YCIDEAS

A Compilation of Promising Practices from Youth Councils throughout California

2001-2005

Youth Council Institute
About the Youth Council Institute

The California Youth Council Institute (YCi), established in July 2001 by the California Workforce Investment Board (CWIB), was designed to assist California’s 50 Youth Councils in creating comprehensive local youth-serving systems. YCi is funded by CWIB and managed by New Ways to Work (New Ways) and its partner, the California Workforce Association (CWA). YCi is a project of CWIB.

About this Compilation

New Ways to Work staff, including Charlene Mouille, Steve Trippe, Virginia Hamilton, Nancy Uber-Kellogg, and Chandra Larsen wrote, edited, and compiled the YCidea book. In addition, Chris Castillo, Ashton Applewhite, Susan Berning, Lois Ann Porter, Regina Tuohy, Brenda Gray, and Rachel Antrobus wrote many of the YCideas, with the patient help of managers and staff who are directly involved with the programs and practices. Some YCideas were written or updated extensively by Youth Council staff or practitioners. The New Ways staff would like to extend their thanks to all who contributed. Nancy Uber-Kellogg copyedited the book. Chandra Larsen, Maren Belland, and Krista Bollum formatted it.

This compilation would not have been possible without the guidance, support, and hard work conducted by the California State Youth Council and the more than 40 Youth Councils throughout the state that have adopted and implemented the “All Youth-One System” approach in their communities.

Additional copies of the YCideas: A Compilation of Promising Practices from Youth Councils throughout California can be downloaded from the YCi Project website:

www.nww.org/yci/ycideabook/ycideas

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Introduction

YC Ideas: A Compilation of Promising Practices from Youth Councils throughout California has been prepared by the Youth Council Institute (YCi) to acknowledge and share the accomplishments of Youth Councils over the last four years as they have pursued the development of a single comprehensive system that serves all youth in their local area. The Compilation has been written with several audiences in mind: the staff of local Workforce Boards and Youth Councils, Youth Council members and leadership, local practitioners and educators, policy makers and institutional leaders at the local and state levels, and the partners and potential partners needed to develop a strong and vibrant system. We invite you to read these stories, take stock of the effective and innovative programs, and find ideas that can be adapted to your mission and goals.

Context

The approaches and programs described in the YCideas represent actions that local Youth Councils have taken as they have addressed their obligations under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. When WIA was enacted, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor said in A Vision for Youth:

The Act challenges local communities to achieve a level of collaboration that brings together local workforce training providers, schools, community organizations, and others, in an effort to strategically align and leverage resources and to create community assistance strategies.

In fact, leaders in California’s workforce development and education systems saw the formation of local Youth Councils under WIA as an opportunity to build a comprehensive system that would serve all youth in the state, not just those whom WIA programs are able to serve. Responding to this charge, the California Workforce Investment Board, in the summer of 2001, launched the California Youth Council Institute (YCi) to help California’s 50 Youth Councils not only meet their WIA obligations, but also accomplish the mission of building connected systems at the local level. New Ways to Work and the California Workforce Association were selected to launch and manage the YCi.

The All Youth-One System™ Approach to System Building

The work of YCi has been guided by the All Youth-One System principles, formally adopted by the California State Youth Council and Workforce Investment Board and over 40 of the state’s local Youth Councils. These principles are articulated in three frameworks: the Elements of a Comprehensive Local Youth-Serving System, the Functions of a Youth Council in Building the System, and the Stages of Building a Comprehensive Local Youth-Serving System. The frameworks have been used by local Youth Councils to discuss the youth-serving components that need to be in place, to describe the responsibilities of the Council, and to develop strategies for creating a system in their area.
Elements of a Comprehensive Local Youth-Serving System

Functions of a Youth Council in Building the System
Local Youth Councils: Building Local Comprehensive Systems

Youth Councils in California have risen to the challenge placed before them by WIA, and many have chosen to extend their scope from a regulatory, advisory, WIA-youth focused body to that of a strategic, proactive, system-building collaborative. This broader mission is reflected in the Ideas gathered in this document. The Compilation highlights Youth Councils carrying out their strategic functions, especially convening local leadership to take action and coordinating youth services. Taken together, the Ideas address all four of the core Elements of a Local Youth Serving System: Academic Excellence, Career Preparation, Youth Leadership, and Youth Development and Support. They also illustrate the foundational element of a Comprehensive Approach. In addition, a wide variety of subjects are addressed, including services for special populations, youth involvement, and staff development.

One of the strategies used by the Youth Council Institute is that of a peer-learning network or community of practice. The Institute leaders believe that this approach, along with collecting and documenting quality practices, offers the greatest potential for supporting local Youth Councils as they carry out their work and seek to build local systems that serve the needs of young people in their community. Council members, staff, and service providers have developed and implemented highly effective approaches that can benefit others doing similar work or facing similar challenges. In order to enhance connections among the Councils, YCi continues to provide opportunities for Youth Council members, service providers, and Workforce staff to communicate with each other and share challenges and questions, showcase promising practices, and highlight emerging ideas.

About YCideas

YCideas—short articles describing a promising approach or practice—were developed beginning in 2002 as a means to share ideas among Youth Councils and service providers. Over the past four years, YCi staff had written 35 Ideas articles about promising practices around California. On the occasion of the fourth anniversary of YCi, all fifty Youth Councils were invited to work with YCi to create new Ideas about current programs as well as to update any articles that had been written earlier. This book is the result: a compilation of articles, many of them new, from Youth Councils that responded to our invitation as well as a collection of earlier articles, some of which have been updated to reflect recent developments.

All of the articles describe promising approaches and practices that can serve as examples for other regions.

A Note on the Format of the Ideas

Over the years, as YCideas were written, a new, expanded format emerged that better served the needs of the readers. In the expanded version, new information has been included: the challenge facing the Council that prompted them to develop a new practice or program, the practice the Council instituted to address the challenge and the evidence that it was working, details about how the program was established, a description of a breakthrough moment when participants...
recognized that the practice was working, and information about plans for the future. In some cases we were not able to gather information in two or more of these areas. In these instances we are including an abbreviated version of an Idea, called a YCidea Snippet.

**Acknowledgements**

The Youth Council Institute would like to thank all of the dedicated Youth Council members and staff as well as youth service providers who are working hard to build systems that provide youth with the comprehensive supports they need to prepare for adulthood. In particular, YCi extends its thanks to the people who spoke with our staff about their programs and who read the draft articles. Without their contributions, these Ideas would not be nearly so complete or useful.

YCi would also like to acknowledge the young people of California, many of whom are facing huge challenges yet nevertheless are bringing their vibrant talents and energies to bear as they make their way to successful futures.
Chapter One

Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

In this section:

- Expanding Participation through RFP Process
- Youth Council Committee Structure Aligned to AYOS Elements
- Engaging the Community and Youth Leaders as Members of the Youth Council
- Enhancing Youth Council Participation in Rural Areas
- Engaging Diverse Council Members from throughout the Community
- Engaging the Community to Plan for New Two-Year Plan
- Engaging Community Partners to Join the Youth Council
- Forming Subcommittees to Address Practitioner Challenges
- Supporting Buy-in from Community Decision-Makers
Expanding Participation through RFP Process

Youth Council: The Youth Council of San Luis Obispo County

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: The Youth Council of San Luis Obispo County faced two challenges. The first was that they wanted to ensure broader awareness of WIA services for youth, and expand participation by increasing the numbers of community organizations providing WIA services. In order to engage more agencies, they decided to create a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. The challenge with the new RFP process was to create a system that would involve the Youth Council in designing and managing this process, yet ensure that those Council members who would be submitting a bid would not be included in either the development of the RFP or the review of the submitted bids.

The second challenge the Youth Council dealt with over the past year was the fact that their mission and goals needed to be broader than solely WIA.

The Practices, Details, and Evidence: In order to address the challenge of avoiding conflicts of interest, the Youth Council created a RFP design team that did not include Council members who were going to submit bids to provide services. To help promote a broader “buy in” and understanding of the RFP process, the design team included non-Council members.

Help with the challenge of expanding their mission and goals beyond WIA came from the Council’s outreach to other agencies and initiatives in San Luis Obispo County. Once the RFP process was in place and proposals were submitted, the RFP design team reviewed them. In the course of reading all the proposals, members were able to access a more global view of what needs to be in place for all youth in San Luis Obispo County.

Another experience helped Youth Council members clarify their ideas for expanding their mission and goals. The Youth Council became involved in the Youth Transition Action Team (YTAT) process, an initiative designed to help counties strengthen the transition supports they provide for foster youth preparing to emancipate. Youth Council members were able to participate in the initial YTAT launch meeting in San Luis Obispo, which provided the opportunity to weigh in on ideas and discuss where to go from there. Through inclusion in these YTAT meetings, Youth Council members understood that the groups are all involved with attaining the same goals and by working together, they could align the mandated structures that exist (Youth Council, Youth Transition Action Team, and Children’s Services Council) to serve youth. This experience helped the Council members to come to an understanding of the All Youth One System (AYOS) perspective. (continued)
Council members still feel as though they are in the fledgling stages of learning from and sharing with other groups. Through the Youth Council’s involvement with the San Luis Obispo Youth Transition Action Team, however, there exists the strong possibility to learn from and share with other YTAT teams throughout the state of California and to join forces on policy and strategic planning issues that have an impact on the lives of youth. According to Wendy Wendt, WIB Consultant, by coming together at the Youth Transition Team Meetings, “We can begin to think consciously about how we can be maintaining a common conversation and moving forward in the same direction that is complementary to the efforts.”

The RFP has proven to be a positive process because more youth will end up being served since the number of organizations that won a contract has increased, resulting in more players on the field and more youth being served.

The RFP process also opened the doors for Youth Council members (again, who were not applying for the funding) to take a leadership role in having new youth serving organizations access funding for services for youth.

**Breakthrough Moment:** Participation in the Youth Transition Action Team (YTAT) has become an activity that individuals and groups could mobilize around. “We were excited about the possibilities that exist to join forces, work together, and make connected strides to get to where we need to be for youth,” said Wendt.

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** Youth Council members will participate in monitoring and evaluating the programs that emerged or continued as a result of the RFP process over the year.

In terms of the second challenge, reworking their mission and goals, it remains to be seen what will happen. Wendt stated, “We will continue to identify ways to streamline and calibrate efforts with the Youth Council, YTAT, and the Children’s Services Network with the ongoing goal of making life better for youth!”

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Youth Council Committee Structure Aligned to AYOS Elements

Youth Council: Tulare County Workforce Investment Board Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: Although the WIB and Council had identified goals similar to those outlined in the YCi charts, the work had stalled because some of the tasks seemed overwhelming. After the Tulare County Workforce Investment Board (TCWIB) Youth Council team attended the YCi Strategic Planning Institute in January 2002, they determined that it was necessary to re-evaluate their governance and committee structure.

The Practice and Evidence: Working closely with the WIB and aligning with its goals, the Council shaped and unanimously approved a new committee structure around the YCi Elements of a Comprehensive System. The Youth Council has four primary committees, each focused on a quality element: Academic Excellence, Career Preparation, Youth Leadership and Development, and Support Services (Youth Development and Support).

Each of these committees is responsible for the functions of its work: coordinating services, convening the community, measuring quality, and promoting policy. The Chair of each committee is responsible for leading strategic planning efforts and reporting to the Council Executive Committee on a monthly basis.

The WIB and Council collaborated to further develop the WIB committees that affect youth and established standards ensure fair and consistent representation of Youth Council members on those committees.

The WIB Program Committee, comprised of WIB Directors and Youth Council members, now handles the procurement for the Council, reducing the potential for conflicts of interest and unfair advantage with providers who are also Council members. Providers now play a more prominent role in educating the Council by giving presentations at each Council meeting.

The new governance structure allows for greater focus as well as increased opportunities for informing and integrating the youth community.

Because community partners are more comfortable with the structure, relationships have blossomed. The County Probation Department has become more involved, which has resulted in a more integrated partnership for funding opportunities.

(continued)
The new system better embraces and integrates the key tenets of the two founding groups of the Council, School-to-Career, and the Tulare County Community Youth Coalition, and it provides a better environment for their work to blend. Above all, Youth Council and WIB meetings are more efficient, with committees that drive the work and support the system.

Members of the WIB and the Council are embracing the concepts of a comprehensive youth system. Already, the Council is seeing signs of better convening, linking services, and quality measurements. Youth Council members sit side-by-side with WIB members on WIB committees, creating a vital information and communications link that informs both the WIB and the Council. Because members are in committees for which they volunteered, they actively participate with natural interest.

Details: Aligning the Youth Council Committees to the Elements of a Comprehensive Youth-Serving System has been successful and sustainable. According to Eldonna Caudill, WIB Liaison and Senior Analyst, “The intent would be that most of the work would be done in committee rather than on the Council.” Streamlining activities to the targeted focus of each Committee allowed monthly Youth Council meetings to be focused on strategies, checking in on progress of the workplan, and hearing presentations from other youth programs. Caudill adds, “We didn’t want the Youth Council to keep growing in size, but we wanted to allow for community members to participate in an ad hoc sort of way. We get better input and broader buy-in without making the Youth Council grow too large.” Most of the work generally happens outside of the Youth Council meetings and reports are brought back to the larger group for approval or re-vamping.

The Committees for the Youth Council delegate specific details and issues to those most experienced in handling them. Listed below are the Youth Council Committees, their key areas of focus, and other details:

- **Academic Excellence Committee:** Tutoring, scholarships, after-school programs, and preparation for and knowledge of educational and career options. This Committee is linked to the county-wide education committee that operates out of a county-wide group already in place. Caudill explains, “They bring back information to the Youth Council specific to education. This allows us to discuss things in a different way because the education folks have a different perspective. Then the Youth Council members go back to these ‘big picture’ meetings and offer more input aligned with WIB, Youth Council, and workforce development strategies.”

- **Career Preparation Committee:** Career awareness and preparation, youth employment, job shadowing, and vocational training. The local School-to-Career Board adopted the Youth Council as their decision-making body and dissolved the previous board. This Committee also has the largest representation, including all of the local Chambers, the Economic Development Corporation, Regional Occupational Programs, community-based organizations, and local community colleges.

(continued)
Youth Leadership and Development Committee: Leadership training and opportunities, mentoring, and service learning/community service. This Committee provides an interactive environment for youth engagement in Youth Council activities. They have conducted focus groups with youth and utilize youth to guide curriculum and trainers for youth programs.

Support Services Committee: Child care, counseling, health care, housing, and transportation. Currently this Committee is focused on support for foster youth, and is working to develop partnerships with social service agencies. The committee members have also worked on resource mapping and strengthening partnerships and supportive services.

In addition to the Youth Council Committees, the following WIB committees conduct work for both the local board and Youth Council and have at least one but more often several representatives of the Youth Council on them:

- Evaluation and Oversight Committee
- Program Committee (Procurement)
- Marketing Committee
- Employment Connection Council
- WIB Executive Committee

Breakthrough Moment: Caudill says their breakthrough happened when the “School-to-Career folks developed a Committee and they had met some, but [the STC Director] still had a separate board. But after a couple of meetings, they decided to dissolve their School-to-Career Board through the local Office of Education and adopt the Youth Council as the board.”

Another breakthrough occurred when they figured out how to engage youth, notes Caudill. She explains that creating a Youth Leadership Committee allowed them to “to bring youth in a decision-making capacity that is more focused on work and results rather than ‘brown act committee stuff.’ That was really big to me. And that’s the place where we go to engage youth in special projects, allowing them to drive the design with adult staff in a role as mentors and guides.”

What’s Next for this YCidea? The Council members feel that with a solid, efficient organizational structure with good communication channels, they can now tackle their many program, operational, and administrative priorities. Ongoing evaluation and fine-tuning of their new governance structure is planned.
Where to Go for More Information
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SNIPPET

Engaging the Community and Youth Leaders as Members of the Youth Council

Youth Council: The Teen Employment Network of the Carson/Lomita/Torrance Investment Network Board

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: The vision for youth that the Teen Employment Network (TEN) has adopted is “Every young person shall have access to the resources needed to successfully transition into a productive and meaningful working adulthood.” Their mission is to “establish a collaborative network for local organizations and educational institutions that support the well being of youth, promote lifelong learning, and offer opportunities for young people to conduct wide-ranging explorations of career and educational options.” TEN members were pleased to have pooled their perspectives and knowledge, but wanted to include more members of the community, including youth, in order to be more effective.

The Practice and Evidence: TEN strengthened the leveraging power of their membership by building and leaning upon the expertise of their community and its youth. The Council understands that all youth-serving partners bring something to the table when they can, and when it’s needed, so Council members make a point to give credit to the organizations they engage. As a result, partners and individuals are willing to fully support the TEN. The Council has also increased the number of active youth members from four to seven.

This extended collaboration has resulted in new, youth-focused projects:

• The City of Torrance, the City’s Parks and Recreation Department, and the TEN are partnering to create a satellite Work Source/One-Stop Center for teens. It will be the first such office solely dedicated to youth in the region.

• The Marketing and Outreach Committee is leading the effort to reconstruct the youth web site to make it more user-friendly for young people.

The Details: A few strategies have emerged that have worked especially well for the TEN:

• Both the WIB and the Youth Council have intentionally engaged local elected officials who have a genuine desire to help youth as members. This includes mayors, council members, and legislators, all of whom have been invaluable, going to bat for the TEN and unifying the area’s diverse, three-city community.

(continued)
• Regional city leaders, EDD, Parks and Recreation, and in particular, school districts have been critical partners, resulting in countless programs, linkages, and leveraging resources.

• The TEN’s two subcommittees, Research and Development as well as Marketing, are chaired by youth and mentored by adults. Although the youth are not paid for their service, they do receive school credit.

• The TEN impresses upon the youth that they are needed and that they are the future.

• The TEN recruits youth from a variety of backgrounds to get different perspectives on how to better serve young people. Because of this strategy, the TEN assures itself that it will receive unique, qualified viewpoints on what it’s like to be a youth in the area and the types of services/programs that are needed.

• The TEN utilized the local Youth Employment Opportunities Program (YEOP). The interaction with this agency has been essential to the success of local youth programs, especially in engaging youth and youth leadership.

Where to Go for More Information
The Teen Employment Network of the Carson/Lomita/Torrance Investment Network Board

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Tools
Program information, links and resources available at
http://www.careerzone.torrnet.com
**SNIPPET**

**Enhancing Youth Council Participation in Rural Areas**

**Youth Council:** Golden Sierra Youth Council

**Element:** Comprehensive Approach

**Function:** Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

**Subject:** Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

**The Challenge:** The Golden Sierra Youth Council is a sub-committee of the Golden Sierra WIB. This Youth Council is made up of members from five counties that are very spread out: Placer, Nevada, El Dorado, Alpine, and Sierra. The main problem that has inhibited the work of this Youth Council over the past year is the distance Council members must travel for meetings. The least distance traveled is one hour, with the majority traveling two to three hours each way in order to attend a one- or two-hour meeting. This distance inhibits consistent member engagement with one another. The Youth Council members are dedicated and want to work together, but they had not been able to come up with a solution to adequately address the problem of distance.

**The Practices or Evidence:** Council members were made aware of the potentials of using a “bridge line” which allows for conference calling among members. The line would be purchased and “sited” at Placer County and the Youth Council members would dial in on a stated date/time and hold their meeting. Agenda would be distributed prior to the Youth Council meeting with all members having input regarding the agenda. The Golden Sierra Youth Council feels their capacity to meet regularly, identify areas of concern and connection, and work towards identified goals can be accomplished by adding a bridge line.

This phone conferencing method will make it possible for the Youth Council to meet monthly to work on targeted areas of concern.

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Engaging Diverse Council Members from throughout the Community

Youth Council: Merced County Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach, Youth Leadership

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: Merced County has the youngest median age in the country, creating a unique challenge for its Youth Council. The Merced County Youth Council feels it is their role to build community-wide consensus to promote and support an integrated youth service delivery system that ensures each youth receives the needed support. In order to create that consensus most effectively, Council members saw that they needed to engage community leaders from throughout the community and create a Council structure and process that would maximize each member’s contributions.

The Practices, Details, and Evidence: The Council increased its effectiveness through various collaboration and engagement strategies. First, the Council worked toward a diverse Council membership by providing collaboration opportunities that also meet the needs of potential members. For example, it offered to link its future website to faith-based organizations in exchange for sharing their extensive databases. The faith-based groups, pleased with the opportunity, agreed. In addition, the Council teamed with the local ROP youth committee and asked them to recruit youth to the Youth Council. Youth on the Council were assigned two adult members to support them with transportation, follow-up, and leadership opportunities. Furthermore, the Council provided them with the same full training as Workforce Investment Board members receive, including training in Robert’s Rules of Order. The Council also highlighted youth as public speakers, getting them out into the community.

Another key engagement strategy was to place the power of the Council in the committees; recommendations flow from the committee level up to the Council for action. This structure ensured that each member has valuable and engaging work, and each committee has its own goals, enabling them to move quickly and efficiently. The five active committees are 1) Executive, 2) Planning and Quality Assurance, 3) Operations, 4) Marketing and Leadership, and 5) Outreach and Education.

The diversity of members and their high levels of engagement resulted in growth and expansion of the Council and its capacity to leverage resources and serve the community's youth. The committees have been especially effective. For example, teamwork between the Youth Leadership Committee and the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program resulted in the marketing and presentation of a teen pregnancy video at no cost to the community. The Outreach and
Education Committee members and the Council developed a Statewide Conference for Youth on Youth Councils.

Development of leadership skills among youth members of the Council also expanded their capacity to participate in civic activities. For example, a Merced youth was selected as one of 14 national finalists to attend a conference in Washington D.C. to discuss national issues.

**Where to Go for More Information** Although these practices were instituted early on, information is still available:
Merced County Youth Council

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Engaging the Community to Plan for New Two-Year Plan

Youth Council: Sacramento Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: The WIA authorization cycle was coming to a close in June of 2005, and the incoming Department of Labor Strategic Vision for Delivery of Youth Services and California’s corresponding Two-year plan put greater emphasis on special populations. The Sacramento Youth Council was faced with the challenge of planning its strategies to address the new WIA reauthorization.

The Practice and Evidence: In order to prepare for working with the new DOL Strategic Vision and California’s Two-Year Plan, the Sacramento Works Youth Council engaged the community in a youth planning process during 2004-2005 to address the upcoming WIA reauthorization. The Youth Council conducted several public meetings to engage the current and potential providers, community stakeholders, youth, and parents in this process.

In addition, the Sacramento Community Services Planning Council (CSPC) provided analysis and maps identifying high-risk factors for youth in the Sacramento community. From these risk factors, CSPC identified the top 20 high-risk neighborhoods. Results of these findings were published on both the Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA) and CSPC websites and were used to determine the 2005-2006 funding recommendations.

Where to Go for More Information
Sacramento Youth Council

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Tool
High-risk factors for youth in Sacramento
(http://www.seta.net/pdfs/cspc_setapresentation_110404.pdf)
Engaging Community Partners to Join the Youth Council

**Youth Council:** San Diego School-to-Career Youth Council

**Element:** Comprehensive Approach

**Function:** Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

**Subject:** Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

**The Challenge:** The San Diego School-to-Career Youth Council is about all youth, regardless of funding sources. Their mission is “To build a universal access workforce development system for youth.” “What do we want for our youth?” was the primary question driving their strategic planning. A crucial follow-on question was “How can the Youth Council function best in order to create the supports we want for our young people?”.

**The Practice and Evidence:** The Youth Council identified several practices that helped them work towards accomplishing their mission.

First, they found that a diverse membership of a wide variety of community leaders to be critical to building a system for all youth. Business leaders were especially valuable participants. Members from the businesses sector helped move the work of the Council along, and without them, Council processes became stalled. They also found that staff members who had experience in the business sector added a real bonus.

Second, they incorporated a powerful partnership that already existed. Using the School-to-Career partnership as the Council core, they transferred School-to-Career activities to the Youth Council and held an intentional focus on education.

Third, they recognized that having an effective Council committee structure would help them carry out their work. In the system they created, the full Youth Council meets every other month and the executive committee, a small, highly engaged group of five, meets monthly. Meetings then started to be focused on progress and action.

Fourth, they saw that the executive committee had to provide strong leadership. Their executive committee has not been afraid to acknowledge needed improvements, which has proven to be highly beneficial and has resulted in accelerated progress of the Council’s work. They embraced the idea of adapting their plans. Periodically, they found it necessary to dismantle and re-build the strategic plan is necessary. They reported that it felt like they were starting over, but that is part of the process.
Where to Go for More Information
San Diego School-to-Career Youth Council

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Forming Subcommittees to Address Practitioner Challenges

Youth Council: Verdugo School-to-Career Coalition

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: The mission of the Verdugo School-to-Career Coalition (VSTCC) is “To foster community collaborations among Verdugo area schools, youth service organizations and business as partners for planning policy, programs and support services that respond to changing workforce needs.” However, the VSTCC found that issues arise while practitioners are implementing the work of WIA. When the entire Verdugo Coalition tries to resolve these issues, their discussions tend to stall.

The Practice and Evidence: The Verdugo Coalition has developed an Ad Hoc Advocacy Subcommittee to address the providers’ implementation issues. The Subcommittee avoids dealing with local management issues. Rather, it articulates program implementation difficulties that are embedded in the enabling legislation and regulations of the youth workforce program funding sources, including WIA.

By forming the Subcommittee, the Verdugo Coalition intends to keep certain issues from stalling the progress of discussions at regular Coalition meetings.

The Details: The Coalition assigns issues to the specialized group of practitioners who really understand the details of WIA and who are dedicated to researching the complex system of interactions.

The Subcommittee creates statements that articulate identified problems so that the Verdugo School-to-Career Coalition can request and recommend advocacy positions to be taken by members of the Verdugo Workforce Investment Board.

Where to Go for More Information
Verdgo School-to-Career Coalition

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Supporting Buy-in from Community Decision-Makers

Youth Council: Verdugo School-to-Career Coalition

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: The Verdugo School-to-Career Coalition is committed to “Preparing tomorrow's workforce.” Their mission is to “foster community collaborations among Verdugo area schools, youth service organizations and business as partners for planning policy, programs and support services that respond to changing workforce needs.” Coalition members established that it is important to convene the right people in order to create a solid foundation for the Coalition’s future. Their ability to function effectively as a clearinghouse, Coordinating services, and maneuver through WIA regulations depends on buy-in and support from a diverse group of community decision-makers. The challenge was how to best engage the most effective partners.

The Practice and Evidence: The Coalition conducted an initial Youth Summit, an important, focused, televised panel designed to gain the attention of the highest level representatives in their community: business leaders, city council members, community college trustees, government agency officials, district administrators, and so forth, as well as the larger community. A key method was to produce a program on the local cable television network in which youth explained the benefits they gained through participation in jobs programs; also, the Coalition Chairman introduced the organization and local youth jobs programs.

This strategy is not yet fully implemented; however, it responds directly to the identified youth-serving system needs of the region. Information and feedback collected through the Youth Summit process are discussed at Coalition meetings. The strategic plan, programs, and priorities of the Coalition have been influenced as a result of the initial Summit. Follow-up with the local leaders continues to be important, as has been developing strategies to keep leaders engaged in an ongoing way.

