

 **The Herald-Palladium**

http://www.heraldpalladium.com/news/local/youth-solutions-gets--year-k-grant/article_aaa252c6-f9bc-5ba4-8703-79e6289c56c3.html

Youth Solutions gets 2-year, \$250K grant

By TONY WITTKOWSKI - HP Staff Writer Feb 9, 2018 Updated Feb 9, 2018



From left: Tabitha Cortez, Juana Diaz, Cesar Hernandez, Carmen Calvillo and Maria Lopez study for final exams in 2017. All five students, who would go on to graduate, were part of the Jobs for Michigan Graduates program at Hartford High School.

Photo provided

BENTON HARBOR — A Kinexus statewide organization is getting \$250,000 in grant funding over the next two years to help increase high school graduation rates.

America's Promise Alliance announced that Youth Solutions Inc. was awarded a GradNation Acceleration Grant, as part of the GradNation campaign to raise the graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020.

Youth Solutions Inc. is one of five state and community grant recipients around the country that offer services in correlation with the campaign.

Kinexus launched Youth Solutions – a statewide youth opportunity organization – last year in the effort to bridge the gap between young adults and the workforce.

Youth Solutions operates as a subsidiary of the Benton Harbor-based nonprofit organization.

Totaling \$800,000 across all five grantees, Youth Solutions will get \$250,000 over two years to fund statewide Jobs for Michigan's Graduates programming.

Kristin Harrington, executive director of Jobs for Michigan's Graduates, said their programming has a proven track record of keeping young people in school and helping them obtain a high school diploma.

"Youth Solutions Inc. envisions a Michigan where all young people are educated, employed and career-bound. Yet, nearly 11,000 young people are dropping out of Michigan high schools each year," Harrington said in a news release. "We make sure our graduates are prepared to enter the workforce upon earning their diploma, which is a win for Michigan youth, employers and the communities that we serve."

With the Michigan graduation rate at 79.6 percent, support from this grant will help Youth Solutions reach more than 4,500 at-risk young people across 45 Michigan cities. The JMG program started at Benton Harbor High School in 2008, serving 76 at-risk teenagers and young adults.

Harrington said JMG programming targets successful graduation from high school and transition into meaningful employment opportunities, with 98 percent of the program's participants from the Class of 2016 graduating and 91 percent going onto a "positive outcome."

Applications for the grant were submitted from 10 priority states that would have a measurable impact on improving the national graduation rate and closing equity gaps. In total, there were more than 100 applicants.

The platform identifies six areas every community should act on to accelerate the high school graduation rate.

"We know that the most significant improvements in the national high school graduation rate will happen on the local level – in districts and communities working each day to meet the individual needs of young people," John Gomperts, president and CEO of America's Promise, said in the release. "The final grantees were selected because they demonstrated a deep understanding of the specific student populations needing additional support and have a track record for maximizing the resources and partnerships to meet those student needs."

Gomperts said the intention of this work includes an increase to the graduation rate, shared learning for adoption and replication in other states and communities.

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