

COVERSHEET



U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS/USA FUNDS 2016 EDUCATION PATHWAYS WITH A PURPOSE GRANT AWARDS

NAME OF CITY: Orlando, FL

MAYOR: Buddy Dyer

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PLEASE INDICATE POPULATION CATEGORY HERE

- ☐ SMALL: fewer than 200,000 in population
- ☒ MEDIUM: 200,000 to 500,000 in population
- ☐ LARGE: greater than 500,000 in population



NAME OF PROGRAM /INITIATIVE: City of Orlando Youth

Employment Initiative

PART II Application: Mayor-Led Initiatives that Promote College and Career Readiness

1. Describe what the mayor's level of involvement in your pathways to college and careers program will be and how his or her leadership will impact the program.

When Buddy Dyer was elected Mayor of Orlando in 2003 he was determined to improve academic, social, and economic outcomes of Orlando's children by initiating, leading and investing in collective efforts to build evidence-based cradle-to-career, data-driven youth programs, especially focused on children residing in the City's lowest income neighborhoods and attending struggling city schools. To this end, during his early terms of office, Mayor Dyer organized and led the Mayor's Pre-Kindergarten Initiative, the Mayor's Education Action Council, the Blue Ribbon Panel on Education, the Parramore Task Force, and the Safe Orlando Task Force. Through this early work, Mayor Dyer engaged key stakeholders from all sectors – government, philanthropy, education, nonprofit, public safety, business, professional sports teams, youth, neighborhood leaders, and child advocates – in a collective planning and visioning process that resulted in the development and implementation of numerous groundbreaking programs collectively known today as Mayor Dyer's Children's Initiative (MDCI). Today, MDCI serves an estimated 13,000 children per year – 90% of whom are low income – covering an estimated 73% of all the low income children residing in Orlando. To support the work, Mayor Dyer has incrementally allocated more funding each year so that today MDCI is supported by approximately \$6.6 million in City general revenues annually and supplemented by an estimated \$2 million that the Mayor and his core staff leverage each year via corporate donations, public and private grants, philanthropy, and Mayor Dyer's signature fundraising event – *CityKidz! Buddy's Benefit for Children*.

Among other things, MDCI aims to reduce juvenile arrests, increase youth employment and improve academic performance among Orlando's children including increasing enrollment and completion of post-secondary education. To achieve these goals, Mayor Dyer's Children's Initiative operates evidence-based programs, including a core focus on activities that support college going and post-secondary completion, especially among students who are the first generation in their families to attend college. MDCI also includes a comprehensive set of strategies and programs aimed at boosting employment and career development among the City's low income youth. All of these programs heavily rely on data to track performance and effectiveness, and the results have been remarkable. MDCI and its results are described in later sections of this application.

Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer has been a committed advocate for Orlando's children since he was first elected in 2003, having lead the charge to create and implement effective strategies to address children's academic, social and economic interests over the thirteen years that he has served as Mayor, including and especially efforts to boost college-going and career development among Orlando's low income populations. He has invested personal leadership, City financial resources, relationships with key community leaders, a supportive public policy platform, and significant, sustained public attention to this work, further illustrated in this application, the attached documents, and the links to MDCI's online presence sprinkled throughout this application.

As can be seen by his work to date, Mayor Dyer is firmly committed to building pathways to college and careers, especially among Orlando's low income youth, and is passionate about expanding and enhancing the work to have an even greater impact on college-going, youth employment and economic development in Orlando – the City Beautiful.

2. Describe the rationale behind or purpose for establishing this program.

Mayor Dyer recognizes the benefits to youth and their families, the local economy and business development, of a trained, educated workforce, contributing to Orlando's overall economic growth, vitality and quality of life. He is also deeply committed to building pathways out of poverty for the estimated 11,765 children growing up in Orlando families who live below the federal poverty level.

