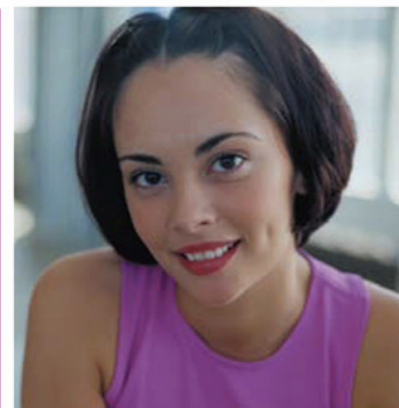
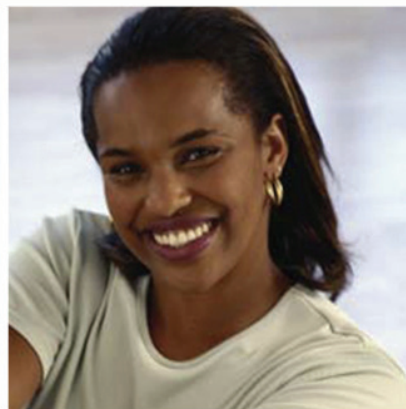


Common Sense, Uncommon Commitment:

A Progress Report on the Shared Youth Vision Partnership

January 2009



Prepared for

U.S. Department of Labor
Shared Youth Vision Federal Partnership
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Executive Summary

Too many youth in our society face steep challenges in acquiring the talents, skills, and knowledge necessary to ensure their healthy transition to successful adult roles and responsibilities. Today, roughly one-third of students fail to graduate high school on time and are left struggling to compete in the increasingly global economy. An estimated 3.8 million youth ages 18–24 are neither employed nor in school, which represents 15 percent of the young adult population.¹ Federal, state, and local governments and private organizations have targeted billions of dollars toward ensuring that the most disconnected and vulnerable youth succeed in the workforce and life. Unfortunately, public and private organizations often fail to coordinate the delivery of services to the neediest youth, leading to duplication, fragmentation, and a failure to take full advantage of the resources available.

The Shared Youth Vision is a common sense, yet transformative strategy for maximizing the reach and effectiveness of society's collective investment in our neediest youth. It is a new outlook, a new philosophy, and a new approach to planning and implementing youth service delivery systems. *It is not a new program or service strategy.* Built on a foundation of partnership, collaboration, and communication, as well as a solid commitment to helping our country's neediest youth, the Shared Youth Vision reflects the belief that a coordinated whole generates significantly greater return than a series of individual investments.

The Shared Youth Vision began as a cross-agency Federal partnership formed in response to the 2003 *White House Taskforce Report on Disadvantaged Youth*, which pointed to the need to develop highly collaborative and integrated systems at the federal, state, and local levels for transitioning America's neediest youth into adulthood. Federal agencies were charged with developing more effective interagency collaborations to better serve targeted youth populations, with priority given to serving the neediest youth. In 2004, the U.S. Department of Labor formed a Shared Youth Vision Federal Partnership with the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice.

Since its inception four years ago, the Shared Youth Vision Federal Partnership has successfully transferred its philosophy, commitment, and energy to the states—approximately 30 states now have formally established Shared Youth Vision teams. Targeted Federal investments in technical assistance, capacity

¹ Jekielek, S., and B. Brown. 2005. *The transition to adulthood: Characteristics of young adults ages 18 to 24 in America*. A Kids Count/PRB/Child Trends Report on Census 2000.

building, and peer-to-peer support have helped to expand the reach of the Shared Youth Vision. But most importantly, the Shared Youth Vision Federal Partnership has set the tone for coordinated investments and strategic reforms at the state and local levels by modeling the type of collaborative behavior necessary for system integration.



Several key milestones reflect the systemic transformation that is underway:

- Formation of the Shared Youth Vision Federal Partnership and its growth from four to nine Federal agencies: U.S. Departments of Defense, Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Labor, Social Security Administration, Transportation, and the Corporation for National and Community Service (often with two or three major offices represented in each agency).
- Sponsorship of several major communication and technical assistance forums to promote the Shared Youth Vision concepts and provide hands-on planning support for federal and state partnerships.
- Award of planning grants to 16 pilot states to provide more intensive and targeted support in advancing the Shared Youth Vision concepts and implementation.
- Development and implementation of a diverse array of state pilot programs and prospective system reforms.
- Formation of a diverse technical assistance and communication network, including the "Solutions Desk," directly linking emerging Shared Youth Vision state-level partnerships with their Federal counterparts.
- Continued expansion of the Shared Youth Vision concepts through a formalized peer-to-peer information exchange network that now includes 28 states.

In 2007, the Department of Labor, in conjunction with the Federal Partnership, commissioned Abt Associates to conduct this study to document the evolution of the Shared Youth Vision, and identify key "success strategies" driving its progress at the federal and state levels. The following charts summarize key factors that have contributed to the development, growth, and productivity of both the federal and state level partnerships.

Key Success Strategies in Building the Shared Youth Vision Federal Partnership	
Success Strategy	Key Features
Recognize the distinction between leadership and ownership	Partnership guided by the Shared Youth Vision mission, not single agency mission
Flexible participation and shared responsibility	Major investment of resources by many Federal Partners
Leverage existing commitments	Use visibility, credibility, and relationships afforded by the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coordinating Council as launching point for the Shared Youth Vision
Growth strategy that strategically targets new partners	Prioritize prospective new partners based on critical "gaps" in service delivery
Avoid tendency for "mission drift"	Unwavering focus on "neediest" youth
Build conceptual awareness before brand awareness	Limit over-alignment with single administration, agency or individual
Avoid "program" mentality	Emphasis on process, philosophy, and new business model

Key Success Strategies in Building the Shared Youth Vision State Teams	
Success Strategy	Key Features
Avoid perceptions of a Federal "top down" mandate	Engagement of federal and state partnerships in identical and parallel planning processes
Create task-oriented working culture	All meetings built around outputs and products
Emphasize non-financial incentives	Federal emphasis on technical assistance versus funding for programs
Personalize the Federal bureaucracy	Visible presence of Federal representatives at technical assistance sessions and accessibility through the Solutions Desk
Leverage existing resources	States' integration of the Shared Youth Vision with ongoing statewide youth initiatives or collaborative infrastructures
Operate like "start-up" enterprises	States' use of basic business principles (e.g., strategic planning, careful growth, market research)
Engage in proactive networking	Continuously raising awareness of state and local resources
Build on common needs of state partners	Identify issues that link partners' self-interests (e.g., transportation, youth with disabilities)

With the success and momentum of the Shared Youth Vision thus far, federal, state, and local governments have a unique opportunity to fundamentally transform the youth service delivery network. Yet there is no single roadmap for progress or prescription for success. Each Shared Youth Vision state and local partnership must chart and navigate its own course in a way that reflects the distinctive economic, political, and program environment in which it operates. To date, their efforts are guided by two critical factors that provide the Shared Youth Vision with the foundation needed to become a significant

force for system reform. First, the Shared Youth Vision federal and state partnerships take a **common sense** approach, recognizing that collaborative planning and programming will produce better results and returns than a system characterized by fragmentation, duplication, and isolated decision making. Second, they have displayed an **uncommon commitment** to the long-term vision that extends well beyond program and agency boundaries in pursuit of the ultimate goal: workforce success and economic self-sufficiency for our country's neediest youth



Background

The successful transition of disconnected and vulnerable youth to self-sufficient adults is one of the most critical and complex problems facing society. Many youth face significant hurdles as they move from adolescence into adulthood. These obstacles typically include, but are rarely limited to poverty, criminal history, difficult family dynamics, lack of positive role models, homelessness and unstable living situations, substance abuse, mental health problems, disabilities, and/or inadequate education and job readiness skills.

