

# Out-of-School Time Stories

## BOOST Grantee Spotlight: Nobis Works

“Some of our parents simply never thought their son or daughter was capable of doing what we were witnessing,” remarked Liz Pfennig, Director of Programs at Nobis Works and primary facilitator of Nobis’ EYES (Early Youth Employment Services) Program. “On those days I have to wear my waterproof mascara.”

A recipient of a Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time (BOOST) grant, Nobis Works focused its year one allotment on expanding services for youth aged 14-21 navigating the challenges of a disability diagnosis. **“Because of BOOST, we expanded our program into new communities where we had never before provided summer programming,”** noted Pfennig. “We partnered with a school in Fulton County called Cumberland Academy to use their facilities, and we hosted two weeks in Forsyth County this past summer where previously we only had the resources to do one.”

## Expanding Horizons

Working to provide students access and exposure to a diverse array of potential employment opportunities, Nobis’ EYES summer program is designed so that students receive three days of interactive classroom instruction and two days of community outings aimed at career exploration.



**Youth Served:**  
123 annually



**Ages Served:**  
9th-12th grade

**Counties Served:**  
Cherokee, Cobb, Dekalb, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Paulding, Polk, Rockdale

**Programming Offered:**  
Summer Learning

**BOOST Grant Purpose:**  
Expand access,  
Reduce barriers, and  
Increase quality

**OST Government Funding Sources:**  
BOOST grant

Website: [tommynobiscenter.org](http://tommynobiscenter.org)

Educational components of the program focus on practical skills, like how to fill out an application or dress for an interview, and feature guest speakers from some of our state's most prominent businesses and institutions. Leadership at Comcast, a local television producer, and the head of a local animal rescue have all joined Nobis Works' to impart their wisdom. In these settings **students get to experience the kind of belonging and togetherness that was absent during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially youth living with the challenges presented by their disability status.**

“The joy that students experience while they're in camp, it's a joy many don't often get to experience as a result of the challenges they're having to navigate,” said Monica Oliveira, Senior Development Specialist and chief architect of Nobis' innovative use of BOOST funds. “For them to come to camp and just be happy and feel like they belong, I'm really happy we can provide that sense of inclusion that they may not get every day. It's really special to be a part of.”

## Reducing Barriers

Informed by the traditional education framework of our state, organizations like Nobis Works have the flexibility to align their curriculum with the evidence-based practices proven effective for the specific population they serve. In the EYES program, for example, the bulk of their work focuses on PreETS or Pre-Employment Transitional Services. Included in these services are trips to local businesses and institutions like the Cobb County Courthouse, local bakeries, Guitar Center, and the Strand Theatre. **Nobis aims to expose its summer campers to a wide range of potential employers, increasing the likelihood that students find a profession in which they could see themselves thrive.**

“Students do a tour and talk about the various positions within the employment site,” said Pfennig, “we want to expose our students as much as possible to a variety of opportunities.” Occasionally, students can secure positions at the locations they visited during their time at camp. One student was able to secure a position at a Forsyth County animal shelter. Another could not wait to call the theatre they had just visited to inquire about a job.

Even at this early stage of state investment, Nobis students are accepting positions in the workforce as a result of their participation in the EYES program. More notable still, some students opt to apply what they've learned to their own entrepreneurial ventures.



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– Monica Oliveira

Senior Development Specialist

## Promoting Entrepreneurship

Oliveira recalls a student who attended the summer program:



**one of her goals was to work in a bakery. She had been attending outings at bakeries but wasn't getting the results she wanted in looking for a permanent bakery role. She decided instead to open her own baking business. She got all the permits she needed, took all the classes she needed for food handling safety, and her mom drove her to the bank, waiting in the car while she opened her own banking account. She has since begun operating her own small business where she makes baked goods and sells them. It is fulfilling her passion and giving her purpose.** 

The benefits of Nobis' out-of-school time programming, however, are not purely economic. **When students first arrive at camp, many are unable to stand in front their peers and introduce themselves.** Through its data-informed curriculum, staff work systematically with youth to increase confidence and provide tools to help them more effectively interact with their communities. Oliveira remarked, "the summer program really gives us an opportunity to take a deeper dive and work on these kinds of soft skills."

## Reaching More Youth

This kind of growth is made possible through state and federal funding for out-of-school time. Having been in operation for four years, Nobis Works' programming achieved significant expansion into underserved and under-resourced communities in Fulton and Forsyth counties. **Last summer they were able to provide their transformative programming to 70 local students. This summer they served 123.** By allocating the majority of their BOOST grant to reduce staffing costs, Nobis was able to put the remainder of its budget to work for Georgia's youth experiencing disabilities.

"It's kind of a chain reaction with BOOST funding," said Oliveira. "BOOST has allowed us to have the capacity to hire more folks to serve more students in different areas, so we are able to do those career exploration activities across multiple counties. This also introduces a lot of businesses, institutions, community partners to the Tommy Nobis Center, creating opportunities for them to support students in multiple, whether it be through in-kind donations, partnership opportunities, or other student support."

At the conclusion of the program, Nobis hosts a celebration for students' parents and families. Throughout camp, students work to refine "elevator speeches," 30-second presentations outlining who they are, what their passions are, and what they hope to achieve down the line. **At the end of summer, students stand in front of an audience of 50-60 people, the most many have ever addressed, and present their speeches.** It's an emotional moment for families who have long searched for programming that can produce these kinds of results for their children. Tears of joy are not uncommon.

"The pride of watching our kids come in on the first day not even able to stand up and say their name, to the last day standing in front of the room and giving their elevator speech, is powerful."





GEORGIA STATEWIDE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

75 Marietta Street, Suite 401  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303  
(404) 521-0355 | [info@afterschoolga.org](mailto:info@afterschoolga.org)  
[www.afterschoolga.org](http://www.afterschoolga.org)



@AfterschoolGA



[Facebook.com/AfterschoolGA](https://www.facebook.com/AfterschoolGA)



Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time (BOOST) is a competitive grant program administered by the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN) and operated in partnership with the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). BOOST offers \$85 million via three-year grants, renewed annually, with funding made available through the American Rescue Plan. The grants program is aimed at promoting evidence-based practices and whole child supports in afterschool and summer learning programs. BOOST is designed to expand access, reduce barriers to enrollment, and increase programmatic quality to improve outcomes for students and families throughout the state. GSAN provides recommendations for grant awards based on rigorous application criteria and offers technical assistance and training to grantees to ensure successful implementation. All grants are approved by GaDOE, ensuring alignment with statewide priorities and goals.