What’s Next for this YCidea? Related future goals include discussion of how key youth organizations might coordinate services, address gaps in services and resources, and how the Coalition can maximize impact. By opening the pathways of communication between the Coalition and powerful community representatives, the Coalition hopes to broaden the knowledge of its work as well as enhance its potential to influence community policy and to stimulate more local job opportunities for youth.
Where to Go for More Information
Verdugo School-to-Career Coalition

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Chapter Two

Coordinating Youth Services

In this section:

- Establishing a Centralized Case Management System
- Supporting Collaboration among Youth Service Providers
- Streamlining Services to Deliver WIA’s Ten Program Elements
- Youth Service Provider Networking Supports Awareness of County Services
- Service Providers Connect to Improve Placement Rates
- Effective Partnership Strategies to Maximize Resources
- One-Stop for Coordinating Youth Services and Involving Youth
- Coordinating Regional Youth Services in Rural Communities
- Promoting Policies to Support Coordinated Services
- Mapping and Marketing Resources for Entire Community
- Forming a Network for Youth Services Providers
Establishing a Centralized Case Management System

Youth Council: Imperial County Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Coordinating Youth Services

The Challenge: Imperial County is located in the southeast corner of California and is a rural, desert community. The county consistently has one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation, ranging from 22 percent in winter to 35 percent in the summer months. The population is about 150,000 (70 percent Hispanic) and has been identified by EDD as having one of the highest concentrations of WIA-eligible youth in the state (33 percent). Imperial County struggled with efficiently connecting youth with services due to a shortage of resources that strained their system, and a lack of connectivity between providers and leadership in other social service systems. Because of these inefficiencies and concerns with loss of services, the local Youth Council and Workforce Investment Board worked to identify systemic challenges and develop strategies and solutions.

The Practice and the Evidence: In October 2003, the Workforce Investment Board of Imperial County made two changes to improve their efficiency when connecting youth with work. First, they transitioned to a centralized case management system in order to maximize resources. Second, they created controls for the new system to prevent loss of services. By centralizing case management, they were able to better coordinate with other service providers and more fully serve the comprehensive needs of youth. Helen Palomino, Program Analyst for the WIB, says, “By merging each other’s strengths and allowing organizations to focus on what they did best, local providers were able to support youth through their services while one body focused on the administrative case management function.”

Since they transitioned to centralized case management, their overall performance has increased despite budget reductions of 60 percent. In fact, performance is 34 percent above their benchmark. In addition, they’ve seen minimal changes in the number of youth served. In 1999, they were serving an average of 570 youth with a budget of 2.5 million dollars. By 2004, their funding had declined to 1 million dollars for youth, yet they were able to serve 550 youth and exceed their performance agreements. Palomino says of the transition to centralized case management, “The timing could not have been better because of the reduction…. By centralizing case management, we were able to stay afloat and increase our performance.”

Recently their local One-Stop system underwent an efficiency study that evaluated the effectiveness and process of the whole system and found that Youth Services was given much credit. The study also favorably assessed the local Youth Services system and the partnerships (continued)
that exist among the WIB, Youth Council, the County, and youth contractors for implementing an exceptional program in such early stages.

**The Details:** The Imperial County WIB was inspired by the Daisy Wheel model presented at a YCi workshop. Since the WIB and Youth Council had adopted the All Youth-One System approach and had participated actively in YCi, they were able to access information and resources to assist them in their transition. Palomino says that they used “YCi as a credible base for trying something new.”

Several factors contributed to the successful merging of the centralized case management system. Youth Council members actively lobbied for a new implementation system and supported the transition. As a result, the WIB recognized that the Youth Council was a resource for implementing change. Members and WIB leadership also made it a priority to network with other individuals/organizations that were doing similar work. Developing relationships with key decision makers led to a new conversation about what was possible, culminating in agreements among the Youth Council, WIB, and Interagency Administrators.

After spending time exploring procurement strategies, Imperial County decided to implement a service model that was a hybrid. They integrated the Daisy Wheel model in which their local youth programs centralize case management services with services delivered via a network of youth service providers. Their model featured a combination of cost reimbursement contracts and fee for service contracts. They also established a Youth Service Provider Network made up of fee for service and cost reimbursement contractors as well as non-WIA services.

The centralized case management approach entails certain contractual requirements for their service providers. First, they must identify leveraged in-kind contributions with other youth service agencies. Second, youth contracts require an MOU-type agreement between service partners. As a result, strong collaborative and cooperative relationships with schools, social services, behavioral health, employers, and One-Stops have led to an abundance of complementary services and great fiscal savings.

Imperial County found networking critical to meeting their goals. Palomino reflects that the “key is really building relationships so it is a win-win situation for all involved. Everyone has their own perspective about what problems are affecting youth. The secret to our success has been to build relationships with people who are willing to stretch beyond their personal perspective.” She added that “partnerships must emphasize mutual benefit, non-duplicative effort, and commitment to excellence.” Creative collaborations with the community college, CBOs, San Diego Labor Council, Literacy Volunteers of America, and other local organizations have led to leveraged funding and services. Palomino reflects that the key to her success with the networking has been to “really put myself on the line and build relationships with people working at all levels and connect them to others” who she knows can serve their needs.
Palomino and her project partner, Terry Swing, Program Compliance Coordinator for Imperial County Office of Employment Training, have worked together to establish strong protocols for improving the system. They started out by creating a safe space for the exchange of ideas and feedback among front line contractors, management, and monitors. “It really paid off,” says Palomino. “We were able to create a system where everyone was able to standardize and monitor the service providers” and front line staff felt as though their concerns were heard and implemented into the system. Based on feedback from all partners, Swing created several new protocols and worksheets that clarified “who gets what when and where. We established a new system that involves all players—fee for service and contractors—and the documentation allows everyone to track where they are at a certain place in time so that they know what needs to be submitted. Documentation comes in at the front end and the back end.”

Imperial County has found many advantages to having a centralized case management system. Most notably, they’ve had great program performance, an overall savings in program costs, improved quality services, as well as improvement to existing and establishment of new program controls. The new model has also afforded them an opportunity to promote and establish several new effective practices including exit committee reviews and a system-wide standardization. They have also seen an increase in understanding of performance, new focus on quality vs. quantity, a maximized use of EDD Capacity Building Unit’s trainings, and a centralized brokering role for framework services.

**Breakthrough Moment:** Assuring players on all sides that their needs were being met was a challenge during the initiative. The breakthrough occurred when Swing and Palomino saw the results of creating a safe forum where contractor managers, compliance staff, and case managers could all discuss needs and opinions. Palomino says that during the course of the meetings, they were able to “just listen and get an idea about the problems and weakness, and build and create a strengthened process from it…. We were able to create ease in an environment that was previously very territorial.” What this afforded for leadership, Swing states, was for a clear “establishment of protocols. By agreeing to a give and take on all sides, a smooth and regulated process was structured.” Front line staff felt heard, and saw their ideas implemented into system change. They approached these meetings with “win-win as the message,” which Palomino says allowed participants to “experience the willingness of other players. It really just comes down to having dialogue, knowing where the challenges are, and responding accordingly.”

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** Imperial County is transitioning into another stage of youth services. System challenges and continuous funding reductions have forced everyone to work more creatively and resourcefully. They are moving forward with open communication, improved coordination of resources, and strong commitment to goals. They are actively seeking connection with agencies and organizations willing to merge activities and systems. Currently they are piloting cross-system activities with the Department of Social Services, Department of Rehabilitation, and WIA adult services.
In May 2005, the Imperial County WIB established a pilot project to leverage resources to help meet the needs of foster youth. Building on the success of centralized case management, this pilot was made possible due in large part to strong relationships between the WIB and the Department of Social Services. They have developed a work agreement to support foster youth connecting them with the right people from DSS and WIA Case Management providers. This agreement supports all existing MOUs and expands upon them. As a result, partners are able to establish cooperative work relationships with all parties. As Palomino says, they are “tapping in from both sides to support the comprehensive needs of all youth.”

In June of 2005, the Imperial County WIB is exploring the development of similar relationships between the County Office of Education and the Department of Rehabilitation with an eye towards merging services within their systems. For the first time, a representative serving youth with special needs has sought membership on the Youth Council. They are also planning to work with WIA Adult programs by looking at providing services to 18- to 21-year olds.

Palomino says, “Centralized case management is a transition system for us. We have not yet arrived at the optimal system, and there’s a lot more room for even better collaboration and coordination among systems and services.” She adds that this project is in “continuous improvement. That’s what most people fail to understand - you never arrive, you never really get there, you just continue to work on your process and find weak areas and strengthen them.”

Where to Go for More Information
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Tool
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Supporting Collaboration among Youth Service Providers

Youth Council: San Benito County Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Coordinating Youth Services, Staff Development

The Challenge: The San Benito County Youth Council was facing a lack of funding. The WIA can only accommodate a certain number of youth, yet there are more youth in the county who need services. If they cannot be assisted, they are referred to a partner agency. They use the One-Stops as the place where they refer to a partner agency. The challenge was that not all of the agencies were aware of each others’ services.

The Practice and Evidence: The Youth Council organized regular meetings for agencies to meet. During the school year, they have a quarterly meeting with all the agencies that provide youth services in the community. “At the meetings we share information,” said Maria Fehl of the One-Stops Career Center/CSWD. “We iron out the bugs.”

In the year prior to setting up the meetings, forty youth were served. Once the system of meetings was in place, over a hundred youth were served.

The Details: According to Fehl, every agency is short staffed. There may be some concern that joining together with other agencies will create more work, or people may be unclear about how partnering with other agencies will help them accomplish their mission. Fehl notes that they make a point of addressing these issues. “At the first meeting, we identify what’s in it for each agency. We also talk about how it is going to benefit the youth they serve,” she said. Fehl also recommends that the organizers talk to the partners involved, “so they get an idea of what was their initial reaction, feeling, when you approached them.”

Once the agencies have made contacts with one another, they begin to work together to serve particular youth. Fehl gave an example: “We can work with Probation and have two individuals [one from their office and one from ours] who are constantly counseling the youth. It results in a better rate of success for the partnering agencies.” The collaborations that emerge support a shared sense of purpose. Fehl said that partnering service providers tend to work from the perspective of “they are our youth.”

Breakthrough Moment: For Fehl, the breakthrough came “When the referrals started coming in and we started sharing names of the youth, and the [youth] actually started coming in and we shared information with the service providers. You have other agencies, including the courts.

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That is a great feeling when you know the program is successful. The judge wants to have the agency come in for minor offences, using a Deferral program approach. Our view is the youth is still salvageable and maybe if we keep the youth busy, he or she will focus on the future, on career preparation. We refer to ROP or to ILP, depending on the youth. We might send them to Gavilan College.”

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** Adding the Superior Court; the Youth Alliance, a gang prevention program; and having Juvenile Hall juveniles being released to their agency. They are also talking with the YMCA about financial arrangements.

**Where to Go for More Information**
San Benito County Youth Council

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Streamlining Services to Deliver WIA’s Ten Program Elements

Youth Council: Santa Ana Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Coordinating Youth Services

The Challenge: When the City of Santa Ana received WIA funding in 2000, there was particular emphasis in the legislation to provide comprehensive services within one system. Santa Ana Youth Council sought a service system able to cooperatively deliver the required ten program elements, believing that streamlined services would greatly benefit the city’s young people.

The Practice and Evidence: The City of Santa Ana Workforce Investment Board and Youth Council have structured their service delivery around the daisy wheel model. They have created a comprehensive system by contracting with a service navigator as the center of the “daisy” and five youth serving organization “petals” that cooperatively provide WIA’s ten program elements. By leveraging marketing and administrative work, the model allows youth programs to focus on their strength of serving youth.

Santa Ana requires their contracting providers to join their Network of Youth Providers (NYP), a group of WIA- and non-WIA- funded youth organizations. The group shares best practices, information, and training in order to build partnerships, avoid fragmentation, and stretch limited resources. The network brings in new partners, facilitates cross references, and works on common projects, which enhances overall performance and brings the city closer to their All Youth-One System goal.

Within the daisy wheel model, services are delivered in a cohesive manner. The system allows providers to focus on their area of expertise rather than requiring one program to provide all ten elements. Instead, the model encourages that the system rather than individual programs exceeds performance outcomes.

The Details: It is the responsibility of the service navigator, which has been contracted to the Santa W/O/R/K Center (One-Stops), to determine eligibility, oversee enrollments, review and correct MIS forms, analyze performance, report, and ensure accuracy. The navigator also Coordinates the NYP and announces updates and youth development trends that are having an impact on the city’s youth.

The NYP supports WIA- and non-WIA- funded programs to provide comprehensive services to youth. The NYP participates in the Youth Council as well so that there is an ongoing alignment of youth development initiatives. The NYP/YC partnership continually identifies new partners,

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based on gaps in service delivered by current providers. For example, La Familia, a drug and substance abuse program, was invited to join the NYP because there were no providers specifically addressing drug and alcohol issues. The result is a constantly evolving service system able to be flexible with the changing needs of youth.

Another benefit to implementing the daisy wheel model is youth have multiple entry points into the system. Providers refer youth to NYP partners, especially if youth do not meet program criteria. The providers are in continual communication, so cross-referral is easy and information is shared. Any program will connect youth to more providers and to the service navigator.

**Breakthrough Moment:** “We began to grow when the Youth Council understood that every provider in the network is valuable, that we all succeed together or all fail together,” comments Frances Cadenas, Santa Ana Youth Council Coordinator. The NYP supports common projects and the identification of additional funding that can be leveraged to serve more of the city’s youth.

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** Recently the county’s three WIBs (Santa Ana, Orange County, and Anaheim) partnered with Department of Social Services (DSS) and Department of Probation to request permission from the Superior Court of California to share information with each other. The Judicial Order issued now allows agencies to share pertinent information which expedites referrals and reduces duplication of intake and assessment services.

**Where to Go for More Information**
Santa Ana Youth Council

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Youth Council: Santa Cruz County Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Coordinating Youth Services, Staff Development

The Challenge: According to Paul Demarest, Youth Council Senior Analyst, the youth of Santa Cruz County were not being adequately served. Despite perceptions to the contrary, the WIA Youth Program in Santa Cruz County can serve only about 4 percent of the youth who are eligible with the level of federal funding, according to their estimates. Youth Council members knew of many other nongovernmental programs that might help additional youth throughout the County. However, they also saw that these programs were often operating in relative isolation rather than aligning with other complementary efforts. Furthermore, the WIA Youth Program staff did not have complete information about their services.

Youth Council members saw that youth could be better supported if there were greater cooperation among local service providers. They viewed their own role as being central to fostering connections. “We need to be the force for change,” said Demarest. In order to move Santa Cruz County forward, they had to make sure that “all the providers were aware of each other,” Demarest noted. “In a larger view [we] hoped . . . that some of these agencies might consider cooperation, that they might acquire resources together, and go after a project together.”

The Practice and Evidence: The Youth Council developed a two-part strategy to increase connections and cooperation: create a service provider directory and host a service provider poster fair.

The Council staff created a directory that included over 50 youth-serving organizations and offered information on locations of sites, hours of operation, demographics of youth, range of services, and sources of funding. Two hundred directories were printed and distributed not only to the providers listed, but also to middle and high schools as well as other organizations that serve both adults and youth or families. Council staff also shared the directory on a CD with Together for Youth, the regional United Way agency focused on young people. The first edition was created in 2003, and an updated version was made available in 2004.

Two service provider poster fairs were also held, one in 2003 and another the following year. The primary focus was to get the providers aware of one another and to give the WIA Youth Program staff an opportunity to meet them. Each of the 50-plus providers that participated was supplied with table space for displaying a poster and presenting literature. Almost every agency (continued)
had at least 2 people, so they were able to engage with all those who visited their area.

On the evaluations, everyone indicated that the most valuable part of the 2004 fair was the opportunity to ask questions and meet people. “At that second fair, everyone commented about how excited everyone was to have an opportunity to sit down and talk about the challenges they were facing and also to form some alliances and do things they couldn’t do alone,” Demarest stated. “We feel that we have accomplished making all the providers aware of one another, and we have put the idea out as a County entity that they need to be leaders for youth services.”

**The Details:** The Youth Council members used some creative strategies to locate resources for the 2004 fair and directory. First they asked one of their own, Rock Pfotenhauer, Dean of Career Education and Economic Development of Cabrillo College, to arrange for the school to provide a meeting room free of charge. In addition, members were aware that two local agencies, the Housing Authority and County Mental Health’s Drug & Alcohol Division, had grants that were coming to a close that had some funds left. The Housing Authority and Mental Health used these funds to pay for the directory publication costs and for the fair’s refreshments. Council members formed a partnership with the philanthropic arm of a local business, the Sea Odyssey Program of O’Neil and Company, to handle the refreshments.

The Council staff did a mailing that included both a request to fill out a provider information sheet for the directory and an invitation to participate in the fair. The cover letter explained that it was not necessary to attend the fair in order to be included in the directory. Nevertheless, of the 50+ providers who completed the information sheet, only two did not attend.

**Breakthrough Moment:** Demarest reports he knew the fair was working when “the Chair of our Youth Council picked up the portable microphone to welcome everyone and still could not get people’s attention because everyone was talking so loud. You could barely hear yourself think . . . because there was a din in the room. And when she was done speaking, people were calling back to her, saying, “Thank you for giving us this opportunity to get together!”

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** The Santa Cruz Youth Council is “hoping there will be more cooperation and another agency will pick up the gauntlet, do an annual update [of the directory], . . . and keep it updated so that people can use it for a real resource,” said Demarest. Meanwhile, the Youth Council is pursuing its mission to be the force behind change in the delivery of services for youth in their county. Their next initiative entails identifying and marketing soft job skills curricula to meet employers’ needs for employees who are “socially well adjusted and trainable.”

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Service Providers Connect to Improve Placement Rates

Youth Council: Tulare County Workforce Investment Board Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Staff Development, Coordinating Youth Services

The Challenge: Tulare County has three WIA-funded youth agencies, with staff spread out across a rural county the size of Connecticut. County youth job developers were accustomed to meeting for administrative purposes or trainings every few months, but had no ongoing way to connect and share information. Consequently, the county-wide job placement process — both for youth and for employers — was less efficient than it might have been.

The Practice and the Evidence: Youth service providers played a key role in solving this challenge. “One of our premises in the Youth Program is that although some competition among providers is natural, we need to work together to ensure quality services,” says Eldonna Caudill, Senior Analyst with the Tulare County Workforce Investment Department (TCWID). So she was supportive when these service providers approached the Youth Council office with a request: they wanted to meet on a regular basis with all their fellow front-line practitioners in order to share resources, best practices, and job orders. Caudill’s response was, “OK, tell us how you want it to work, what you want to call it, and what you want from us.”

The result was the establishment of monthly meetings called Youth Force, which are built into the calendar and hosted by each of the provider agencies and the TCWID on a rotating basis. Participants readily pass along job orders and recruitment strategies, and the positive response was immediate. “If you walked in, you’d never know that input was coming from different agencies. They were sharing without boundaries because they understand the ‘All Youth-One System’ concept,” comments Caudill. Soon the material shared at the meetings expanded to include information gained at trainings and conferences, strategies, and news about resources and events like job fairs.

At a recent meeting Caudill brought up county performance rates “because our county performance is on target to meet or exceed all measures as a result of the good work they’re doing. It even looks as though we’ll meet the older youth credential rate, which had been lagging like that of many areas nationwide.” Caudill also wanted to reinforce the idea that meeting performance is a collective effort. She readily acknowledges that this success can’t be attributed to the meetings alone, but that’s where she can strategize with practitioners about making performance rates, discuss problem areas, and brainstorm solutions.

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“I have tremendous respect for these folks,” she says. “They’re completely responsible for these Youth Force meetings, and they’re a great idea.”

**The Details:** Youth Force meetings have been taking place since 2002. Each of the Provider agencies and the TCWID hosts monthly meetings, deciding internally which local office will host. Food is always provided, keeping the tone informal. The meetings are open to all provider staff, but typically only front-line staff attend, and they feel free to ask questions or speak openly if they need help or have a very troubling client. Case workers and job developers share job orders, providing the details and offering to set up the interview for anyone with a qualified candidate.

Over the last couple years, TCWID and Youth Council staff have focused on connecting with other non-WIA partners. Caudill says, “We’ve been working really hard at connecting with foster care youth, and, as a strategy, have invited Independent Living Program (ILP) staff to the Youth Force meeting to share additional information about the ILP program.” Bringing partners and potential partners into these informal meetings has allowed for more open communication about how to better work together. A focus of their conversations has been about how to best link WIA and foster care. Caudill explains that Youth Force meetings provide an opportunity for participants to discuss “their vision of how we all fit into the big picture [of child welfare services] and how to link services, without duplicating.” In addition, the informal atmosphere has supported youth engagement. Foster youth who are involved in both programs (WIA and ILP) were recently invited to a Youth Force meeting to share their thoughts and experiences of both systems.

Caudill points out that this makes the process more efficient for employers as well, and “opens up the whole landscape beyond the scope of a single agency — which is very different than it was several years ago.” These meetings have helped create a shift in perspective, from viewing youth as the only customer, to understanding that employers are also customers. The county reaps internal benefits as well, because the Youth Force meetings turn the agencies into a single group. For example, knowledgeable staff members take less experienced staff under their wing and essentially provide guidance and advice, whether or not they work at the same agency. “It’s incredible because technically they could be considered competitors, and it grows out of the Youth Force interaction. It opens doors on a personal level in building relationships between service providers - WIA and non-WIA” says Caudill. Another benefit is that direct contact with front-line staff informs administrators about what works and what doesn’t. This allows administration to be more realistic in aligning policy and practice.

Another best practice was created when one agency explored a different format for orientations in order to connect better with disenfranchised, older, out-of-school youth. Instead of starting with an important but slightly boring list of services, staff engage youth in a discussion of what stands between them and what they want, along with possible options for addressing these obstacles. “During the discussion we can slip in the list of services. It has a more natural flow, and it seems to be working because youth are returning to enroll in programs,” Caudill explains.

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The group has shared this effective practice with the other agencies, thus implementing the guiding principle of the Youth Council Institute. Comments Caudill, “There are incredibly talented people out there. The Youth Force meetings allow the practitioners, and we administrators as well, to tap into each other’s ideas efficiently.”

**Breakthrough Moment:** It only took two Youth Force meetings for Caudill to know that they were going to make a real difference because everyone came in the door with the same goal. Set by practitioners, the agenda focused primarily on sharing job orders, secondarily on sharing resources and best practices, and thirdly on problem-solving across areas. “I knew it was going to work early on,” says Caudill, “because I could see this collective energy focused on ‘how do we best serve our kids?’” The efficacy of the program also struck staff from New Ways to Work in Spring, 2004 when they came to Tulare County to host an Engaging Workplace Partners workshop. When New Ways’ staff wondered why that inevitable sense of interoffice competition was absent, provider staff explained, “We don’t need it. We have Youth Force meetings.”

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** The Tulare County Youth Council has been sharing Youth Force meetings concept with partner counties at YCi meetings. The program is also evolving to include front-line workers from other agencies that are not WIA funded but want to be connected to it. “You can talk about ‘All Youth–One System’ forever, but you have to build it from the ground up, one piece at a time,” Caudill points out. “These meetings create trust and build relationships, and that’s especially important in bureaucracies. I believe the Youth Force is helping build a more connected youth system and that is an essential component in realizing our vision of “All Youth–One System.”

Tulare County is currently focused on building and leveraging relationships to better connect with child welfare services and support foster youth. They have invited ILP staff to Youth Force meetings to share additional information about the ILP program and provide an introduction for WIA staff about their system and discuss linkages. Again, the informal nature of the Youth Workforce meetings has allowed for better relationship building. In addition, a best practice that came out of these meetings was to create a special orientation monthly after hours for foster youth. As a result of the relationship building, the TCWID has secured an information sharing agreement with DSS to support services for emancipated, out-of-school foster youth.

**Where to Go for More information**
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Effective Partnership Strategies to Maximize Resources

Youth Council: City of Los Angeles Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action, Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Coordinating Youth Services

The Challenge: One in every four residents in the City of Los Angeles is under twenty-one, creating a serious public need to ensure that the entire youth services system is linked and efficient. Members serving on the City of Los Angeles Youth Council faced the crucial task of maximizing, leveraging, and connecting all the players to make the best use of their resources.

The Practice and Evidence: The Council established basic common goals that every Council member committed to support. By keeping their over-arching theme and unrelenting “battle cry” of Integrated Quality Services in the forefront of all interactions, an unmistakable vision is supported.

Youth Council members are bound by these common ideals:
1. All hold to the common vision of Integrated Quality Services.
2. Each understands the value of school-to-career principles.
3. Each has a passion and compassion for youth.
4. Each brings extensive resources or “rolodexes.”
5. Each is committed to make the Youth Council broader than WIA.

Other outcomes were as follows:

- Systemic partnerships, such as a jointly operated project with the Casey Family Program, which leverage state money requiring 100 percent cash match. Through their partnership with the Probation Department, the Council receives referrals electronically through shared databases, and provides training to youth in Boot Camps.

- The CA Department of Education is funding a Unified School District position to work as a full-time liaison to the WIA system, deepening the connection between education and the Council.

- The Council offers two free technical assistance consultations to each provider.

- Training and collaboration workshops are conducted for providers on the 10 WIA elements.

- Providers are now required to attend five days of training. More than anything else, this brings together the system. Providers also attend monthly follow-up technical assistance sessions.

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The Details: Council members realized that it is only through effective partnerships and integration of services that they would be capable of tackling the overwhelming needs of their youth. For example, a major thrust of the Council is to enhance opportunities for youth through their partnership with School-to-Work, resulting in more relevant academic experiences.

The intentional overlapping of the Council and partnership members ensures that strong educational preparation for productive employment opportunities is a cornerstone to the Youth Council foundation.

The City of Los Angeles Youth Council suggests the following ideas for making the best use of resources:
- Invest in skilled staff and/or consultants to conduct goal development sessions.
- Members are each formally appointed by the mayor. Find the right person to expand membership.
- Use facilitators to reach understanding, develop the strategic plan, and create partnerships.
- Require collaboration for bidding service providers. Through collaboration, providers show they can provide all ten WIA elements.
- Require collaborative groups to use one centralized assessment organization.
- Establish subcommittees and task forces on which providers can serve.
- Involve Council members in oral review of bidders and service providers.
- Each member of the Council is personally contacted and asked questions about how they feel the Council can be improved.
- The Council Chair is always from the private sector.
- Develop strong vision and principles prior to the bidding process.

Where to Go for More information
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**SNIPPET**

One-Stop for Coordinating Youth Services and Involving Youth

**Youth Council:** Fresno County Youth Council

**Element:** Youth Leadership, Comprehensive Approach

**Function:** Coordinating Youth Services

**Subject:** One-Stops, Coordinating Youth Services

**The Challenge:** With the advent of Workforce Investment Act legislation, the Fresno County Workforce Investment Board recognized that there was a need for collaboration among youth services in order to implement youth programming under WIA. They also realized that youth needed to be engaged in leadership in a coordinated way throughout the large county. The challenge was to find effective ways to support these efforts.

**The Practice and Evidence:** The Fresno County Youth Council created the Youth Service Network (FCYSN) to address the need to collaborate and to also engage youth in decision making. The network acts as a One-Stop for youth and offers youth referrals to YCYSN members. The network’s mission is to serve as a catalyst in a united effort to nurture the well being of all Fresno County youth through coordinated youth services that invite full community participation.

The FCYSN serves as a clearinghouse of information for youth, service providers, and community members in Fresno County. FCYSN maintains a resource library and a quarterly newsletter as well as an email listserv to keep youth agencies connected. The network also created opportunities for youth organizations to partner and share best practices.

In addition, the network created a youth commission and advisory board to engage youth at the decision making table. The commission provides an opportunity for youth to develop leadership skills and provide an active youth voice to the county’s decision makers.

The community benefits from the youth commission by the development of young leaders who are able to communicate needs effectively, engage decision makers, and create further opportunities for youth to be heard in order to serve their communities.

