



2004

# User Guide for Youth Services

**A Workforce Guide to Creating  
Dynamic Programs for Older  
Youth in the One Stop System**

**WORKSource**  
First Coast Workforce Development

**WORKS**

# User Guide for Youth Services – Seven Steps to Success

- Step One:** Build partnerships for a year-round youth strategy
- Step Two:** Identify youth from your current clientele
- Step Three:** Offer youth a vital program that provides what they need – and want
- Step Four:** Create a plan for each youth to deliver needed services
- Step Five:** Deliver dynamic group programs through energetic and motivational staff members
- Step Six:** Engage the youth in the Income Growth Strategy and help him/her manage his/her career path
- Step Seven:** Document success

## Step One: Build partnerships for a year - round youth strategy

### Why Your Job Doesn't End in August

If you're like many WIBs, your youth program is a *summer* youth program. Many WIBs engage youth for a few months after they leave school, enroll them in remediation or summer jobs, then abandon them to the school systems for almost nine months. In the spring, you work hard to re-engage them, and start the process all over again.

You really are starting all over again! Studies show that many youths lose the skills they gain in summer remediation over the school year. The individualized attention and interesting programs end in August, and they are sent back to the system that is less personalized, and often feels less relevant to them. Many also lack the family support systems to help them compete in a traditional school setting. What WorkSource has discovered through assessment is that 70% of the youth who had made gains in academic skills during summer programs lost ground again during the school year. Some students had dropped as many as three full grade levels when tested again at the end of the school year.

Here's another blow to the relevance of your summer youth system: you're not really serving very many youth. Most WIBs are creating systems to serve at risk youth (those that they can find and engage). Our position is that your true mission is to build the workforce of the future, and that means serving every youth, not just those who fall into certain neat categories. That's why you need to build a strategy for year-round Universal Youth Services.

Universal Youth Services means finding creative ways to stretch funding to provide programs that not only serve youth in need, but also serve the rest of your future workforce at the same time. There are two groups of youth that you'll want to create programs for: the in-school youth (ages 14 – 21), and the out-of-school youth (ages 16 – 21), who are not in the school systems, and chances are, not productive in the workforce either. This guide will help you create a dynamic program to engage the older, out-of school youth, and get them started on career paths and success in the workforce.

### You Can't Do It Alone

A truly effective Universal year-round Youth Strategy is a community partnership program based on the needs of your local businesses. Bringing together business and community organizations to share a common vision will bring several advantages to your WIB. Some of the immediate benefits you'll see include:

- **Your youth customers will have a better chance of getting good jobs:** Basing your program on input from business means that your training is relevant and will lead to meaningful employment. The business community is your best

source for current needs, and when they are a part of your planning process, they will help.

- **Serving greater numbers of youth:** Increasing your partnerships increases your reach into the community. You'll also be building on the success of other programs, creating a "halo effect" which will increase your visibility in your region.
- **Elimination of duplicate and competing programs:** Creating a single vision and strategy among youth service providers means that you can offer the best programs to more students. There are some very good ideas in small organizations that could use a funding boost, and there are many similar programs that could be consolidated for more impact and better use of funds. This approach also lets each partner do what they do best and lets them rely on other partners for support. A creative partnership may ask the school system to do assessment and the business partner (like the Chamber of Commerce) to bring in job opportunities.
- **Leveraging your limited funding:** When we discuss writing effective RFPs later in this guide, we'll discuss how bringing in partners and asking them to step up the funding plate will increase your ability to fund innovative services by up to 50%. By bringing in multiple funding sources, you'll expand the numbers you can serve. Your role as a WIB is to make funding seamless for your customers; you do the work of deciding which funding source should pay for individual services.
- **Greater buy-in from partners and more creative programs offered:** Once your community organizations understand that they are true partners in your program, and not mere contractors, they will begin to design creative and dynamic programs that meet the needs of the youth they serve. The key to bringing them all together is the creation of a common vision at the beginning of the planning process. The shared vision gives diverse organizations a common language to discuss challenges and solutions.
- **Greater access to competitive grants and pilot programs:** Once your strategy starts to create synergy, your community will start attracting other funding. Your increased visibility in the community, coupled with your partnerships with other diverse organizations, will make you an attractive prospect for new innovations that state and federal agencies are trying to pilot.

## Who Should You Include as Partners?

A strong youth council will have many diverse partners. Some will actually become contractors, creating and delivering programs. Some are on the list because they can become champions for funding and support for your vision (local elected officials). We can't state often enough that business is an essential partner in any relevant program. Without the involvement of your business community, you run the risk of turning out workers that haven't got what it takes to succeed.