The consequences of social inaction are well understood. In the short run, youth who are poorly prepared for the workforce will increasingly place demands on our already strained social service and criminal justice systems as they move into adulthood. They will experience statistically higher incidences of poverty and reliance on public assistance as well as higher rates of incarceration. According to the U.S. Census, 18 percent of adults lacking a high school diploma are living in poverty compared to only eight percent of the general population.² Similarly, it has been estimated that high school dropouts are 3½ times more likely to be incarcerated during their lifetime than graduates.³ Not surprisingly three-quarters of inmates in state prisons have not completed high school. A 2008 study estimated that by increasing the high school completion rate among men by five percent, the U.S. will reduce criminal costs and increase earnings by nearly \$8 billion annually.⁴

More importantly, over the long term, society fails to reap the benefits of the productive talents of our disconnected youth, adversely impacting our economic growth and development. The increasingly global economy demands a more highly educated workforce equipped with the skills to support emerging industry sectors and new occupations. The most at-risk and disconnected youth will likely experience lower rates of education and labor force attachment, leading to a lifetime of lower earnings and reduced tax contributions. A 2005 study reported that high school dropouts contribute to tax revenues at half the rate of graduates, resulting in a revenue loss of \$50

² U.S. Census Bureau, University of Minnesota Integrated Public Use Microdata Series.

³ Coalition for Juvenile Justice. 2001. *From the prison track to the college track*. Washington DC: Author.

⁴ Alliance for Excellent Education. 2008. *Dropouts, diplomas, and dollars: U.S. high schools and the nation's economy*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

billion dollars annually.⁵ In addition, they are unlikely to help fill critical skill shortages facing employers in emerging sectors of the economy.

Over the past several decades the urgency of this challenge has spawned a vast network of youth development programs, service providers, and dedicated professionals. In addition to public youth-serving agencies, this network comprises faith-based and community organizations, alternative public education options, businesses, and philanthropic organizations. These public and private organizations have made significant investments in both prevention strategies to keep those at risk on a positive path towards productive adulthood and remediation strategies for those who currently need additional supports as they transition to independence.

However, within a network of this depth and complexity, the cost of inefficiency and duplication is nearly as big a concern as the cost of inaction. Young people fail to progress and precious resources are lost when agencies fail to coordinate their efforts, resulting in duplication, service gaps or confusing program channels. Similarly, the work of practitioners, planners, and policy makers is compromised when information and insight are not actively shared among those committed to the same challenging mission.

A fundamental concern about fragmentation, duplication and limited coordination is a key theme in the 2003 *White House Taskforce Report on Disadvantaged Youth*. The report acknowledges that despite the sizeable investment of both preventative and remedial resources, many of the neediest youth are still being left behind in today's economy. The report expresses concern that effective program results cannot be achieved without increased emphasis on four goals:

- Better management
- Better accountability
- Better connections
- Prioritization of services to the neediest youth

Successful pursuit of these goals will not only result in a more sound allocation of scarce youth development resources, but will also ultimately lead to more productive futures for the most at-risk and neediest youth.

⁵ Rousse, C.E. 2005. *The labor market consequences of an inadequate education*. Princeton University and NBER. Prepared for the Equity Symposium on "The Social Costs of Inadequate Education" at Teachers' College, Columbia University.

Shared Youth Vision: Origins and Milestones



In 2003, the Department of Labor (DOL) developed a strategy paper that outlined its vision for the delivery of youth services throughout the workforce investment system. This document emphasized the importance of recognizing America's neediest youth, as an important part of the new workforce "supply pipeline" needed by businesses to fill job vacancies in the knowledge economy.

Recognizing that no one agency could provide the comprehensive array of services needed by the most at-risk youth, the DOL first reached out to select Federal agencies that also participated actively in a long-standing council chaired by the Department of Justice's (DOJ's) Attorney General. The DOJ's Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, legislatively mandated in 1992, addresses and oversees many youth-related issues. Not only did participation on the Coordinating Council provide evidence of a solid commitment to at-risk youth, but it also demonstrated a clear willingness of senior government officials to work in a collaborative cross-agency context.

After a series of discussions about the adverse impacts of fragmentation across youth development investments, the following agency representatives expressed their commitment to jointly emphasize better management, better accountability, better connections, and priority given to serving the neediest youth.

- U.S. Department of Education (DOEd)
 - Office of Vocational and Adult Education
 - Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
 - Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, Chafee Foster Care Independence Program
- U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)
 - Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
- U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)
 - Division of Youth Services
 - Office of Disability Employment Policy

This marked the emergence of the Shared Youth Vision concept and the formation of the Shared Youth Vision Federal Partnership (Federal Partnership). The Federal Partnership's mission is *"to serve as a catalyst at the national, state and local levels to strengthen coordination, communication, and collaboration among youth-serving agencies to support the neediest youth and their healthy transition to successful adult roles and responsibilities."*

Commitment to Serving the Neediest Youth:

- *Children of incarcerated parents*
- *Court-involved youth*
- *Youth at risk of court involvement*
- *Homeless and runaway youth*
- *Indian and Native American youth*
- *Migrant youth*
- *Out-of-school youth*
- *Youth most at risk of dropping out*
- *Youth in or aging out of foster care*
- *Youth with disabilities*

The Federal Partnership is fully supported by the Coordinating Council, which actively endorses its mission and philosophy in support of the neediest youth.

As an emerging cross-agency initiative, the Federal Partnership faced a twofold challenge in pursuit of this far-reaching mission. First, it

needed to form a collaborative working process that would support, deepen, and solidify the Federal Partnership. Secondly, the Federal Partnership had to chart a course that ensured a progression from vision to planning to action. Without visible and tangible evidence of programmatic results and system reforms, the Shared Youth Vision would likely remain a vision and not a productive approach to collaboration among agencies that serve youth.

Even in its infancy the Federal Partnership embraced the challenge, the sense of urgency, and the significance of the far-reaching reforms that the Shared Youth Vision could potentially generate. What has evolved over the ensuing four years is a carefully crafted development and support process that serves to solidify the workings of the Federal Partnership while proactively “exporting” the Shared Youth Vision to the states. The process is comprised of an orchestrated sequence of “touch points” that are designed to gradually build awareness, interest, expertise, and ownership. While the activities are paced and structured by the Federal Partnership, these remain both voluntary and flexible, which allows the developmental process to evolve “organically” and at a pace that allows for meaningful engagement of partners at both the federal and state levels.

Key milestones and highlights from this multi-year sequence of activities are summarized below.