**The Details:** Established in 2002, the FCYSN was created by the Fresno County WIB, which funds 80 percent of the network. The James Irvine Foundation funds the remaining 20 percent. The network serves both as a youth service clearinghouse and a central coordinator for the youth commission. It is advised by a youth-adult partnership board, with 50 percent youth members and 50 percent adults.

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The FCYSN serves as a One-Stop shop for youth by coordinating youth services. The network maintains a youth-friendly website as well as a large resource library open to all youth.

The network connects youth providers in the county by producing a newsletter and email listserv and regularly distributing best practices and emerging youth issues. Youth benefit from having a central point to access youth services and providers benefit from joint marketing and outreach as well as resource sharing.

The youth commissions cover the entire county and are supervised by college-aged youth assistants. The commissions create a direct link of adult decision makers to youth voice as well as provide an outlet for providers to outreach to the youth community.

**Where to Go from More Information**
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Coordinating Regional Youth Services in Rural Communities

Youth Council: Humboldt County Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Coordinating Youth Services

The Challenge: It is the mission of the Humboldt County Youth Council to “provide the youth of the County a coordinated system that ensures opportunities to become productive, contributing, and socially responsible adults.” This aspiration produced an invigorated and focused Youth Council accepting the challenge of developing a five-region system for the delivery of youth services, assuring services are distributed and available throughout their large rural county.

Most Youth Program Operators (YPOs) are based on-site at widely located regional high school districts, but meeting as a group is difficult, due to long driving times (up to 4 hours) and some scheduling coordination issues. Also, reaching youth who live far out in very rural communities, some without phones or electricity, remains a consistent challenge.

The Practice and Evidence: The Humboldt County 5-region system distributes youth services deep into their rural communities, so that they are now serving more youth and connecting them positively into their own community network. Their YPOs have made a united commitment to offer services in ways that “make sense” for their particular community’s youth. YPOs now meet consistently on a monthly basis, increasing the opportunities to network and share resources.

YPOs have developed alliances with local community resources and employers, strengthening each individual program’s ability to address complex issues. Many community relationships are based on connecting or providing supportive services (including shelter, clothing, and crisis- and medical-services referrals) needed by some participating youth. YPOs have also expanded the scope of work experience activities available for youth by increasing participation with private sector employers in their respective regions.

The individual needs of youth are a main focal point for all regions. Both in-school and out-of-school YPO staff focus on youth gaining independent living skills, and often serve as their personal advocates.

The Details: Some highlights of YPO linkages with other programs/agencies that work with youth include the following collaborations:

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**YCideas**

- **The Eureka Region** collaborates with local Independent Living Skills (ILS), Transition Partnership Program (TPP) and WorkAbility, over 100 student clubs, probation, campus programs (such as the homeless project and the family resource center), and pre-collegiate programs (such as College Knowledge, Upward Bound, and Talent Search).

- **The Eel River Valley Region** partners with foster youth; the City of Fortuna; individual businesses; Redwood Community Action Agency (RCAA) housing; ILS; the Humboldt Regional Occupational Program (HROP); TPP and WorkAbility; probation; a medical van; Catholic Charities; anger management programs; private drug, alcohol, and mental health counselors; and College of the Redwoods (CR).

- **The Eastern Humboldt Region** works closely with California Indian Manpower Consortium, probation, Dream Quest, HROP, and TPP.

- **The Northern Humboldt Region** meets with Homeless Project staff, attends Safe Schools meetings with probation, and develops and presents joint workshops with the foster care program.

- **The Southern Humboldt Region** collaborates with Nick’s Interns, TPP, Workability, probation, public health, Child Welfare Services, and the Garberville Teen Center.

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** The Youth Council and staff conducted an in-depth analysis of the 5-region Humboldt County Youth Program that was started 3 years ago. The analysis resulted in a decision to maintain the program structure with continuous improvement and training measures to be implemented in the next three-year cycle. All the YPO contractors applied to continue, and were awarded new contracts. The report gathered invaluable data and statements from young people, the analysis of which will be used for developing a strategic plan for an “All Youth-One System” in Humboldt County. The following recommendations have been accepted by the full WIB for implementation during 2005-2008:

1. **Continue Current 5-Region Program Design**
   Ongoing development of this program design will continue to provide for a high number of quality program linkages and connections, with opportunities to leverage extending into the future. Access to a larger number and distribution of county youth is another intended outcome of this system.

2. **Increase Youth Program Sophistication**
   The Youth Council will support the YPOs to move to the next level of sophistication for youth services with training, best practice sharing, and on-going technical assistance. The academic program for youth is very strong. There is also a recognized desire to continue enhancing connections to employment for youth. YPOs have requested specific training regarding how to motivate youth to find and keep jobs, and they have asked for technical assistance to move youth toward successful career paths.

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Where to Go for More Information
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Tool
Humboldt County Youth Program Analysis (June 2005)
available by contacting the Humboldt County Workforce Investment Board
Promoting Policies to Support Coordinated Services

Youth Council: City of Richmond Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Promoting Policies to Sustain Effective Practices, Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Coordinating Youth Services

The Challenge: The Youth Council members wanted to make sure that they were carrying out their mission in the most effective way possible. In order to do so, they needed a good way to communicate the goals and purpose of WIA and of their programs to their service providers.

The Practice and Evidence: After attending the YCi “Road Trip” Institute in January, 2002, the City of Richmond Youth Council decided to develop a policy statement that would center on coordinating youth services and give new direction and purpose to the work of the Council within the larger community.

The policy statement for coordinating youth services reads “The City of Richmond’s Workforce Investment Board’s Youth Council is committed to improving and promoting collaboration of the various youth-serving programs in our community. Our intent is to create a coordinated, universally accessible youth-serving system to assist in acquiring educational, life and employment skills with priority given to Richmond youth.”

Although the policy was developed specifically for services coordination, it more finely tuned the direction of the entire Youth Council. The Council is now driven to have an impact on policy throughout the community for a comprehensive youth serving system.

The Details: The core group that attended the Institute received permission from the Youth Council to become an ad-hoc committee with the purpose of developing the policy statement. The committee presented the completed statement to the full Council, followed by the WIB’s Executive Committee, for full approval. The ad-hoc committee became a subcommittee of the Council to focus on the issues involved in coordinating services and to take them back to the larger Council body.

Where to Go for More Information
City of Richmond Youth Council

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Mapping and Marketing Resources for the Entire Community

Youth Council: Ventura County Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Resource Mapping

The Challenge: The mission of the Ventura County Youth Council is “To form collaborative alliances with other dedicated youth-service agencies and youth advocates to more effectively disseminate and share information, as well as provide for and assist with opportunities that benefit our youth – our future.” Toward that end, they and their Workforce Investment Network had formed the Workforce Investment Network for Youth Program (WINetwork). They recognized a need to inform the community and potential collaborators of the program, to gather information about local youth serving agencies, and to recruit members to the network.

Practice and Evidence: The Council developed community outreach and marketing strategies for their WINetwork. The WINetwork began by sending letters and surveys to community youth advocates. They also conducted a series of town hall meetings and arranged for one of them to be televised on a local cable network. These efforts had three goals:

1. To introduce the community to the unified effort forming the Network.
2. To administer the Youth Services Survey to gather provider information.
3. To invite all youth advocates and survey respondents to participate as members of the Network.

After the initial outreach efforts, the WINetwork developed ways to create community awareness and market their Network. They developed a strong tag line for all their materials: “Advocates for an enlightened and mighty generation.” They established a color code so that the community would begin to identify the “look” as that of the Network. The Network promoted the concept that healthy and effective youth programs will eventually contribute to the success of adult programs. This message educated the community that good youth programs were the best investments that can be made for the entire county.

Through the Network, all youth services were marketed as a whole, thus creating a clear, unified message for youth seeking assistance.

The WINetwork was able to complete several projects as a result of its outreach and marketing practices. It published the Ventura County Youth Services Resource Directory, and held a Youth Summit during which the resource directory and its purpose were introduced. It also established monthly meetings for members, with benefits such as professional development workshops,
YCideas

monthly calendar discussions, technical assistance, and program education. (See the YCidea “Forming a Network for Youth Service Providers” beginning on page 43.) The Network also produced a full-color publication that outlines the youth services in the county, explains the scope of the Network, and invites participation. In addition, it published the second edition of the resource directory, “Jobs for Youth and More,” and held a countywide job fair where the directory was released.

After the initial collection of data through the survey, the WINetwork continued to solicit responses. They knew that more time was needed to gather all the information about youth services in the area and that the work would always be evolving. The members continued to develop new ways to engage additional stakeholders, including reaching more youth.

Where to Go for More Information
Ventura County Youth Council

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Tools
Tools are available from the Ventura County Youth Council
Youth Services Resource Directory I
Youth Services Resource Directory II
Youth Services Directory Survey
Youth Summit Flyer and Agenda
Forming a Network for Youth Services Providers

**Youth Council:** Ventura County Youth Council

**Element:** Comprehensive Approach

**Function:** Coordinating Youth Services

**Subject:** Coordinating Youth Services, Staff Development

**The Challenge:** The mission of the Ventura County Youth Council is “To form collaborative alliances with other dedicated youth-service agencies and youth advocates to more effectively disseminate and share information, as well as provide for and assist with opportunities that benefit our youth – our future.” The Youth Council wanted to find ways to form alliances effectively.

**The Practice and Evidence:** In October 2000, the Ventura County Youth Council initiated an effort to build a comprehensive youth development system by creating the Workforce Investment Network for Youth (WINetwork for Youth). WINetwork for Youth is a collaborative effort of the WIB and the Youth Council, a unified effort to form an alliance of youth advocates. The Network was designed so that everyone working with youth would equally recognize its work and identify with it. All youth-serving organizations that completed a mapping survey were automatically included as members; therefore, the Network has developed into a system capable of serving all youth. The success of the Network has been strengthened by providing the following member benefits:

- an opportunity for youth service providers to network with fellow youth advocates regarding youth development efforts across the county;
- a structured forum to communicate and disseminate information;
- An opportunity to discuss community events and include them on a monthly calendar posted on the WIB website, (www.wib.ventura.org);
- workshops and technical assistance for staff development and capacity-building, especially important to non-profit organizations with limited funds;
- youth services marketed as a comprehensive system, rather than as specific programs. (See the YCidea “Mapping and Marketing Resources for the Entire Community” beginning on page 41.)

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The Details: Several strategies have helped make the Network a success:

- Although WINetwork is a project of the Youth Council, it was intentionally created as a separate identity. Network members feel ownership through regular opportunities to discuss and determine what is important to all youth.

- The Network holds monthly meetings to keep everyone connected, engaged, and informed, and creates incentives so that champions, individuals, and organizations will want to be involved.

- In designing the Network, the Council involved all key stakeholders in the community, giving them the opportunity to build a comprehensive system to leverage collaborations.

Where to Go for More information
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Tools
The following tools are available through the Ventura County Youth Council:  
Youth Services Resource Directory I  
Youth Services Resource Directory II  
Youth Services Directory Survey  
Creating Choices Marketing Piece
Chapter Three

Educational Options

In this section:

- Supporting Re-Entry Education for Out-of-School Youth
- Leveraging Resources to Support Academic Achievement
- Supporting Alternative School Options: Opening a Charter Vocational School
Supporting Re-Entry Education for Out-of-School Youth

Youth Council: Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties Youth Council

Elements: Academic Excellence, Career Preparation, Youth Development and Support, and Youth Leadership

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subjects: Educational Options, Serving Special Populations

The Challenge: Located in central California, Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties extend from the coastal mountain range on the west to the Nevada border on the east. Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties have very high unemployment overall for both adults and youth, with the unemployment rate falling just below the 10 percent mark in 2004 compared to the estimated statewide average of 6.4 percent. The largest industries are typically government, services, retail trade, and agriculture, with a much larger mining sector than average due to the oil production in Kern County.

Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties have had a long term struggle with a huge drop out population. For example, between October and March of 2005, over 1300 youth dropped out of high school and were not enrolled in other schools within the consortium. Karine Kanikkeberg, Resource Teacher for Career and Workforce Development in the Career Resources Department, says their staff refer to this as “dropping to nowhere,” and it is the job of their agency to try to find and help these youth. In addition to a high drop out rate, the consortium is experiencing very rapid population growth. For example, the high school population is growing by 1,000 high-school-age youth per year in a district that serves 33,000+ 9-12 graders.

Prior to the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the Consortium hadn’t placed a great deal of attention on the out-of-school youth (OSY) population. Previously, the OSY services offered by the districts were limited to continuation and alternative high schools. Simultaneous with WIA Authorization in 1998, the school district made a concerted effort to try to locate OSY over the summer and reengage them on a path towards education. The challenge was how to find and involve these young people.

The Practice and the Evidence: The Re-entry Education Attainment Program (REAP) was established in 2000 to address the 12 percent high school dropout rate in the Bakersfield area. REAP is a year-round program for out-of-school youth, supported by the local WIB and the high school district. Its academic and experiential learning activities are customized to meet the needs and abilities of the students while linking training to the economic needs of Kern County. The program goal is that every younger student receives a diploma or GED and each older youth obtains a GED, diploma, or an occupational skills certificate or license, and unsubsidized employment before leaving REAP.

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REAP is designed to give high school drop-out youth, age 15 to 18, the opportunity to get their lives back “on-track,” earn a high school diploma or GED, learn employability skills, and improve self-esteem. Staff motivates, encourages, and assists high school dropouts in a re-enrollment process that eventually leads to self-sufficiency for young adults. Each participant is placed in an educational component based on individual learning style, transportation, work, and childcare needs. Participants are monitored for attendance and progress throughout the school year and summer, provided guidance with goal setting, life skills, and career exploration. Quarterly incentive stipends, paid work experience and project-based learning activities, tutoring, life/soft skills conferences, and supportive services are available to all enrolled REAP students to provide motivation to stay in school and graduate.

REAP matches needs, abilities, and interests of targeted youth by providing a combination of educational, supportive, and training services along with emotional support from caring staff. The youth targeted are in desperate need of educational services, tutoring, academic counseling, and lack self-esteem, work readiness, and soft skills. Because many are parents, REAP individually assigns an educational plan to meet the student’s childcare, work, and transportation needs. Students may attend day, night, or weekly classes. This flexibility encourages the students to believe completion of high school diploma is actually possible. Kanikkeberg adds, “Having caring adults is the most important piece to youth. Youth feel they are being heard for the first time in their lives. Sometimes youth just want to get out of the high school system they’re in, and they don’t want to be placed again. We help them to find placement in the right setting.”

Over the 2004 - 2005 year, more than 130 youth were served and 72 percent were retained in school from start to finish. Twenty-two percent of participants completed the school year with a GPA of 3.0 - 4.0 or higher, despite the fact that most of them started out with failing grades. Over 60 percent of these students were still enrolled in the spring semester.

Since 1997, the Kern High School District/Career Resource Department CRD programs have three times been awarded the PEPNet (Promising and Effective Practices Network) recognition from the National Youth Employment Coalition and U.S. Department of Labor.

The Details: REAP is an initiative of CRD, which, in partnership with the Local Workforce Investment Board (Kern, Inyo, and Mono County Consortium), has operated youth development and workforce training programs for over 20 years. “We’ve always done things different in Kern County,” says Kanikkeberg - “Even as far back as during the CETA days [Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973], the County has always believed that youth employment services were best provided by the schools, which were already structured to serve the needs of youth.” With the implementation of WIA, the CRD redesigned its system of youth and workforce development service delivery. As mandated by the legislation, 30 percent of youth funds had to be appropriated to serve out-of-school youth. REAP is the component created to serve this population. CRD is the only department in the high school district that has full-time staff dedicated to recovery and follow-up with high school dropouts. Kern County School (continued)
District, over the years, has applied for and received WIA funding through a Request for Proposals (RFP) from the Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties Consortium. Through WIA, the District serves up to 150 participants annually, enrolling approximately 80-100 new students over the course of a year. In 2004, the CRD received WIA funding for one in-school and three OSY contracts. The CRD has been moving in the direction of focusing on OSY over the last several years, which coincidentally is aligning with federal and statewide efforts.

The CRD is centrally located in a downtown area, which provides easy access and is a “neutral territory,” so they avoid issues with gang turf. The CRD has classroom space, a computer lab for youth, and provides workshops and other services for youth participants.

The REAP program targets Kern County youth ages 15 to 18 who have dropped out of high school and who are interested in earning a diploma or GED certificate. Ninety-five percent are low income and about 50 percent have children. Young women make up 82 percent of the participants and nine to ten percent are pregnant. Sixty-three percent are seventeen or eighteen year olds. Fifty-two percent are living on their own, without families, without foster families, and/or are homeless or living with friends. Fifty-seven percent of the young people are Latino with the rest about evenly divided between non-Hispanic, White, and African American. Each student’s length of time in the program is individual and may range from one to three years or more.

Kanikkeberg says the youth who participate are primarily “interested in getting back into school and want to improve their lot in life.” Participants are referred through the district office or come on their own through word of mouth and in response to youth-friendly radio public service announcements. At times, REAP staff go out and recruit youth from the streets. Once enrolled, participants meet with their case representative who helps them decide which program works best for them, and they develop an Employment and Education Plan. The REAP strategy, according to Kanikkeberg, is to “break down barriers and find solutions. Participants choose among a variety of types of school environments and REAP staff follow through to make sure it happens.” Youth go through an orientation for other CRD services, including work experience, GPA improvement, driver’s license preparation, conflict resolution and decision making, and conferences - all of which build incentive points. The primary goal is to get students connected to postsecondary opportunities and work experiences, and REAP staff stay with them until they graduate.

A majority of the youth in the program begin in their younger years. REAP is no longer focused on enrolling older youth and instead has built their capacity to serve 15 to 18 year olds because that is where they’ve found they can do the best work. Jennifer Chadburn, Career Consultant and REAP Coordinator, says, “We have found older youth much harder to work with [given the structure of their services and programs], and that they either want to be in school or in work. So we’ve found that if we can enroll them in occupational programs, usually through the Bakersfield Adult School, they are much more successful at completion.” Kanikkeberg says, “We’ve found that when we get to them sooner, they are much more successful than the 19 - 20 year old population.”
Re-engaging students with appropriate academic instruction is a major program objective. As a division of the school district, the CRD can enroll students in a variety of educational settings: independent study, GED preparation, Bakersfield Adult School, Workforce 2000 Academy (three hours of instruction conducted twice a week in the afternoon or evening at various school sites), continuation (alternative) high schools, and comprehensive high schools. The majority of youth in the initiative attend school one to two days a week.

Out-of-school youth are evaluated on a regular basis by the Attendance Specialist, Career Consultant, and Job Coach for supportive service needs. Barriers preventing participants from success in the program are identified in Individual Employment Plan (IEP) at time of enrollment, and they are continually reassessed as many students’ lives are in frequent turmoil. Recently added to all CRD programs is the Health Intervention Program (HIP). KHSD’s Registered Nurse comes to CRD once a month to provide basic health care screening for all participants. Also, referrals are made to partnering agencies for support ranging from dental to mental health services.

Project-based learning activities, supportive services, tutoring, life/soft skill workshops, and follow-up activities complete the REAP offerings. Paid industry-based and project-based learning activities combine creativity, technology, work readiness, soft skills, and academic skills. This blend is good for participants because they are very interested in working and earning money, but may not be ready to be placed at a worksite.

In addition, “3-D Conferences” engage the students in topics that affect them daily. They are allowed to express themselves in discussion and ask questions of professionals in the community about such topics as how to control their baby’s asthma, how to stop binge drinking, and where to go for drug counseling, or get tested for HIV. Topics are “real” and touch upon here-and-now situations they are facing in their own lives. Chadburn explains that when they held regular workshops, “no one was showing up. Our [youth] are really the type that we have to engage them. Instead of calling them workshops, we call them ‘3-D conferences’ and we give them treats and ‘really pump it up.’” 3-D Conferences were modeled after adult conferences and participants responded. “Now we fill up all the rooms. We created something that was similar to what adults experience,” says Chadburn. In addition, the Youth Leadership Team members from the youth program decide on a topic together and come up with a catchy name for it. 3-D Conferences run three days in a row, and youth receive stipends for participation. “And what happens is that they learn at least the skill of coming three days in a row, and it teaches them to be on time and responsible,” says Chadburn.

REAP places a special emphasis on providing supportive services to help participants stay in school, and uses the Individual Service Strategy to identify potential barriers. Each participant receives a backpack full of supplies as a "welcome" to the program. Ninety-five percent of the REAP students use public transportation to get to and from school and work, a process that can take one to two hours each way. REAP can’t change the commute time, but the program does provide monthly bus passes. Other ongoing services may include child care assistance,
drug/alcohol abuse counseling, health services, family planning/contraceptive counseling, and emergency food baskets. Job coaches also will take students shopping to purchase two to three work outfits when they get a job.

REAP ties its project-based leaning opportunities to the economic needs of Kern County, based on employer interviews and the Regional Outlook Directory. Four of the programs are the Customer Service Training Program; Focus on Facilities, a custodial and groundskeeping training program; Basic Quilting as an Art; and Computer Office Microsoft Basics (COMB). For more information on these programs, please see Kern County REAP Program: Additional Information about Programs, Supportive Services, 3-D Conferences, and Success Stories. Certificates of completion from projects and portfolios created during the project help youth communicate what they have learned.

**Breakthrough Moment:** The breakthrough moment occurred when participants started showing up for the 3-D conferences. REAP staff discovered the solution to marketing and structuring learning environments that really appealed to participants. In addition, youth learn valuable employability and life skills, and the Youth Leadership Team actively participates in identifying topics for and planning each conference.

A second breakthrough took place when CRD received its own Independent Study instructor. This provided an opportunity for students to participate in the program on location at the CRD, rather than having to go to school every day. Since many of the participants are parents, Independent Study allows them flexibility with child care. In addition, many participants struggle with social skills, and Independent Study allows students to focus on work and not have the pressure of in-school settings. Chadburn says that they are not using Independent Study to avoid addressing social issues; instead, they address them through support services, and “we’ve found that if we are able to work with them one-on-one with their school work and emotional support, they are more successful overall.”

**What’s Next for this YCidea?**
They would like to increase funding and build upon strategies that are working. They plan to continue the Independent Study program and add more project-based learning activities over the school year. In response to their successful quilting project, they plan to add more hands-on experiences with practical vocational application. Chadburn shares her dream: “I would love to be able to have a youth center where we could actually have a day-care, a place where participants could eat and work [in food services], and a hang out room that’s comfortable - like a youth One-Stop.”

(continued)
Where to Go for More Information
Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties Youth Council

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Tools/Resources
PEPNet Awardee Profile
(http://www.nyec.org/pepnet)

Kern County REAP Program: Additional Information about Programs, Supportive Services, 3-D Conferences, and Success Stories
(http://www.nww.org/yci/ycideabook/kernreapaddlinfo.pdf)
Leveraging Resources to Support Academic Achievement

Youth Council: South Bay Youth Council

Element: Academic Excellence

Function: Coordinating Youth Services, Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Educational Options, Innovative Programs

The Challenge: Two features of the South Bay Youth Council contribute to the direction of their work and their approach to challenges. First, the Council’s mission involves serving all youth. In order to achieve their mission, the Youth Council has chosen to seek non-WIA as well as WIA funding. Second, every superintendent of schools in the South Bay region sits on the Youth Council, bringing a strong emphasis on education.

Within this context, the Council was facing major challenges. Federal funding was declining while at the same time more students were falling behind in their math and literacy skill levels, creating an increased need for educational support services. The disparity between students’ Grade Point Average (GPA) and their scores on the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) was increasing. For instance, some high school students had a GPA of 3.0, yet they tested at below 5th grade level in reading and math. Another problem was that more students were dropping out of school, which was leading to increased needs for WIA-funded social services.

The Practice and Evidence: Using several non-WIA funding sources in addition to WIA funding, the Youth Council has been able to develop and sustain a multifaceted afterschool tutoring program for all high school students. The program, called High Achievers, addresses basic skills problems, weaving together the goals and criteria of several major community and youth support funding sources and initiatives. High Achievers is operated within the broader Fit for Gold Program.

Funding for the program comes from many non-WIA sources as well as WIA. Currently, in addition to WIA funds, Department of Corrections (DOC) Title Five Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Program funding helps to support the tutor program. A Juvenile Justice block grant is combined with the DOC monies, so they can provide tutoring at all their campuses. Additional funding is supplied by CalWorks, and this money is channeled through Los Angeles County afterschool funding. The availability of afterschool funding led the Youth Council in part to design High Achievers to be an afterschool program. Two other major sources are SAFE Learning Communities and Schools for the 21st Century Learning Community.

The Youth Council, in cooperation with the superintendents of schools, has used the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) grade level tests for math and reading scores to measure (continued)
outcomes. Approximately 87 percent of the participating youth improved their scores by at least one grade level in math or literacy on the TABE.

The Details: The development of the tutoring program started about the time WIA replaced the Job Preparation Training Act. The Workforce Investment Board and the Youth Council engaged 98 business and community leaders and members, and they gathered strategic data around skill requirements. Business people presented why they could not hire youth right out of school or why it was difficult to do so. As a result, the Youth Council saw that students had to perform at a certain grade level. These meetings supplied the impetus for the Fit for Gold program.

Cyd Spikes of the South Bay WIB reports that participation by education, service providers, and business leaders has been vital to the successful development of the High Achievers program. “It really has helped us having all of our superintendents [involved],” said Spikes. The second group that drives the Youth Council consists of representatives from the partner Youth Council agencies. “Each Youth Council member assigns a program manager to attend a partners meeting without staff so that we can really deal with implementation issues. It keeps them from having to work so hard,” notes Spikes. In addition, in 2001, a number of workgroups started outside of the Youth Council and reported to the Council for a couple of years. (They also had a good amount of student input in the first three years.) Council members engaged business people through this subcommittee structure because they found business leaders to be very issue driven. “If there’s an issue they can help solve, we recruit business leaders for these efforts rather than invite them to participate in regular meetings,” says Spikes.

Another practice they have adopted is holding the quarterly community meetings at times other than in the morning to match parent and youth needs.

Cyd Spikes attributes strong student success in High Achievers to several elements of the program. First, since High Achievers is operated within the Fit for Gold Program, they have many opportunities to recruit youth. “Any youth that’s involved in anything we do we try to steer them to it for extra credit and extra help,” reports Spikes. This placement of High Achievers helps draw a larger number of students into tutoring. Second, the basic skills instruction and homework are embedded in life skills workshops, employment training, and career activities rather than taught in isolation. Math skills, for instance, are incorporated into financial literacy topics. Reading skills might be included in lessons on decision making or conflict resolution. Third, the tutors are slightly older youth who not only provide instruction and support, but also serve as role models and mentors. High Achievers hires UCLA students to be the tutors, paying them $8.75 per hour. Most of the time, the tutors meet students on the high school campuses, but periodically they take the youth on field trips to the UCLA campus for various college-awareness outings. Fourth, the program is available to all of the region’s high school students. It’s not limited to WIA-eligible youth. The tutoring centers are located at three of the four comprehensive high schools, one public library, and a community center at a park. Finally, the program incentivizes everything. Students have to complete a minimum of 45 hours; in
exchange, they receive five academic credits. In addition, the program offers performance-based incentives: $25 to $200 based on points they earn.

**Breakthrough Moment:** For everyone involved with High Achievers, the quarterly report on the improved reading and math skills was a breakthrough moment. The report not only showed them that the program was working, but it also gave them a way to demonstrate to funders that their resources were being well used.

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** The South Bay Youth Council will continue to support the High Achievers Program, using its documented successes when applying for continued funding.