### A list of partners should include:

- Your local Chamber of Commerce, economic development agency, and business associations
- Professional and industry associations such as manufacturer's councils and human resource associations
- Your local school districts
- Literacy providers
- CBOs such as Boy Scouts, Junior Achievements, YMCAs and youth athletic associations
- Local elected officials
- Faith Based organizations

Here's a radical idea: include youth in your strategic planning. If you're wondering what kinds of programs they would want to be a part of – try asking them. When the Duval County School system was designing a program to help kids stay in school, the planning team included 200 at-risk students chosen from schools around the city of Jacksonville. The students designed their own retention program, which included "Success Saturdays," days where the kids worked on remedial math skills and designed their own leadership projects. The average attendance on Success Saturdays was 98%. Not bad for "throwaway kids!"

## How Do You Connect with Partners?

One way to get started is to conduct a community audit. This audit can serve two purposes; it allows you to collect data on what programs and services are out there, and at the same time, identify where the gaps and the really good ideas are. The question you should be asking is, "If there were no constraints on your program – money, rules, and staffing were not issues– what kind of creative program would you design?"

This "sky's the limit" question energizes partners with a vision of the possibilities, instead of focusing on rules, funding and limitations. It's the start of true synergy.

One great idea is to let them connect with you. Effective WIBs are open to new ideas from the community and let everyone know that they are open to feedback. In

Jacksonville, we were approached by ICARE (Interfaith Coalition Reconciliation and Empowerment), an umbrella organization of diverse church leadership. They had no interest in becoming a service provider and had no funding to offer. What they wanted from us was information on how we're working on helping at-risk youth in our community.

We opened up a continuing dialogue with ICARE and they became regular attendees at committee meetings. When we mentioned in passing one day that we'd love to expand our Individual Development Account (IDA) program, but couldn't because we were unable to find a funding source, ICARE offered to champion the program with one of their connections – the Jesse Ball Dupont Foundation. We're now working on securing grant funding through the foundation that will provide up to 1,000 youth with education IDAs.

## **Step Two: Identify youth from your current clientele**

### **Where Do You Find the Youth to Serve?**

The good news is that they're right there in your One-Stop centers. A detailed look at your clientele will turn up dozens, if not hundreds, of older youth that you can serve. In 2002, WorkSource screened our TANF files looking for customers that could be classified as Older Youth. We screened for three very targeted criteria:

- Age: between 19-21
- Skill level: TABE scores below ninth grade level, *or*
- High school dropout

A search of our 1,700 TANF cases turned up roughly 300 customers that could be co-enrolled in WIA as Older Youth, and thus eligible for more services.

By co-enrolling your customers as older youth and TANF clients, you can access many diverse funding sources and educational and training resources that are designed specifically for older youth.

### **Success Story:**

After screening the TANF files at WorkSource's Beach Boulevard One-Stop on the Southside of Jacksonville, we identified 26 customers that we could re-classify as Older Youth. We designed a program that combined relevance with learning and all 26 customers agreed to participate.

The program consisted of eight intensive weeks of basic and soft skill remediation. Participants received 4 hours of basic skills in the morning and 4 hours of soft skills in the afternoon. True to our philosophy, we didn't deliver the program alone – we brought in our partners with proven success records. Florida Community College delivered the basic remediation at our on-site learning lab. A program called Forward March, developed by the Florida National Guard, obtained state funding to deliver the soft skills training. Participants also received assessments such as WorkKeys, which helped them envision a career path and measure their own progress.

One of the biggest challenges in providing training and education to our customers is that they must give up income to sit in class and learn. This leads to a vicious cycle of low-wage jobs that offer no growth because customers still lack the basic skills they need to succeed. WorkSource used WIA funding to pay participants a stipend to participate in the training full time. They receive \$100 per week while in training, but it's not simply pay for seat time – the stipend is performance based. Participants get 33% of the weekly stipend for perfect attendance, 33% for completing assignments,

and 33% for class participation and professional behavior. Tying the stipend to performance reinforces good work habits and ties behavior to earning.

Lianne is just one youth who was helped to succeed through this strategy. She left home after domestic hostility made it an untenable situation. Striking out on her own she soon found a job and entered into a relationship that resulted in pregnancy. However, the business she went to work for closed, her boyfriend turned his back on her, and she suffered a miscarriage.

At this point Lianne enrolled in youth services at our Southside office. First she received mental health counseling through the Human Services program housed at the One Stop. Next she entered a soft skills training course, again at the One Stop, that provided training on getting, keeping and moving up in the right job. Also, a major component of training was successful money management.