Studies show that youth employment has a profound impact especially on low income youth and is one of the strongest indicators of future earnings. Work at an early age raises later employability and earnings and leads to fewer school dropouts and lower rates of disconnection from school and work. (*From Cradle to Career: Educating our Students for Lifelong Success, Recommendations from the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's Task Force on Integrating College and Career Readiness, 2012*). Notably, the number one factor employers give for not hiring someone for open positions is lack of work experience. Because of this, Mayor Dyer has made youth job training and employment a key element of MDCI.

Data indicates wide variations among Orlando's demographic groups and neighborhoods as it pertains to economic vitality, educational attainment and employment, with the most disadvantaged groups generally defined as ***populations of color residing on Orlando's west side***. The data presented below illustrates conditions facing youth who reside in these neighborhoods.

The American Community Survey 2010-14 Five Year Estimates demonstrate that the youth unemployment rate in the City's west side neighborhoods is a staggering 32% compared to the national average of 20.4% in this age group, exhibiting a critical need for innovative work experience programs and exposure to career pathways for west Orlando youth.

These same neighborhoods face a 38% poverty rate, compared to only 16% statewide. As the poverty values across these Orlando neighborhoods confirm, young adults and their families in west Orlando are struggling to provide even the basic necessities in their everyday lives. Based on the percentages of youth and young adults living below the poverty rate, programs that provide tangible resources and personal empowerment skills are essential to families' ability to increase self-sufficiency. In fact, most of the low income youth who have participated in MDCI youth employment programs use at least a portion of their paychecks – sometimes all of their paychecks - to help their families pay rent, utilities and food expenses.

In these same neighborhoods, twenty-nine percent of residents do not have a high school degree and the high school graduation rate for the area high school is 76.7% compared to 89.6% for the rest of the schools in the City for the 2014-2015 school year. With regard to demographics, the chart below compares high school graduation rates and college going of the city's black vs. white students; giving rise to MDCI's *My Brother's Keeper* Orlando initiative, described in greater detail in later sections of this application.

All Orlando	Black Orlando
86.7% of all Orlando residents aged 25+ are high school graduates or higher.	77.9% of Black Orlando residents aged 25+ are high school graduates or higher.
Graduation Rates of <i>White</i> Students, by High School	Graduation Rates of <i>Black</i> Students, by High School
<i>White</i> , Lake Nona HS: 95%	<i>Black</i> , Lake Nona HS: 80%
<i>White</i> , Jones HS: N/A (no White students)	<i>Black</i> , Jones HS: 80-84%
<i>White</i> , Edgewater HS: 85-59%	<i>Black</i> , Edgewater HS: 65-69%
<i>White</i> , Colonial HS: 85-89%	<i>Black</i> , Colonial HS: 75-79%
<i>White</i> , Boone HS: 90%	<i>Black</i> , Boone HS: 75-79%
31.9% of all Orlando residents aged 25+ have Bachelor Degrees or higher.	16% of Black Orlando residents aged 25+ have Bachelor Degrees or higher.

The above data provides strong rationale for a comprehensive approach to building pathways through high school to college, employment and careers, especially among Orlando's low income youth and youth of color who reside in the City's most disadvantaged neighborhoods.

3. Describe the specific work the program is doing, including prior successes and demonstrated effectiveness in aligning education and training programs with workforce needs, and why this need was unmet in the city.

MDCI is innovative, data-driven, and serves children of all ages, especially disadvantaged youth, from cradle to career (generally birth to age 24). Over the past ten years, we have incrementally re-engineered these programs to better impact academic achievement, juvenile crime, workforce readiness, and health and wellness (especially childhood obesity) in Orlando. All of the work is accomplished in an atmosphere of robust collaboration with schools and non-profit, faith and business partners. Strategies include:

- Enhance older youth programming. Engage older youth in programs that keep them away from crime and on track to graduate high school, obtain post-secondary credentials, and get jobs. This includes robust college access and youth employment programs and a special focus on boys and young men of color.
- Enhance academic support capabilities. Immerse children who participate in City programs in academic support and educational enrichment activities, including intensive, targeted support for children/youth who are struggling in school. This includes robust STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) and cultural arts components.
- Develop comprehensive health/wellness component. Turn the City's children's programs into a springboard for preventing childhood obesity, by encouraging healthy eating and active lifestyles.
- Enhance wrap-around supports for basic needs (transportation, food, clothing, school supplies, hygiene) so that children living in economically precarious conditions have their basic needs met.