**Where to Go for More Information**
South Bay Youth Council

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Supporting Alternative School Options: Opening a Charter Vocational School

Youth Council: Madera County Youth Advisory Council

Element: Career Preparation, Academic Excellence

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Educational Options

The Challenge: Madera County has had rapid population growth despite consistently experiencing a double-digit unemployment rate. Furthermore, new employment opportunities have been shifting from agriculture to services and manufacturing. The Youth Council recognized that not all the County’s youth were being prepared for careers. In particular, youth who were not succeeding in the comprehensive school system and students who had dropped out of the school system needed an alternative option.

The Practice and Evidence: Madera County Youth Advisory Council, with the help of a Special Planning Committee, successfully opened the Pioneer Technical Center in the fall of 2002.

Pioneer Technical Center operates five days a week with a morning academic program and an afternoon vocational schedule. At this point in the school’s history, there are three vocational programs offered: building trades, criminal justice, and a technical business program. Because of the partnership with the Regional Occupational Program, both out-of-school youth and youth attending comprehensive high schools can participate in the vocational program with the option not to attend the academic part of the day.

When Pioneer Technical Center was opened in September of 2002, there were approximately 30 students registered. By March of 2003 that number doubled to 60, with a capacity at this point for 160 full-time students. Fourteen students graduated in 2003. In May of 2005, 39 students graduated. “They might not have if it wasn’t for our school,” said Steve Carney, executive director of the school.

During the 2002-03 school year, attendance rates for the students went from 30 percent to 84 percent and grades shifted from D’s and F’s to B’s and C’s. Today Pioneer Technical Center boasts a 91 percent attendance rate. In addition, students have been involved in a number of community service projects. Building technology students constructed sheds that were sold, with the profits going back to the school. Other students have raised money to buy books for Madera first grade students and participated in Madera’s Community Beautification project. The students were not only an integral resource in visioning, planning, and creating Pioneer Technical Center,
but once the school was opened in the Fall of 2002, the Building Trade students turned the warehouse that was their school into a fully functioning learning facility.

**The Details:** Initial funding for planning the school was supplied by the Madera County Workforce Investment Board’s Youth Advisory Council, which provided $60,000. The Youth Council also created a partnership with the local school district.

The planning process for the Pioneer Technical Center was greatly influenced by the youth on the Youth Advisory Council and other Madera County youth. The school’s name was chosen through a youth contest.

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** Adding more occupational clusters to the curriculum at Pioneer Technical Center is a priority, and the County is currently researching labor market information and interviewing local businesses as to what other occupational areas will be the most beneficial for the youth, their futures, and the workforce of Madera County.

**Where to Go for More information**
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Chapter Four

Innovative Programs

In this section:

- Summer Hire-A-Youth Program Engages Youth and Employers
- Youth Involvement and Leadership through Public Art
- Youth Development Program to Support Career Preparation
- Job Search Workshops Available to All Youth
- Partnering with a Housing and Redevelopment Agency
- Year-Round Life Skills Workshops to Support At-Risk Youth
- Youth Programs Created by the Council to Support Service Gaps
- Youth Programs to Support Career Preparation, Youth Development, and Crime Prevention
Summer Hire-A-Youth Program Engages Youth and Employers

Youth Council: Anaheim Youth Council

Element: Career Preparation

Functions: Coordinating Youth Services, Measuring Quality and Impact of Local Efforts

Subjects: Innovative Programs, Youth One-Stops

The Challenge: Over the years, the Anaheim Youth Council has consistently provided funding for subsidized youth summer employment programs. However, the Youth Council’s funding sources have dwindled consistently over the past few years, which has meant that resources have not been available to support summer youth employment programs.

The Practice and Evidence: As summer youth employment funding for subsidized work has dwindled steadily, Anaheim Youth Council responded by creating a program to connect youth to unsubsidized summer work. The program connects youth to local businesses seeking employees for the summer months by leveraging the existing outreach of Anaheim’s One-Stops and partner agencies.

Hire-A-Youth is coordinated by Anaheim’s One-Stop (Anaheim Workforce Center) and is a cooperative effort between the Anaheim Workforce Investment Board and Youth Council, Anaheim Workforce Development Division, Youth Employment Services (YES), City of Anaheim Community Services, Anaheim Chamber of Commerce, Employment Development Department, Anaheim Union High School District, and North Orange County Regional Occupational Program (ROP). These partners work together to solicit unsubsidized jobs from the business community and outreach to youth participants.

Created in 2002, Anaheim’s Hire-A-Youth Program has resulted in 3000 referrals and 1100 youth hires over the last three years. Hire-A-Youth has no eligibility or residency requirements, as the jobs are 100 percent unsubsidized. Jobs are developed for 14-17 year olds as well as for young adults 18-21 and generally are in sectors that youth have voiced interest in. Each June the Hire-A-Youth partnership hosts a job fair to match employers with prospective youth workers.

The Details: Anaheim’s business team works collaboratively with EDD and the Chamber to outreach to targeted businesses; businesses then mail or e-mail back potential jobs, and the business service team follows up with them for specific job orders. Concurrent with the business outreach, the ROP, YES, and City of Anaheim do outreach to youth to invite participation in the Hire-A-Youth program and in other services of partners.
Youth look through a book of Hire-A-Youth listings at partner offices, receive up to three referral cards at each visit, and contact the employer directly. Youth are then either hired or directed back to Hire-A-Youth for additional assistance, training, or referrals.

All job orders and youth referral cards are collected at the central hub at the Anaheim Workforce Center. The center’s staff also complete follow-up with employers and collect all related program data and evaluative information.

Over the past three years, the Hire-A-Youth program has become increasingly strategic in their business outreach, mailing out targeted letters to businesses by using the Chamber of Commerce mailing list as well as a proprietary mailing list. “In previous years, we mailed Hire-A-Youth information to all companies with ten or more employees, which resulted in 6000-8000 mailings; the result of this “shotgun” approach did not meet our needs,” said Rita Slayton, Manager of Anaheim Workforce Center who oversees the Hire-A-Youth program. Now the team has evaluated the types of jobs that are of interest to youth from previous years and targeted 2500 companies with an employee base of 10 to 250 in the service, retail, hospitality, entertainment, and manufacturing industries. This targeted approach has resulted in a steady source of job listings that serves the larger population of 16-17 year olds, something they had not be able to generate in previous years.

Youth outreach has grown to be increasingly more coordinated and comprehensive, mirroring the program’s business recruitment success. Outreach is done at malls, fast food restaurants, community-based organizations, and local youth hang outs, coordinated through multiple youth-serving partners. Additionally, youth are offered basic job skills workshops, including interviewing, applications and resumes, and job retention.

All of the partners have reaped benefits as a result of participating. By leveraging the work of the Anaheim Workforce Center’s business service team, the program does not require extra funding or sponsorship, as it is an extension of the work done under WIA. The benefit to the business service team, beyond the youth employment, is the development of new business resources for WIA-eligible participants.

**Breakthrough Moment:** “In our third year, 2004, we broke through many of the barriers of previous years,” comments Slayton. “We had repeat businesses, good jobs, more youth, and an improved process.” Part of the success is that most operations were centralized two years ago to the Anaheim Workforce Center – One-Stop, which has reduced duplication and gaps in the program.”

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** Serve more youth in need—foster, emancipated, probation, welfare, homeless, and disabled youth through building more partnerships with local youth-serving agencies that serve these populations; in turn, target more businesses that are willing to hire youth that are most at risk, and most in need.

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Where to Go for More Information
Anaheim Youth Council

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Youth Involvement and Leadership through Public Art

Youth Council: Monterey County Youth Council

Sponsoring Agency: Monterey County Workforce Investment Board Office for Employment Training

Element: Career Preparation and Youth Leadership

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subjects: Innovative Programs, Youth Involvement

The Opportunity: When the Monterey County Youth Council began its work, the Monterey County One Voice Murals project was already in place and very successful. Since the program was being funded by workforce dollars and included at least four of the ten WIA-mandated elements, the Youth Council decided to partner with the program and provide funds.

The Practice and Evidence: The One Voice Murals Project, a program run through the One Voice Arts and Leadership Program, engages youth from throughout Monterey County in eight-week summer youth employment projects during which they create murals. Up to one hundred youth participate in these annual projects, which not only beautify the community for years to come but also provide the youth with team-building skills, bonding, and a pride for their community, which will translate into their being productive members and good citizens of the community where they live.

Through the One Voice Murals Project, youth muralists learn many valuable job-related, transferable skills, including working well on a team, enhancing group dynamics, developing leadership, thinking creatively, and solving problems. The project also provides a positive and motivating role-model leadership activity for youth.

During the six most active years, over 720 youth participated with a greater than 90 percent success rate in relationship to participation. An alumni survey indicated that, at the program’s peak, 96 percent thought it was excellent, and many went on to participate in leadership programs, visiting different cities to give presentations. Thirty-six percent of the youth gave money they earned to their parents to help at home. Approximately fifty murals have been completed throughout Monterey County.

The Murals Project is not only the largest and most successful youth program of its kind in the Monterey tri-county area, but also the most influential public arts program in the county’s recent history. As a result of the work of youth in Monterey County, this art program is being replicated across the nation. The One Voice Arts and Leadership Program that sponsors the Murals project

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has been honored by the National Endowment for the Arts, and has had information on display in the California Capitol and in the Monterey County Courthouse.

Another successful One Voice public art project was the Healing Pole, created during the summer of 2002. One Voice had been given a 23-foot log that was a remnant of the Port Chicago disaster, with the stipulation that they create a sculpture out of it and give it to a community in need of healing.

A master carver, Shane Eagleton, was hired to work with the youth and direct the project. With no training as artists, youth sculpted the log using chisels and mallets. Eagleton carved a DNA helix into the log and the youth added 16 endangered species, to show the “connectivity of all animals and plants,” noted Eagleton. Youth participant Jaymes Lambert said, “People were kind of timid with each other at first, but we all worked together great, and the project turned out to be something wonderful.”

The City of New York accepted the healing pole as its first commemorative gift in recognition of the September 11 tragedy. On September 5, 2002, the pole was installed at the front gate of Bronx Zoo. A documentary on the pole, sponsored by the California State Youth Council and California Workforce Association, was seen by over 20 million people on 20 public television stations.

The Details: The One Voice Murals Project started in 1995, five years before the Youth Council was established. It was developed as a response to information that the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) received regarding the importance of art, leadership, cultural issues, and youth involvement in the community. They were looking for an arts program they could establish to complement the Summer Youth Employment Training Program and the eleven different academic enrichment programs that ranged from Graduation Equivalency Diploma (GED) through Regional Occupational Programs (ROP) to community college and computer literacy offerings. They also had programs that integrated drama in which students created their own plays where youth from all different parts of the county worked together.

Monterey County is very diverse culturally with at least 12 major ethnic groups that are somewhat compartmentalized, so WIB members looked to establish a county-wide program because it would be a great opportunity to learn about cultural diversity. In 1996, they went to Chicago to visit a major community arts program. It was initially run through the city’s jobs program, but eventually they formed their own 501c (3) non profit. They took a part of downtown and created spaces where 20 different arts programs were located, and the aldermen had other centers throughout the city. They hired professional artists from around the country.

The Monterey County WIB members asked how they could create a comparable program in a miniature form at home. They decided to start a county-wide cultural murals program. They invited local cities and businesses to co-create the program, to match dollars, and to identify youth who would participate. Together with the youth and city officials, the WIB members
developed concepts for the murals. The concepts were relatively non-controversial: jazz, fairness, peace, citizenship, honor, subjects that everyone can believe in, so as to ensure the project would be successful.

Each community decided how the concepts would be represented. A paid professional artist worked with members of each community to create the image, and then the renderings were taken to their city council to approve and to contribute funds. At the mural project’s highest point, it was receiving $120,000 per year in matched funds. In 1996, two or three murals were created. At the project’s zenith, 20 murals were created in eight weeks. Thirty-six professional artists were hired, and they worked with over a hundred youth. They also did sculpture, drama, and martial arts.

Basic funding for the youth mural and arts project has been supplied by the Workforce Investment Act and sponsored by Monterey County Workforce Investment Board, the Office for Employment Training, and the Monterey County One-Stop Career Center System.

**Breakthrough Moment:** “I knew it would work the day that we started,” said WIB Executive Director Joseph Werner. However, one of the most dramatic moments for the project came during the first summer. “The first year we had a community paint day,” Werner reported. “We publicized the mural project and invited people to come out and paint. When our congressman, state senator, supervisor, and over 200 people from the community joined in, I knew it was working. People were supporting youth.”

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** During the summer of 2005, a mural will be created at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey.

**Where to Go for More Information**
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**Tool**
One-voice Murals Project
(http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/workforce/murals/index.htm)
Youth Development Program to Support Career Preparation

Youth Council: San Bernardino City Youth Council

Elements: Youth Leadership, Career Preparation, and Youth Development and Support

Functions: Coordinating Youth Services, Engaging Local Leadership to Take Action

Subjects: Innovative Programs, Youth Involvement, and Serving Special Populations

The Challenge: According to Cynthia Cervantes, Division Chief of the City of San Bernardino Employment and Training Agency (SBETA), the city is on the rebound. They have gone through hard times with very high unemployment and poverty, especially among young people. Because so many of the city’s youth face multiple challenges, the Youth Council wanted to support career programs that serve youth who are at risk not only because of low family income but who also have barriers to employment such as having skill deficiencies, being teenage parents, or being high school dropouts.

The Practice and Evidence: The Youth Council decided to support San Bernardino’s long standing Youth Development Program (YDP) in order to provide at-risk youth with a multifaceted youth leadership development and career preparation opportunity. The YDP is an eleven-day summer residential program that the city has operated since 1981. The focus of YDP is to provide the participants with practical work experience that enhances positive attitudes about work and to share information on career opportunities. Other goals include building self confidence and responsibility.

The program is held each summer on the University of Redlands campus or at another college in the area. Participants live in dormitories and create a miniature town called Micro City. Every person is responsible for filling a government or business role in the city. Goal setting and team work are featured while at the same time each person sees how his or her actions affect everyone. Participants establish rules of conduct that everyone must abide by, such as no profanity; if a youth breaks a rule, he or she may be called before the court, tried, and, if found guilty, issued a penalty such as having to bus tables for two meals.

Elections are held for five of the community roles: police chief, mayor, judge, public prosecutor, and environmental services chief. Everyone who is interested in one of these positions has to run a campaign that includes pulling together a campaign staff and giving a speech. An election is held on the morning of the third day of camp.

Adult community leaders are an important component of the program, and many participate by joining the camp for a day and partnering with a youth who has taken on a comparable role in Micro City. These leaders also run seminars for youth.

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In previous years, when more funding was available, 100 youth between the ages of 14 and 17 participated. In 2005, 50-60 youth between the ages of 16 and 21 will take part.

Throughout the life of the program, alumni, parents, and community leaders have commented on the positive effects on the youth who participate. For example, Cervantes noted in a 2002 Redlands Daily Facts article that “for a lot of [the youth], it’s the first time someone believed in them. Afterwards they come out much more positive people. They’re encouraged to do goal planning, and they realize that staying in school produces results and gives them more confidence knowing they’re leaders themselves. They also realize they’re responsible for the kind of community they live in.” Dr. Mims, the founding director of YDP, told the Redlands Daily Facts in 2002, “I would . . . guess that at least 85 percent of [the youth] go back to finish high school, or if they don’t, they at least become more [accomplished] in their life skills.”

Participation by adults also benefits the youth. Over the years, some alumni have come back as business owners and leaders, and they talk to the current participants and serve as role models. The other business people and elected officials talk to youth as well, and the San Bernardino mayor spends time with the camp mayor. The police and fire chief come year after year. “You should see the [youths’] faces when they’re talking to the mayor or police chief,” says Cervantes. “Afterwards, the young people go ‘I’m talking to this person!’”

According to Cervantes, the adult leaders always find the participants to be outstanding. “Without fail adults say ‘I’m so impressed with these youth,’” she notes. A 2004 article in the San Bernardino Sun reports that the Sheriff Department’s Captain Sheree Stewart told the participants, “I want to hire you. I want to put everyone we hire through this program.”

Youth participants also report benefits. For example, Brian Offiah, a 21-year old who took part in the 2004 Micro City, told the Press-Enterprise that he liked the program because he felt that people really cared. “Everybody in the environment wanted us to figure out what was best for us, to figure out a goal. They really helped us.” Jamal Moreno, who was 17 when he was elected Micro City 2002’s mayor, told the Press-Enterprise, “Sometimes you aren’t sure if you are capable of what is expected of you, but now that I’ve been here, I know I am. You learn job skills here, and the seminars inform us how to maximize [them].”

The Details: YDP began in the late 1970’s as a country-wide program sponsored by the National Football League Players Association. In 1981, the Association stopped providing funding, so the founding director, Dr. Dennis Mims, approached communities and counties where there were many high risk youth about continuing the program. The City of San Bernardino was sold on the idea from the beginning, and has sponsored the camp every year since then. They have had some private funding from individual donors as well as from the San Bernardino Arrowhead Credit Union. In recent years, the Youth Council funding has made it possible to continue the program.
For many years, the City of San Bernardino has been the only city to continue the YDP. Dr. Mims and his staff run the camp, and they supply the curriculum. In 1997, the Youth Development Program was honored as one of the best programs in the nation for youth, and Dr. Mims won the National Association of Counties (NACO) individual award for youth program leadership.

All the YDP staff have other jobs. One is a licensed psychologist; another works for Los Angeles City College District; a third is a business owner, and a fourth an insurance agent. All of these staff members use their personal vacation time in order to participate.

Initially the San Bernardino YDP was geared towards first-year high school students to help them set goals early, and to encourage them to believe in themselves. These youth were high risk but in school. “Now,” says Cervantes, “we gear it towards older youth and out-of-school youth because that’s the focus of our funding. We have reformatted the curriculum so that, for example, teenage mothers can leave their children with other family members while they participate.” She goes on to say, “With the out-of-school youth, we ask them, ‘What are you going to do now? Here are some options.’ Our intent is to get them back into school or higher career-level educations.”

**Breakthrough Moment**: According to Cervantes, each summer has at least one breakthrough moment, but they all are similar. She tells it this way: “Some of the youth are very resistant about going to this program. They’re cool and independent; no one tells them what to do. They are pretty used to calling the shots for themselves. [Having a schedule] is not exactly what they want to hear. Or some of them have never left their neighborhood, and they don’t want to leave their family setting. They are very fearful about that. So they come here to our office, and they are clinging to their mom or their children. They are kind of having a hard time; some of them are crying because they just don’t want to leave. Yet you see them a couple of days later at the camp and you see them [doing great] in their roles, or at the parent night performance. Then when you see them at the end, you see tears again because they don’t want to leave.” Cervantes continues: “The other [breakthrough moments] are the reactions of the business and community leaders. We try to bring new people in each year. The first-time reaction of a community leader is really significant to see.”

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** Funding has been dwindling, but they have been continuing the program on a reduced scale, and hope to extend the program into the future. Dr. Mims has stated that he would like to secure national support for the program so that it can be delivered on a larger scale to benefit many more young people.
Where to Go for More Information
San Bernardino City Youth Council

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Tools
The following tools are available through the City of San Bernardino Employment and Training Agency:
Excerpts from Student Handbook
Typical daily schedule
Job Search Workshops Available to All Youth

Youth Council: San Joaquin County WorkNet

Element: Career Preparation

Function: Coordinating Youth Services, Engaging Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Innovative Programs

The Challenge: The number one challenge facing the San Joaquin Youth Council has been how to serve youth in the summer under WIA. According to Elena Mangahas of San Joaquin County Worknet, “Even though the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) is no longer in place, we still have to respond to [a high] unemployment rate” that persists in the San Joaquin Valley towns. Entry-level jobs are primarily retail with some manufacturing and warehouse. Youth are competing with adult welfare recipients who are also seeking entry-level jobs. Council members wanted to secure commitments from local employers to hire youth for the summer. They knew that employers would only be willing to do so if the youth were well prepared, so they looked for a way to provide youth with the knowledge and skills they needed to be work-ready.

The Practice and Evidence: The Youth Council engages in efforts to link employers and youth. Since the area’s chambers of commerce are part of the WIB infrastructure, the Youth Council members have long-established relationships with the local business community. They are able to ask for—and receive—commitments from employers to hire youth for the summer. However, says Mangahas, “To make this agreement really [worthwhile], we don’t just send youth who are not prepared. We prepare them via the Job Search Workshop.”

The workshop “focuses on the critical job search techniques that will help young first-time job seekers find the job that is right for them,” explains Mangahas. “It is available to every San Joaquin County youth between the ages of 16 and 21. What we’re doing really is prepping the youth and giving quality referrals to the local employers.” The workshop is also portable and can be replicated.

The WorkNet also links youth with volunteer opportunities particularly in local library volunteer programs, the Tutor Resource Collaborative of non-profit learning centers, and the Stockton Parks and Recreation Department’s theater arts programs and events. Youth interested in volunteering contact WorkNet via e-mail at the Worknet web page called “Volunteer Interest.” Mangahas reports, “We’re continually connecting youth to the community even if it’s not an employment position.”

The program has been successful. Mangahas notes that businesses have continued to offer summer jobs for youth, signaling that they are pleased with the youth they have hired. Youth who have taken the workshop are happy to have job search skills and to find jobs. The Youth (continued)
Council members and staff find that the approach makes it possible for them to serve more youth through the summer. Mangahas says, “When the youth unemployment rate is higher than our adult unemployment rate, it calls for assistance for our young job seekers. [The workshop tailored for youth gives] them a better understanding of the labor market, the expectations of employers, and what they have to do to be successful in their job search.”

**The Details:** The model is an updated version of all the outreach efforts the WIB conducted under JTPA. “We had many of the practices that we carried over, the same community connections and partners involved. We [made a point of working with] the ones we had good experiences with.”

The workshop is offered throughout the year at all the County One-Stops as well as at high schools during career days. Once a youth has completed the workshop, she or he is invited to visit a One-Stop (called WorkNet). Each WorkNet center is equipped to assist in resume writing and internet-based job searching. The centers also offer listings of CalJOBS, employment postings, and intranet postings that are targeted for youth who are looking for summer, part-time, or temporary work. WorkNet also holds an annual job fair as well as employer-specific mini job fairs throughout the year, and youth customers are notified about them.

**Breakthrough Moment:** The breakthrough moment came when the Youth Council members and staff realized that they were still able to serve youth during the summers even though WIA does not fund summer jobs programs.

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** The Youth Council and Worknet system will continue to connect with chamber of commerce members and to offer the Job Search Workshops for youth. They anticipate that the demand for the workshops—and the youth who complete them—will increase.

**Where to Go for More Information**
San Joaquin County WorkNet

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**Tools**
San Joaquin County WorkNet website
(http://www.sjcworknet.org)
Partnering with a Housing and Redevelopment Agency

Youth Council: Solano Youth Advisory Council

Elements: Career Preparation, Academic Excellence, Youth Development and Support, and Youth Leadership

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subjects: Innovative Programs, Serving Special Populations

The Challenge: The Workforce Investment Act requires local areas to contract with community-based and other agencies to provide youth in WIA programs with ten required program service elements. In May 2000, the Workforce Investment Board of Solano County, Inc. issued an RFP to every known youth-serving community-based organization, city manager, and recreation department in and near the county, looking for proposals that sought to address the ten WIA youth program elements, which were new to them.

The Practice and the Evidence: One response came from the City of Vacaville Housing and Redevelopment Office, which saw an opportunity to create a new kind of partnership between the WIB and their very successful Youthbuild Program, then in its second year and funded by Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Vacaville wanted to leverage and expand their Youthbuild program by linking it to WIA-funded GED tutoring, leadership training, mentoring services, and paid work experience through the WIB. “It’s kind of unusual for a workforce program to work with a housing program,” observes Lynette Gray, Planning and Youth Development Manager for the WIB of Solano County and staff to the Youth Advisory Council. “But this was truly what Congress intended: for communities to connect and leverage programs and funds with each other.”

Vacaville’s Youthbuild program serves approximately 100 high school dropouts annually. Each year of the partnership about 25 percent of the youth served were WIA enrolled, increasing the number of youth enrolled in the Vacaville Youthbuild program by better than 30 percent. All Vacaville Youthbuild/WIA enrolled youth received GED preparation tutoring and HAZMAT (Office of Hazardous Materials Safety) training, and most transitioned into apprenticeship programs and/or direct job placements. “At least 75 percent completed their GED, and we consider that hugely successful,” Gray reports. Some youth have gone into more advanced training programs, and others went to work for local contractors. One young graduate worked on the Youthbuild program as an employee of the City of Vacaville.

The Details: HUD funds Youthbuild in communities around the country. Their program focuses entirely on dropouts from ages 16-24 (the WIA population is for ages 14-21), and teaches them the building trades; they build low-income, retirement housing, and perform graffiti abatement (continued)
community-wide. The City of Vacaville did tremendous direct outreach, first city-wide and then county-wide, to high school dropouts. All participants went through GED preparation and took the GED. All also went through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and HAZMAT training, learning how to deal with graffiti abatement and hazardous-waste clean-up, and they received a HAZMAT certificate that made them employable. Youth worked on different aspects of building projects, depending on their age and their ability to use power tools.

The Solano Youth Advisory Council added in WIA program service elements to make the Youthbuild program more comprehensive: alternative education, mentoring, tutoring, and leadership training. Gray notes that this population, older youth who have already dropped out of school, “is very, very, very difficult to engage and keep engaged. Getting them drug-free is the first barrier.” The program employed both carrots and sticks: cash payments for passing each installment of the GED (the money comes from Youthbuild, which has more incentives built in than the WIA), deadlines, and penalties. When one of the “good kids” was caught selling drugs during a break, he was kicked out. “You have to have zero tolerance,” Gray counsels. “You have to obey your own rules. If a youth is more than ten minutes late, she’s locked out and doesn’t get paid. It’s the real world. You give them all the tools they need to succeed, but they have to show effort and consistent progress.” Mentoring was a key element. The impact of a caring adult in a young person's life was seen firsthand. They came in clean and on time because their good behavior was noted and rewarded by the mentor.

From an administrative point of view, Gray emphasizes the importance of being very clear with program elements. All the program contractors had to understand all of the WIA requirements, which entailed a constant, ongoing communication and training process. “But that’s the way you succeed,” Gray points out. “You all have to understand each other’s programs.” She also had representative contractors and youth present their successes to the Youth Advisory Council and the Health and Social Services Agency. “They come in with their gang tattoos and their scary faces and say what the program has done for them, and get applauded. It’s about recognizing the successes, and also about putting a face on those who receive the services. Otherwise it’s just a number.”

Another factor behind the success of the program was that it had a comprehensive wraparound element. Family resources in the City of Vacaville provided additional counseling and support. The WIB and indirectly the Youth Advisory Council in turn covered expenses like childcare and transportation. “We fixed the brakes on one young man’s car, so he could get to work,” says Gray. “We did those extra things to let the young people know that they mattered, and that their success is our success.”

**Breakthrough Moment:** The Solano Youth Advisory Council got to hear first hand from a young man who went through the program, and whose story exemplified the outcomes they intended. He was very unsure of his future plans and his ability to attain a GED when he entered the Youthbuild program. He completed his GED with the support of WIA-funded tutoring,
completed OSHA certificates, and worked with a Youthbuild mentor to acquire the necessary skills to apply for and secure employment with the City of Vacaville’s Office of Housing and Redevelopment. Initially he was so shy that he had a difficult time speaking to adults, but as he participated, the young man blossomed. He concluded his training with a heartfelt presentation to the Council, thanking them for their support of the Youthbuild program.