WIA Youth funding was used to pay a stipend that helped support Lianne through this process. Lianne set aside part of the money to open her first savings account. Successful career pathing landed Lianne a job in the Management Training Program with the McDonald's organization.

This does not end our work with Lianne, in fact it is only beginning. As she builds experience we will work with her employer offering services which will target retention and assist Lianne in moving up her career ladder.

## **Step Three: Offer youth a vital program that provides what they need – and want**

### **What Do Young Jobseekers Really Want?**

**1. They want an alternative to the system that has failed them.** Most youth drop out of school because their skills aren't adequate to keep up and they feel like failures. For many, the school system represents failure, disgrace and feelings of inadequacy. That's why many successful programs locate offsite, in an environment that doesn't look or feel like school.

**2. They want relevance.** The fancy name for relevance is contextual instruction. That means taking abstract concepts and putting them into every day situations, so that students see immediately how a concept is applied in real life.

A quick success story about how relevance changes everything. One of our youth programs was designed to explore complex occupations such as robotics and engineering. A student in the school had applied for the program, but was being gently discouraged because his learning disabilities meant that his math scores were far below what was required for participation in the project. As a matter of fact, he didn't even function at grade level. He refused to be denied, however, and finally succeeded in talking his way into the program. One of our field monitoring visits revealed an astonishing surprise – we walked in on our learning disabled student doing calculus. Oh, he didn't have any idea he was using calculus – he thought he was just working on this cool project where the class calculated how much weight their newly-designed bridge could hold before collapsing – you know, practical, "real stuff."

**3. They want income.** They don't necessarily understand the relationship between income and work – which is part of our mission to teach. Neither do they understand the relationship between income and skills, which means that school and training just doesn't make sense. At least, not until they get a chance to experience a job and see for themselves how relevant skills are to earning potential.

**4. They want a future.** Career pathing is the creation of a vision for the future. It also helps make the connection for young people between getting where they want to be and understanding the skills they will need to get there. Remember Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither will our customers acquire all the hard and soft skills they need to succeed in one fell swoop. It is our challenge to ensure that we, in partnership with business and education, provide the opportunities for our customers to attain these needed skills at the rate and to the level that guarantees success.

**Congratulations – you've been promoted to marketing!**

One of the core tenets of good marketing is that it's everyone's job, and that means everyone. From the receptionist at the front desk to the service delivery staff – every employee in your organization should feel that he's a part of your strategy to build and maintain the brand of your organization.

In its most basic form, marketing consists of defining your organization's message, creating a consistent rendering of it (whether visual, i.e. a logo, or verbal, as in a tagline), and creating materials for your public that incorporate and reinforce that message. Whenever possible, your name or message should be consistent in all your communication media. If your organization name is "Oklahoma Works" and your email is johndoe@state.ok.us, you've missed an opportunity to reinforce your brand.

Good marketing materials will do three things:

- Capture your audience's attention by offering something they need or want
- Reinforce your message or brand
- Tell your audience what to do next (call, visit, sign up, etc.)

### **Creating a brand and articulating the vision**

Contrary to popular belief, you don't need a separate, jazzy brand to promote your programs. In fact, if you have a strong local brand for your workforce services, adding a sub-brand may dilute your name recognition. What is important is creating a vision for your program that each staff member can articulate. Mission and vision statements become branding when they are concise and memorable enough to add to your marketing. A good example of this is found in WorkSource's youth vision statement: "Building tomorrow's workforce today."

If you don't have a strong brand for your local workforce services, you may consider creating a name for your youth program. Branding is a very complex process and thousands of articles and books have been written on good – and bad – branding. But one of my favorite simple definitions of branding comes from consultant Dave Dolak:

**"The definition of brand:** A brand is an identifiable entity that makes specific promises of value. In its simplest form, a brand is nothing more and nothing less than the promises of value you or your product make. These promises can be implied or explicitly stated, but none-the-less, value of some type is promised."

What that means is, despite the current corporate trend of names that don't mean anything, your brand should clearly state some benefit to your audience.

### **Making your material relevant and compelling**

Whether you are writing a sales letter, ad copy, a brochure or a direct mail marketing piece, the same three parts will always be present:

- The attention-grabbing headline
- The development of your message
- The call to action

The most important thing to include in your marketing piece is information on how what you have is of benefit to the person you're targeting. It's critical that you capture your audience's attention with a compelling statement that speaks to an immediate need.

If you can't capture your young reader's attention in a few seconds, you won't capture them at all. Marketing experts tell us we have 10 seconds to capture a reader's attention. That means that your headline has to be a good one. Questions are always powerful leads, as are bold statements that contain the unexpected.