Regional Youth Forums: In 2004, the Federal Partnership sponsored three Regional Youth Forums (Chicago, IL; Philadelphia, PA; and Phoenix, AZ) to formally introduce the Shared Youth Vision concept and its overriding commitment to: 1) better management; 2) better accountability; 3) better connections; and 4) priority service to the neediest youth. The sessions were attended by state youth development professionals primarily from state education, human services, juvenile justice, and workforce development agencies. At the same time, the Federal Partners (DOEd, HHS, DOJ, and DOL) were in attendance and actively engaged in a parallel planning process to continue to solidify their evolving work together. External consultants

with expertise in partnership formation and growth facilitated the state teams and the Federal Partnership planning sessions. These were structured as task-oriented working sessions providing the dedicated time, organization, and facilitation needed to develop working plans for the formation of the states' and Federal Partners' teams.

The Regional Forums were initially met with some degree of skepticism by participants about the Federal commitment to cross-agency collaboration. At the same time, there was also emerging evidence that the underpinnings of the Shared Youth Vision fundamentally resonated with these state youth development professionals. Most notably, participation was nearly universal with 48 states volunteering to attend. Additionally, despite having to pay their own travel costs to the forums, states largely complied with the



requirement to bring a team of four to six representatives that mirrored the Federal Partnership in both size and composition. Retrospectively, several participants noted that these state team planning meetings would have never taken place without the dedicated time and support provided through the Federal Partnership.

Advanced Level Technical Assistance Youth Vision Forum: Over the next 24 months, the state teams worked on refining and implementing their Shared Youth Vision State Implementation Plans. By 2006, nearly half the states were sufficiently energized by their progress to compete for the opportunity to attend an Advanced Level Technical Assistance Forum sponsored by the Federal Partnership with earmarked funding from the DOJ. Completion and submission of an application alone was a strong reflection of a state's commitment to the spirit and mission of the Shared Youth Vision. Not only did the state teams have to fully document evidence of partnership evolution and expansion, they also had to cover the costs for the entire team to attend. Ultimately, 16 states were selected to attend based on their progress achieved and documented in their applications.

Conducted in Atlanta in September 2006, the two-day Advanced Level Forum engaged both the state teams and the Federal Partnership in concrete planning tasks including goal setting, resource alignment, and asset mapping. By this time, any residual skepticism evident in 2004 had fully dissipated and had been replaced by a genuine sense of collaboration that accompanied the steady growth of Shared Youth Vision state teams. This growing sense of partnership was actively fostered by constructive dialogues between Federal Partners and their state counterparts. The forum not only fostered a valuable exchange of information and commitments, it also provided a real time demonstration of the power and potential of the Shared Youth Vision approach. So palpable was the collaborative energy on display at this forum that an observer from the U.S. General Accounting Office noted that "it was the richest, deepest example of cross agency collaboration that I have witnessed in my 30 years in government."

Every member of the newly expanded 2006 Federal Partnership participated in the Advanced Forums:

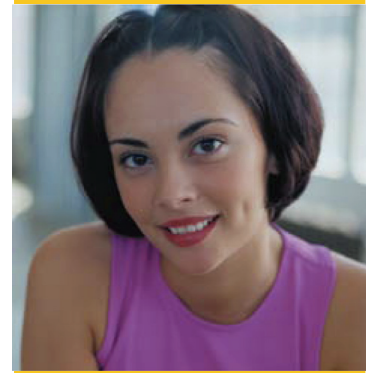
- U.S. Department of Education (DOEd)
 - Office of Vocational and Adult Education
 - Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
 - Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, Chafee Foster Care Independence Program
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
 - Office of Public Housing Investment, Public and Indian Housing
- U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)
 - Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
- U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)
 - Division of Youth Services
 - Office of Disability Employment Policy
- U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA)
 - Office of Program Development and Research
- The Corporation for National and Community Service

Pilot Grants:

Participation in the Advanced Level Technical Assistance Forums was initially seen as a gateway

activity that would lead to an invitation to apply for a pilot grant to become a Shared Youth Vision pilot state. Successful applicants

SYV pilot states: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, and Utah



received a modest (\$50K to \$120K) planning grant to “support the development of collaborative agency approaches and joint partnerships at the state and local levels.” It is important to note that while the \$1.6 million in grant money was provided by the DOL, the grant solicitation was collaboratively developed by the entire Federal Partnership. Ultimately, the Federal Partners attending the forum were so encouraged by the states’ level of commitment to the Shared Youth Vision approach that the DOL modified its procurement process on the spot. Specifically, the Federal Partnership committed to funding all 16 of the state teams who were in attendance at the Advanced Level Forum, and provided the assistance necessary to ensure the submission of an acceptable grant application. Dropping the traditional competitive procurement in favor of a fully inclusive award process underscored the underlying message that the Shared Youth Vision collaborative approach is universally applicable throughout the system.

The Solutions Desk: The active participation of the Federal Partners and state teams at the forums generated a degree of synergy that began to close the communications gap that has historically existed between the Federal government and the states. State teams suggested institutionalizing this valuable connection. In response, the Federal Partnership, primarily through HHS’s Administration for Children and Families, provided resources to establish a **Solutions Desk** as a component of its existing Child Welfare Resource Center. The primary purpose of the Solutions Desk is to provide call-in access to Federal Partner representatives, who can share agency-specific expertise with state pilot teams.

Regional Shared Youth Vision Dialogues: In 2007, the DOL’s Employment and Training Administration’s (ETA) Regional Offices hosted a series of Regional Shared Youth Vision Dialogues. ETA’s Regional Office Youth Leads worked in conjunction with their regional/state counterparts from DOEd, HHS, HUD, DOJ, and SSA to conduct these Dialogues with state interagency teams. The focus of the Dialogues was on information sharing, identifying barriers to effective coordination and collaboration and increasing services to the neediest youth.

Cross-Team Communication and Information Exchange: A variety of venues were used to promote peer-to-peer learning and information exchange. These included opportunities for state teams to dialog with each other as well as with their Federal counterparts. For instance, the state teams met for working sessions at the DOL’s National Workforce Innovations Conferences in 2006, 2007, and 2008. Additionally, the Solutions Desk hosts monthly “Community of Practice” calls and authors a monthly e-newsletter to promote

information exchange primarily among state youth development professionals. To firmly solidify its commitment to two-way communications, the Federal Partnership created an e-mail based communication system (youthfed.team@dol.gov) to disseminate information and regularly correspond with state teams, the Federal Partners, and Shared Youth Vision stakeholders.

Customized Technical Assistance and Support: The Federal Partnership assembled a team of consultants offering specialized expertise in such critical areas as team building, planning, employer engagement, and working with disabled populations. The DOL's Division of Youth Services and Office of Disability Employment Policy led this team and in conjunction with the other Federal Partners developed a series of tools (e.g., sample logic models, implementation check list, local assessment tools), and a series of webinars to support the use of these technical assistance products.

Expansion beyond the Pilot States: Using a peer-to-peer learning model, the Federal Partnership has implemented a process for expanding the Shared Youth Vision collaborative approach beyond the original 16 state pilot teams. Specifically, an additional 12 states were selected to participate in an ongoing "information exchange" with designated partners from the original state pilot teams. Representatives from all 28 states gathered for a more structured two-day planning workshop in Tulsa, Oklahoma in June 2008. While much of the information exchange will be handled informally between each set of partners, the conference provided an opportunity for new states to understand their work in the context of the emerging system-wide reform that is underway.

