President Obama launched the My Brother’s Keeper initiative to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color, and to ensure that all young people can reach their full potential. The City of St. Petersburg joined this initiative and launched the Cohort of Champions.

What is the Cohort of Champions?

Cohort of Champions (COC) is a youth training program that offers support by way of educational, entrepreneurial, workforce, and enrichment training opportunities for young African American males ages 12-24. The City of St. Petersburg works with nonprofit community organizations to connect young people to mentoring, support networks, and teach the skills necessary to start a career or go to college or technical school. Through workshops, cohort members gain real life experiences, learn how to implement real world business principles, and gain an understanding of the importance of serving the community.

Cohort of Champions includes these major components:

- **Wrap-Around Services** – Support networks are offered for the families of all members in the cohort. Services include exposure to African-American culture and heritage, setting family priorities/goals, financial education, mental health, trauma counseling, emergency assistance and certification scholarships.

- **Post-Secondary Education, Second Chances** – Cohort members who are disconnected or have a criminal record are given the opportunity to further their education by acquiring a technical certification or a college degree in a supportive environment.

- **Career Readiness Training** – Available incentivized training targets out-of-school youth with hard and soft skills training, and key support services including job placement and continued monitoring and coaching.

- **After School Employment Training** – Cohort members can gain exposure to programming to prepare to enter the workforce through employment shadowing and industry-wide certification programs.

- **Champions Academies** – Champions Academies provide entrepreneurship training, career readiness training, and after-school employment training to males (ages 12-18) by way of partnerships directly with middle and high school principals.

- **Enrichment Camps and Extra Curriculum Activities** – Extracurricular camps and activities are offered during extended breaks of the school year to the cohort members with focuses on STEM, Entrepreneurship, Agriculture, Financial Literacy, and Art.

- **Academic Enrichment** – Tutoring is available to help cohort members become stronger academically and provide resources to assist with testing, post secondary education and applying for scholarships.

- **Entrepreneurship Training** – Entrepreneurship training tracks help grow entrepreneurial mindsets, personal branding, acquiring proper business licenses and developing a business plan.
Cohort of Champions in Action

- The 2nd Summer Leadership Workforce Development Training Initiative, in partnership with ACT, has served over 25 young men at Gibbs High School. Several young men finished the summer with a Maintenance/Handyman Certificate from Pinellas Technical College.
- The Cohort of Champions had its inaugural class of high school graduates Summer 2019.
- 25+ COC participants have received certifications through SPC’S PITCH program for clinical medical assistance, cell phone and tablet repair, phlebotomy, and programmable logistics.
- More than 10 COC participants have completed the Tiny Homes program through PERC’s collaborative efforts with Pinellas Technical College.
- More than 70 Champions have been placed with jobs or internships.
- Several students have received their certification to become a certified Drone Pilot.
- COC is starting the 2nd Annual Sports Champion’s Academy with young men from Lakewood, Childs Park, and St. Pete youth football leagues ages 12-16.

Since its inception, Cohort of Champions has provided support for:

- **125+** YOUTH
- **150+** FAMILIES
- **200+** ADULTS

Get Connected

The Cohort of Champions is an ongoing open enrollment program. For additional information about the Cohort of Champions and other MBSK programs, visit stpete.org/MBSK, follow the City’s social media pages, or contact the City of St. Petersburg Urban Affairs Department at 727-893-7885.