What’s Next for this YCidea? On September 30, 2004, after six years, the City of Vacaville reached the end of its HUD funding. WIA monies alone were not sufficient to run the Vacaville Youthbuild comprehensive program that included GED training and mentoring. However, the Solano County Youth Advisory Council continued to serve as a cross-referral agency. The WIB and the Youth Advisory Council will work with any city in the county that wants to implement a similar program. While more of the funding and program management for the current program was borne by the City of Vacaville than by the WIA, the county benefits, as Gray points out: “These young people earn money, put it back into their community for the most part, and learn the satisfaction of a good day’s work.”

Where to Go for More Information
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SNIPPET

Year-Round Life Skills Workshops to Support At-Risk Youth

The **Youth Council**: Kings County Youth Council

**Element**: Youth Development and Support

**Function**: Coordinating Services

**Subjects**: Innovative Programs, Serving Special Populations

**The Challenge**: Kings County has a high number of homeless and poverty-stricken youth who need help and guidance. The Youth Council was sponsoring Life Skills workshops through summer school programs, but the Council members felt that the at-risk youth they served needed assistance throughout the year.

**The Practice and Evidence**: Kings County Youth Council developed year-round Life Skills Workshops modeled after those in their summer school program.

Because the topics are particularly relevant to youth facing difficult life situations, the workshops are always filled to capacity. One Workshop speaker was a County Mental Health representative whose presentation educated youth on managing their own mental health and identifying issues. Another popular class, taught by college dietician interns, teaches youth how to make six meals out of just 12 food staples. The youth were given recipes, a food budget, and the 12 staples, encouraging them to cook their own nutritious meals. Other workshops, such as those that teach parenting skills, give students the informational foundation they need to help them overcome current difficulties.

The workshops are now also conducted in locations other than the One-Stop. Career Advisors go to the court school and teach on topics such as job preparedness and dress for success.

**The Details**: The workshops were created by WIA-funded Career Advisors based in five mini-One-Stop career centers located in high schools throughout the county. Each month up to 20 at-risk youth attend these evening workshops at their local One-Stop and obtain help with specific issues. The career advisors coordinate transportation, providing a way for each student to attend. In all the workshops, youth evaluate and rate the speakers to ensure their value and impact.

According to Becky Hudson, Staff to Youth Council, “Finding the right speaker is the key. There are many knowledgeable people who are willing to help, but only a few can connect with the youth. Be flexible – if you want young parents to attend, provide child care. Gimmicks attract; use food, drawings, or require a minimum number to be attended per year. If it’s a good workshop but not well attended, have a repeat performance; the youth will sell it. Let the youth know far enough in advance, then remind them.”

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**Breakthrough Moment:** When the workshop in sexually transmitted diseases was scheduled, a low youth turn out was predicted by the adults. However, much to the adults’ surprise, a large group attended. The speaker was humorous but tasteful and put the students at ease. The youth asked lots of questions, many of which shocked the Career Advisors. “It became very apparent that the youth want answers,” said Hudson. Another eye-opening workshop was sponsored by Family Support. The youth present were very surprised to realize that if you parent a child, the father and mother are responsible for that child and that Family Support Services will go to great lengths to make sure that responsibility is maintained.

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** Once the lines of communication are opened, youth typically begin to work with the One-Stop Career Centers and are then linked with additional supportive services. The Youth Council anticipates continued growth of the number workshops offered as well as the number of youth attending the classes.

**Where to Go for More Information**
Kings County Youth Council

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**Tool**
Please contact the Kings County Youth Council:
Programs Descriptions Brochure
Youth Programs Created by the Council to Support Service Gaps

Youth Council: City of Richmond Youth Council

Elements: Youth Development and Support, Academic Excellence, Youth Leadership

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subjects: Innovative Programs, Youth Involvement

The Challenge: Immediately after its formation, the City of Richmond Youth Council saw that the youth of Richmond were not being adequately served. Their vision for the City of Richmond was “a community where all youth are a success in school, work, and life. We envision a community that provides youth with positive adult relationships and role models. We envision a community where all youth are healthy and have equal opportunities to learn and where all youth are supported on their way to becoming self-sufficient adults. We envision all youth as leaders and contributors in our community.” The Council members saw their role as follows: “To serve as a catalyst to build a comprehensive, community-wide youth preparation and development service delivery system.” They saw that there were not sufficient opportunities for the youth of Richmond to get the support they needed.

The Practice and Evidence: Youth Council members set to work promptly to improve and expand programs available to their youth.

One program paid for driver’s education for youth preparing to take driver’s license exams. Another program prepared a group of 23 junior and senior high school young women to go to college. Council staff took the young women on a tour of northern California’s colleges (traditional black colleges were highlighted), allowing the students to fully explore their educational opportunities. All seniors in the program took the ACT and applied to college.

Each of the 70 WIA-enrolled youth regularly attended after-school tutoring classes four days per week to help them with daily homework, and math and writing skills. During the first program year, 2002, 40 youth went through a program where they were required to take two classes per week for six weeks. Classes included quick and healthy cooking, sex education, and money management.

The Council also formed the Youth Leadership Team, a team of outgoing, determined WIA-enrolled youth. This close-knit group accomplished much in a short time and impressed the Council with their “can do” attitudes. The youth developed their own mission statement: “We are the youth of the City of Pride and Purpose committed to becoming dedicated and confident leaders for youth.” The multiple roles of the Youth Leadership Team are to 1) make youth programs youth focused, 2) advise the Youth Council on youth issues and needs, 3) build
relationships and collaborations, 4) increase program visibility, and, 5) represent the youth of the City of Richmond.

The Youth Leadership Team has been involved in many activities that both support them as leaders and promote the work of the Council. For example, staff of the Council took the Youth Leadership Team to Merced for a youth conference. The Youth Leadership Team also developed a presentation and arranged with area high school teachers to bring it to students in the classroom so as to educate students about the Council and its programs. Furthermore, the team writes monthly articles that describe the programs and youth activities of the Youth Council for publication in a local newspaper.

**The Details:** The Council determined what additional programs to offer by conducting surveys that asked youth what programs the schools and community formerly offered at no charge, but were no longer available. The Council members then wrote proposals to obtain funds to support them. They received three grants and began to implement programs that gave in-school and out-of-school youth much needed assistance.

Youth Leadership Team members attended a two-day camping retreat to learn about the Council and how to talk with adults about issues they had at home or with friends so that the Council would be better able to support them. Close bonds were formed between the adults and youth who attended. Youth also met for a few Saturdays to prepare for their work with the Council.

**Where to Go for More Information**
City of Richmond Youth Council

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Youth Programs to Support Career Preparation, Youth Development, and Crime Prevention

Youth Council: Sacramento Youth Council

Elements: Career Preparation, Comprehensive Approach, Youth Development and Support

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subjects: Innovative Programs, Serving Special Populations

The Challenge: The Sacramento Youth Council has been working with reduced funding during the past several years, so the Council has been facing the challenge of using its current resources effectively.

The Practices: The Youth Council supported two successful programs: pre-employment workshops (JOBS) and the Youth Development and Crime Prevention Program (YDCP).

The Youth Council offers a series of one-week pre-employment workshops known as Job Opportunities Bring Success (JOBS) workshops. They were held during the summer of 2004 and 2005 at a variety of Sacramento Works Career Centers. These Sacramento Works Youth Workshops have seen great participation in the 2004-2005 program year.

The Youth Development and Crime Prevention Program (YDCP) is serving 50 probation and foster youth at the Hillsdale and Franklin SWCC. The youth are being provided with work experience, community projects, and tutoring as well as advocacy/coordination with juvenile justice, education, and counseling providers. In addition, the Sacramento Youth Council continues the tradition of placing Universal Youth Specialists at the Sacramento Works Career Centers (SWCC).

Details: The JOBS workshops are facilitated by teams from Sacramento Employment Training Agency (SETA), Sacramento Works Career Centers, and youth-service providers. The one week curriculum is patterned after the popular industry-specific “Boot camp” model and youth receive incentives for perfect and on-time attendance. Upon graduation from the Youth JOBS workshops, youth are provided ongoing job placement assistance.

In one of the YDCP projects, youth painted a mural for the Franklin SWCC. The YDCP program was recently awarded continuation funding from the U.S. Department of Justice.

Along with supporting Universal Youth Specialists at the SWCC, the Youth Council has actively engaged the SWCC site supervisors to create more “youth friendly” career centers. Two
locations, the Franklin and Hillsdale Career Centers, created a Youth Connection section of the centers that were re-designed, painted, decorated, and are being completed with updated resource information to better serve youth customers.

Where to Go for More Information
Sacramento Youth Council

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Chapter Five

Resource Mapping

In this section:

- Urban Resource Mapping to Analyze Needs and Gaps in Youth Services
- Community Scan Mapping Project to Outreach to Community Partners
- Mapping and Gap Analysis to Support Youth Services
Urban Resource Mapping to Analyze Needs and Gaps in Youth Services

Youth Council: San Diego School-to-Career Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Functions: Coordinating Youth Services, Measuring Quality and Impact of Local Efforts, Promoting Policies to Sustain Effective Practices, and Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Subject: Resource Mapping, Measuring Quality and Impact of Local Efforts

The Challenge: San Diego School-to-Career Youth Council’s vision is to “maximize the opportunities for youth to develop and achieve their potential.” Their mission is “advocating and sustaining an integrated regional youth development system.” In order to achieve their mission, Council members needed to know what educational and employment services were available and what additional services were needed. Furthermore, they needed to understand the employment, population, and education trends for the region. However, since San Diego County is the 6th most populous county in the nation, with 2.8 million people living in eighteen municipalities, the task of analyzing employment trends, youth services, needs, and gaps was huge.

The Practice and Evidence: The Workforce Partnership conducted the Youth Mapping Project. Because the project was so large, the Youth Council decided to hire third parties to conduct the work. New Ways to Work was hired to lead the project, with Public Works, Inc., CSU San Diego’s Social Behavioral Research Institute, and the San Diego Futures Foundation providing consultation.

The mapping project had five express purposes:
- Improve the responsiveness of workforce preparation programs in order to better serve youth
- Build towards a comprehensive system that is responsive to needs identified by the community
- Educate the community about the value of youth workforce preparation services
- Increase the availability and access of youth workforce preparation services
- Increase community and youth participation in the design of youth workforce preparation programs

The Project produced four products:
- Mapping San Diego’s Future: A Snapshot of Youth Resources and Needs
- Voices from the Field: Education and Employment Services for San Diego Youth
- Youth Mapping Resources including a demographic analysis and an inventory of funding
- Youth Connections Locator

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YCideias

The Snapshot provides an analysis of the needs of the region’s youth and a strategy for building a more comprehensive and responsive youth workforce preparation system. Voices offers a summary of youth, parent, employer, educator, and community organization perspectives on the youth workforce preparation system. The Youth Mapping Resources brings together a vast array of information that policy makers and service providers can use to improve the quality of their workforce preparation systems, including an analysis of the County’s youth population and the region’s economic future and an inventory of funding resources that support youth workforce preparation services. The Youth Connections Locator is a user-friendly database of organizations that provide youth services in the San Diego region.

The project and the four products that emerged have helped the Youth Council in their work. The Council members used the assembled data see where to shift their attention regarding the priorities in strategic planning and resource allocation. Furthermore, the products have helped them work towards an integrated youth development system by educating all the stakeholders on the importance of preparing the region’s workforce for the evolving economy.

The Details: The entire process took one and a half years to complete. They drew upon preexisting economic, demographic, educational, and programmatic data, and gathered new information through provider surveys and focus groups for San Diego youth, parents, employers, educators, and community organizations.

According to Kelly Henwood, Director of Youth Programs for the San Diego Workforce Partnership, the biggest challenges came when determining how to summarize the information they gathered. “We were involved with so many pieces—demographics, funding, quality labor market information, so many other different components—that what I wanted to see happen was a summary. It was very difficult to get to. With the labor market information [we had to ask] ‘How do you pull it together so that it’s meaningful and digestible?’ There was no way they were going to be able to give people a four inch thick report and expect them to read and be engaged by it. So we spent a lot of time trying to boil the information down into something that was clear, concise that people could react to. We had some creative and smart people working with us. [Even so], it was very challenging.”

Henwood explained that they arrived at the solution by asking some very tough questions: “What makes this information different from any other data source? What does this data mean for young people? Why does this matter for young people?” The answers guided the structure of the summary. Each of the summary sections includes the question “What does this mean for youth?” and supplies the findings in succinct, reader-friendly prose. For example, in the section on the economy, the answer to the question of what do the economic trends mean to youth is “Youth need to be prepared for entry-level employment and career advancement,” with a short paragraph highlighting the employment sector most likely to have jobs in the coming five years.

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**YCideas**

**Breakthrough Moment:** Henwood reports that the “What does this mean for youth?” sections of the summary were very much appreciated. “[They turned out to be] one of the best things we did that we didn’t necessarily know we needed.”

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** They will continue to use the information to inform strategic planning and community outreach.

**Where to Go for More Information**
San Diego School-to-Career Youth Council

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**Tools**
Main web page link to mapping information  
(http://www.SanDiegoAtWork.com/youthmapping)

Summary Report  
(http://www.sandiegoatwork.com/pdf/youth/Youth percent20Page/ymp_summary_BW.pdf)
Community Scan Mapping Project to Outreach to Community Partners

Youth Council: Greater Long Beach WIB Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Resource Mapping

The Practice and Evidence: The Greater Long Beach WIB Youth Council conducted a Community Scan Survey to begin the process of mapping youth providers in their community. The survey produced information gathered from over 120 community service providers, 75 percent of which were newly documented agencies with no prior linkages to WIA or the Council. The information is also used in the outreach and marketing to community partners.

The Details: The Youth Council sent the survey to over 500 area education, youth service, and business network agencies and programs to determine potential linkages with WIA. The purpose was threefold: (1) to increase the Council’s awareness of area programs and services; (2) expand the base of service providers within WIA system; and (3) to establish partnerships with quality organizations.

The Council discovered a number of strategies important to the success and follow-up of the project:

• Knowing who is in your community is critical for forward movement to take place.
• Dig deeper for all youth providers such as businesses with internal youth programs.
• Look for organizations working in the heart of special populations.
• Realize that each agency is a resource for the Youth Council as they are for them.
• Use the mapping survey as a tool for follow-up communication.
• Send a Youth Council introductory letter from the Mayor to community leaders for increased awareness and buy-in.

Where to Go for More Information
Greater Long Beach WIB Youth Council

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Mapping and Gap Analysis to Support Youth Services

Youth Council: Merced County Youth Council

Elements: Comprehensive Approach, Youth Leadership

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Resource Mapping, Youth Involvement

The Challenge: The mission of the Merced County Youth council is “To build a community-wide consensus that promotes and supports an integrated youth service delivery system that ensures any youth the support needed.” One of the first tasks of the Merced County Youth Council was to assess their community to determine what youth services were available to address their top five concerns.

Practice and Evidence: They conducted a mapping project before developing their strategic plan. Initially, they tried to contract with an organization skilled in this process, but were unable to locate any to hire. Ultimately, this proved to be a gift in disguise as the Youth Council itself mobilized to accomplish the task. An important piece of the process was surveying youth to gather their input. Youth Council members—rather than staff—surveyed over 300 students in area summer schools, working face-to-face with administrators and youth.

This process worked on many levels, some the Council did not expect. The Council members were more fully engaged and educated, and they understood their youths’ needs better as a result of participation in the project. The Council expanded its membership and identified areas of immediate need on which to focus. As a result of the mapping survey and the Gap Analysis created from the data, the Council produced its first Asset Map. An equally important tool developed from the analysis was the Youth Resource Directory, given to every youth (14 to 21) in Merced County.

Where to Go for More Information
Merced County Youth Council

Even though this project was conducted early in the Youth Council’s history, information is still available. Please contact

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Measuring Quality and Impact of Local Efforts

In this section:

- Los Angeles and Long Beach WIBs Collaborate on Study of Out-of-School and Out-of-Work Youth in Their Communities
- Utilizing a Youth Interest Survey and Report to Analyze Needs and Gaps in Services
Los Angeles and Long Beach WIBs Collaborate on Study of Out-of-School and Out-of-Work Youth in Their Communities

Youth Council: City of Los Angeles Workforce Investment Board and Greater Long Beach Workforce Development System

Elements: Academic Excellence, Career Preparation, Comprehensive Approach

Function: Measuring Quality and Impact of Local Efforts, Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Measuring Quality and Impact of Local Efforts, Serving Special Populations

The Challenge: Education and employment among young adults should be a vital part of workforce development strategies. It is important to understand the extent to which young adults participate in these activities and identify subgroups of young adults who fail to acquire formal education or to access employment. Nationally, an estimated 5.6 million youth between the ages of 16-24 are out-of-school and out-of-work. In 2000, there were 4.6 million disconnected youth in the nation and 638,000 in California. Disconnected youth accounted for 14.3 percent of all young adults in the nation, and 15.9 percent in California.

Youth in Los Angeles, particularly from South and East Los Angeles, have less exposure to jobs and lack early work experience. A report released in the fall of 2003 found that one out of every five Los Angeles youth ages 16-24 is both out-of-school and out-of-work. The numbers were based on U.S. Census data in 2000. Early work experience is considered necessary to gain early development of “soft skills” needed to compete and succeed in the workplace. This disconnection from work compounds the problem of low completion rates for high school, documented recently by this study and others on Los Angeles area youth and education.

The WIBs of Los Angeles City and Long Beach recognized that many of their youth were disconnected as well. However, to better understand the situation of local youth and the circumstances they face, the two WIBs saw that they needed more specific data. Robert Sainz, Assistant General Manager for City of Los Angeles Community Development Department says, “The national data presented compelled us to say, ‘Let’s look at this and address it as a significant issue for Los Angeles.’ We see the [out-of-school and out-of-work] youth on the street every day, but no one really knew the significance of the problem for Los Angeles.”

The Practice and the Evidence: In order to really look at the issues facing their community’s youth, the Workforce Investment Boards of the cities of Los Angeles and Long Beach commissioned a study on out-of-school and out-of-work youth in their cities. The findings were published in “One Out of Five”: A Report on Out-of-School and Out-of-Work Youth in Los Angeles and Long Beach. The report provides a broad snapshot of the longer-term structural (continued)
changes in the economic environment and the consequent increase in the demand for and the earnings premium of highly educated and skilled workers. Some key findings are as follows:

- Over 25,000 Los Angeles teens are not enrolled in school programs and are not in the workforce.
- One out of five 16-24 year olds in the City of Los Angeles is out of work. In the spring of 2000, 93,013 young adult residents of Los Angeles City, representing 19.8 percent of the city’s total young adult population, were out of school and jobless - disconnected.
- In 2000, there were 11,500 disconnected youth in Long Beach City, accounting for 19.4 percent of youth.
- Among young college graduates, the earnings of bachelor’s degree holders were 66 percent higher than those of high school graduates, up from 15 percent in the early 1970s.

In an effort to share the information gleaned from the study, the Cities of Los Angeles and Long Beach conducted public education activities to support sharing this information with youth workforce staff and the general public.

Sainz says that the study enabled them to make effective strategic plans. “Doing the research was critical for us to truly identify the problem and to move forward,” he notes.

The Details: The City of Los Angeles Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and its Youth Council, in partnership with the City of Long Beach WIB and the U.S. National Conference of Mayors, conducted a special joint Youth Council meeting - a Youth Summit - on November 18, 2004. Invitations were extended to workforce areas and Youth Councils throughout Greater Los Angeles County and other surrounding communities.

The Summit, “Los Angeles/Long Beach Youth Summit: Our Future Workforce, A Report on Out-of-School Youth in Los Angeles and Long Beach,” featured commentary from local leadership and a panel of youth discussing their perspective on the results. The Summit featured findings from the study, which were presented by the report author, Dr. Paul Harrington, national expert in youth employment and labor markets. Dr. Harrington is an economist and the Associate Director of Northeastern University’s Center for Labor Market Studies. The study was jointly commissioned by the L.A. WIB’s Youth Council, the City of Long Beach WIB, and the City of Los Angeles Community Development Department.

The Youth Council also conducted a panel discussion comprised of experts on the topics presented in the report. In addition, participants had a chance to hear stories and learn from the experiences of local, out of school youth. To see the agenda and a list of speakers, please go to www.lacity.org/wib/.

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In May of 2005, Los Angeles City’s Workforce Investment Board Youth Council hosted their annual policy symposium, Crossroads, to share findings from the report with the greater community. The conference was intended for elected officials, managers of youth-serving organizations, business leaders, and local leaders to propose policy recommendations. Over 160 people attended the conference, held in Hollywood.

The conference focused on three themes: youth development, economic development, and employment. The goal of the symposium was to develop awareness and bring leaders together to commit resources in an effort to spearhead a long-term campaign for systemic change engaging leaders in education, business, government, community-based organizations, and public safety. The campaign will seek to improve graduation rates and attach youth to early work experience and quality jobs.

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Tools
To learn about the research findings or to download a copy of the report, go to http://www.lacity.org/wib/youthsummit.htm, or click the following links to access any of the following printed materials:

- Youth Summit Brochure
  (http://www.lacity.org/wib/YouthSummit_Brochure_2004.pdf)

- Executive Summary - Final Draft, November 2004
  (http://www.lacity.org/wib/YouthSummit_ExecSum_2004.pdf)

- Complete Report

- "One Out Of Five" Powerpoint: Education and Labor Market Outcomes of Young Adults in Los Angeles and Long Beach (MS PowerPoint Document)
  (http://www.lacity.org/wib/1OutOf5.ppt)
SNIPPET

Utilizing a Youth Interest Survey and Report to Analyze Needs and Gaps in Services

Youth Council: Fresno County Youth Council

Elements: Youth Leadership, Comprehensive Approach

Function: Measuring Quality and Impact of Local Efforts, Coordinating Youth Services

Subjects: Resource Mapping, Youth Involvement

The Challenge: The mission of the Fresno Youth Council is “To serve as a catalyst to mobilize and integrate all private and public partners to effectively educate, train and place youth with the necessary resources and skills to fulfill employer needs.” Recent demographic data indicate that Fresno County has the highest percentage of under-eighteen residents in the State, and that the unemployment rate for youth ages 16-19 is 22.9 percent. Given their mission and the conditions youth were facing in their County, the Fresno Youth Council members found their first task was to identify priorities. When they first approached the question of what services to support, Council members realized they did not know what youth in their community wanted or needed.

The Practice and Evidence: One of the first activities of the Fresno Youth Council was to conduct a Youth Interest Survey in September 2000. The purpose was to gain an understanding of what youth wanted in terms of services and the priority of those services. Nine hundred thirty-three youth, primarily non-WIA, completed a questionnaire asking what they felt their interests were, based on existing services. In July 2001, five focus group sessions were conducted, attracting 100 participants. These sessions provided youth with an opportunity to discuss whether current services were effective and how the delivery of those services could be improved.

The following were results of the Council’s efforts to survey their youth:

- The two processes, the survey and the focus groups, helped to activate the voice of youth for Fresno County.
- The information from the Youth Interest Survey motivated the Council to reevaluate provider contracts. They augmented funding to expand work experience, occupational training, and leadership, and now require that 65 percent of the funds are to be used in those areas.
- The Council saw an increase in activities for youth. One thousand seven hundred youth were involved in work experience last year, up 36 percent from 1,089 in 2000, and 1,200 in leadership activities, up 60 percent from 719 in 2000.
- The results of the summary helped the Council and youth leadership to enhance and directly market those services that youth seemed to need the most.
- The Council has recognized the invaluable benefit of engaged youth contributing to and sometimes taking lead on projects and management of the Youth Council.
The Details: Once the survey and focus groups were completed, a document titled Voice of Youth Needs Assessment Report was developed from an analysis of the collected data. The report indicated the five areas of identified need: jobs, education, guidance and support, personal community development, and individual services for all youth.

It also showed that, with the exception of schools, youth felt they had no consistent place to go in the county for information they need. In general, young people responded that they felt that services were not coordinated.

Next, the Voice of Youth Needs Assessment Report was used to develop a Youth Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire. The two youth representatives on the Youth Council were very instrumental in crafting the draft. A draft was then introduced to youth in seven focus sessions conducted throughout the county. In these sessions, youth had the opportunity to review the questionnaire draft and comment on content, relevance, and language used, ensuring that the tool would be effective for young people. The tool was then distributed to 133 youth.

Where to Go for More Information
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Chapter Seven

Youth One-Stops

In this section:

- Mini One-Stop Centers in Schools
- Partnership-Run Youth Opportunity Centers are Youth Friendly
- Using High Schools and One-Stops to Create Education and Workforce Partnerships
Mini One-Stop Centers in Schools

Youth Council: Kings County Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach, Academic Excellence, Career Preparation

Function: Coordinating Youth Services, Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Youth One-Stops, Coordinating Youth Services, Educational Options

The Challenge: When the Kings County Youth Council began its work, the members wanted to coordinate their services with other programs.

The Practice and Evidence: In addition to their county One-Stop, the Kings County Youth Council has supported the five mini-One-Stops centers, called Work Offices, located in area high schools. Each has one to two Career Advisors who are funded in part by WIA. Programs and services, such as independent living, Workability, Department of Rehabilitation, ROP, Tech Prep, School-to-Career, work experience, and service learning, are coordinated through the Work Offices. Additional programs such as those addressing domestic violence and mental health issues can be accessed through links made at these centers.

The Work Offices have been so successful with attracting targeted youth looking for work and services that the career centers have needed to expand to accommodate them. Through the Work Offices, the Youth Council has built a great foundation to support the goal of a comprehensive system for all youth. Many times the offices are so busy that it becomes necessary for the Career Advisors to hide to get their paperwork done.

The Details: The Mini One-Stops were originally created by the Kings Regional Occupational Program (ROP) office to house Career Advisors who handle ROP relations, WorkAbility, and Department of Rehabilitation TPP for individual high schools. When Kings County Office of Education received the WIA Youth grant, it was a natural step to serve youth at the One-Stops. Having all of the programs’ youth outreach housed in one place also consolidates outside agencies’ contacts for the high schools, eliminating interruptions to school day.

The offices are provided by the individual schools with the equipment split between the school and WIA. The current attendance and information system is available in all of the Work Offices, providing the Career Advisors with access to student grades, schedules, and contact information. The Career Advisors attend high school staff meetings as an integral part of their team.

Services are blended. Becky Hudson, staff to the Youth Council, says, “Our Career Advisers that are housed at the high schools do it all. They are counselors, job developers, eligibility intakers, recruiters. They also transport their participants to and from life skills workshops and if need be

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to job interviews etc. We truly are a Mini One-Stop at each Kings County High School. Our Career Advisors are awesome!”

The items that follow show the results of the Council’s efforts to establish mini One-Stop Centers in schools. The Council anticipates ongoing improvements, resulting in additional outcomes:

- The Council now requires that all youth served are connected to programs that support their career goal.
- Each Work Office provides a Job Club program, which is a requirement before obtaining a subsidized work experience.
- The Work Offices arrange 150 work-experience hours per young person during the school year and 120-192 hours during the summer program.
- Career Advisors work with students to collect legal documentation such as birth certificates, picture IDs, and social security cards to pave the way for eligibility into WIA or work.
- For youth who legally cannot receive services, such as illegal aliens, the Work Offices make connections for them to organizations that can help.

**Breakthrough Moment:** The Youth Council knew the mini-centers were working when they heard stories of young people receiving the help they needed. One young man who wanted to work with his hands but didn’t want to go to college was hired as a plumber’s helper following his successful work-experience with a plumbing firm. WIA funding paid for the clothing and tools required for the job. Work Offices also helped six students who moved from home to home but who had not declared themselves homeless to obtain more stable living situations. They were able to help one young woman to get an apartment.