Ongoing Support from Federal Regional/State-Level Staff: The Federal regional/state staff has played a principal role in providing technical expertise and support to the state teams. Specifically, they have: 1) accepted responsibility for oversight of the initial sixteen pilot state teams; 2) promoted the Shared Youth Vision approach in the additional 12 states; and 3) facilitated training and provision of resources for the newest states.

Documenting the Implementation and Progress of the Shared Youth Vision

June 2007 marked an important juncture in the evolution of the Shared Youth Vision. At that point, the Federal Partnership had grown and stabilized and focused on supporting a select group of pilot states that had actively embraced the Shared Youth Vision collaborative approach. The Federal Partnership took

the opportunity to examine the Shared Youth Vision's early developmental phases as well as key implementation challenges that might be associated with moving the Shared Youth Vision forward. To document the progress made in the Shared Youth Vision implementation phase, the Federal Partnership, with funds from the DOL, partnered with Abt Associates Inc. to develop this report. The remainder of this report synthesizes insights from the documentation activities, and is broadly organized around three phases.

- Implementation of the Federal Partnership
- Implementation of state-level teams
- Implementation of local pilot programs or systems reform initiatives

Each of these sections emphasizes "strategies for success" that have effectively supported progress in advancing the principles of the Shared Youth Vision.

Documenting the Shared Youth Vision

Abt Associates Inc. was retained to:

- Document key activities and milestones in the Shared Youth Vision implementation at the Federal, state and local service delivery levels.
- Identify design and implementation strategies that have influenced progress to date.
- Provide "real time" input and feedback to the technical assistance team charged with supporting the Shared Youth Vision implementation.
- Prepare a blueprint for practitioners that showcases accomplishments and broadly applicable lessons and strategies.

Between June 2007 and July 2008, the research team:

- Participated in a series of formal debriefings with key stakeholders involved with the conceptualization and implementation of the Shared Youth Vision, including DOL representatives and other Federal Partners.
- Participated in or observed an ongoing series of support activities ranging from Federal Partnership meetings to Community of Practice calls to Webinars.
- Conducted interviews and site visits with states that had made significant progress in implementing the Shared Youth Vision.



Implementation of the Shared Youth Vision Federal Partnership

The stated mission of the Shared Youth Vision Federal Partnership emphasizes:

- Developing approaches to prepare vulnerable and disconnected youth for participating successfully in the global economy;
- Communicating the Shared Youth Vision to states and local workforce service providers;
- Facilitating the alignment of related programs, policies and funds; and
- Leveraging resources and promoting outreach to additional partners committed to the Shared Youth Vision's principles.

To successfully pursue this mission, the Federal Partnership established an effective working structure that promotes sustained participation and commitment among its members. In addition, their effort serves as a platform for transferring the collaborative spirit of the Federal Partnership to state teams and to local pilot initiatives. Feedback from the Federal Partners paints a consistent picture of a productive collaboration that has established a presence and an identity, as well as direction and momentum. The DOL is widely credited with playing a critical role in several key areas, including developing a productive working process, building the Federal Partnership, and concentrating focus on the Shared Youth Vision core mission. Below, we discuss each of these broad developmental areas, and summarize the strategies that have contributed to the successful implementation and growth of the Federal Partnership.

Developing a Working Process

Each youth-serving Federal agency has its own unique organizational mission, culture, staff composition, and resource constraints. In light of this diverse Federal landscape, the Federal Partnership recognizes that a successful working structure has to allow for flexible levels of participation and investment among its members. It also accepts that the Federal Partnership will likely emerge somewhat organically and unpredictably.

Nonetheless, the Federal Partnership recognizes the need for a well-defined and collaborative operating structure. To this end, the team implemented a basic working framework that includes:

- A quarterly meeting schedule
- Rotating meeting hosting responsibilities
- Designated moderator responsibilities

- Available staff support to record minutes and disseminate materials
- Active communication channels to maintain momentum between formal meetings (e.g., common workspace, e-mails)
- A standing invitation to attend or participate regardless of previous involvement

This common sense framework has sent a message of permanence and shared responsibility to participating and prospective partners. Several strategies are particularly important contributors to this productive work process.

Actively distinguish between leadership and ownership:

Federal Partners widely acknowledge that the DOL has demonstrated a highly effective leadership style

that has provided a strong vision and direction while avoiding the perception of proprietary ownership. Stakeholders agree that the DOL has set a highly constructive tone from the outset by promoting a collaborative agenda rather than what may have been perceived as an extension of its own agency-specific mission.

“It’s not [Department of] Labor led, though their staff does a lot of the legwork and they made some of the funding commitments, but we’re all equal partners.”

–Federal Partnership representative

Allow for flexible levels of partnership participation: The Federal Partnership recognizes that each member organization has its own organizational mission, culture, priorities, resource constraints, and staffing flexibility. Therefore, it is unrealistic to expect uniform levels of investment or participation across agencies. The DOL has set an exemplary benchmark by investing significant departmental resources, including staff time. Ultimately, the Federal Partnership recognizes that it is this level of flexibility that will be attractive to future Federal Partners.

Emphasize shared responsibility: While the Federal Partnership allows for flexible levels of participation, it is built on a foundation of shared responsibility. This key principle has been demonstrated from the outset by a series of notable investments made by partner agencies that were critical to the evolution of the Shared Youth Vision. Examples of these include:

- Advanced Technical Assistance Forums (DOJ)
- The Solutions Desk (HHS)
- State pilot grants (DOL)
- Technical assistance (DOL)

Building the Partnership

The Federal Partnership needed first to solidify a core team. This provides the critical mass needed for immediate action as well as to establish the foundation for future growth. Over a four-year period the Federal Partnership identified and enlisted a dedicated set of members who are committed to youth development and have embraced the Shared Youth Vision.

Recruitment employed both informal and more structured outreach. Wherever possible, the Federal Partners used existing forums and relationships as networking opportunities. Federal agencies where there were no existing relationships were targeted more strategically and formally based on:

- Alignment of mission with the Shared Youth Vision
- Perceived interest in the Shared Youth Vision
- Involvement with past or ongoing collaborative initiatives
- Perceived service “gaps” in the existing mix of Federal Partners

Representatives of the Federal Partnership first contacted these agencies through letters from senior agency administrators and follow-up calls inviting them to learn more about the Shared Youth Vision. As part of the outreach, education, and recruitment process, the Federal Partnership engaged its primary technical assistance partner, the School & Main Institute (SMI), to provide a more operational roadmap for implementing the Shared Youth Vision collaborative approach, particularly at the state and local levels. SMI met with interested agency representatives to review the history and evolution of the Federal Partnership, as well as provide direct insight into how the Shared Youth Vision could potentially support their ongoing youth programs. This allowed new partners to join the Federal team with a more operational understanding of the Shared Youth Vision and its potential to promote collaboration within the youth service delivery system.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the growth of the Federal Partnership was, in part, fueled by a long-standing desire, particularly among career staff, to address the challenges of at-risk youth in a more collaborative manner. These professionals bring an important perspective to the Shared Youth Vision in that they fully understand the realistic barriers to interagency coordination. At the same time, their



professional experience has afforded them the organizational insight needed to gradually build support for the Shared Youth Vision within their respective agencies.