What's unexpected? A statement that contradicts what the reader thinks he'll be hearing from you. In almost every case, it's the subhead that plays the critical role of explaining what you mean, and draws the reader into your marketing piece. Here are some examples:

### **We don't want you to get a job.**

(We want you to start a career.)

### **No one cares if you do a good job.**

(If you never show up for work.)

The real meat of your marketing is the message, and it should be full of benefits, not simply full of features. Benefits talk about what your reader will gain, save, or not lose. The way you write makes a difference as well. Using conversational language and contractions make the copy more friendly. "You are" and "It is" are much more imposing and formal than "You're" and "it's." Using adjectives makes the copy more interesting. Consider the difference between offering a service and offering a quick, reliable service. Or between offering a program or a comprehensive program package.

Be sure to use bulleted lists when you have lots of data to give your readers. They seldom take the time to read dense paragraphs. One of my favorite techniques is to use bold print in a different typeface and size to draw attention to important words or phrases in the copy.

If you develop favorite techniques and a unique graphic style, use it in all your written materials. The repeated impact of your format, even with different content, can be as much as double your material's recognition and response, as you can see in the attached WorkSource documents.

**Don't forget your call to action.** It should create a sense of urgency and be simple. Recently, one of our vendors (located in San Diego, CA) designed a call to action on a website for business that read like this:

**Northeast Florida Employers - access your personalized HR website for hiring and retention info, current salary data, resumes and more. If you have not received an invitation, call us at 866-374-7630 or 866-374-7633.**

When I edited the copy, I pointed out that there was no real advantage in offering two numbers – make it one easy one. I also pointed out that they should have the line go directly to a user friendly voice mail, since the companies here might well be calling at 6:00 in the morning California time. Lastly, I wanted to make sure that callers would know it was a free call – since we ran out of “800” numbers, it’s a bit confusing. The end product looks like this:

**Northeast Florida Employers – access your personalized HR website for hiring and retention info, current salary data, resumes and more. If you have not received an invitation, call us toll free at 866-374-7630.**

Positioning is important, too. All Western readers follow the same pattern with their eyes. The best place for the coupon; phone numbers or other calls to action should be at the bottom, right-hand corner because this is where the readers' eyes stop after reading the ad. Sometimes, it's hard to follow that rule, but adhering to it whenever possible makes your piece much more effective.

Other ways to draw attention to your call to action include using graphics and images to guide and direct the reader's attention where you want it. Put some clip-art of a phone handset next to your phone number or a computer near your email address. Use an illustration along with your headline if possible. Put a box around a paragraph that you wish to emphasize like the date or time of an event.

## Step Four: Create a plan for each youth to deliver needed services

### Creating a Youth-Friendly Environment in the One-Stops

First, let's agree that it is possible to serve youth within your One-Stop system. That means your existing One-Stop system. Bringing young workers into the One-Stop means that they can access the full range of opportunities you've worked so hard to create in your system. You probably already have a well-developed network of business customers, ready and waiting for talent. You've worked hard at assembling talented and dedicated staff members who have the skills and contacts to open up opportunities for your youth customers. Why would you then create a separate environment where youth are denied access to these opportunities already in place?

But before you bring youth into the One-Stop, you must prepare staff for these new customers with special needs. Staff members serving youth must be able to relate to the youth, and have patience with young people's lack of focus and lesser communication skills. Successful youth staff members have the ability to see past the current young customer to the worker they someday will be.

Once you've identified your "Youth Champions," you can help them implement the four-part strategy that identifies each youth's needs for the immediate future. The steps consist of:

- **An introduction to the current local labor market:** The information will help your young customers understand the realities of the market place. The data should include salary trends, education and training requirements, and employment trends in your local area. Some of these can be delivered in-group settings, or through self-service with labor market surveys and tools readily available in most areas.
- **An assessment of where the young customer fits into that market:** This step includes interest inventories, skills and ability assessments, and educational achievement inventories. Tools such as WorkKeys take skills and make them relevant by comparing them to what's required to succeed in jobs in the marketplace.
- **Defining what the young customer wants to achieve:** This step includes the introduction of career paths, and serious exploration of how far and in what direction the youth wants to take his/her career.
- **A plan for addressing the gaps:** Once the youth has defined his/her plan, the youth counselor can identify specific gaps in skills and education, and create a plan for addressing them.

## What Goes into a Good Plan?

WorkSource's Career Success Plan for Youth includes elements from the WIA menu of services that should be available in every One-Stop. This menu provides a complete array of services that can address almost any gap, whether it's personal, educational or experience-based.

The menu of services below is comprehensive, and if you're wondering how you're going to get the resources to offer them all, the answer is – you're not. Many of them will be offered through your community partners, who have much more experience and proven success with some of these capabilities.