**Where to Go for More Information**
Kings County Youth Council

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**Tools**
Available by contacting the Kings County Youth Council:
Programs Descriptions Brochure
Partnership-Run Youth Opportunity Centers are Youth Friendly

Youth Council: Riverside County Council for Youth Development

Element: Comprehensive Approach, Career Preparation, Youth Development and Support, Academic Excellence

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Youth One-Stops, Coordinating Youth Services

The Challenge: When the Riverside County Council for Youth Development (CYD) received WIA funding in July 2000, the legislation emphasized providing comprehensive services to youth within a single system. Riverside staff felt that young people needed less intimidating, more hands-on services than would be available at their adult One-Stops. They also realized that no single organization would be able to deliver all of the ten required program elements, and that the solution lay in community partnerships. The goal was to make sure to meet the employment and education needs of all Riverside County youth, including those not funded under WIA.

The Practice and the Evidence: In 2000 the Riverside County Council for Youth Development established seven partnership-operated Youth Opportunity Centers (YOCs) across the county. The Centers provide tutoring, assistance with keeping youth in school, GED preparation, leadership development and civic responsibility, work-readiness skills, paid work experience, and internships. The YOCs also offer support services such as mental health counseling, drug or substance abuse counseling, mental health support, and occupational skills training. The form this training takes is created by each partnership, and each Center operates differently. For example, one concentrates on technology, offering sound production, graphic design, and computer facilities. Another focuses on the construction trades, with youth building guitars, cabinets, and grandfather clocks. Youth who move can transfer to that city’s YOC. Once youth have completed these programs, job placement and access to post-secondary education are the primary activities of the Riverside Youth Opportunity Centers. The Centers serve approximately 1200 youth a year, and met or exceeded WIA performance outcomes during the last program year.

The Details: The CYD put out an RFP that stipulated their requirements for each partnership contract. There had to be a designated lead agency and a minimum of four partners (including a local school district, a business partner, and a community-based organization). This structure was chosen in order to ensure that comprehensive services were provided, and to leverage resources as effectively as possible. “For example,” explains Felicia Miller, Youth Programs Manager, “instead of having the YMCA run one of Youth Opportunity Centers and try and do all ten program elements, in our model the YMCA would be the lead agency. They might provide leadership development, which they’re very good at, but they would partner with other
community organizations to do the academic skills, work preparation, and other elements. That way we’re leveraging resources as well as expertise.”

It took the better part of a year to get all seven centers up and running. The CYD drew on a significant sum of Job Training Partnership Act money as well as their first allocation of WIA money. Each partnership had a Youth Advisory group that advised on layout and the design in order to make the Centers highly youth-friendly, another requirement in the RFP. Each has its own flavor; one has a dance floor, another a pool table; each has a resource area, workshop space, and a place with comfortable couches, bright colors, sound systems, television, and Play Station games. “And young people themselves were part of designing them,” emphasizes Tiki White, Youth Council Coordinator.

The time pressure brought political pressure, and White advises against trying to open seven facilities at once. She also recommends a hard look at the experience and track record of the agencies being brought in to run the YOCs. “Some organizations had highly skilled, talented staff who knew how to develop great partnerships, who understood youth development, and who could really implement the vision. Other lead agencies didn’t have that skill level and ended up trying to do everything themselves. And that was not successful even though we provide lot of technical assistance,” Miller explains. Two-year contracts expired on July 1, 2004, at which point the less effective partnerships were replaced.

Success depends on strong community partnerships and commitment, the ability to leverage resources, and the capacity to raise additional money. “You cannot count on one funding stream,” says White. WIA funding has since been cut by 50 percent, leaving it unable to support the YOCs nearly so well as in the past. However, partnerships had been informed from the beginning that they would need to seek out other sources of income beyond the WIA seed money. Each is now being called upon to do so to a greater degree, whether in the form of additional cash from grants or more resources leveraged from the community.

**Breakthrough Moment:** It took a good year and a half to do all of the improvements, to get young people involved, to train staff on all the regulations, to get all the partnerships in place, and to start the programs. It was then, as White and Miller visited Centers filled with busy young people and attended recognition ceremonies for youth who had completed the program or otherwise excelled, that they realized that the YOCs were achieving their goal.

**What’s Next for the YCidea?** Each Youth Opportunity Center must be certified to continue to receive funding from the Youth Council, which is now implementing a continuous quality improvement system. The evaluations are conducted by an independent group of private-sector businesses invited onto the Youth Council by the WIB. Quantitative measures were already in place, but “this is really about quality,” says White. “We want to make sure our Youth Centers are run in the best way, at the highest quality because our young people deserve that.”

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Where to Go for More Information
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Using High Schools and One-Stops to Create Education and Workforce Partnerships

Youth Service Provider: Santa Barbara County Education Office

Youth Council: Santa Barbara County Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach, Academic Excellence, Career Preparation

Function: Coordinating Youth Services, Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Youth One-Stops, Comprehensive Approach, Educational Options

The Challenge: Several barriers prevented students from accessing One-Stops in rural Santa Barbara County. In addition to the challenge of transportation, the offices were only open during school hours.

The Practice and the Evidence: The opportunity presented by this challenge was to create coordinated youth services by linking high school career centers and the county’s One-Stops to give youth access to a wider range of career development services.

Recognizing that the county does an excellent job of keeping its 20,000 high-school-age youth in school, and that all the high schools have career centers (or the makings of one), the Santa Barbara County Office of Education and One-Stops worked together to address this issue. They created satellite youth One-Stops at the high school career centers. Their partnership solved the problems of access and also enabled the community to forge ahead in its goal of building a countywide Comprehensive Youth-Serving System.

The plan has worked. High school career centers have coordinated services with the county’s two off-campus One-Stops, using the YCi Elements framework, in the form of a poster, to guide their service strategies. The problem of youth access to One-Stops has been solved by bringing the One-Stops to where youth are - their schools. According to reports to the Santa Barbara Workforce Investment Board, over 5000 student visits to the high school career center One-Stops take place each month.

Additional benefits include increased communication and sharing of resources, such as online job postings and all kinds of career education materials. “The YCi Elements of a Comprehensive Local Youth-Serving System poster and related written materials really helped by giving people an understanding that collaboration is critical. It broke down the barriers between services,” says Program Assistant Tom Spadoro.

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The Details: The Santa Barbara County Education Office was one of 42 agencies to receive a $100,000 grant from the California Department Education (July 2001-2002). They turned to the YCI Elements framework, which visualizes the way education is related to all other aspects of building the system, in order to raise awareness of the “All Youth-One System” concept. The objective was to create partnerships that would connect youth to the One-Stop system. The County Education Office used grant monies to make posters. They distributed them as part of formal trainings to each comprehensive high school in the county and with program networks (School-to-Career, Workforce Investment Act recipients, Partners in Education, etc.), as well as informally in meetings with schools and community partners. Smaller prints of the poster were also handed out to people staffing all the Santa Barbara networks - youth capacity, youth centers, training centers - and were put in conference packets for their Region 8 Youth Summits attended by upwards of 100 youth service providers. Says Spadoro, “These images promote not only an understanding of services but a view of how they related to each other.” Adds Art Fisher, Director of Career Education Programs for the Santa Barbara County Education Office, “It shows shared ownership of the mission of helping youth.” The Career Education Office has also promoted the Daisy Model Approach to service delivery that they first heard about through a YCi training that goes hand in hand with the YCi Elements framework.

“Schools are the largest youth-service providers in the country,” Fisher points out. “If schools see themselves - and many do - as brokers of all kinds of coordinated youth services to meet youth development needs in addition to providing academic training, it would be fantastic.” School staff are trained in helping students with choosing colleges, applying for scholarships, identifying career paths, and getting jobs. Already accessible to students and geared to provide workforce development services, the high school campus career centers were the perfect place to establish satellite One-Stops. Fisher and his staff approached the schools with this idea, proposing that career center staff come to see themselves as brokers of services, including the youth-service programs available through One-Stops. This effort also served the Youth Council’s function of coordinating youth services, and built upon their vision of a youth-serving system that connects academic excellence, youth development and support, and career preparation through a comprehensive approach.

Breakthrough Moment: The concept of coordinating youth services “has helped promote the collaboration necessary to achieve positive program outcomes,” Spadoro reports. The partnership between the high school career center staff and local One-Stops through a common approach and language depicted by the Elements of Building a Comprehensive Local Youth-Serving System posters created an environment where staff are better informed and communicate more effectively. As a result, new partnerships, supported by grant programs that require such collaboration, have emerged.

What’s Next for this YCidea? The Santa Barbara County Education Office plans to continue to use the YCi Elements of Building a Comprehensive Local Youth-Serving System framework to promote future collaboration and to sustain career education systems in times of limited funding.
They plan to coordinate with the schools on future grant proposals, and hold collaborative meetings during the year.

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Chapter Eight

Serving Special Populations

In this section:

- Project HOPE: A County-wide Partnership Extends Services to Emancipated Foster Youth
- North Star Community: Housing and Support for Emancipated Foster Youth
- Improving Transition Services for Foster Youth through One-Stop Support
- Television Documentary Series on Preparing for Adulthood
- Providing Summer Employment for Underserved Youth
- Out-of-School Youth Order of a “Skillz Menu” to Acquire Basic Skills
- Project TRENDSS – Coordinating Services for Foster Youth
- Enrolling Out-of-School Youth
Project HOPE: A County-wide Partnership Extends Services to Emancipated Foster Youth

Youth Council: Alameda Workforce Investment Board

Elements: Career Preparation, Youth Development and Support, Youth Leadership, Comprehensive Approach

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Serving Special Populations, Youth One-Stops, Staff Development, Youth Involvement

The Challenge: Alameda County is home to some 700 foster youth who were receiving basic skills and job training through the Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP). However, the 200 to 250 youth who emancipated each year at 18 were unaware of Alameda County’s WIA employment services for youth and its One-Stop Career Centers. The Alameda County Workforce Investment Board (ACWIB) saw an opportunity to offer foster youth employment information components that were not part of the Children and Family Services Department or ILSP, and believed that interagency services could be coordinated more effectively. In September, 2002, Program Finance Specialist Rosario Flores requested $75,000 to fund an Employment Consultant who would act as a liaison between agencies. The objective was to share and extend supportive services and employment lists to emancipated foster youth, and to increase WIA youth enrolment for youth with barriers.

The Practice and Evidence: After meeting with all departments in order to understand what each had to offer, the ACWIB established a framework of monthly meetings for information sharing. They then brought in key partners in addition to the ILSP – Pivot Point (a community-based youth services organization), the Casey Family Foundation, the National Youth Law Center; the EDD, CASA (court appointed services), and several youth advocacy groups – and created Project HOPE (Helping Our Young People with Employment and Education). The program provides each foster youth with in-depth career assessment, work readiness skills, financial management counseling, short-term paid work experience, enrollment in various apprenticeship and training programs, support service payments for work clothing, training, and connection to the One-Stop system. Setting Project HOPE apart from other programs is the direct communication between the WIB and the Children and Family Services Department, along with an ongoing commitment to target the foster youth population.

Since its inception in September, 2003, Project HOPE has had excellent outcomes. It has reported 100 percent enrollment and placement across the whole time period, through April, 2004.
The Details: The Employment Consultant’s mandate was to get at least 60 emancipated youth referred to One-Stops in Oakland and Alameda Counties within the calendar year (September, 2002-2003). Just as the position was being approved, the state offered the WIB a $400,000 15 percent discretionary fund grant to serve 40 youth under WIA and 40 under Welfare to Work. Many older youth were paid a stipend to attend a pre-apprenticeship training in the construction trades. The project found apartments for those without homes, paid their rent, and asked for job placement assistance from the State Construction Building Trade Council when the youth had completed the pre-apprenticeship program. “Lo and behold. Many are now getting jobs,” Flores reports, emphasizing that “the main word here is collaboration.”

Flores has found that having a full-time paid staff person to make the liaison work and to conduct the necessary publicity campaigns has been essential. So are roundtable discussions with key individuals and organizations, on at least a monthly basis. Flores refers to the employment consultant as a “change agent” who puts a working system in place before moving on. “When the consultant leaves, you have an ongoing referral process and communication network in place, with the question of getting resources to youth always at the center,” she explains.

A key component of Project HOPE was a campaign to educate foster care social workers, many of whom were unaware of what the WIA and the One-Stop Career Centers had to offer. “Caseloads are so large, and it’s hard for youth to understand that they have to start employment planning as early as 16. So it starts with educating the social workers,” Flores points out. To that end, the ACWIB worked with Pivot Point Youth Services, which completed the case management, following through with career assessment and internships. Along with other partners, Pivot Point also educated foster parents, working to inform the whole family unit about resources and job opportunities.

A goal of the state pilot project was to identify former foster youth who could serve as peer educators. The WIB hired three youth who had to go through an interview process and be enrolled in college at least part-time. These peer educators are paid $12/hour and are assigned to a One-Stop 20 hours per week in order to guide incoming foster youth through the WIA application process, and also make presentations at foster care group homes. “It’s great procedure and publicity,” says Flores.

Breakthrough Moment: Shy when she was hired, one peer educator is now making presentations to the State Legislature about the hardship she endured as a foster emancipated teen trying to find employment, then housing, then trying to assist her peers. “She has truly blossomed,” says Flores, “and it made me realize that the collaboration can work, the networking, that changes can be made, and that foster youth can be reached more effectively.”

What’s Next for this YCidea? The initial program cycle has come to a close, but Project HOPE is continuing. A priority is to educate probation judges in much the same way as social workers have been educated, encouraging them to mandate youth to an employment services

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program. “We want to prevent youth from entering the probation system by doing preventive education and getting them involved in community services and employment education,” Flores explains.

Another goal is to develop an Employment Resource Binder for foster care social workers that profiles each Alameda County One-Stop Career Center and how to access their services. The ACWIB is also working with the National Youth Law Center to establish a confidentiality agreement with WIA employment contractors and with Children and Family Services. Youth information must be handled very carefully and evaluated from a legal perspective. “We want to make sure that criteria that could make that youth eligible for WIA services is expedited to the employment contractor and/or the employer,” says Flores. “We’re going through all the fine print and establishing a boilerplate to share with other counties. It’s not glamorous, but it’s essential.”

Where to Go for More Information
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Tools
To read more about Project HOPE, please see “Project HOPE” by Thou Ny. (http://www.nww.org/yci/ycideabook/alamedaprojecthope.pdf)

To read the WIA closeout report, please click here. (http://www.nww.org/yci/ycideabook/alamedacloseoutwiapilot05.pdf)
**North Star Community:**
**Housing and Support Services for Emancipated Foster Youth**

**Youth Council:** Merced County Youth Council

**Element:** Youth Development and Support

**Function:** Coordinating Youth Services, Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

**Subject:** Serving Special Populations

**The Challenge:** Foster care youth who have been removed from their homes due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment become wards of the county and are placed in the foster care system until their 18th birthdays when they are emancipated. Oftentimes, many of these vulnerable young adults leave the system without adequate skills and are unprepared for life’s challenges. Without a firm plan for success, which includes housing and employment, these young people often end up unemployed, homeless, and without those permanent, lifelong connections that are critical to a healthy life. In order to facilitate successful transitions for these young adults, adequate housing with inclusive, supportive living structures must be in place. The challenge is to design a transition support program that is time limited, with established goals, and with the outcome of a healthy, successful, independent transition to adulthood.

**The Practices and Evidence:** The Youth Council, through the efforts of Mark Gregory, Staff Services Analyst II for the Merced County Human Services Agency, has designed a program that will provide housing, supportive services, and permanent connections to a caring adult. This solution is a unique collaborative operating under the name of “North Star Community” and is aimed at meeting the critical needs presented each day by the emancipating youth in Merced County.

**Details:** The North Star Community is being created through a collaboration of a group of local business leaders, non-profit organizations, and government agencies. Each collaborator fulfills a unique and vital role in the overall development and success of the project and the residents. The business leaders bring particular expertise in the identification and development of housing resources as well as the financial means to make this project a reality. The Central Valley Coalition for Affordable Housing is the connecting point for the development of the community. Government agencies will provide counseling, transportation, ongoing financial commitments, and administrative expertise to the North Star Community and its residents.

The location for the North Star Community has yet to be determined, largely due to the lack of available property. However, they are currently working with the City of Merced and the Housing Authority on a 5-acre parcel within the City limits of Merced. The Community will consist of approximately 72 four-unit complexes that are primarily one-bedroom apartments with a few two-bedroom units for young women with children. The Community will be designed (continued)
for expansion to allow for future growth. There will also be an on-site Administration building with classrooms, a medical area to conduct physical examinations and deal with routine medical emergencies, a day-care area for small children residing in the Community, and a recreational complex that will also serve as the Community’s social area.

Young adults who are accepted into the North Star Community become part of a caring program where they work with a case manager who will assist them in developing and managing a plan to achieve their goals; receive an apartment, which must be maintained as though the resident were in a non-subsidized environment; match with a trained mentor; and receive assistance in finding a livable-wage job. Once employed, residents will place 30 percent of their earned income in a trust fund that will be available to the resident to access permanent housing upon preparing to leave North Star Community. Each resident may live in the community for up to two years; during this time, they will have access to professional counseling resources. Residents will be provided with the opportunity to participate in spiritual life development workshops and become a part of the North Star Community by participating in regular meetings, meals, outings, and trips.

Housing is a key component of making the North Star Community program work. The North Star Community has developed a unique strategy that creates affordable housing opportunities for young adults and provides a funding stream to help support the program. Each four-unit complex will house a low-income senior mentor who will be contributing monthly rent that will be used toward the operational costs of the Community. Additional operational costs will be borne by the collaborators, either through direct contributions or services provided through their regular allocations; fundraising by the non-profit and community business leaders, or grants. Effective property management, savings on financial costs, and a partial exemption from property taxes will also decrease the operational costs of the Community.

**Breakthrough Moment:** The breakthrough moment came when the Youth Council was able to partner with the Central Valley Coalition for Affordable Housing and developed the partnerships with the business and non-profit communities to buy in and commit to participating and supporting this project.

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** The next stage in the process is to finalize the site, set the date for the groundbreaking, and begin the build which they anticipate will occur in early 2006.

**Where to Go for More Information**
Merced County Youth Council

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Improving Transition Services for Foster Youth through One-Stop Support

Youth Council: North Central Counties Consortium (NCCC)

Element: Comprehensive Approach, Youth Development and Support

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Serving Special Populations, Youth One-Stops

The Challenge: The five counties that make up the North Central Counties Consortium—Colusa, Glenn, Lake, Sutter, and Yuba—all have large areas that are rural. The scattered population, combined with inadequate funding for social services and few community-based or faith-based organizations, have historically led to significant gaps in services for current and emancipated foster youth. The Youth Council found that there was no bridging system for transitioning foster youth: no housing, no emergency homeless shelters for emancipated youth, no access to ongoing education, and in fact no bridge to independence aside from the Independent Living Program courses that were offered. The Youth Council needed to do something about this dearth of services. The challenge for the Youth Council was huge.

The Youth Council found that some of the five counties were able to do a wonderful job coordinating services with the County Health and Human Services Department, as well as with the Independent Living Programs; however, others were not. The Youth Council felt it imperative to educate all parties about the needs of foster youth and to begin to get the lines of communication open. The necessary communication topics included what the parties could do, who they could serve, and finally how to get the referrals moving so that foster youth could access services.

Another challenge was how to get the One-Stops moving in the direction of what foster youth want to hear and how to facilitate communication among the One-Stops, youth, and Department of Health and Human Services. There is a tremendous amount of institutionalization of the youth in foster care. They are used to having people tell them what to do, when to do it, and why to do it. At a certain point youth do not want to hear this anymore. The programs in place operate under the constraints of the WIA and their rules, so the need to conform can deter youth from being involved. Youth Council members recognized that it is difficult to make a government program into one that appeals to the foster youth and former foster youth it is intended to serve.

Practices and Evidence: The Council embarked upon the Foster Care Youth Project, one of three pilot programs supported by the State of California’s 15 percent funds. The goal of the Project is to improve transition services for foster youth.

The Youth Council contracted the pilot project to the five counties. The WIA youth programs are also run by the One-Stop operators. The Youth Council wanted to educate partners in the One-
Stops, educate the target population about how to use the One-Stops, and educate agencies that are working with current and emancipated foster youth.

The Youth Council brought the programs together and began to strategize about how educate all One-Stops partners (besides WIA partners) about how to work with foster youth. The Youth Council also realized they could educate the agencies that work with foster youth within the counties about what the One-Stops could provide. The specific focus was on the combining of efforts to serve foster youth and emancipated foster youth.

Rick Rickord, with State of California Employment Development Department, provided one-day training for all staff. The session was developed and focused solely on foster youth and their needs.

Since the trainings, the Youth Council and the One-Stops are educating and marketing the One-Stops system to emancipated and foster youth. They are trying to get youth to understand available services and to begin to trust the system. They want to educate others who work with foster youth about the One-Stops approach.

The county One-Stops operators were successful in accomplishing their goals not only to the target population but to other organizations as well. The evidence includes the increased service levels to both current and emancipated foster youth; improved relationships with the Department of Social Services and One-Stops; increased numbers of foster youth coming in to One-Stops, whether they are being enrolled or not; and increased levels of trust so that youth are using the One-Stops system.

**Details:** Before beginning the program, the Youth Council began making calls to One-Stop operators and The Department of Health and Human Services. The Youth Council verified that foster care youth were being underserved. The Youth Council realized they needed to step up the plate and improve services for current and former foster youth. They wholeheartedly accepted this challenge.

The Youth Council was actually approached by the State of California to participate in this pilot project because they serve a rural area.

**Breakthrough Moment:** The breakthrough moment actually consisted of two separate realizations. First, the Youth Council learned that there were landlords willing to work with the project to support emancipated youth by renting them apartments without co-signers or credit ratings. The Director of Health and Human Services was really impressed with this commitment. Second, the Youth Council members were heartened to see the WIB members being educated about the process of emancipating youth without any financial, family, or moral process which leaves these young people alone in the world.

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What’s Next for this YCidea? The Youth Council is always looking for new sources of funding to serve high risk youth. The members of the Youth Council have made a commitment to the One-Stops and administrative entities to have active participants continue to be active without this pilot funding. These programs would be funded from the WIA funding. The Youth Council will continue to write grants and continue to look for funding and housing for high risk youth.

Where to Go for More Information
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Tools
Web site for foster youth developed by the Glenn County Human Resource Agency
(http://www.fosteryouth.net)
Television Documentary Series on Preparing for Adulthood

**CWIB Special Project:** Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium (NoRTEC)

**Elements:** Youth Development and Support, Youth Leadership

**Function:** Promoting Policies to Sustain Effective Practices

**Subject:** Serving Special Populations, Youth Involvement, Innovative Programs

**The Challenge:** High school students in the northern part of the state struggle to develop career goals and plan their future. A survey of 1500 high school seniors revealed that 90 percent of youth said they had a vision for their future. However, when asked what they had done to act on this vision, only 45 percent had taken concrete steps to put the plan into action. Survey results show that more than 50 percent of youth in Shasta, Tehama, and Trinity Counties did not have a plan as of May in their senior year of high school as they moved towards graduation. The survey results for youth with disabilities were consistent with the identified norm. Youth indicated parents and adults who had gained the respect of the youth significantly influence their plans for their future. NORTEC, a consortium of nine north California counties, has never had a formal Youth Council. However, the CWIB-funded Futures Project, funded by an Improving Transition Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities Project (ITOP) grant in the north state, wanted to provide a forum through which parents and the community as a whole could hear what was missing. It was agreed that it is important for adults who influence youth to hear the message and be given information and resources to help them support youth in developing a plan — knowing what they want to do, what their options are, and how to get there.

**The Practices and Evidence:** It was decided to use television as one of the tools to promote the message. A meeting was scheduled with the producers at Redding’s local Public Broadcast System (PBS) station. The Futures Project staff shared the problem, survey results, and information from the ITOP grant, which included frameworks for youth with disabilities, with producers from the PBS station. The producers were excited about the project and saw this as a way to address an unmet community need. If parents and youth could become engaged and learn what career opportunities and supports were available and how to access them, success would be achieved on all fronts. (To access the survey, go to [www.shastacareerconnections.org](http://www.shastacareerconnections.org).)

**Details:** The Futures Project is funded by the CWIB through an ITOP grant, one of three pilot initiatives in the state.

The documentaries were produced in cooperation with the local PBS television station. As a result of conversations with Lorraine Dechter, Producer/Director, two television shows were produced, titled “The Futures Shows.” The goal of each program was to promote a strong message to parents and adults in the community about how important they were in preparing youth for transitioning from high school to career.

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All involved agreed the best way to accomplish the goal was through youth voices.

Each show began with Sue Sawyer, Executive Director of Shasta 21st Century Career Connections, (a community-based intermediary organization with the Improving Transition Outcomes Project) providing the foundation for the program. The next segment focused on staff from the Smart Center speaking about how easy it is to work with an individual who has a sense of what they want to do, and knows what their skill sets are and how they can be incorporated into further education, work, and career. This piece was focused directly at parents and other caring adults who have the potential for a significant, positive impact on the lives of youth.

The film then segues into a ten-minute segment about two boys who have been friends for years. One youth is ADHD/learning handicapped and the other does not have learning challenges, yet both find themselves ill prepared to go forth into further education or the work world upon high school graduation. The audience witnesses the experience of these young men mentoring one another about how to set goals and move ahead as they begin to explore different businesses, visit the career center and an ROP program at their school, and read the local newspaper, all with the intent of learning about available life options.

The film closes with a variety of community businesspersons speaking about the importance of providing youth with the opportunities to explore their options. Business partners speak about what it means to be successful, to understand career ladders, to have a strong work ethic, and to know the importance of education. The program closes with the Redding City Manager urging the audience to build a critical mass of support for youth in identifying and developing life plans. He explains this can be accomplished when parents and community work together and focus on positive transitions for all youth.

The second program in the series focuses on youth speaking to youth. Each young person has a specific disability that impacts their life, yet each has developed internal tools to maneuver through some of life’s challenges. They serve as mentors to one another. The youth identify life situations and share how they have dealt with them, and go into the deeper situations facing young people, especially if they are challenged learners. The key message of this film is the importance of seeking out caring adults to assist in sorting through and resolving life problems as they arise.

Now that the production is complete, the Futures Project is using the “youth to youth” piece as a stand alone. It is used in presentations to service organizations, classrooms, and various television stations. The film will also be used as a tool to teach decision-making skills in various curricula.

The film has been shared with the Shasta’s 21st Century Career Connections. Sawyer, the Executive Director, says she wants it made available to schools as well as to Juvenile Probation, and any youth-serving organization in the county in order to promote student success. The ten-minute “voice of the youth” piece is the marketing “buy in” piece.

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Breakthrough Moment: The Futures Project Staff had been working on the project for quite a while and felt it important to test the films on a different audience and decided to share the films with the Shasta 21st Century Career Connections Board of Directors. The board is composed of a county administrator, a community college vice president, three business people, a director of a local intersegmental college partnership, and the director of career and technical education at a local high school district. The reaction to this film was “The message is solid and must be heard.” Youth audiences critiqued the film and said the message was strong, held their interest, and was something they could identify with. The film also received a positive reception from a local Rotary Club.

What’s Next for this YCidea? The Futures Project will share these films in every venue possible – schools, career centers, and community. The films are being used to promote the whole concept of helping youth set goals and make informed decisions based on career exploration activities. It is anticipated the number of options for internships available for youth will be increased through this effort.

Where to Go for More Information
Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium

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Providing Summer Employment for Underserved Youth

Youth Council: Solano County Youth Advisory Council

Element: Career Preparation

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Serving Special Populations

The Challenge: When the WIA came into being, on July 1, 2001, it replaced the Job Training Partnership Act youth program, which was primarily summer-based and served about 600 youth in this suburban county. The Youth Advisory Council members saw that in order to offer any summer youth employment programs, they would have to find other partners and funding sources.