Over its four-year history the Federal Partnership has grown to encompass:

- U.S. Department of Defense
 - National Guard Youth Challenge Program
- U.S. Department of Education
 - Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
 - Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
 - Administration for Children and Families
 - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
 - Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
 - Office of Public Housing Investment, Public and Indian Housing
- U.S. Department of Justice
 - Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
- U.S. Department Of Labor
 - Employment and Training Administration
 - Office of Disability Employment Policy
- U.S. Social Security Administration
 - Office of Program Development and Research
- U.S. Department of Transportation
 - Federal Transit Administration
- The Corporation for National and Community Service

The following strategies were particularly critical to the success of this expansion effort.

Leverage existing commitments: The Federal Partnership recognized the value of leveraging *existing* commitments and investments rather than “starting from scratch.” In this spirit, it built upon the visibility and potential of the Coordinating Council, which helped identify a critical mass of core members with existing agency commitments, personal dedication, and expertise. In addition, the integration with the Coordinating Council demonstrated the Shared Youth Vision’s commitment to coordinated planning and action.

Strategically target new partner agencies: Solidifying and growing the Federal Partnerships required identification of both new

Federal agencies and a broader representation of youth programs within existing agencies. Outreach efforts were prioritized in part by feedback from state pilot teams who began to recognize “gaps” in the network of resources required to comprehensively address the range of needs or obstacles facing disconnected youth (e.g., housing, transportation).

In the summer of 2006, the Federal Partnership engaged other youth-serving Federal agencies in the Shared Youth Vision approach with commitments being made by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA), and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNS) to promote the Shared Youth Vision to state and local agencies serving youth. In 2007-2008, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Defense (DOD) became the latest two partners to join the partnership. The DOT funds and operates the “United We Ride” program, an interagency Federal national initiative that supports states and localities in developing coordinated human service transportation delivery systems. The DOD, in partnership with the Governor, funds and operates the “National Guard Youth Challenge Program” which serves high school dropouts between the ages of 16-19. Over the last four years, the Federal Partnership has grown from the original four to nine Federal agencies.

Champion the mission at the senior level: The four original partners are regularly and enthusiastically represented by high-ranking agency representatives, including Deputy Assistant Secretaries from the DOL, and the DOEd, the DOJ Administrator of OJJDP, and the HHS Deputy Associate Commissioner of the Children’s Bureau. In addition to signaling the importance the distinct agencies attached to the initiative, this level of involvement generated opportunities to reach out to other agencies at a level where decisions can be made and resources potentially committed. It also signals to staff that involvement in the Federal Partnership is an agency priority.

Maintaining Mission-Critical Focus

Each individual partner agency is committed to serving at-risk or disconnected youth in a way that reflects its agency’s mission and priorities. The Federal Partnership implemented several strategies that helped to maintain mission-critical focus on the neediest youth.

Create a vision for success: The Shared Youth Vision is an evolving process that does not lend itself to a prescribed set of action steps and sequential work plans. Therefore, it is particularly important to communicate a clear vision of the direction of the Shared Youth

Vision. Federal Partners under the DOL's leadership have tirelessly recounted the history and evolution of the Shared Youth Vision to convey their ultimate vision. This allows stakeholders to "visualize" the significant system reforms that are underway, while serving as an important reference point for today's plans and decisions.

Avoid the tendency for "mission drift": While the Shared Youth Vision recognizes the importance of the broader youth development challenge, the Federal Partnership maintains an unwavering focus on the "neediest youth." This tight focus provides a critical degree of direction, cohesion, and momentum. More importantly, it minimizes the potential for "mission drift" that can defuse the energy, focus and direction of a collaborative effort. The Federal Partners widely acknowledge that the Shared Youth Vision's sustained commitment to the "neediest youth" has provided a rallying point and a sense of urgency that may not have been as prominent under a more broadly interpreted mission.

Avoid the "program" mentality: The Federal Partners recognize that the long-term success of the Shared Youth Vision is more integrally tied to a process than a program. Commitment built around a specific program model or design is more likely to be bound by funding levels, enrollment requirements, and/or outcome targets. In contrast, the Federal Partners continue to view the Shared Youth Vision as an evolving process that emphasizes planning, collaboration, and coordinated action.

"Shared Youth Vision is a verb, not a noun."
–Signature reminder from SYV technical assistance team.



a

Building conceptual awareness before brand awareness: While the Federal team recognizes the importance of marketing, it has restrained the scope of its efforts to avoid the Shared Youth Vision becoming overly aligned with a particular administration or agency. To this end, marketing and communication efforts (e.g., brochures, press releases, speeches) successfully emphasize building familiarity with and support for key concepts, rather than building “brand awareness” around the initiative itself (e.g., logos, separate website, letterhead). This emphasis on concepts over “brand” also helps to maintain the Shared Youth Vision’s unique identity as a process rather than a program.



Formation of the State-Level Teams

The Federal Partnership devoted considerable efforts in establishing its operating structure, membership, and direction. However, the Federal Partnership was also clear that its ultimate goal is to deploy its vision and commitment to state and local settings where direct services to youth are planned and implemented. The Federal Partnership facilitated this expansion in two important ways. First, it continued to model collaborative behavior and joint commitments in its own work. Second, it developed, implemented, and oversaw a flexible technical assistance process to support the formation of state-level Shared Youth Vision teams.

Feedback from state stakeholders helped to identify a number of “success strategies” that aided in the formation of state-level Shared Youth Vision teams. These are discussed below at two levels: approaches adopted by the Federal Partnership in support of the states, and effective state-developed strategies that support states’ own internal efforts to solidify their teams.

Federal Strategies for Supporting State Partnerships

Framework for Supporting Partnerships

- *Systems thinking*
- *Self-interest*
- *Shared vision*
- *Foundation/assets*
- *Infrastructure*
- *Collaborative implementation*

The Federal team understands that partnership formation and growth requires considerably more effort than simply bringing key parties to a meeting and hoping they will work together—it requires a

structured approach and professional expertise. To provide the support and direction the SMI team, working in both group and individual consulting sessions, provided the stakeholders with a framework and an approach to partnership formation. While each state team evolved in its own unique manner, these principles provided a consistent perspective and conceptual framework for building and strengthening the teams. Feedback from the state-level partners provides insight into specific strategies that contribute to the successful formation of state-level Shared Youth Vision teams.

Avoid the perception of a “Federal top-down” mandate:

Feedback from state-level stakeholders suggests that the Shared Youth Vision gained traction in the field in part because it did not rely on a traditional top-down approach. Rather than mandating a prescribed approach, the Federal Partnership “led by example” by modeling its own effective collaborative process. Two key practical decisions reinforced the perception that the Shared Youth Vision was not a mandate from above. First, the regional planning forums were led not by Federal

representatives but by SMI consultants whose expertise is in partnership formation, collaborative system design, and meeting facilitation. More importantly, the Federal Partners were simultaneously engaged in a parallel set of planning and strategy sessions to advance the Federal Shared Youth Vision agenda. This kept the Federal Partnership a part of the process rather than “above” the process.

