



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on September 4, 2012

Labor Dept. Grants Go to States Spending Most Per Pupil

The federal government, via the U.S. Department of Labor, is [dispensing](#) \$75.7 million in taxpayer-funded grants to offer high school dropouts vocational training in construction, healthcare, information technology, and other in-demand occupational fields. With about 5,000 people (ages 16 to 24) projected to benefit from the grants, YouthBuild, an alternative education program that assists high school dropouts in obtaining employment-related skills, will be distributing the funding.



“YouthBuild offers young people the opportunity to earn academic and industry-recognized credentials, practice the skills they’ll need to succeed at work, and experience what it means to contribute to their own success and that of their communities,” asserted Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis. The Labor Department described the program in a recent [press release](#):

The YouthBuild grants announced today are the first awarded under new program regulations published in February 2012, which expand occupational skills training beyond construction to include fast-growing industries such as health care and information technology. The construction skills training programs funded teach valuable skills to participants who build or rehabilitate housing for low-income or homeless individuals and families in their communities. The non-construction skills training programs funded include leadership development and community service elements to ensure that youth maintain a connection to their communities through service and volunteerism.

This marks the first year that the program, which has been receiving federal support since 1992, will offer training services in occupational fields beyond construction. Electrical appliance installation and air conditioning system repair are just a couple of fields now offered in the revamped program, which purportedly acknowledges the recession-era decline in the construction industry. “We know that, because we’re going through hard times, to also push out areas that are growing,” Solis [told reporters](#) last week.

Ranging from \$700,000 to \$1.1 million per grant, the money will fund 74 YouthBuild programs across 28 states and the District of Columbia. While the nation’s elementary-secondary public school systems spent about \$10,500 per pupil in 2010, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, this new program will spend an average of \$15,140 for each “out of school” individual.

Interestingly, the bulk of the grants go to states that spend the most money per pupil on education. According to a [June Census Bureau report](#), the District of Columbia spent \$18,667 per student, the nation’s highest amount spent on education in 2010. Meanwhile, the Labor Department doled out a \$1.1-million YouthBuild grant to the [Sasha Bruce Youthwork](#), an organization providing social and education services to youths in the Washington, D.C. area.

New York, which spent the second largest amount per student (\$18,618), is reaping \$5,209,046 in grants through the YouthBuild program. New Jersey, ranking third on the list in 2010 per-pupil



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spending, will be awarded five grants from the Labor Department for a total of \$4,323,900.

New Bedford is [one of five programs](#) in Massachusetts — a state that spent \$14,350 in 2010 per pupil — receiving a YouthBuild grant. New Bedford's award, worth nearly a million dollars, will go toward classroom instruction with vocational skills training designed to help high school dropouts or individuals tangled within the juvenile justice system. "This program gives them a second chance," said Bruce Morrell, director of People Acting in Community Endeavors, which helps monitor the YouthBuild program.

While these spendthrift states are raking in millions of dollars in federal grants, states spending the least per pupil in education are being left in the dark from a program that, arguably, should not exist in the first place. For example, Arizona, which spent \$7,848 per pupil in 2010, Idaho (\$7,106), Oklahoma (\$7,896), and Utah (\$6,064), will see not a dime in this year's lavish offering of taxpayer-funded YouthBuild grants.



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