A good Youth Career Success Plan will start out with a very compressed timeline – the ideal plan will contain several opportunities to achieve 3-4 goals in a short time. Be sure to include some process goals in the plan, so your customer achieves success just from making the effort. It's critical to break down the goals into achievable steps that build confidence on the way to real outcomes. "Enroll in the community college" will be a daunting task, until it's broken down into easier components. A good list will look like this:

- Call college to ask for a course catalog
- Select course of study
- Investigate financial aid
- Meet with academic counselor

Steps that allow young customers to check off progress will keep them motivated, and keep them engaged in the process. A good Youth Champion will insist on progress every week and will have plenty of steps that can be achieved to demonstrate progress.

The real outcome-based plan will include some of the menu of services below, introduced in relatively short bursts of activity. WorkSource recommends writing plans for no more than 2-3 months. Longer plans will intimidate young customers. They are also waiting for you to prove your relevance before you can expect a long-term commitment. Once the youth sees results in the short term, they'll be more and more willing to re-commit, and you may successfully engage them for a year or more.

With that in mind, it's realistic to incorporate 2-3 of the menu of services for the short term, and then re-evaluate after the end of the planning period. Services that were high impact and gave a high return on investment can be incorporated into the next plan, while those with low impact can be phased out.

## **The 10 Services You Offer**

Once enrolled in WIA youth programs, each youth is individually assessed, and a plan is formed leading to economic self-sufficiency. The plan will include one or more of the ten following services, all of which must be available (according to WIA legislation) through the centers or through a community partnership (here's where those partnerships from Step One really start to pay off):

- Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to secondary school completion, including dropout prevention strategies;
- Alternative secondary school offerings;
- Summer employment opportunities directly linked to academic and occupational learning;
- Paid and unpaid work experiences, including internships and job shadowing;
- Occupational skill training;
- Leadership development opportunities, which include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social behaviors;
- Supportive services;
- Adult mentoring for a duration of at least twelve (12) months, that may occur both during and after program participation;
- Follow-up services provided after exit from the program;
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse counseling, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate to the needs of the individual youth.

Don't forget that this menu of services must be effective for you and your customer base. Don't be tied to traditional definitions or be boxed in by what you've always done. One of our great in-school programs had written "mentoring" into its mission, and was stymied by finding available mentors. The solution turned out to be right under their noses – they turned the teachers – who were already meeting with and advising the students daily – into mentors – simply by re-naming them. We're doing the same thing with our Youth Champions.

### **How do you know if something's working? Here's an idea – look at the results!**

WorkSource has fully embraced the concept of defining the parameters but allowing our partners define how goals will be accomplished. One of the earliest successes accomplished through this philosophy was in a rural community where resources and opportunities are limited. The community designed a program to reach the children of seasonal migrant farm workers and expose them to high wage/high skill jobs. The local chamber persuaded 100 local employers to provide 3 two week job shadowing experiences. The school district designed the contextual instruction curriculum that guided learning and provided a means of measuring skills learned at each job site.

Communities in Schools provided transportation, student/employer counseling and program follow up.

Post testing proved that at the completion of the program all 100 youth gained basic and pre-employment maturity skills. But one unexpected outcome was that 25% of the youth were offered full or part-time employment. This was never foreseen or designed into the program delivery; it happened organically from the relationships established by the employers and youth.

Our most successful projects take this concept one step further, and have allowed the youth to fundamentally design the program and delivery system in which they will participate. Project ownership is given by allowing youth to craft the activities in which they will participate. One leadership project designed by young participants resulted in the planning, raising funds for, and building of a playscape for an inner city school that had no playground.

Another outcome of allowing youth ownership over their programs is that they constantly improve. One program which embraced leadership started as a project to improve basic skills by having youth participants design teaching aids for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders. Student-led improvements in the project turned it into a summer camp planned and delivered by the youth project participants. Not only did the project reach 200 inner city youth, it eventually led to a greater number of economically disadvantaged 4<sup>th</sup> graders gladly participating in subsequent summer camps. Post testing in science and math of the 4<sup>th</sup> graders placed them one full grade ahead of their peers who did not attend the camps.

## **Step Five: Deliver dynamic group programs through energetic and motivational staff members**

### **How to Choose a Youth Team Member**

The interesting thing about choosing Youth Team members is that you don't often have to choose them – they choose themselves. If youth programs will be a component of a One-Stop staffers job, look for staff members who step up as volunteers. They will know whether they have the right stuff.