Create a task-oriented working culture: The Shared Youth Vision could have easily stalled as a long-term, transformational strategy if it had been perceived as more a vision than a practical approach. The Federal Partnership avoided this pitfall by creating a task-oriented working culture from the outset. A conscious effort was made to turn group time into productive work time. Forums skipped the traditional introductory greetings from Federal Partners and opened with working sessions designed to engage state teams in concrete tasks such as developing:

- A "Stuff List" that includes what programs exist and how they are connected
- A crosswalk of state investments
- An organizational plan for a working state collaborative team

This consistent emphasis on tasks and outputs conveyed a level of seriousness and urgency that was sustained throughout the forums.

Seek to “personalize” the Federal bureaucracy: The Federal Partnership recognized early that its success would partly depend on its ability to narrow the perceived distance between Washington, D.C. and the states, and “personalize” the face of the Federal government. This effort was particularly noteworthy at the Advanced Level Forum, and subsequently at the annual Workforce Innovations Conferences, where representatives of the Federal Partners spent productive “face to face” time with the state teams. This “bridge” has been sustained through other initiatives such as the Solutions Desk, which gives state agencies direct access to Federal agency representatives. In the same spirit, the Federal Partners are committed to reaching out to the state teams to establish a direct connection with counterparts at the state level. States credit this investment in relationships with helping break down the “mystique” of the Federal government.

Emphasize non-financial incentive structure: A significant program grant is the usual “carrot” used to entice state and local participation in a strategic

“There’s no [Shared Youth Vision] money but when you get people talking, you find resources that already exist in the community.”
– **State team representative**

Federal initiative. However, to support the Shared Youth Vision approach in the states, only modest planning grants have been awarded. This supports a culture of innovation and relationship building rather than one of compliance with grant requirements. Additionally, the Federal team supplements these planning grants with an active mix of support resources including on-site technical assistance, structured opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, and improved access to Federal Partner agencies. This modified incentive structure in part reflects the realities of the Federal budgetary landscape. At the same time, however, it is a concerted effort to promote a long-term commitment to at-risk and disconnected youth by emphasizing sustainable partnerships and collaborative programming processes.

Maintain focus on the ultimate goal of successful youth integration into the workforce: Each agency participating in the partnerships at the federal and/or state level represents a unique (and often isolated) component of the youth service delivery network. In particular, agencies that address specific barriers such as substance abuse, mental health problems, and family instability have historically lacked a forum, and the resources, to allow their services to be viewed as an intervention on the path to employment and self-sufficiency. At both the federal and state levels, the Shared Youth Vision is creating an environment in which all partners are now more likely to view and plan their services in the context of work readiness, employment, and economic independence. This integrated mission has become a cohesive force in sustaining state partnerships' efforts.

Effectively pace key events and support activities: Since its inception, the Shared Youth Vision has been positioned as a strategic reform as opposed to a discrete program with fixed time parameters. The Federal Partnership is particularly conscious of the pacing of key events and expectations. An overly prescribed timeline would become intrusive and undermine efforts to empower states. Conversely, an overly protracted implementation schedule could result in an "out of sight, out of mind" mentality, particularly as state teams rely on (already overly committed) career staff to advance their Shared Youth Vision agendas. State partners largely agree that the Federal Partnership established an effective pace and spacing of key activities and milestones. This ensures progress and a sense of building momentum while remaining sensitive to the limited resources and financial incentives accompanying the Shared Youth Vision.

State Strategies for Building and Maintaining Momentum

Emerging state-level partnerships receive considerable support and technical assistance from their Federal counterparts. States, however, ultimately are

responsible for harnessing this initial momentum and building their own self-sustaining partnerships. Several strategies appear to be particularly important in gradually transitioning to a fully operational state team.

Integrate the Shared Youth Vision into the existing fabric of state and local initiatives targeting youth: While the Shared Youth Vision can be positioned as a new approach, it is ultimately about more efficient and targeted management of existing resources. Many pilot teams acknowledged from the outset that ongoing state and local initiatives at least partially embodied the Shared Youth Vision collaborative approach. For instance, Alabama’s Children’s Policy Councils (CPC) and Ohio’s Children and Family First Councils are state initiatives with county infrastructures devoted to coordinating an array of youth resources. Rather than creating a “turf” battle, these existing initiatives provide points of common ground and mutual interests that help to advance the collaborative spirit of the Shared Youth Vision. In Alabama, county-level Shared Youth Vision discussions and activities are fully integrated into the monthly agenda of the CPC. Conversely, the CPC readily acknowledges the value of increasing its understanding of, and emphasis on, workforce preparation for youth to support their successful transition to employment.

Draw on basic business principles to support team development: Much like any “start-up” enterprise, the successful formation of state teams is linked to such critical steps as developing a mission statement and a strategic plan. Similarly, these state teams have had to identify and develop a market entry strategy that ensures early success (e.g., target a single youth subgroup, or take a more broad-based approach). The Shared Youth Vision state teams have also had to adopt appropriate marketing and communication efforts to build awareness and participation at a pace that matches their growth strategy. Rhode Island, for instance, conducted market research by gathering input from youth in the design of its web portal and the branding of its new Youth Centers. While the partnerships may not have consciously adopted a business planning framework, its use has been instrumental in the evolution of these new state team ventures.

“Shared Youth Vision is not a program but a way of doing business. It’s getting people talking who hadn’t been talking before.”
– **State team representative**

Sustain a commitment to proactive networking:

Even in the geographically smallest states, the youth development network can be vast, encompassing

government agencies, educational institutions, and community and faith-based organizations. The Shared Youth Vision’s success is ultimately rooted in making connections that foster collaboration within this broadly defined network. State teams realize the importance of

orchestrating this networking process at the state and community level. For instance, Arizona devotes part of each meeting to formally introducing one new agency to the team. In Alabama, part of the state team's rollout entailed county-level meetings devoted extensively to introductions by and networking among community groups. While these activities may seem straightforward, they are important keys to building an awareness of community resources and collaborative opportunities that will ultimately benefit the neediest youth.

Identify and build on common needs and interests: All state partners and stakeholders are linked by their common and abiding commitment to at-risk and disconnected youth. Nonetheless, even within this tightly focused community, agencies will have different responsibilities, target populations, and/or roles in the service delivery process. Thus, it is particularly important to proactively seek out common ground. The state of Ohio has taken an empirical approach to this challenge by implementing a needs assessment survey of key partners. This allows the team to isolate cross-cutting interests and priorities based on respondents' direct feedback. An example of a "common ground" issue that surfaced in Ohio (and many other states) is the transportation challenge. This includes the myriad obstacles (e.g., vehicles, driver's licenses, cost of insurance, limited public transportation) that may constrict access to education, training, services, or a job.

Build on the dedication and experience of youth development professionals: As the state teams grow and mature, the critical role of the experienced youth development professional becomes clearer. While agency representation is valuable at any level (administrative level, executive level), the dedicated youth development professionals bring a unique degree of passion, career commitment, and operational insight to the Shared Youth Vision collaborative approach. Their ongoing recruitment should be a high priority, and engaged partners must have the flexibility and latitude needed to maintain their level of involvement in Shared Youth Vision activities.





