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**RochesterWorks!**

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**RochesterWorks! Introduces ROC SEEDS Program for At-Risk Young Adults**

RochesterWorks announced the SEEDS (Safety, Economic Empowerment, Development, and Support) Program. This represents the first phase of a state-funded anti-gun violence initiative that seeks to provide pathways to employment for young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 in targeted City of Rochester neighborhoods.

Last month, State leaders announced a plan to address emerging gun violence hot spots across New York, including funding an initial investment of \$2.25 million to target cluster zones in Upstate New York. Locally, the state will provide \$450,000 in funding for engaging at-risk youth in nine Rochester City zip codes (14605, 14606, 14608, 14609, 14611, 14613, 14615, 14619, and 14621) with a high incidence of gun violence.

“The SEEDS program will provide vital pathways to employment for at-risk young adults to help provide pathways out of violence and get kids into other structures and systems that will help support them in a healthy lifestyle,” said Monroe County Executive Adam Bello. “This investment will create critical opportunities for young people to earn needed income and build life and leadership skills that will benefit them and our community for years to come. This is an important part of a multi-pronged strategy to help reduce gun violence in our neighborhoods and I thank RochesterWorks and the Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce for their partnership in this initiative.”

Executive Director of RochesterWorks!, Dave Seeley says of the program, “The framework for SEEDS has been built for us over the last twenty years with the success of our Summer Youth Employment Program, and those best practices will now be used in the fight to reduce gun violence. RochesterWorks! has cultivated relationships with employers throughout the City to offer worksites dedicated to developing and supporting young people, and year after year nearly 90% of those employers come back to partner with us again. Those strong roots in the community are going to help the SEEDS program thrive.”

Antwan Williams, Director of Youth System Services for RochesterWorks! adds, “More than 20,000 young people from the Greater Rochester community have participated in SYEP since its inception in 2000. While this initiative is new, its business as usual when we look at the population we serve annually. It’s all about putting the supports in place – exposure equals opportunities.”

Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Bob Duffy said, "Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce is honored to join New York State, Monroe County, and RochesterWorks! in supporting the development of our community's youth and efforts to disrupt gun violence with the ROC SEEDS program. Every time we lose a young person in Rochester to gun violence, our entire community suffers. A program like this can change the life of a young person and improve the outlook of our City. In support of this initiative, Greater Rochester Chamber will be working with its members to provide job opportunities to youth ages 18-24 to help place them on a path toward a successful career and future. Like County Executive Bello and RochesterWorks! Executive Director Dave Seeley, we are passionate about putting people to work and securing the safety and prosperity of our community. We thank them for their leadership and look forward to our continued partnership on this worthwhile program."

SEEDS will run through December 2021 with a target of 50 participants. Job placements will be located at various employers throughout the City of Rochester Monroe County. Positions are guaranteed for at least ten weeks, with the opportunity for full-time permanent work at the end of the program period. All jobs will pay at least \$15.00 per hour, though some employers may offer a higher wage.

Participants will enroll with TES Staffing and complete pre-employment coaching with program staff to identify needs such as banking access, financial literacy, transportation, and other support services.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis at [rocseeds.org](http://rocseeds.org).

Last month, the Governor's office also announced a broader \$16 million initiative, which included allocating \$2.25 million to RochesterWorks! to provide employment opportunities for 450 at-risk Rochester young adults. RochesterWorks! is currently working with the Department of Labor to finalize details of that program.

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*As Monroe County's largest employment and training initiative, RochesterWorks! is dedicated to developing a strong workforce in the Rochester, NY, region as we serve job seekers, youth, and businesses in our community.*