To this end, some of our signature programs are highlighted below, particularly those that help Orlando's youth graduate from high school, enroll in and complete post secondary education,

build job skills and transition into careers in alignment with the City's economic development strategies.

- Parramore Kidz Zone (PKZ). During the early years of Mayor Dyer's tenure, the City decided to develop a place-based, cradle-to-career model of investment in children in Orlando's most disadvantaged neighborhood, where children struggled most. To this end, MDCI leveraged grants and City funds and launched Parramore Kidz Zone (PKZ) in 2006. A replication of Harlem Children's Zone and predecessor to the U.S. Department of Education Promise Neighborhoods Initiative, PKZ is a place-based, cradle-to-career model serving all children and young adults from birth to age 24 who reside in the City's Parramore Heritage Neighborhood. When PKZ was launched in 2006, the Parramore Heritage Neighborhood evinced the highest child poverty rate (73%) in Orange County, a teen birth rate that was six times the rate of the County's, a juvenile arrest rate that was two-and-one-half times the City's rate, and the high school that Parramore teens were zoned to attend, Jones High School, was one of only two in all of Florida that had been rated "F" for five years in a row under the State's school grading system. Since then, multi-pronged investments in evidence-based children's programs offered by a coalition of partner organizations (with the City serving as "backbone organization") have begun to move the needle on poverty, juvenile arrests, teen births and academic performance among children in Parramore.

As one example of these investments, Parramore youth at every grade level, from kindergarten through completion of post-secondary education, have been assigned to Student Advocates who mentor, coach, arrange tutoring, track their academic scores in real time, work with teachers, professors, guidance counselors, and school administrators and develop academic success plans with students and their parents to keep students on track for high school graduation. PKZ also operates a college access program that provides college tours, college and financial aid application support, and scholarships to Parramore youth. Once they are enrolled in post-secondary education or training programs, older youth are mentored and advised by Postsecondary Education Student Advocates to help them persist in school, graduate, and earn credentials that will help them obtain career employment.

By 2015, Parramore Kidz Zone and its robust array of partners throughout the neighborhood were serving 1,185 children/youth under the age of 24, an estimated 77% of all children in Parramore. Between 2006 and 2015, the child poverty rate in Parramore declined to 53%, juvenile arrests in Parramore plummeted 74%, the number of teen births among Parramore girls dropped 66%, the percentage of Parramore high schoolers passing State Reading and Math tests increased from 12% to 24%, and 27% to 49%, respectively, and Jones High School now rates a "B" under the State's school grading system. In 2009 (three years after PKZ was launched), PKZ sent its first cohort of seven Parramore youth to college and by 2015, 140 Parramore youth received college assistance, including college tours, application/financial aid assistance, scholarships, care packages; all 30 Parramore seniors graduated high school and entered college in Fall 2015 (every one was the first generation in their families to go to college); and 85 Parramore youth currently attend college. PKZ has been featured in national publications including "[Needle-Moving Collaboratives, Case Study: Parramore](#)" issued by the Bridgespan Group as part of [The White House Council on Community](#)

[Solutions](#), and [Parramore, Orlando: Leveraging Local Strengths](#) (see Attachment A), a case study released by the [America's Promise Alliance, Center for Promise](#) (links also provided).

"This program has provided me with the opportunity to pursue so many of my dreams, including being the first one in my family to attend college," said Robertson Bassy, a Parramore youth who recently graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Morehouse College and is currently pursuing his Ph.D.