Pilot Programs and System Reforms

The 16 state teams that received planning grants were each charged with designing and implementing a local pilot initiative at the service delivery level. These initiatives can broadly be characterized as either **innovative program designs** or **statewide systems reforms**. Program innovations emphasize new or modified service interventions that directly target the states' neediest youth. Systems reforms are generally designed to enhance the service delivery infrastructure or statewide policies in a way that broadly strengthens service providers' ability to fund, plan, or implement youth programs.

The Federal Partnership supported these state teams and their pilot initiatives by providing:

Access to Federal agency representatives: Federal Partners made an organized effort to contact their state and local counterparts to facilitate pilot initiatives involving their agencies' resources or area of expertise. In addition, the Solutions Desk provides a formal line of inquiry for state partners who could benefit from the guidance or support of their Federal counterparts.

Regular opportunities for peer exchange across pilot states: Using the Solutions Desk as the focal point, Community of Practice conference calls are convened monthly. These calls are moderated by Solutions Desk staff and provide updates on pilot initiatives, as well as stimulate an exchange of ideas, information, and prospective resources.

Dedicated Shared Youth Vision resource library on the DOL website: The DOL organized and maintains an extensive electronic resource library on its website. In addition to a variety of background documents, the site contains electronic tools, presentations, and webinar links that can support pilot activities at the state or local level.

Contracted technical assistance: The Federal Partnership assembled an array of specialized technical assistance resources to support the formation and growth of the state teams. These resources can also be flexibly deployed to design and monitor pilot initiatives. In addition, a number of pilot states secure technical assistance independently.

Strategies for Success

Regardless of whether pilot activities emphasize a model program intervention, or a more systemic reform, the Shared Youth Vision has been

successfully integrated into these activities. Selected successful strategies along with specific examples from the field are highlighted below.

Leveraging existing resources and/or program initiatives:

The Shared Youth Vision approach acknowledges that resources targeting the neediest youth will always be less than ideal. Thus, an intensified investment requires a concerted effort to creatively pool and leverage resources, and/or streamline programs, and services. This includes integrating the Shared Youth Vision into existing statewide initiatives, infrastructure, or planning frameworks.

“We can no longer say that we don’t do that [service]; if we don’t do it one of our partners does.”

–State team representative

Ohio: To more flexibly serve its highly at-risk ex-offender population, the Ohio Shared Youth Vision partnership creatively orchestrated an internal exchange of Federal funds. The state petitioned for a waiver from the DOL that authorized the release of local Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds to support a statewide initiative. Local WIA funds were then replaced with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds, which were currently in surplus at the state level. TANF funds serve the same population as WIA funds, but cannot be spent on juvenile offenders. Many of the youth needing services were on the TANF caseload, but could not be served due to their criminal records. With the exchange of funds, Ohio was able to fund its TANF/WIA state pilot initiative, which is currently operating in four (and soon to be six) counties across the state.

Delaware: Delaware consciously modeled its Shared Youth Vision team composition after the Federal Partnership and integrated its operation with the statewide Youth Council of the Delaware Workforce Investment Board. After statewide partner training, a series of local provider groups were formed that focused on capacity building through the adaptation of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration’s Strategic Prevention Framework. While the Framework originated in the substance abuse prevention field, it takes a comprehensive “life span” view that is fully consistent with the Shared Youth Vision.

Rhode Island: The state realigned its program procurement process to reflect the Shared Youth Vision’s focus on collaboration by combining funding from three sources (WIA, Governor’s Workforce Board, and Adult Education) into a single integrated Request For Proposal. The result is in an estimated tenfold increase in the number of youth served relative to independent funding.

Florida: Based on focus group feedback, the Shared Youth Vision team is piloting a Youth One Stop Center to provide a “convenient, effective, efficient and holistic” approach to serving youth in Charlotte County. To maximize efficiency and coordination, the Center is integrated with Family Service

Centers, which offers both confidential space, and access to multiple social services. The strategic foundation of the Youth One Stop is a newly formed Re-Entry Board that proactively coordinates services for youth.

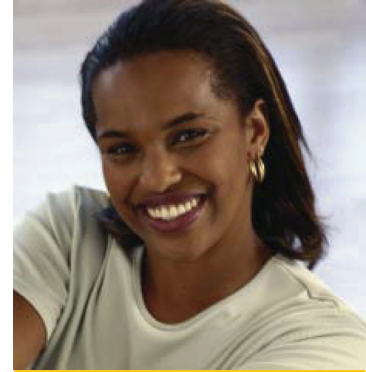
Alabama: The Alabama Shared Youth Vision team worked to consciously integrate local efforts with existing Children’s Policy Councils (CPCs) in every county in the state. While more broadly focused, the CPCs provide a natural forum for local information exchange and program collaboration as well as an opportunity to promote longer term emphasis on workforce development and economic self-sufficiency. The Shared Youth Vision’s collaborative approach has been further expanded at the state level with the 2007 Executive Order 36, which created a highly integrated State Workforce Planning Council that targets adult populations.

Engaging employers and targeting high growth sectors: The Shared Youth Vision promotes self-sufficiency among at-risk youth through preparation for and participation in the job market. Employer needs, interests, and expectations need to be actively integrated into pilot activities.

Rhode Island: Working through the Governor’s Workforce Board, the Shared Youth Vision state team has leveraged the involvement of several sectoral partnerships (e.g., construction, marine trades, and biotech) as well as a number of contract recruiters. In addition, the team has engaged the Workforce Development Sub-Committee of the Rhode Island Society of Human Resources Management. This allows the state partnership to maintain its focus on the challenge of preparing the neediest youth for employment in high wage, high growth occupations where employers are experiencing shortages of both technical and “soft” skills.

Utah: The Youth Vision Team (YVT) has engaged an Industry Sector Specialist from the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) as a YVT member. Through this partnership, DWS will invite the target youth population to annual projects coordinated through business and industry which include Construction Career Days, Motor Fest, and Summer Health Camps. Additionally, employers have been approached to become “Door Openers” to more formally engage youth in activities such as mentoring, internships, job shadowing, practice interviews, and tutoring.

Florida: As part of its pilot initiative in Orange County, the Shared Youth Vision partnership has engaged the support of Employ Florida Banner Center Construction (BCC). BCC targets the needs of the high growth construction sector, and has agreed to establish ten virtual training stations in the Orange Youth Academy, a juvenile justice residential facility. Further strengthening the partnership, the Eckerd Family Foundation is investing \$200,000 to support the transition plans of students exiting the juvenile justice



commitment programs who are not eligible for the same tuition waivers as foster care youth.

Communication for greater access across the system: Making information more accessible to end-users through the latest technological means is highly consistent with the Shared Youth Vision's commitment to coordination.

Alabama: The partnership is actively promoting the statewide "Connect 211" as one of the core building blocks of its Shared Youth Vision activities. The automated system is a phone-based resource for connecting individuals with community health and human service resources.

Minnesota: User-friendly regional career information websites support the Outreach to Schools Project. Preliminary websites for four rural regions in Northwest Minnesota were recently launched and can be accessed through the state's Shared Youth Vision webpage.