When you do have to make a choice, here are some qualities to look for:

- A high-energy personality that can keep the kids energized
- Follow-through skills and persistence
- Flexibility – someone who can shrug off changing priorities and chaotic schedules
- A good sense of humor, especially about themselves

### **“Audition” your staff for presentation skills**

Some of the world's best and well-thought-out presentations have been torpedoed by dull presenters. A great Youth Champion will have the ability to engage an audience of young people and keep their attention long enough to teach them something – no easy task. The only way to know if someone is a good presenter is to have him or her make a presentation.

Don't rely simply on past experience on a resume to gauge speaking skills. A great way to audition a staff member is to create a simple scenario for a presentation. Create a subject that has no technical content – worrying about saying the “right” things will detract from the speaker's natural style. Select a subject such as, “Are you a cat person or a dog person, and why?” This will take the pressure off, and such a personal subject will give them the confidence to relax and be themselves.

Look for logical and clear presentation of ideas, energy in front of the group, and where possible, humor. You'll know it when you see it. The absolute best way to predict effectiveness in front of a group of young people is to audition in front of young people - consider having your applicants deliver guest presentations in front of your youth groups.

### **Understanding career pathing**

A dynamic part of our center based youth program is providing to our customers a clear vision of the career path that leads to their ultimate occupational choice. Many workforce professionals think they comprehend the career path concept, but we tend to think of it as vertical, pathing through a single industry. For instance, we all recognize

that there is a direct career path from Certified Nursing Assistant to Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse. However, this is only one possible model. Other models include crossing industries. For example: cashiering experience in retail gives a young worker cash handling skills he can apply to a bank teller position. Bank teller may lead to a banking career, or cross over to the mortgage loan or consumer finance industry. Either way, the worker has moved from a low skill industry to one that not only pays better wages, but often funds career development and education.

Successful implementation of career pathing mandates that the staff have a series of foundational skills that provide our customers informed choices in their employment goals. A career counseling professional who understands the career pathing process first commands a clear vision of the local labor market, and in particular comprehends industry and career trends within the market. Our Youth Champions have a clear grasp of the business developments on the First Coast that include:

- Growth Industries
- Growth Occupations
- Transfer of Skills across Occupations
- Company hiring practices
- Wage and fringe benefit trend within the labor market

Every action taken is founded on what are the current and future needs in the business community and how the aspirations of the customer can be realized within the local labor market.

Second, the seasoned professional understands that it is our job to provide an honest assessment of how the customer can reach his employment goals. In other words, if a customer wants to be a widget maker, our expertise should be such that we can explain the skills and abilities needed for widget making, identify gaps in our customers experience and training, and assist him in creating a realistic plan to reach his goal. A thorough assessment should go beyond measurements of basic skills and abilities and encompass:

- Passions
- Earning Expectations
- A propensity for working with People, Data, or Things
- Personality Type
- Learning Styles – Would Formal Training, or On-the-Job be the best fit?
- What kind of working conditions?
  - Large or small company
  - Indoors or outdoors
  - Travel or local

With this information clearly understood, a customer's career path plan is often created by starting at the end, or the youth's ultimate occupational goal, and working backward in a step-by-step process. Under this concept, training is built into the overall plan and may include any or all of the following:

- Formal or informal On-the-Job Training
- Accepting new responsibility in the current job – new projects
- New job – targeting cross transferable skills
- Formal Education & Training
- Volunteer experience
- Self study – reading
- Obtaining a mentor

Last, our Youth Champions understand that this is an on-going process, a long term commitment. With many organizations services end at placement, ours are only beginning. In fact the majority of work takes place "after the sale", or after our youth customer has been placed into their first job. We offer to the hiring employer a comprehensive set of business services packaged as an "employee assistance program" focusing on retention and advancement; the establishment of WorkSource brokered or delivered services to grow new employee skills; consultation on salary increases to meet current labor market trends; and/or developing long-term training plans for the new worker that show career growth opportunities with that specific employer, or within the industry. Oh yes, our plans are flexible and easily adapt to the changing needs of our customers.

## Creating an interactive experience

Below is an example of one tool we designed to begin the process of building a career path. This instrument is crafted so our Youth Champion can start a dialogue with the youth customer and gain important information.



