs one to two cohorts per year, with participants working 40 hours a week for 16-25 weeks at \$19.14/hour. Participants gain experience in horticulture, maintenance, and operations under the supervision of a Parks manager. Additionally, the program offers HSE classes and on-site HSE testing, one-on-one career coaching sessions, and employment-readiness sessions covering key topics such as pursuing future education, establishing career goals, and resume, cover letter, and job interview preparation. Participants often receive ongoing support after the conclusion of the program, with staff helping them to continue advancing their educational and career goals.

Program Goals and Expected Outcomes

- Professional Development
- Work readiness skills
 - Attainment of occupational skills and industry-based credentials (Security - NYS 8, 16 hour certifications; Driver Training - NYS Driver License)
 - Subsidized work experience
 - Post-program job placements
- Educational skills advancement
 - HSE classes
 - HSE diploma attainment

⁴Urban Institute. "[Community-Based Workforce Engagement Supports for Youth and Young Adults Involved in the Criminal Legal System.](#)" June 2022.

⁵Urban Institute and NYC Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity. "[Bridges to Education and Employment for Justice-Involved Youth.](#)" May 2019.

⁶Briggs, Amanda, Natalie Spievack, and David Blount. Employer Engagement in Summer Youth Employment Programs. Washington, DC: Urban Institute (2019)

⁷Ibid.

⁸Urban Institute. "[Community-Based Workforce Engagement Supports for Youth and Young Adults Involved in the Criminal Legal System.](#)" June 2022.

Performance Data:

	FY25		FY24
	Actual	Target	Actual
Enrolled in GAPP	16	15	9
Completed GAPP	16	-	9
Post-program job placements	4	-	5
Connected to education post-program	3	-	0
Pass HSE exam	3 out of 4	100% of eligible	1 out of 1
Drivers license attainment	2 out of 2	100% of eligible	3 out of 3