



Ministerial Statement

by:

The Hon. Jason P. Hayward, JP, MP

Minister of Economy and Labour

Youth Employment Strategy Update

Friday, 27 February 2026

Mr. Speaker,

I rise today to provide Honourable Members with a comprehensive update on the implementation and advancement of Bermuda's Youth Employment Strategy.

This Strategy remains a central pillar of the Government's commitment to building a resilient, future-ready workforce by ensuring that young Bermudians are equipped with the skills, experience, and support necessary to transition successfully into meaningful employment.

The Youth Employment Strategy is designed to expand access to training, strengthen career readiness, increase internship and apprenticeship pathways, and provide structured support for vulnerable youth. In 2025, the Department of Workforce Development continued to advance these objectives through measurable and coordinated action.

Mr. Speaker,

During 2025, more than 320 young Bermudians engaged in Youth Employment Strategy programming, including internships, apprenticeships, job readiness training, and individualized career services. Through the Summer Internship Programme (SIP) and the Summer Employment Programme (SEP), a total of 172 students were placed across both public and private sector employers.

- 72 high school students participated in the Summer Internship Programme.
- 100 college and university students participated in the Summer Employment Programme.

These placements were secured through partnerships with 32 employers across a diverse range of sectors such as international business, hospitality, retail, and aviation, as well as government departments.

Employers consistently reported strong performance, professionalism, and initiative among student participants. Student feedback was equally positive.

- 96% of respondents indicated satisfaction with the programme.
- 100% reported a better understanding of how to present themselves professionally in the workplace.

Mr. Speaker,

These outcomes demonstrate that the Youth Employment Strategy is not merely facilitating temporary placements, it is strengthening professional identity, workplace readiness, and career direction.

Bridge to Work

In 2025, the Department launched the Bridge to Work Programme, a pilot initiative designed to support young people transitioning from training into employment.

Fourteen participants engaged in structured, paid short-term placements with twelve local employers.

- 75% of participants met or exceeded employer expectations.
- Eight participants received job offers following completion of their placement.

Bridge to Work was specifically designed to close the gap between certification and full-time employment, offering mentorship, soft skills development, and structured exposure to workplace standards.

This initiative represents an important evolution of the Youth Employment Strategy, moving from access to opportunity, toward structured transition into sustainable employment.

Learning Through Experience and Sector-Specific Pathways

Mr. Speaker,

The Strategy also expanded sector-specific programming through the Learning Through Experience (LTE) – Hospitality Programme.

Seven participants engaged in structured hospitality placements, with three securing full-time employment as a direct result of their participation.

Additionally, collaboration with the Gang Violence Reduction Team supported at-risk youth through individualized employment planning and trauma-informed coaching. One participant secured employment, while another is progressing toward certification in the HVAC sector.

These targeted interventions reflect the Strategy's commitment to inclusive access and wraparound support for vulnerable youth.

Strengthening Governance and Programme Integrity

Mr. Speaker,

While progress has been significant, responsible stewardship requires continuous improvement.

During the 2025 cycle, the Department undertook a comprehensive review of programme administration and compliance processes. As a result, the following enhancements have been implemented:

- Introduction of a structured three-stage documentation timeline to improve onboarding efficiency.
- Strengthened enforcement of academic eligibility requirements for college placements.
- Enhanced digital application and timesheet systems to improve processing and accountability.
- Earlier employer engagement and interview cycles to reduce onboarding delays.
- Clearer communication of programme expectations to students and parents.

These refinements ensure that programme delivery remains compliant, equitable, and aligned with best-practice standards.

Alignment with Strategic Goals

Mr. Speaker,

The Youth Employment Strategy continues to advance its core objectives:

- Increasing local training opportunities and promoting pathways to employment;

- Expanding career support services from high school through early employment;
- Strengthening apprenticeships and internship opportunities;
- Improving access to labour market information; and
- Promoting structured support for vulnerable youth.

Career Development Officers embedded labour market trends into coaching sessions, and 182 youth completed structured job readiness workshops in resume development, mock interviews, and professional communication.

Importantly, 67% of participants were employed within three months of programme completion.

These are tangible, outcome-driven results.

Looking Ahead – 2026 Priorities

Mr. Speaker,

Building on the momentum of 2025, the Department will prioritize:

- Expanding Bridge to Work into a year-round programme with tiered placements;
- Strengthening pathways into trades, hospitality, and digital literacy;
- Expanding graduate apprenticeship opportunities; and
- Deepening employer onboarding and mentorship frameworks to improve retention and long-term hiring outcomes.

The Youth Employment Strategy will continue to evolve to meet the needs of both young Bermudians and the industries that power our economy.

Mr. Speaker,

The work of the Department of Workforce Development under the Youth Employment Strategy reflects strategic partnerships, disciplined policy implementation, and measurable outcomes.

This Government remains committed to ensuring that every young Bermudian has access to opportunity, preparation, and structured pathways into meaningful employment.

I commend the staff of the Department of Workforce Development for their continued dedication, and I thank our employer partners who have demonstrated confidence in Bermuda's youth.

Together, we are not only preparing young people for work, but we are also building a workforce prepared for the future.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker.**