## Career Survey

**Name:**

**Age:**

**Education:** \_\_\_ Less than HS \_\_\_ HS degree \_\_\_ Some training after HS \_\_\_ Some college  
\_\_\_ College degree

1. What do(es) your (parent(s) do for a living? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Does this career interest you? Why or why not?
3. Who is the most successful person you know of? Would you want their job? Why or why not?
4. Do you enjoy learning new things in a classroom environment? Why or why not?
5. What did you want to do for a living when you were a young child? Are you still interested in that career? Do you think it's within your grasp? Why or why not?
6. If money, training, or personal history were not factors in your choice, what career would you choose? What is holding you back from that career?
7. What job(s) have you held? Which was your favorite? Why?
8. Which job was your least favorite? Why?
9. Rank these job factors in order, with "1" being the most important to your career satisfaction, and "12" being the least important to your career satisfaction:
  - Salary
  - Flexible schedule / time off
  - Creative or challenging work
  - Helping people in my work
  - Prestige or title
  - Travel and/or excitement on the job
  - No paperwork or classroom training
  - Potential for career growth
  - Interaction with a team
  - Comfortable working environment
  - Using my strong talent: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Quality of life
10. My strongest skill is: \_\_\_\_\_
11. The biggest barrier right now to my career advancement is: \_\_\_\_\_

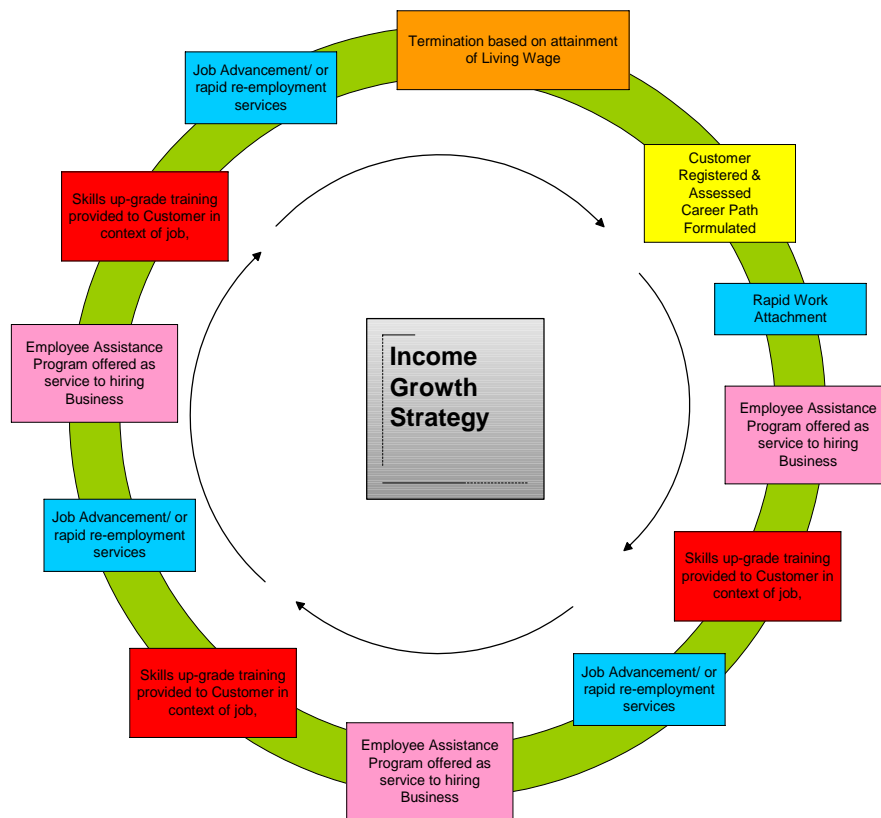
### Resources for career exploration & development

- usworks.com
- MBTI
- Career Scope
- Choices
- [http://www.doleta.gov/Career\\_OneStop.asp](http://www.doleta.gov/Career_OneStop.asp)
- American Youth Policy Forum @ <http://www.aypf.org/subcats/prepcar.htm>
- Business Coalition for Educational Reform @ [www.BCER.org](http://www.BCER.org)

# Step Six: Engage the youth in the Income Growth Strategy and help him manage his career path

## The Income Growth Strategy

The Income Growth Strategy is a system of customer-led career pathing. This concept maps a deliberate series of services, which simultaneously target both the needs of youth in the larger context of serving our business customer. The model embraces skill growth achieved through labor market advancement over identification of a "job goal." Understanding natural career paths that exist within our local labor market targets the solicitation of job vacancies. Our service delivery system has been redesigned so that WorkSource Associates are no longer assigned to specific tasks, but rather are integrated into team-based approaches that remove barriers to partnership activities.



