Connecting with, and engaging out-of-school youth (OSY) is one of the biggest challenges youth providers of all types struggle with. From finding and recruiting OSY, to keeping them engaged throughout their program lifespan, success can often be a moving target, and difficult to achieve. Effective engagement and retention requires planning, a skilled staff and ongoing efforts to sustain success. When looking at this issue at the local level, discussion often focuses on:

Youth Cohort Challenge

What Does It Take to Effectively Engage and Retain Out of School Youth Throughout the Program Lifespan?

Program Design, Elements and Participant Flow

Positive Youth Development Principles and Relationship Building

Community Partnerships, Collaboration and Sustainability

We are so glad you are interested in applying to participate in this important work to identify solutions for effectively engaging and retaining OSY. We welcome all formula and non-formula grantees serving OSY, including but not limited to WIOA Title I Youth, YouthBuild, NFJP, INAP, and REO grantees. In order to select the strongest and most diverse cohort, we have put together some questions for your team to respond to.

**Please answer the following questions by providing a short (paragraph or two) response.**

## What challenges do you face in OSY engagement and retention?

## Of the potential areas of focus, where is your greatest interest?

* + Program Design, Elements and Participant Flow
	+ Positive Youth Development Principles and Relationship Building
	+ Community Partnerships, Collaboration and Sustainability

## What have been your local area’s efforts to date, if any, around innovation in engaging and retaining OSY?

## Who would make up your group of 3-5 staff (name, title, organization)?

*We will select around 5-7 groups from across the country with 3-5 staff in each. Groups should include local level staff and partners that support out-of-school youth and should include different levels of staffing.*

## Why were they selected? What would be their role in the group?

## What potential deliverable(s) would you like to see?

*(for example, capacity building tools, examples of best practices,
strategy guides, resource toolboxes, etc.)*

**Please keep applications to two pages or less. Applications should be submitted to** *cohorts@mahernet.com* **with the subject
line “Youth Cohort Challenge.”**

**The application due date is December 15, 2017. Cohort members will be announced in early January 2018.**

*Selections will be made by the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. The Administration is looking to make between 5 and 7 selections and will consider a number of factors including geographic location and ensuring there is a balance of state and local members.*

## Important Dates:

Application due date – December 15, 2017

Selection announcements – early January 2018

Cohort period – February – April 2018

For more information, please contact cohorts@mahernet.com.