With regard to career development and youth employment, Parramore Kidz Zone offers "PKZ Workz", a comprehensive employment initiative for Parramore youth ages 16 to 24, including soft skills and financial literacy training, jobs, job coaching and educational support for 120 youth/year. Participants are placed in positions with businesses, non-profits and at city community centers. With funding from Heart of Florida United Way and Valley National Bank, the program also offers participants the opportunity to open Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), whereby youth employees open savings accounts and, for every dollar they deposit, they receive two additional dollars in match, with all savings designated to support their post-secondary education. The City is currently partnering with CareerSource Central Florida to obtain a U.S. Department of Labor's Career Pathways for Youth grant, which would enable expansion PKZ Workz to a second low income Orlando neighborhood.

Additional examples of online content describing PKZ's activities and accomplishments, including Mayor Dyer's involvement, can be found at the links below:

- [Partnership with Enterprise Holdings to Offer College Scholarships to City Youth.](#)
- [Parramore Kidz Zone Behind-the-Scenes Tour of EA Sports](#) – Encouraging youth to pursue careers in science and technology.
- [Orlando Sentinel editorial: One student describes how the City's children's programs have helped her graduate from high school and go to college.](#)
- [See how Raysean Brown – a longtime participant in Parramore Kidz Zone – found his path through high school, through college, and now in his first job post-college.](#)

AmeriCorps. The City of Orlando is the recipient of numerous AmeriCorps grants from the Corporation for National and Community Service. Taken together, these grants enable MDCI to employ an estimated 150 AmeriCorps members each year. The program not only offers essential work opportunities to the college students and recent college graduates (most of whom are low income Orlando youth in their early 20's) who become AmeriCorps members, but these members then "pay it forward" by providing academic and social support to several thousand low income children at school and neighborhood-based sites. [Click on this link to read about one of MDCI's AmeriCorps programs – Orlando Partnership for School Success \(O-PASS\)](#) – wherein 30 AmeriCorps members are deployed to 8 City middle schools to impact the academic achievement of low income students.

Last year, the City of Orlando became one of 10 sites in the nation to be awarded an Operation AmeriCorps grant through which 70 AmeriCorps members have now been

recruited and deployed to five Orlando high schools to work with an estimated 2,000 eleventh and twelfth graders, with the goal of improving high school graduation rates and ensuring every graduating senior is connected with post-secondary education, employment, military service, or national service. And, for the third year in a row, the City will arrange for summer employment for 36 youth via the AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associates program via a grant the City receives from the Corporation for National and Community Service.

- My Brother's Keeper Orlando. According to the White House Press Release issued May 30, 2014, "...*For decades opportunity has lagged behind for some, including millions of boys and young men of color. Boys of color are too often born into poverty and live with a single parent. And while their gains contributed to the national high school graduation rate reaching an all-time high, in some school districts dropout rates remain high. Too many of these boys and young men will have negative interactions with the juvenile and criminal justice system, and the dream of a college education is within grasp for too few. Our society can and will do more to help remove barriers to all young people's success, because America prospers not only when hard work and responsibility are rewarded but also when we all pull forward together. Rebuilding that core American value—community—is why the President launched My Brother's Keeper, an initiative designed to determine what works to help young people stay on track to reach their full potential.*" Orlando joined the President's efforts by being one of the first cities in the nation to sign on to the *My Brother's Keeper* (MBK) Community Challenge in partnership with the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Goals of MBK Orlando are to improve academic performance, increase employment, and reduce disproportional representation in the justice system among Orlando's young men of color. A detailed description of MBK Orlando is provided in Attachment B to this application. As one example of MBK Orlando's work to promote employment among young men of color, this summer *My Brother's Keeper* Orlando will partner with LinkedIn for Good as part of the White House Summer Opportunity Initiative to connect an estimated 20 Orlando young men of color to jobs offered by local employers.