Job seekers are not necessarily terminated from career development services at job placement. Successes are measured by the on-going skill development and wage growth of the job seeker. Building blocks of this strategy are:

- Assessment of the jobseekers knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA)
- Rapid Work Attachment based on quantified job requirements and jobseeker KSA
- Contextual Skills Development
- Career Pathing based on local labor market conditions
- Wage Progression
- Just-in-time service interventions
- Work with Working Individuals
- Solve problems within context

The goal of a system using the Income Growth approach relates to planned increases in income over time. This is in contrast to the goal of a program that is only concerned with placing the job seeker into employment. Some examples to clarify the differences are:

- Our work only really begins when our customer gets a job. This concept breaks the mold of short-term intervention. Up until now we felt that our work was done when the job seeker got a job. Under the Income Growth Strategy - getting a job is just the beginning. It triggers a series of services, e.g., career choices, career search, and educational enhancement designed to help the job seeker keep the job and advance in the job market
- Education and training are not the immediate focus of our activities; getting a job is where we start. Most of the older youth we serve have not had good experiences with education. By first helping them obtain a job in a career path of their choice, we can introduce training as a means of moving up the ladder they have designed. Used in this context, education and training become relevant and meaningful.
- Our Board of Directors has told us that we only have one customer, the business community. We don't serve youth at the expense of the business community; we serve them because of the business community. This concept is fully embraced within the Income Growth Strategy. Contact with the employer does not end at placement, it only begins. An integral element of this scheme is our Business Consultant staff. They provide a wide array of value-added products to the hiring firm. These comprehensive sets of business services packaged as an "employee assistance program" focus on retention and advancement; the establishment of WorkSource brokered or delivered services to grow new employee skills; consultation on salary increases to meet current labor market trends; and/or developing long-term training plans for the new worker that shows career growth opportunities with that specific employer, or within the industry.

## Step Seven: Document Success

We all understand the need to track and report performance. WIA measures success in serving older youth by the entered employment rate, retention rate, earnings change and credential rate for older youth. Those are the criteria by which our programs are judged to be “successful.”

But are we measuring the right things? Could we measure other factors that have greater impact on success? Research tells us, for example, that teen pregnancy is one of the strongest contributors to poverty, yet it's not usually included for tracking in most youth workforce programs.

In 1997, the WorkSource board of directors challenged us to include teen pregnancy prevention as a success factor in all of our youth programs. We wrote it in as a performance point in our RFPs, and challenged providers to include it as a factor in their programs. The results were gratifying, and prove that what you measure determines what you get. Since 1997, not one youth participant in our programs has become pregnant, or become a parenting father.

We don't report that to the Feds, but we consider it to be the foundation of success for our future workforce. Expanding our workforce platform to include important social issues such as teen pregnancy has also opened the door to partnership with other community agencies who embrace the issue. That means more opportunities for grants and expanded programs.

So, we encourage you to measure not only what you *must*, but also what you should measure. Take a look at the values and challenges in your community, and add some of the success factors to your performance measures. You'll gain credibility, and you'll be considered an organization that is a dynamic part of the future success of your community.

### Leverage Your Funding through Documentation

Careful documentation means that you capture data about clients that will allow you to look for extra sources of funding. Much of the funding for the teen pregnancy prevention components of local programs came from partner agencies in the public health system. Our documentation was what they needed to capture to provide services, and they were grateful that they could access our records. It proved to be a win-win for our partners.

Another way to leverage funding is through **dual enrollment**. We enroll every eligible TANF youth into WIA youth as well. Enrolling youth into WIA helps integrate youth services into the One-Stop system, and has the added benefit of

allowing us to cost allocate services across multiple funding streams. That expands our funding, and allows us to serve more youth. In FY 2003, 10% of the cost of operating our One-Stops will be cost allocated to youth funding. And we expect to serve three times as many young jobseekers this year by cost allocating funds. We could only serve a fraction of the 400 or so Older Youth we plan to with stand-alone funds.

### **Return on Investment (ROI)**

In 2000, our private sector-driven board of directors asked us a question that, not too long ago, would have been a showstopper: "What's our ROI on training?"

We commissioned a study by an independent consultant to find out if we were investing our funding wisely. Our ROI was 4:1; for every dollar spent on WIA training, \$4 was returned to the economy and the taxpayers. Some of the ROI came through reduced public assistance (we saved taxpayers \$40 million per year in reduction of TANF rolls) and increased tax revenues from workers that were now employed.

### **Leveraging Your Own Funding**

Here's a three-step plan for leveraging your local funding base:

1. Meet with community organizations to ask them about values they are willing to support with programs and funding of their own, as well as tie in with your workforce mission. These meetings will build goodwill and credibility, along with starting some creative thinking on partnership opportunities.
2. Dual enroll all Older Youth and create a plan to cost allocate funding.
3. Make sure your constituents know what your results are. Documenting success makes writing grants easier and builds support for the good work you are doing. If you don't publish an annual report, consider making the investment. Nothing succeeds like success, and you'll want to let everyone know about the progress you're making.