The Practice and the Evidence: The Council partnered with the Solano County Health and Social Services Department to create a summer employment program for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) dependents. The Youth Employment Program (YEP) serves approximately 45 youth each summer. They are placed in entry-level/trainee jobs across a range of fields, including county departments, facilities at Travis Air Force Base, animal shelters, and parks. YEP youth work four days a week for five hours a day, and attend a two-hour workshop each week; they receive minimum wage for these 22 hours.

“There’s a very big need for youth to have something positive to do in the summer, and we fill it with something that’s productive for the community and good for youth,” said Lynette Gray, Planning and Youth Development Manager. “We’re focused.” As Gray observed, the county gets a good return on its investment: “These youth are off the streets and spending their money.”

At the end of the summer, youth fill out a survey that rates their employment experience. The rate of positive responses at the end of the summer of 2003 was 85 percent. Even more concrete evidence of the program’s effectiveness is supplied by the test of ten work-related questions that is administered to youth before and after their work experience. (The questions, which are addressed in the weekly workshops, are very specific, such as, “Do you have a resume?” and “Do you know why you need a Social Security card?”) “It might look as though it’s a set-up, but the reality is that you’ve taught them, and the test is the instrument to show that they’ve learned it,” said Gray. “They do well.”

The Details: The Workforce Investment Board of Solano County, Inc. is a private non-profit that has a contract with the Solano County Health and Social Services (H&SS) Department to serve TANF/CalWorks welfare and foster youth. To get things going, Gray asked the County H&SS staff whether any funding was available for TANF dependents who needed a summer employment program.

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In return, the WIB and the Youth Advisory Council would establish work sites, do payroll for the youth, pay workers’ compensation, and provide “World of Work” and “Life Skills” workshops that teach work-readiness skills and career exploration. “It’s designed to complement WIA but with funding just from the county TANF system,” Gray explains.

Start-up was slow because of the transition, and because simply going into the schools before they let out for the summer was no longer an option. Direct mail proved ineffective. The second year the county started outreach earlier, in late February, putting articles in a monthly newsletter called Bridges that is sent to all CalWORKs and aid recipients. “It’s important to bring young people and parents in together to complete eligibility determination as early as possible, and then to keep the youth engaged by sending information till summer employment is ready,” Gray notes.

Screening is intensive. Seventy-three percent of the candidates, of whom approximately 25 percent are foster youth, are basic-skills deficient. Staff carefully assesses skills, interests, and level of commitment, screening about ten youth for every one enrolled. “It’s staff-intensive. And even if the young people don’t stay in the program, they learn something through the screening process,” says Gray.

The YEP program staff support participants in many innovative ways. They organize

- A pre-program Mini-Camp. The week before starting work, youth spend four hours with staff learning basic work readiness skills: how to behave, to dress, to communicate. “Many of these young people do not have a role model at home who goes to work,” Gray observed. Since the WIB’s Youth Advisory Council cannot afford buses, “the young people need to make choices about how to get to work—that’s part of readiness.”

- Supervisor training. Every work site has a primary and an alternate supervisor. Both have attended a two-hour training session, “so they know that they need to instruct the young people, watch them, check them, supervise them,” Gray explained.

- Workshop presentations. During the summer of 2003, a very seasoned case manager had all of the young people stand up during each weekly workshop to describe what they do and what they’ve learned from their supervisor since the previous week. For example, a young person working at the YMCA might have learned how to put chemicals in the pool. “These are not youth who have a lot of experience in even talking to adults,” Gray noted. “We give them a script of what to ask their supervisor. Everything is planned to give them what they need to have the right answer at the end, to build confidence.”

- An annual recognition ceremony. Gray obtained a sizeable room, created certificates signed by the executive director, had plaques made for five outstanding participants, and lined up a keynote speaker. (In 2003 the speaker was a judge who was once on welfare.)
During the first recognition ceremony, the executive director handed out the certificate to each young person, looking them in the eye and shaking their hands. “Some didn’t know how to shake hands, so the next year we decided to teach them,” Gray commented. “These are not the stars who get recognition in public school. They’re getting recognized because they worked hard and completed a program, and they’re happy.” Participants leave with a portfolio that includes a resume, sample application, and, where possible, a letter of recommendation.

Another top priority has been pleasing funders. The program’s funder has been the County, so at the end of each recognition ceremony, Gray makes short “success story” presentations to the subcommittee of the Health and Social Services Department.

Gray’s advice is to plan and coordinate “and have a road map, if you will. Check in with yourself to make sure you’re on track. If you have a deadline, you’d better stick to it.”

**Breakthrough Moment:** Gray was pleased with the wide range of services in the program, and confident that it would work. The successes of individual participants verified her thoughts about the program. Gray offered the following example. A young woman worked at the Medical Center at Travis AFB in Fairfield during the summer of 2003. She learned through her YEP work experience that she had a passion for helping people. As a result of her employment at the AFB, she has decided to join the United States Air Force after high school, and to seek an assignment as a medic to help her fellow soldiers.

**Where to Go for More Information**
Solano County Youth Advisory Council

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Out-of-School Youth Order off a “Skillz Menu” to Acquire Basic Skills

Youth Council: Southeast Los Angeles County Workforce Investment Board (SELACO)

Elements: Career Preparation, Academic Excellence, Youth Leadership

Functions: Coordinating Youth Services, Measuring Quality and Impact of Local Efforts

Subjects: Serving Special Populations, Innovative Programs

The Challenge: Since 1995, the Southeast Los Angeles County Workforce Investment Board (SELACO-WIB) has run the Community Youth Corps (CYC), an employment and training program for out-of-school youth between the ages of 17-21. In 1997 and 2002 CYC received the nationally recognized Promising and Effective Practices Network (PEPNet) Award (see more here: (www.nyec.modernsignal.net/page.cfm?pageID=115)). Over the years, the program’s basic structure offered out-of-school youth an opportunity to receive minimum wage for work such as house painting, graffiti removal, community food distribution, and other community tasks for two-week periods, and then return to the classroom for two weeks to study for their GED and learn workjob readiness skills.

However, in 2002, with budget cuts and a virtually new staff, CYC realized that the program was attracting students who lacked employment/academic skills but who also lost interest in the skill-development component of the program after exhausting their work experience allocations. In an effort to retain out-of-school youth without using paid work experience as the primary motivator, and to ensure that all students exiting the program had the skills to obtain and maintain entry level employment, the CYC decided to redesign their program.

The Practice and the Evidence: CYC staff realized that their old marketing and program design did not reflect the types of employment training services that they offered, so they changed it to attract youth who would understand the need for skill development and personal growth. Recognizing that this population also needs to earn money during training, the CYC staff came up with a concept they called the "Skillz Menu”: an incentive-based program that ensures students earn money while completing a recognized training course or gaining certifications in various occupations. “It’s a creative self-help continuum that keeps students constantly engaged in learning activities that directly support positive WIA outcomes while also appealing to their interest: money,” explains Youth Services Manager, Valerie Lathern.

As of August 2004, the Skillz Café program was still in its assessment stage. It was implemented in May 2004 and the first group of youth was expected to complete ROP and other training programs that August. “These youth are excited,” Latham reports. “Youth now better understand how to navigate the CYC program and are eager to use the menu. We merely reintegrate the (continued)
message of Ed DeJesus, President of Youth Development and Research Fund, and tell our youth that these are their skill-learning years, not their money-earning years.” Participants clearly understand that the program goal is to make them marketable by equipping them with as many skills as possible.

Lathern feels that the program is particularly effective with out-of-school youth because it gives them the opportunity to “earn while they learn. We used to speak to them in work experience hours - now we speak to them in dollars. We deal with some interesting youth, some reformed drug dealers and single parents. This gives them a chance to learn a skill and keep some money in their pockets. The amount is up to them, and it gives them some autonomy. We say, ‘You’re here to make the choices and we’re here to guide you.’”

The Details: In a change from previous years, CYC makes their expectations very clear in the orientation: to assist youth in enhancing their income by acquiring as many skills as possible, which will result in being marketable. “In the past, we tried to be the single stop for these youth. We still offer the full range of services, but we don’t try to provide everything ourselves. For example, for the GED, we partner with adult ed programs and Cerritos College. We leverage our resources,” Lathern explains.

While the youth are completing 30 hours of basic work-readiness workshops, they are given a “Skillz Menu” that lists tasks ranging from “Developing 10 Questions You’d Ask an Employer” an Appetizer that’s worth $15, to “Obtaining a Full-Time Job” – a Main Course worth $200. Youth then meet with their career development specialists and pick items from the menu - up to four each month - and establish the steps required to perform the identified tasks. The Skillz Menu was created to motivate students to select the “entrées” with the biggest incentives, like jobs, certifications, and college admission. “The idea is that they choose wisely based on a wide range of needs; some already have a GED while others aspire to better their math or reading skills,” Lathern explains. “The objective is to make learning fun.”

With little assistance from the CYC staff, youth must develop these skills independently and be prepared to demonstrate them at the monthly Skillz Challenge night, which brings them together to eat pizza, check out each other’s progress, and cheer each other on. One at a time, youth move between stations labeled Appetizer, Desserts, Beverages, etc. which are manned by various CYC staff, Youth Council members, employers, and former students. Participants state each item they have accomplished, describe it, demonstrate it, get their Skillz receipt stamped, and take it to the Cash Out window to receive their earnings. “Even the shyest youth participates. The others are very supportive whether a youth performs a skill for $20 or one for $180. One youth, a former gang member, took a few guys in the corner and showed them how to tie a tie. Those guys will never forget that they learned to tie a tie in the hallway at CYC and got paid for it,” Lathern recalls. Students leave the monthly challenges with earnings between $25-$180 in cash.

Unbeknownst to CYC participants, each has a total of 250-300 work experience hours ($2,025) available after completing any recognized training program. They are allowed to spend 100

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hours ($697) of their work experience hours in the Skillz Menu. The Skillz Menu was crafted so that if a participant “orders” wisely off the menu and gets a job placement, the WIB will never have to spend his or her work experience dollars.

The program represents a full-time commitment for the four dedicated CYC staff members. Lathern recommends that anyone interested in replicating such a program begin with their budget. “Assess how effectively your work experience dollars are being utilized by your youth. Are you getting the maximum skills for the amount you are investing? If you feel you could get more bang for your buck, creatively craft a menu that supports your desired outcomes.” Lathern credits Ed Dejesus’ emphasis on keeping services “real” for youth, and believes that youth need to be dealt with realistically.

Breakthrough Moment: The Skillz Café made sense to the staff right from the orientation and they felt more comfortable marketing the program. “People used to call asking if we had jobs, and now the callers are more interested in developing skills,” says Lathern. “We keep it real, but we put the burden on the youth. We tell them what we offer, and it is up to them. This new program design also aligns with the staff personalities and the CYC mission.” She describes the networking that takes place at the Skillz Café each month as “incredible.”

What’s Next for this YCidea? CYC will continue to assess the Skillz Menu’s growth and success. They would like to develop a menu that makes it easier to follow up on students who have exited the program. This is a challenge since at-risk youth are so mobile. The CYC Staff is working on a menu with services tailored to youth out in the job market. It will be integrated into the existing Skillz Challenge Night, but its incentives will primarily be donated items such as movie tickets, sporting events, pre-paid cell phones, and other community donations.

Where to Go for More Information
Southeast Los Angeles County Workforce Investment Board

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Tool
Community Youth Corps Skillz Menu
(http://www.nww.org/yci/fallreporterdocs/SkillZMenu.pdf)
Project TRENDSS – Coordinating Services for Foster Youth

Youth Council: Ventura County Youth Council

Element: Career Preparation, Youth Development Support

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Serving Special Populations

The Challenge: California’s 2003 statistics indicate that about 3,500 youth annually age out of the foster care system. Within two to four years of emancipation, 51 percent are unemployed. A quarter have been homeless for at least one night, and 40 percent have been on public assistance or incarcerated. Contributing to these dismal statistics is a lack of collaboration between people and systems that deal with these youth. The Ventura County Youth Council wanted to help their foster youth transition into adulthood more successfully.

The Practice and the Evidence: Serving youth between the ages of 16 and 22, Project TRENDSS aims to add structure and flexibility to the process of weaning youth from foster care by coordinating services that had not previously been integrated. Youth workers identify each participant’s support system—all the people involved with that youth, such as the case manager and probation officer—and support communication and cooperation among them. Strategies include meetings, networking, youth ownership of the program, and shared software.

Project TRENDSS started in July 2003, serving a total of 31 participants. Some were still in job training programs, some at One-Stops, and others at local Girls and Boys Clubs. Most were to graduate the next June and those in the training programs stayed with the required activities. “We’re seeing that when youth connect to the activities we have going for them, it helps them to focus and stay out of trouble,” comments Frank Ramirez, Youth Services Manager for Ventura County. The training programs were subsidized by the county, but some employers expressed interest in retaining participants for regular jobs after the training ends. An account executive helped the others find jobs.

To read more about Project TRENDSS and the success of one youth who participated, please click here or visit (http://www.nww.org/yci/winterreporterdocs/ProjectTRENDSSUpdate.pdf).

The Details: TRENDSS stands for “Teens Reaching for Employment Now and Developing Self-Sufficiency” – the result of a “Name-the-Project” contest that exemplifies the program’s commitment to involving youth in the design and implementation of services. Until Project TRENDSS, no practical link existed between services offered by the offices of Children and Family Services and employment and training programs. “That’s where there needs to be linkage to One-Stops or to other entities that provide that expertise. That’s what made this program stand
out as a good solution,” says Ramirez. Project TRENDSS offers work-readiness workshops and comprehensive employment and training services. Youth who complete the work-experience component can also get on-the-job training, which involves a contract that defrays up to 50 percent of the expense for the employer. “It almost guarantees a job. It’s a very positive component,” Ramirez notes.

As part of the Council’s overall menu of Youth Services, the program builds on an existing “All Youth-One System” infrastructure and networking process. Memos keep everyone in the network involved in the youth’s situation and progress. Youth Service staff attend the emancipation conference when a youth “ages out” of the county’s system, and informs him or her about the range of available services. A common database tracks participants and mentoring/leadership activities. When marketing the idea, staff developed a flyer and distributed it to anyone who came into contact with foster youth, including nonprofits and faith-based organizations. They also spread the word in schools through presentations and mini-workshops on Career Days.

**Breakthrough Moment:** People got excited about Project TRENDSS when the youth actually started the activities “because then they finally saw the results of youth getting connected to services. It had never happened before,” comments Ramirez. He gives a lot of credit to the workshops that youth participated in before being offered work activities. Building relationships with project staff and getting used to a structured environment made it easier for participants to make the transition into program activities and actual employment.

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** Even though Project TRENDSS is no longer operational, information is still available.

**Where to Go for More Information**
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Enrolling Out-of-School Youth

Youth Council: Merced County Youth Council

Element: Youth Development and Support

Function: Coordinating Youth Services, Measuring Quality and Impact of Local Efforts

Subject: Serving Special Populations

The Challenge: Merced County was having trouble finding out-of-school youth. Their first youth service provider was unable to enroll enough youth to satisfy the requirements of their contract. Furthermore, the Youth Council members realized that not one of the 150 youth they had enrolled lived in County Housing Authority residences. They discovered that there was a group of youth that were not being served.

The Practice and Evidence: The Youth Council decided to develop a collaborative between out-of-school youth programs and the County Housing Authority. A job specialist from a service provider was placed in the Housing Authority office (rent free), and the records of this Housing office were opened to the provider to highlight prospective youth.

As a result, over 20 youth from the Housing Authority were enrolled in the out-of-school program in Merced County, and the service provider served more youth than the original contract called for. The only additional cost was the salary of one job specialist.

The Details: Youth Council members from the Housing Authority agreed to the idea after the Youth Council Staff presented it. The actual plan became a funded amendment to the older youth contract. The Youth Council conceived the idea, negotiated a contract amendment to implement the program, and monitored the program progress.

Where to Go for More Information
Merced County Youth Council

Although this program is no longer operational, information is still available. Please contact:
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Chapter Nine

Staff Development

In this section:

- Professional Development for Youth Service Providers
- Educating the Youth Council on WIA
- Professional Development for Youth Center Staff
SNIPPET

Professional Development for Youth Service Providers

Youth Council: Greater Long Beach WIB Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Staff Development

The Practice and Evidence: The City of Long Beach Youth Council has developed workshops for community service providers designed to improve their skills in grant writing, budgeting, responding to an RFP, and youth development services. While this practice provides a valuable community service, it also helps to promote awareness of the vision and objectives of the Youth Council. The sessions enable service providers to strengthen their ability to partner with the system and share relevant, high quality programs.

As a result of the workshops, new service providers responded as applicants to the RFP issued by the Council. The new bidders included faith-based organizations, typically in need of orientation and experience with WIA processes. The providers who attended came to understand what is expected by the Youth Council, and how they could best tailor their services to support Council needs.

The Details: The sessions are offered every month during the intensive times of RFP bidding and the summer months, and every other month during slower periods.

Where to Go for More Information
Greater Long Beach WIB Youth Council

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Educating the Youth Council on WIA

Youth Council: City of Richmond Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Staff Development, Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: The partners who were initially identified to serve on the City of Richmond Youth Council recognized that they were unfamiliar with the role of the Council and not well versed in the guidelines of WIA. They were further concerned that without a clear focus on their mission—to serve as a catalyst to build a comprehensive, community-wide youth preparation and development service delivery system, their work would lack focus.

The Practice and Evidence: The founding group of Youth Council members formed an Organizing Committee to study and learn about WIA. The Organizing Committee then educated new Council members regarding WIA and the Youth Council’s role and mission.

The Richmond City Youth Council has seen many benefits from the work of the Organizing Committee. First, the entire Council is well versed on its role and purpose and fully participates and contributes to the strategic plan and the actions of the group. This firm understanding of their purpose gave the Council an advantage as they launched an aggressive work plan to develop new programs. The plan includes workshops, classes, after-school tutoring, and a youth leadership team.

The Organizing Committee was also instrumental in educating the Council’s new council of youth, the Youth Leadership Team, with the same intensive and in-depth training the Council receives.

Finally, because all members understand and are committed to a common direction, staff is not placed in the position of injecting reminders of goals or objectives.

The Details: Knowing that WIA would have a significant impact, this core group immersed themselves into training to learn all that they could about the role of the Council. Now, the Organizing Committee’s purpose is to 1) provide in-depth WIA and Youth Council education for new Council members and the organizations they represent, 2) focus Council discussions on the vision, mission, and purpose, 3) help the Council to align action steps and programs to the goals to which it is committed, and 4) offer ongoing education of Council members. The Organizing Committee is separate from, but supports the work of, the Executive Committee.
Where to Go for More Information
City of Richmond Youth Council

Sal Vaca
Program Director
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SNIPPET

Professional Development for Youth Center Staff

Youth Council: Riverside County Council for Youth Development
Element: Comprehensive Approach
Function: Coordinating Youth Services
Subject: Staff Development

The Challenge: With limited resources for professional development and the goal to provide the highest quality services to youth, the Riverside County Council for Youth Development (CYD) was faced with the challenge of providing professional development opportunities for Youth Center staff.

The Practice and Evidence: The Riverside County Council for Youth Development realized it was important to get creative! They began by educating the Youth Center staff on youth development and the principles for operating effective youth programs. The Youth Opportunities Consortium, comprised of Youth Center Staff and Partners, was established, and monthly roundtable meetings were implemented to continue building capacity. Roundtable meetings offer an opportunity to discuss federal regulations, local policies, and critical issues as well as share best practices on a variety of topics.

Program staff has increased their professional skills and ability to provide quality program services resulting in high performance outcomes. Establishing the Consortium has fostered strong relationships and partnering among Youth Opportunity Centers. Best practices have been implemented across the system and can be evidenced by more than one center having the same partner(s) providing a service. For example, the Riverside YMCA provides the leadership development component in three of the Youth Centers.

The Details: Four LWIA staff members serve as program liaisons between the Youth Center(s) to which they are assigned and the CYD. Each liaison has a mandate to participate, get involved, and understand the community in which their Youth Center is located. Program Liaisons provide on-going technical assistance and specialized training to the Youth Center they serve, resulting in increased professional skills for program staff.

What’s Next for this YCidea? The CYD will implement processes to receive feedback from Youth Center Managers and Staff on their needs for training and technical assistance. The Consortium will meet on a quarterly basis to plan for system improvements and share best practices.
Where to Go for More Information
Riverside County Council for Youth Development

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Chapter Ten

Work-Ready Certificates

In this section:

- Using Work-Ready Certificates to Align Career Instruction with Industry Needs
- Workforce Ready Curriculum and Certificate to Ensure All Youth are Work-Ready
- Work-Ready Certificates to Support Students and Business Leaders
Using Work-Ready Certifications to Align Career Instruction with Industry Needs

Youth Council: Sonoma County Youth Education and Employment Services Council

Element: Career Preparation, Comprehensive Approach, Academic Excellence

Function: Cross Function

Subject: Work Ready Certificate

The Challenge: The Sonoma County Youth Education and Employment Services Council and the Sonoma County Office of Education have been working to align all career-focused instruction with high growth/high demand industry sectors in the county. Currently a wide range of programs exists to expose and prepare young people for life in the workplace. These programs, not always well connected to industry and rarely connected to each other, include Career Technical Education, Regional Occupational Programs, Career Academies, Work Experience Programs, Tech Prep, Career Pathways, and other career-focused instruction at the county’s high schools, workforce preparation programs, and the community college. The two agencies wanted to find an effective means of aligning the career-focused instruction with industry needs.

The Practice and Evidence: Together, the partners in this initiative (the Workforce Investment Board, the Economic Development Board, and the County Office of Education) proposed a strategy that will form a county-wide work-ready certification system that will serve as a pipeline to both college and careers in identified high growth and high need industry sectors in the county. The Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board’s Youth Education and Employment Services Council developed a plan to create a Work-Ready Certification that can ensure that work-readiness (as defined by business) is a goal within the systems that prepare youth, and that youth can earn a credential that will put them at the “head of the line” when seeking employment in the county. The Work Ready Certificate will build on and document basic workplace, academic, and employability skills that pertain to all industries at the entry level.

The purposes of the Work Ready Certification system are as follows:
- promote rigor and relevance by integrating industry standards into school curriculum;
- carry industry voice to schools;
- add value to the high school diploma; and
- align with the All Youth-One System goal.

The Details: A Work-Ready Certification (WRC) design team comprised of members representing business, education (both K-12 and post secondary), and government began by surveying employers throughout Sonoma County to identify the core skills necessary for entry-level employment.

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Over 200 surveys were collected, and data on the top 20 skills necessary for work readiness were disseminated at the county-wide Youth Symposium in March 2005.

Next the WRC design team created an assessment framework focused on measuring the skills identified by employers. The assessment battery includes multiple methodologies:

- observation rubrics for both worksite supervisors and other adults;
- skills tests in the areas of math, reading, customer service, and computer literacy;
- critical thinking and problem solving scenarios; and
- student-based performance portfolio.

The goals for the certification program are as follows:

- Ensure all youth are successful in the global economy.
- Align education and workforce preparation systems to the skills needed in the global economy.
- Prepare a quality workforce and promote a healthy economy for Sonoma County.

What’s Next for this YCidea? To ensure maximum effectiveness of the Work-Ready Certification, a field test will be conducted during the fall of 2005, and the certification process will be refined. Before the certification is launched in January 2006, a county-wide awareness campaign will be launched with appropriate messages for each targeted group: business, educators, students, and parents. Window stickers for businesses such as “We hire Work-Ready”; certificates as recognized elements in student portfolios; “Top Fifteen Skills” posters, bookmarks, and other materials to be used in education and youth development environments will be developed to ensure that work-readiness stays in the forefront of the community’s mind.

Where to Go for More Information
Sonoma County Youth Education and Employment Services Council

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Workforce Ready Curriculum and Certificate to Ensure All Youth are Work-Ready

Youth Council: Ventura County Youth Council

Element: Career Preparation

Function: Cross Function

Subject: Work-Ready Certificates, Educational Options

The Challenge: The Ventura County Youth Council was offering a work-ready certificate (WRC) for WIA-eligible youth, and the response from employers was very positive. In fact, they were asking for more work-ready youth. The challenge was how to develop and expand the work-ready certificate program and make it available to all youth in Ventura County. The Youth Council members recognized that a high school diploma did not necessarily prepare youth for entering the work force, so the work-ready curriculum could fill a need.

The Practice and Evidence: The Workforce Investment Board of Ventura County, in partnership with the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Office, recently approved curriculum for a new work-readiness certificate program for youth. The 10-hour curriculum prepares youth for work through a series of workshops on employer expectations, self-assessment of personal qualities, job search and interviewing techniques, telephone etiquette, resumes and cover letters, and job and work permit applications.

The curriculum, which combines work readiness and life skills activities, helps students gain a work-ready level of proficiency in the areas outlined in the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) Report by the U.S. Department of Labor. The curriculum includes teaching youth to set goals and plan for the future, use the county’s Job and Career Centers, search for a job and use the Cal Jobs online database, understand employer expectations, create a resume and cover letter, practice interviewing, consider the company’s perspective, develop basic workplace skills, and complete job and work permit applications.

According to Amy Fonzo, Deputy Director of the Ventura County WIB, “After completing the work readiness program, the youth have a resume, cover letter and a portfolio with all the documents they need to start working.” She notes that “Completing the work readiness program gives youth confidence when applying for a job. The certificate also acts as a ‘hire-me-first card’ because it gives employers confidence in a youth’s abilities and potential.”

Over 220 students have earned certificates through the program, which began as a pilot project during the 2004-2005 school year. The course has since been endorsed by several local school
districts and is currently being offered to youth countywide through high schools and Job and Career Center locations. Work experience school credits are available for eligible students. “Local employers are responding positively to the certificate as a reliable way to determine the quality of an employee even before an interview begins,” says Fonzo.

**The Details:** Several years ago, the Ventura School-to-Career board merged with the Ventura Youth Council, enhancing the Council’s education/career preparation knowledge base. When the Youth Council decided to support a work-ready curriculum and certificate program for all youth in Ventura County, they were able to fund the pilot with some remaining School-to-Career monies.

The pilot program ran during the 2004-2005 school year, and two hundred and fifty youth participated. The earlier WIA-program curriculum was revised. The updated ten-hour curriculum can be presented in several two- or four-hour sessions. Participants end up with a portfolio, a cover letter, resume, and other materials, including a “hire me first” identification card and a certificate that lists the elements of the curriculum on the back. Participants are also prepared to get a work permit if they need one.

Now that the pilot has been completed, the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools is managing the program. This phase of the program is being funded through WIB with some additional funding from Superintendent’s office. The plan is for the program to become self-sustaining. It is available to all youth in Ventura County, both in school and out of school.

Work Ready Curriculum instructors have been trained, and some superintendents of schools are training their teachers so that they can teach the curriculum as well.

Several marketing aids—a logo, the “Hire Me First” ID cards, and the certificate—were created to help build awareness of the program. Templates of the certificate and the ID cards have been made available to the different school districts so that they only need to fill in the blanks.

**Breakthrough moment:** According to Stephanie Luce, marketing specialist for the Ventura WIB, the breakthrough moment for the Youth Council occurred when the new curriculum was approved by the WIB and The County Superintendent. She says that once the approvals were in place, the plans for offering the certificate on a wide scale “really got going.”