Additional examples of online content describing MBK Orlando's activities and accomplishments can be found at the links below:

- [My Brother's Keeper Orlando Behind-the-Scenes Tour of Kennedy Space Center](#) – Encouraging youth to pursue careers in science and technology. (Also, [click on this link](#) for a video of the same activity).
 - [My Brother's Keeper Orlando full day, behind-the-scenes tour of the Orlando Magic corporate headquarters](#), including in-depth conversations with Magic staff to learn about careers in sports.
- Opportunity Jobs Academy. An initiative of the non-profit Opportunity Jobs Foundation, [Opportunity Jobs Academy \(OJA\)](#) works in close partnership with Mayor Dyer's Children's Initiative to facilitate career pathways for disengaged Orlando 16-24 year olds. OJA works closely with MDCI and local business leaders to bring practical education and mentoring to Orlando youth, providing MDCI participants basic workplace skills, real world education and hands-on mentoring to help them begin along their journeys to economic independence and the middle class. OJA's deep relationships within the business

community provide students with access to mentors and jobs across many different businesses and vocations. Each participating youth is matched with a mentor who manages a business in the youth's neighborhood. For a period of 8 weeks, the youth attends weekly soft skills training sessions and shadows his or her mentor. At the end, youth are hired into a management training program operated by the mentor's business. The program takes a long-term view, providing postgraduate support, networking and other services designed to continue guiding OJA graduates long after they complete training. To date, three 8 week sessions have produced 60 trained and hired youth employees. [Click here to learn more about the program](#), including videos featuring Mayor Dyer speaking about the importance of such programs for Orlando's children – [and this story Mayor Dyer's recent visit to OJA](#) to talk to youth about what his first job was like.

- College Access Assistance and Exposure of Youth to Career Opportunities. Examples of college access assistance provided by MDCI include college tours, college application assistance, scholarships leveraged from donors, Individual Development Accounts, and support from MDCI staff to encourage persistence through post-secondary graduation. This year, the City of Orlando will hold *Reach Higher* College Signing Day on May 2, 2016, in the spirit of First Lady Michelle Obama's *Reach Higher* initiative, to celebrate the 50 Orlando high school seniors who are going to college this fall as a result of the wrap-around social, academic and economic support that MDCI has provided.

In addition to college access assistance, MDCI exposes several thousand youth, each year, to careers in emerging industries, including behind the scenes tours of local businesses, classes in computer coding, operation of a citywide Science Olympiad competition, and more. Below please find links to examples of online content describing these activities and accomplishments:

- [Partnership with Fox Sports to introduce youth to careers in sports broadcasting.](#) (Also, [click on this link](#) for a video of the same activity)
- [Mayor Dyer Children's Initiative College Tour 2016: Hello New Orleans!](#)
- [Mayor Dyer Children's Initiative Science Olympiad](#) – encouraging middle school youth to pursue careers in science and technology.
- [Mayor Dyer visits youth participating in "An Hour of Code"](#) where middle schoolers learn about careers in computer coding.

Finally, the City of Orlando is one of the city's largest employers of youth. Each year, the City hires and trains over 500 youth between the ages of 14 to 24 years old in a variety of jobs. These positions include camp counselors, athletic coaches, after school tutors, and lifeguards at City facilities. As a result of Mayor Dyer's leadership, Orlando will hire over 500 youth this year and arrange for employment of an additional 236 via grant and partnership programs. Recognition from the U.S. Conference of Mayors will facilitate scale up of these programs, providing employment opportunities for more youth.

4. **Outline your program results, and include documentation to support them. Other supporting documentation may include educational/promotional materials, brochures, statistics, news clippings, citations, etc.**

MDCI relies heavily on data to track performance and effectiveness, and the results have been remarkable. A description of MDCI programs, including metrics on the number of children served, by program, and outcomes of those programs related to academic achievement, is included in Attachments C and D of this application, and can also be viewed [at this link \(a November 2014 presentation to the Orlando City Council\)](#), which provides a “deep dive” view of the City’s children’s programs). Examples of metrics tracked and achieved include:

- Parramore Kidz Zone: 1,185 children/youth served last year. 90% of participants had a 2.0+ GPA, 98% were promoted to the next grade level, 100% of seniors graduated. 94 Parramore youth were employed through PKZ, 86 received financial literacy training and 26 opened Individual Development Accounts to save money for college. 140 youth received college assistance, including college tours, application/financial aid assistance, scholarships, care packages; all 30 Parramore seniors (all first generation) graduated high school and entered college in Fall 2015; 85 Parramore youth currently attend college. Since PKZ was launched in 2006, juvenile arrests have declined 74% in Parramore, teen births have declined 66%, 215% more children attend preschool, and child abuse and neglect has declined by 50%.
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers (operated by MDCI at City middle schools and recreation centers): 2,710 youth served year round; 83% of students meeting or exceeding grade level expectations; 100% of 8th grade students promoted to 9th grade in Fall 2015.
- AmeriCorps: 2,850 youth served year round; 79% of participating students improved their math and reading performance; 86% improved school attendance; and there was a 77% reduction in suspensions and expulsions.

5. How will you evaluate this program to determine if it is effective? What are the key indicators of success? Please include metrics.

MDCI’s performance metrics are tracked, analyzed and reported by qualified outside evaluators, with some examples available in Attachments C and D of this application. Key indicators of success as it relates to college and career pathways are as follows:

- Number of youth receiving job skills training;
- Number of youth receiving financial literacy training;
- Number of youth participating in career exposure opportunities, including behind the scenes tours of local businesses, STEM enrichment programs, and more.
- Number of youth placed in full and part time employment;
- Number of youth who open and maintain Individual Development Accounts, including the amount of money they save for their post-secondary education;
- Number of 12th graders graduating from high school;
- Number of youth receiving college access assistance;
- Number of 12th graders applying to and entering college, career/technical training, the military, employment, or public service;
- Number of post-secondary students receiving on-going academic support;
- Number of post-secondary students who graduate with career credentials;
- Number of post-secondary graduates who are employed in career-oriented jobs within 6 months of having received their post-secondary credentials.

6. Describe the program’s innovative approach to enhancing employment of graduates of post-secondary education or training programs in high-value occupations.

MDCI’s approach is data-driven, evidence-based, innovative and relies upon close collaboration with schools, universities, businesses, donors – in fact, the entire spectrum of stakeholders seeking to collaborate with the City to improve outcomes among Orlando’s children. Examples of innovation, particularly as it relates to high-value occupations, include:

- Deployment of staff and AmeriCorps members to provide wrap-around support to youth to ensure progression from K-12 education, through high school graduation, post-secondary enrollment, and post-secondary completion. Wrap-around support includes: weekly meetings with MDCI participants, academic and career assessments, development of graduation/postsecondary/career plans, provision of support (financial, socio-emotional, guidance) to assist in implementing those plans, with progress reviewed regularly, ultimately leading to careers in high-value sectors.
- Partnership with the local Workforce Innovation Agency (WIA) - CareerSource Central Florida - to assist students in obtaining jobs in high value occupations. This includes a recent application to the U.S. Department of Labor’s for a Career Pathways for Youth grant targeting 100 youth aged 16 to 24, with limited or no work experience, providing soft-skills training, technology training, subsidized summer employment opportunities, unsubsidized part-time and full-time employment, career coaching, career awareness, and career planning, in in-demand occupations.
- Use of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), whereby youth open savings accounts and, for every dollar they deposit, they receive two additional dollars in match, with all savings designated to support their post-secondary education.
- A robust *My Brother’s Keeper* Orlando initiative, targeting all of these services to Orlando’s highest risk population – young men of color.
- On-going exposure of thousands of MDCI participants to careers in emerging industries, especially in STEM fields, including behind the scenes tours of local businesses, classes in computer coding, operation of a citywide Science Olympiad competition, and more.
- Comprehensive deployment of City social media assets to bring awareness and support to this initiative and to position the City of Orlando, and Mayor Dyer, as relentless advocates of efforts that build pathways to college and careers, especially for Orlando’s low income youth, to move the needle on college-going, youth employment and economic development in Orlando – the City Beautiful.