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** The program development is progressing on several fronts. The program manager in the County Superintendent of Schools Office is seeking endorsements from additional school districts, and establishing more sites throughout the county where the curriculum is offered. They are also working on tracking the policies and procedures that are in place, and exploring ways to track certificate holders after they finish the program, looking at whether they get a job and how well they do.
They are planning a public launch of the program for August or September of 2005, once more locations are offering the curriculum. Luce explains, “We want to have the curriculum workshops available all across the county. We’re hoping to offer a lot of different workshops at more places in the fall.” Once these additional places are lined up, the launch will proceed. “We’ll invite officials,” notes Luce. “A local employer is going to host to create awareness of the program.” They hope to have some youth there, but the launch will mostly be directed toward the community, the school board, the teachers union, the chamber of commerce, elected officials, and top staff of the city and county.

They are also planning a mailing campaign. Luce says, “We will be mailing postcards to market the certificate to the employers. We want the employers to look for and ask for Work Ready Certificate youth. We also will have a postcard to send to youth. We will mail 12,000 to youth and to career counselors, as well as other counselors.”

**Where to Go for More Information**
Ventura County Youth Council

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**Tool**  
[Work Readiness Certificate](http://www.nww.org/yci/yicideabook/venturaworkreadycertificate.pdf)
Work-Ready Certificates to Support Students and Business Leaders

Youth Council: Yolo County Youth Opportunity Council

Element: Career Preparation, Academic Excellence, Comprehensive Approach

Function: Cross Function

Subject: Work Ready Certificates, Comprehensive Approach, Educational Options

The Challenge: Business leaders in Yolo County were anxious to hire graduates who possess and can demonstrate work-ready skills. Students with proven work-ready skills want to find employment more easily. The Yolo Youth Opportunity Council wanted to help both business leaders and students.

The Practice and Evidence: The Yolo Youth Opportunity Council, Workforce Investment Board, business leaders, agencies, and educators came together to develop the standards and criteria for earning a Work-Ready Certificate (WRC). The Yolo County Work-Ready Certificate indicates the student's readiness for the school-to-work transition. It reflects important skills, attitudes, and values that are essential for success in the workplace. The Work-Ready Certificate does not replace a student’s diploma, but enhances their personal employment/career portfolios.

The Work-Ready Certificate has been officially adopted by the Yolo Youth Opportunity Council and provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate their work readiness while giving employers an opportunity to provide input on the work readiness of a student.

Students have indicated that the WRC helps them focus on their future. Employers have stated that they have the opportunity to hire students who are focused and have already demonstrated accuracy and initiative.

The Details: Readiness indicators are reviewed and approved by the business and education community. Each participating high school has a process for verifying school indicators required to earn the certificate.

Students must submit an appropriate resume, cover letter and three letters of recommendation. Work ready standards to be verified include a 90 percent attendance rate, 2.0 or better grade point average; basic computer skills and basic math and language skills; participation in community activities, completing a minimum of 10 hours of community service in the past 12 months; and an overall positive behavior history. When this evidence is presented, the student is granted an oral interview from the business/education community. When all of the above criteria are met, and the interview committee agrees, the student is awarded the Work-Ready Certificate signed by the business partner interviewers and the principal.
What’s Next for this YCidea? The Yolo Youth Opportunity Council and its partners will continue to support the Work-Ready Certificate program. They also are looking to have conversations with other Councils that are using or preparing to use Work-Ready Certification since the work ready certificate idea is being adopted throughout the state and the country as a certificate of distinction for those students who have proven to be work-ready.

Where to Go for More Information
Yolo County Youth Opportunity Council

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Chapter Eleven

Youth Involvement

In this section:

- Nontraditional Outreach Brings More Diverse Groups of Youth onto Marin Youth Council
- Youth Philanthropy to Support Career Preparation in Rural Areas
- Youth Forums Garner the “Voice of Youth”
- Building an Effective Youth Advisory Board
- Council of Youth Advises Local Youth Council
- Youth Redesign “Cool” Youth Resource Website
**Nontraditional Outreach Brings More Diverse Groups of Youth onto Marin Youth Council**

**Youth Council:** County of Marin Youth Council

**Element:** Youth Leadership

**Function:** Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

**Subject:** Youth Involvement, Serving Special Populations

**The Challenge:** The County of Marin Youth Council members wanted to involve a truly diverse group of youth on their Youth Subcommittee. They envisioned the Subcommittee as a vibrant forum for youth from throughout the county, a place where they could voice their opinions on a wide range of issues. However, the Youth Council had relied on traditional community partners such as schools and Parent Teacher Associations to invite young people to join the Subcommittee. These partners did not have strong connections with at-risk youth and so were not able to reach out effectively to them.

**The Practice and Evidence:** Members of the Subcommittee had to find other, more direct avenues for engaging vulnerable youth. They realized they would have to build a relationship with each youth. The Council members also saw that they would have to show the youth that their vote counted just as much as the adults’ votes did. The adult members recognized too, that one member of their Council already had relationships with the youth they were trying to reach, Janis Reynolds of the County Department of Health and Human Services. Council members agreed to have Reynolds take charge.

Reynolds reports that the Marin County program she works for, the Youth Employment Program, “had already formed partnerships with local court-mandated schools.” These partnerships seemed like perfect avenues for accessing at-risk youth. In particular, the Youth Employment Program, working with its school partners, had run summer career preparation programs under WIA’s predecessor, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). One summer program, Project Workability, involved recruiting and training youth to be peer mentors at their schools and various service organizations for the following year. Reynolds thought this program would be an excellent place to find and invite youth to participate on the Council.

Reynolds went to her Youth Council and asked them to request that the Workforce Investment Board let the Marin Youth Council use some of its funding to run the summer program. Given the opportunity the summer program offered to engage at-risk youth on the Council, the Board agreed. Reynolds then asked the alumni of Project Workability who were serving as peer mentors to recommend youth they were working with for the 2000 summer program.

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During the summer program, Reynolds used a three-stage process to select potential Youth Council members. First, she identified the youth who seemed most likely to be a good match. The criteria she used included their determination and their belief in themselves.

Reynolds emphasized that the youth were selected based on their abilities, not on their age. Second, Reynolds invited these young people to serve as peer mentors during the summer program so that they could be involved in leadership right away and so she could support them in their leadership roles. Third, at the end of the program, after working with the youth as they mentored others, Reynolds invited seven of the peer summer mentors to serve on the Youth Subcommittee. All seven agreed to join.

Once the initial group was established, Reynolds asked these youth members to do outreach in their communities by talking about the Youth Council and by recommending other potential members. As a result, the youth members have been very involved in engaging other youth. Since July of 2000, twenty youth have served on the Marin Youth Council. “Whether it’s a question of the Council finding the right youth or vice versa, the level of commitment is exceptional,” reports Reynolds.

The Details: Reynolds shares two valuable sets of practices that have emerged from their experience on the Marin Youth Council. The first is to make sure that at least one member of the Youth Council has a strong relationship with any prospective youth member. “You have to establish a real reason why they should bother with you. [You have to show them that] the discussion isn’t the same without them,” Reynolds emphasizes. Council members like Reynolds, youth service providers who already have relationships with young people, are especially well positioned to do outreach. Worth noting is that Reynolds incorporates her engagement efforts into her regular work, which means that only very modest additional resources need to be allocated for outreach.

The second practice has to do with how youth are identified. Reynolds explains, “There are lots of terms to describe these youth, but they all carry baggage: WIA eligible, low income, part of the juvenile justice system, pregnant, parenting, and dealing with substance abuse. I don’t want them to carry that baggage, so I use the term ‘nontraditional’ [when I refer to them outside of Youth Council meetings].” Even more important, Reynolds says, is not to identify youth members in any way other than as youth. “When you bring any youth together, and they bring their identity badges on, they bring that identity. To be able to participate without the stigma or the baggage was our goal for them. To us, they’re just youth.” Because Reynolds didn’t identify them in any specific way when they joined the Youth Council Subcommittee, the nontraditional youth were able to “participate with a clean slate, just like anybody else.”

Breakthrough Moment: Reynolds knew that their engagement strategy was really working when the Youth Council learned of a grant program designed to help homeless youth stay in school. One youth on the Subcommittee helped several young homeless youth get access to the grants. Afterward, an adult member of the Subcommittee asked the youth, “How did you get so
many people connected with the program?” “Because they were at the shelter with me,” was her reply. That was the first time that she identified herself as a homeless youth, and it was a powerful moment for everyone.

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** The Marin Youth Council and Janis Reynolds continue to reach out to nontraditional youth through Youth Employment Programs, and youth members of the Subcommittee also engage their peers. They still use the practices Reynolds describes above.

**Where to Go for More Information**
County of Marin Youth Council

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Youth Philanthropy to Support Career Preparation in Rural Areas

Youth Council: Mendocino County WIB Youth Council

Element: Youth Leadership and Career Preparation

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Youth Involvement, Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: Mendocino County is a large rural area in the north coast region of California. Most jobs are found in the incorporated areas (Point Arena, Willits, Fort Bragg, and Ukiah) although 68 percent of the people live outside of these areas. According to Kathleen Swain, staff to the Mendocino County Workforce Investment Board Youth Council, “Transportation can be a major barrier to youth trying to find jobs. The coast is about a one and a half hour drive on winding narrow roads through rugged mountain ranges to the inland region, where most of the jobs exist. We have many remote communities, Point Arena and Laytonville for example, where public transportation is limited or non-existent.”

In addition, Mendocino County is going through a change in employment opportunities. Swain says, “In the last ten years, the local economy has shifted dramatically. The county has historically been dependent on high wage industries such as timber, fishing, and manufacturing, and those jobs are declining. Like many counties, we have become service-sector oriented, and the jobs tend to be low wage. While this might indicate more available jobs for youth, instead they are competing for those positions with adults who have work experience. Even when it comes to subsidized vocational training opportunities, Worker’s Compensation becomes an expensive issue for our small businesses, who comprise about 81 percent of businesses in our county. And there are almost no jobs for youth ages 14-15.” The lack of jobs and training opportunities for young people was confirmed during youth focus groups conducted in 2002 by the Youth Council, in which youth also indicated a need for more access to leadership activities in their communities.

The Practice and the Evidence: In an effort to address some of these issues, the Mendocino Youth Council hosted two Youth Summits to stimulate youth engagement in local projects. The idea for the Youth Philanthropy Board (YPB) to oversee the youth-led projects was incubated during the second Youth Summit. The aim of this project was to provide youth with leadership and vocational skills and to encourage involvement in their communities (which may be otherwise thwarted by transportation, economic or other barriers.). According to Swain, the Youth Council envisioned that the projects funded by the YPB and Youth Council be “developed by youth, led by youth, and awarded by youth.” In addition, they hoped that the projects would focus on gaps within their communities as well as produce possible entrepreneurship opportunities for youth as they grow into adulthood.

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The Youth Council successfully applied for and received a $9,000 grant from the S.H. Cowell Foundation in San Francisco for training purposes, and received additional Mendocino County Department of Social Services (MCDSS) funding to grant additional projects. Teens and young adults from throughout the county were recruited by the Youth Council to be YPB members, attend five trainings, develop a request for proposal, award funding, and oversee all of the ongoing youth projects.

Since 2002, the Mendocino County Workforce Investment Board Youth Council along with the YPB (beginning in 2004) have funded ten youth-led, community-based projects using funds donated by the MCDSS. At this point, the Youth Council has handed the grant making reins over to the group of young philanthropists. By conclusion of the pilot project in June of 2005, the YPB members successfully provided oversight for six local youth projects.

The Details: Before members of the YPB were selected, a five-member Youth Council subcommittee took the primary role for engaging and supporting youth involvement. They recruited fifteen youth to be YPB members (to compensate for dropouts) and in the end, eight members completed the project. Subcommittee members planned every training, and Youth Council staff supported logistics. Each youth was sponsored by one of the committee members who made sure that he or she got to the trainings. In addition, YPB members were given a $30 stipend per meeting/training, and meals were also provided. Swain says, “One of the biggest challenges is not to take over, and to trust that the youth will figure it out. It’s easy for adults to step in and state their opinions. Part of the learning process for the adults is allowing youth to make their own decisions about how to fund the projects.”

Once the YPB was selected, the Youth Council subcommittee coordinated several trainings to support their personal/professional development and work on the board. In September 2004, an introductory training was held to provide general information about youth philanthropy to both YPB members and the Youth Council subcommittee. Youth Leadership Institute (YLI), a national organization with expertise in youth philanthropy, facilitated the training.

The Youth Council contracted with a local non-profit, the North Coast Rural Challenge Network, to lead a second training for the YPB and other youth who were potential project applicants. Approximately 100 students from throughout the county attended this training, which covered project development and documentation. Members of the YPB developed and distributed their Request for Application (RFA) at the event. In addition, the RFA was sent to schools and distributed through the Youth Councils regular email channels. Press releases to the local media also announced the RFA.

In January 2005, the YPB reviewed the seven submissions/applications for the project. Using a rubric tool, the YPB selected three youth-led projects. Each of the awardees received $500. Project topics included an outdoor education and recreation program for teens, a video project about life on the reservation in Point Arena, and a high school coffee cart business.

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In addition, at the following Youth Council meeting, the members elected to give the YPB full oversight of three more projects, previously funded by the Youth Council, including a teen nightclub, cultural diversity training, and a presentation to high school students on the dangers of drinking and driving.

In March 2005, the YPB asked representatives from each of the projects to present updates on their progress. In addition, the Youth Council arranged for a panel of community funders to provide fundseeking advice for the project participants.

YLI facilitated the fifth and final training for the year, and the youth assessed their efforts to date. As the pilot project reached its conclusion, the YPB scheduled their final meeting to discuss ideas for sustainability and board structure without projected funding. Seven of the eight YPB members elected to stay on the board for the next year, even without stipends. They will also explore different avenues for meeting (due to transportation challenges) such as video conferencing.

**Breakthrough Moment:** As the funded projects are reaching completion, the Youth Council and YPB are seeing an incredible impact on the community and they are reaping local support. According to Swain, the breakthrough has been “recognizing that the projects have gone beyond the initial concept and have had a bigger impact than originally imagined.”

Swain reflects, “for example, a teen night club received the funding to establish a safe and drug-free environment for teens to have dances and concerts. [They] held a concert that about 200 youth attended. Community members are starting to come forth to support them, so it has a good chance of becoming a successful, long term project.” A second project funded a “cultural awareness training” at a local high school, with the intention of addressing concerns about race and ethnicity. An unexpected outcome of this event was the unveiling of issues related to a lack of awareness of gay students’ concerns. In response, the high school has formed a gay-straight alliance club.

**What’s Next for this YCidea?:** The next phase for the Youth Philanthropy Board involves fundraising, both to continue trainings for the board members and to acquire funds to grant to future projects. Recognizing the valuable contribution they have made to the community, seven board members elected to continue as philanthropists and will recruit additional members. They have assessed a need for additional training in project evaluation and formal board procedures.

**Where to Go for More Information**
Mendocino County WIB Youth Council

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(continued)
Tools

Sample Youth Philanthropy RFP Application
(http://www.nww.org/yci/documents/YouthPhilanthropyRFPApplication.doc)

Sample Youth Philanthropy RFP Proposal
(http://www.nww.org/yci/documents/YouthPhilanthropyRFPApplication.doc)

Mendocino Workforce Investment News June 2005
(http://www.nww.org/yci/documents/YouthPhilanthropyRFPApplication.doc)

Economic Scorecard
Youth Forums Garner the “Voice of Youth”

Youth Council: Orange County Youth Council

Element: Youth Leadership

Function: Measuring Quality and Impact of Local Efforts and Convene Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Youth Involvement

The Challenge: Young people have valid and innovative ideas regarding how to best address the needs of youth. They can also greatly benefit from being involved in designing youth programs and policies and in leadership efforts in their communities. However, youth programming and policies are often planned and developed with little or no youth involvement or input. Following its Resource Mapping Project, the Orange County Youth Council wanted to meaningfully engage youth in decision making. They wanted to find a way to hear from youth about their needs.

The Practice and Evidence: To initiate the effort in involving youth, Orange County Youth Council, along with partner organizations, planned and hosted four regional youth forums throughout the county to hear what youth thought they need to be successful. Three additional forums were held at a later time. The youth forums were a catalyst for the development of leadership teams called Youth Action Committees (YACs). (Regional provider networks were also created as a result.) Furthermore, the information gathered at the forums was collected and disseminated. It was used to shape Orange County Youth Council’s work plan and RFP as well as to fuel other initiatives to address common needs.

Other benefits from the youth forums have been the continual source of youth representation to the Youth Council and their integral role in decision making as well as the restructuring of Youth Council meetings to be more “youth-friendly.”

The Details: Beginning in 2003, the county’s three Youth Councils partnered to engage youth leadership and hear what youth felt was important to their success. Spearheaded by an intermediary coalition, the Orange County Coalition for Youth (OCCY), all seven forums collected common data, had similar formats, and shared practices from one forum to the next. OCCY was supported by the three Youth Councils as well as over twenty other youth-serving agencies to be a leveraging agent for youth programs and to serve as a means to help get closer to the common goal of “All Youth - One System.”

Four of the seven youth forums were co-sponsored by the Orange County Youth Council, and the results have had a direct impact on WIA Youth program design. The findings have been incorporated in the county’s WIA RFP by requiring providers to facilitate active YACs that
are ongoing sources of youth feedback and leadership. “Our Youth Council work plan has now been aligned to address the most current [Orange County] youth issues as expressed by young people,” says Mercedes Julian, staff to the Orange County Youth Council.

The youth forums were sponsored, in part, by the Youth Demonstration Grant from California Department of Education in 2002-2003. The grant was used in part to support the resource mapping project/capacity building project. The county’s three Youth Councils partnered with the project. The youth forum data provided qualitative information, which helped support the resource mapping results from 2002 and 2003.

**Breakthrough Moment:** Collaboration was critical to making the forums successful, and each partner was able to contribute to the tangible project of a forum. According to Julian, a breakthrough moment occurred when the forum planners began working together. “Partners found they had a common goal of hearing and involving youth.” This discovery energized all the participants. All in all, over 40 youth-serving agencies and 75 local businesses contributed to the youth forum initiative.

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** This is a constantly evolving process as youth-involvement continues to grow and build capacity. The Youth Action Committees continue to be active in giving input and in community service projects. Some areas are planning mini-forums to rekindle enthusiasm and involve more youth in their regional efforts. Julian comments, “Now youth have built confidence from working side by side with adults and having their voices heard.”

**Where to Go for More Information**
Orange County Youth Council

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Building an Effective Youth Advisory Board

Youth Council: San Diego School-to-Career Youth Council

Element: Youth Leadership

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Youth Involvement

The Challenge: The San Diego School-to-Career Youth Council was concerned with its level of youth involvement; youth attendance was poor and their input limited.

The Practice and the Evidence: Inspired by information from YCi about the value of Youth Advisory Boards, the San Diego Workforce Partnership (staff to the Youth Council) decided to increase youth engagement by establishing one as an offshoot of its Youth Council. Of the seven youth members who joined the Youth Advisory Board when it began in June 2003, six remain active members and one new youth has joined. The group meets at 4PM on the last Monday of each month at the Workforce Partnership offices. Rotating slots enable each youth member to attend one of the bi-monthly Youth Council meetings. Most discussion is about matters on which the Youth Council is seeking youth input, but youth also contribute agenda items. When youth member Michelle Watson proposed scheduling Youth Council meetings at a time more convenient for youth members, the Council readily agreed. Program Specialist Mark Nanzer sees this as just one example of effective youth-adult interactions that have come out of the Youth Advisory Board. “The program is not without its challenges, but successes outweigh them,” he observes. After a year in operation, the Youth Advisory Board is busy determining the status of present members, recruiting new ones, and getting word out to providers who are interested in forming their own Youth Advisory Boards.

The Details: Nanzer and Dan Radojevic of the San Pasqual Academy Youth Employment Services started the recruitment process by building on relationships with existing WIA-funded providers. Dan was the link to Michelle, a former foster youth who was eager to participate, having seen too many organizations with “youth” in the name but little authentic youth involvement. Intern Jason Adame created fliers, recruitment materials, and applications, which were sent in an email blast to providers, who were asked to pass along information and recommend candidates. “Those staff members were a tremendous help,” Nanzer recalls. “They helped the youth feel supported by their local organizations and transported them to our original meetings. And we did a lot of follow-up phone calls.”

Sixteen youth showed up at the original meeting in May 2003. “We understood we were all there to make a difference, and we couldn’t get anyone to be quiet,” Watson recalled. The group brainstormed about the structure of the subcommittee and its role relative to the Youth Council,
then established membership and recruitment procedures. Six of the seven original members remain active, in part because of support provided by the San Diego staff. Before each Youth Council meeting, Nanzer sits down with the youth delegated to attend it and reviews the terms, the agenda, and the protocol in detail. “We committed to doing that because we feel it’s so important for them to be knowledgeable about what they’re voting on - funding recommendations, programmatic implementations,” he explains. “We learned early on that when it’s time to vote, we don’t want youth turning around and looking to us for direction.” Staff also provide transportation to meetings.

Subcommittee processes are constantly being reviewed and revisited. For example, at the first Youth Council retreat, potential mentors put their contact information on cards and youth were expected to make follow-up calls. Youth found this intimidating, and staff realized that face-to-face socializing would be more effective in building relationships, so the Youth Advisory Board is considering another retreat. Other lessons learned include the following ideas:

- Select representative youth, not valedictorians, but those who are struggling. “They’re harder to serve and harder to transport, but they’re the ones who receive the services, and they should have a say on whether services are appropriate or not. They become ringleaders,” says Nanzer. Watson confirms that “as a leader, I pulled other youth to a more positive self-image, to where they believed that positive change is possible.”
- Administrative follow-up is essential. “If you have a lead, if you get a phone call, follow it up; call, visit, bring a youth to share his experiences. Until youth actually go through the process, it’s hard to engage them,” Nanzer advises. The challenge in San Diego is all the greater because no funds are available with which to pay youth participants.

**Breakthrough Moment:** Youth member Watson set a precedent by sitting on a four-member panel that evaluated the yearlong youth program’s RFP. She read five different proposals, scored them, discussed her opinions with the other members, and voted. This kind of collaboration and cooperation has given youth genuine voice on substantive issues like funding recommendations and program design that have historically been voted on only by adults.

**What’s Next for this YCidea?** After the Youth Advisory Board is functioning smoothly, San Diego staff plans to follow up with partners who expressed interest in creating Youth Advisory Boards of their own. The San Diego subcommittee would be bumped up to a Youth Advisory Board Council (though remaining a subsidiary of the Youth Council).

Still in the brainstorming stage, the idea is to create a network of WIA-funded, program-specific Youth Advisory Boards. Two members from each YAB would rotate onto to the YAB Council, providing input on items beyond standard funding and programming matters. “We want a mixture of youth from all over because I know how important good youth representation is, and I want youth to succeed,” Watson declares. If successful, the San Diego program will provide a model of youth involvement for other social service programs that are helping youth.

(continued)
Where to Go for More Information
San Diego School-to-Career Youth Council

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Tools
Click the following links to access the San Diego Youth Advisory Council’s supportive tools and documents.
Youth Advisory Board application
(http://www.nww.org/yci/fallreporterdocs/YAB_application.doc)

Youth Advisory Board flier
(http://www.nww.org/yci/fallreporterdocs/YABflyer.doc)

Youth Advisory Board interview questions
(http://www.nww.org/yci/fallreporterdocs/YABInterviewQuestionsGroup.doc)

Youth Advisory Board recommendations
(http://www.nww.org/yci/fallreporterdocs/YABrecommendation.doc)

Youth Advisory Board update (March, 04) to inform Youth Council of youth members’ activities
(http://www.nww.org/yci/fallreporterdocs/YAB_update_03-04.doc)

Youth Advisory Board presentation at CWA conference
(http://www.nww.org/yci/fallreporterdocs/YAB_CWA_presentation3.ppt)

Youth Advisory Board members Role/Responsibility/Authority document
(http://www.nww.org/yci/fallreporterdocs/draftroleresponsauth.doc)
Council of Youth Advises Local Youth Council

Youth Council: Solano Youth Advisory Council

Element: Youth Leadership

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Youth Involvement

The Challenge: The Solano County Youth Council’s mission is to advocate for youth employment for the community. They wanted to find a way to involve youth in their mission.

The Practice and Evidence: When approached with the idea of bringing ten WIA-enrolled youth together to create a council of youth, the Solano County Youth Council enthusiastically supported the concept. The Youth on the Rise Council was formed and, according to Youth Council members, soon became “where all the action is”! The most effective strategy the Council engaged in, however, was to hire an energetic young adult who related well to the youth to facilitate Youth on the Rise meetings. Another simple but important strategy was for the youth group to have its own name and identity.

- Youth members regularly “check the horizon” to learn effective practices of other communities. The youth identify program gaps and revise workshop curriculum to change how youth are taught in WIA workshops.

- Seventy-five youth have gone through the workshops re-designed by Youth on the Rise members. Participant evaluations indicate that young people are more receptive to the interactive style of teaching that uses their language. Young leaders are becoming more comfortable conducting and participating in the workshops.

- Youth are engaged. The Council lets them in on the challenges of running programs and engages them in problem-solving and decision-making.

- Work experiences for Youth on the Rise members include employment at the One-Stops, or as school liaisons. All of them dedicate a portion of their hours to work directly with the Youth Council.

- Youth on the Rise members tackle difficult issues such as how to improve activities in One-Stops, ensuring services are youth friendly, identifying duplication of services, influencing policy issues, and planning and producing events.
Details: Council staff worked with the youth leaders, teaching them community organizing principals, empowering them to develop grassroots initiatives and showing them how to rally around an issue. Youth on the Rise members became active about their particular environment and learned how to create alternative activities and models for other youth. Work experience opportunities were also intended to include youth at a future stage working directly with case managers to develop and implement youth activities.

Where to Go for More Information
Solano County Youth Council

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Youth Redesign “Cool” Youth Resource Website

**Youth Council:** The Teen Employment Network, the Youth Council for the Carson, Lomita, Torrance Investment Network Board

**Element:** Youth Leadership

**Function:** Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

**Subject:** Youth Involvement

**The Challenge:** The Teen Employment Network (TEN), the Youth Council for the Carson/Lomita/Torrance Investment Network Board, has articulated a vision for its work: “Every young person shall have access to the resources needed to successfully transition into a productive and meaningful working adulthood.” Their mission, therefore, is to “establish a collaborative network for local organizations and educational institutions that supports the well being of youth, promotes lifelong learning, and offers opportunities for young people to conduct wide-ranging explorations of career and educational options.” The Youth Council members thought that creating a web site with links to resources for youth would be a powerful way to create the network they envisioned.

At first, the web site was designed by the adult members of TEN. Later, it occurred to these members that they had not worked with any youth on the project, so they decided to get youth input. Unanimous feedback from the youth indicated that the site was not one that young people would find “cool.”

**The Practice and Evidence:** The TEN members decided they needed more youth input. As a result, the web site redesign and maintenance are now the responsibility of the TEN Marketing Committee, chaired by two youth. The web site content is reviewed by the TEN prior to posting.

The youth resource web site has a link to the Workforce Investment Network (WIN) web site that organizes youth information in an easy-to-use format. The web site walks youth through the information categories and links to career centers, jobs, college information, and youth resources, enabling the TEN and WIN to highlight selected services.

**The Details:** Initially, the site was funded by a portion of a program grant. Maintenance of the site is possible by leveraging funds from the WIN marketing budget, and by including a request for web support into each grant proposal that is written.
Where to Go for More Information
The Teen Employment Network, the Youth Council for the Carson, Lomita, Torrance
Investment Network Board

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Tool
Program information, links and resources available at:
http://www.careerzone.torrnet.com/youth_programs/defyouthres.htm
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