Florida: WORKSource has created a list of youth service providers, and continues to update information and add partners. A webpage dedicated to the state's Shared Youth Vision activities is also on line. The site is accessible to partners and board members, and contains a link to the provider survey, a list of upcoming focus groups, marketing materials, and project updates.

New Hampshire: Youth Voices, a leadership group of young adults nominated by their local workforce board, has developed a website that provides information about employment, training and scholarships; family housing and financial services; and volunteer and community service opportunities for youth across the state.

"Youth workers are building human potential. You need to think about developing that individual, preferably in a way that helps the community be aware of his/her important contributions."

- State team representative

Engaging the youth voice and energy: Even the most comprehensive and well-intentioned programs run the risk of being perceived as impersonal and out of touch with at-risk youth. Certain Shared Youth Vision pilots have made a concerted effort to proactively involve youth in the development of ideas, concepts, and materials as well as in the delivery of program services.

Arizona: The Partners Assuring Youth Success (PAYS) program seeks to ensure the successful transition of youth from foster care to independent living. The model employs youth community liaisons who have transitioned out of the foster care system and can provide credible guidance and perspective for current participants.

Arkansas: The Arkansas Youth Development Collaborative convened a three-day State Youth Summit in 2008 that culminated with a youth service day involving 500–700 youth coinciding with National Youth Service Day.

Minnesota: The Connecting Youth to Communities and Careers Project (C3) uses a unique model of employing youth with disabilities as interns to contact community organizations and enter resource information into its database.

New Hampshire: The state team initiated *Youth Voices*, a leadership group of young adults nominated by their local workforce board. *Youth Voices* also functions as a subcommittee of the State of New Hampshire Youth Council with members meeting annually to determine which projects they want to focus on as a group. They also identify topics and programs of interest, and invite individuals representing those issues to talk about them at their monthly meetings.

Iowa: The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development is operating a Shared Youth Vision pilot intervention that targets youth emerging from the juvenile justice and foster care systems. Both the Dubuque and Buena Vista County models are integrating an Iowa-based leadership and youth engagement model called “Elevate.” In addition to connecting youth to peers with similar backgrounds, the model is designed to further educate stakeholders (e.g., policy makers, legislators, potential foster parents) about the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and the needs of these youth.

Engaging new partners to address

service gaps: One of the Shared Youth Vision’s key underpinnings is the importance of assembling a comprehensive, and coordinated, service and support structure. In this spirit, state teams have successfully engaged new partners to most effectively support the neediest youth.

“You don’t have to be everything to everyone.”
–State team representative

Arizona: Arizona engaged Central Arizona College (CAC) as a partner in its PAYS program targeting transitioning foster care youth. Specifically, the college has made a dedicated counselor available to proactively support those PAYS enrollees who are attending CAC as part of their independent living transition plan.

Kansas: The Niles Home for Children, a leader in youth services in Kansas City, Missouri, and reaching across into Kansas, has recently joined the local Shared Youth Vision team. The Niles Home has been serving youth on both sides of the Kansas/Missouri state line since 1883, and continues to be a strong advocate for the well-being of youth. This agency has a strong partnership with the Kansas juvenile justice system, and works with many youth who are incarcerated along with being in foster care.



Minnesota: The state team has engaged the services of the nonprofit Pacer Center, which has a long history of collaboration to support integrated transition planning for disabled youth. In addition, the Center has refined the concept of parents serving in a critical case manager role through its Parents Helping Parents initiative. This invaluable experience and expertise allows the Center to serve not only as a team member but also as an intermediary dedicated to the growth and maturation of the Shared Youth Vision pilot team in Minnesota.

Creating and using standardized tools, forms, and measures: While each partner agency has its own unique data, measurement, and reporting needs, the Shared Youth Vision strongly encourages the use of common forms, definitions, and measurement tools. This will help create a system that reduces the paperwork burden on young people, and truly has “no wrong door.”

Ohio: Effective July 2007, the statewide data collection system was modified to capture data on the targeted Shared Youth Vision populations. The data collection is mandatory for WIA participants and all individuals ages 16–21 in the labor exchange system.

Rhode Island: The state partnership is in the process of developing a universal intake and assessment form. While each agency will supplement the form, the aim is to consistently gather a core set of consensus items that provide basic information on each individual. To address at-risk youth’s inherent distrust of systems and forms, the design process includes active youth input. In addition, the team is reviewing confidentiality policies from each partner agency to address the challenge of data sharing.

Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

Clearly much has been accomplished in advancing the Shared Youth Vision at the federal, state, and local levels. The Federal Partnership has provided the direction and support needed to successfully transfer the vision to the state and community level where the needs of at-risk and disconnected youth are directly addressed. As this collaborative effort continues to evolve, a number of challenges will need to be addressed going forward if the Shared Youth Vision is to be fully realized.

Strengthening the Federal Partnership

Sharing the leadership roles and responsibilities: The DOL has played a prominent role so far in shaping and implementing the collaborative Shared Youth Vision strategy in conjunction with the Federal Partnership. As the Federal Partnership sustains its leadership role over time, it is important for these responsibilities to be shared among the Federal Partners. Inquiries from the field regarding the future of the Shared Youth Vision inevitably focus on decisions, policies, or actions of the Federal Partners. The spirit of the Shared Youth Vision will have taken hold when these questions are directed towards the Federal Partnership as a collective. State-level partnerships must also remain sensitive to this same issue and the importance of shared leadership.

Piloting innovations at the Federal level: To date, much of the work of the Federal Partnership has been devoted to team building and extending the reach of the Shared Youth Vision to the states. In the spirit of modeling the collaborative approach, it is important that the Federal Partnership also explore new or innovative ways for Federal agencies to more directly promote the Shared Youth Vision agenda. This may include for instance, the cross-agency, joint funding of grants targeting needy youth. Ideally, the jointly prepared grant solicitation would explicitly emphasize the Shared Youth Vision. Similarly, the Federal team could pilot one or more initiatives that address common challenges (e.g., transportation) facing all state/local youth development systems.

Broadening the Teams

Developing deeper support within partner agencies: To date, both the Federal Partnership and state teams have engaged a broad array of stakeholders. In select instances, however, the commitment is often embodied in a single representative or designee. As such, the realistic commitment of the agency often rests with the availability and flexibility of a single individual's work schedule. Seeking to build awareness, participation, and commitments more broadly within an agency is critical to the Shared Youth Vision's future.

Not only do these partners need to engage more representatives whose responsibilities and expertise directly involve youth development, but those who are empowered to commit agency resources as well.

Engaging K-12 education system at the federal, state, and local level:

The long-term success of the Shared Youth Vision is critically dependent on adopting a holistic and highly integrated view of the challenges facing our neediest youth. As such, both prevention, and remediation strategies must draw on the expertise of a full array of public agencies, philanthropic foundations, and faith-based and community organizations. Particularly critical to the sustained success of the Shared Youth Vision is the active commitment of the K-12 public education system that along with parents, plays a uniquely influential role in shaping the life trajectory of our youth.

Preparing for the Future

Meeting growing expectations: It is important that the Shared Youth Vision not become a victim of its own success. Both federal and state-level partnerships must recognize that their considerable progress to date “ups the ante” to sustain collaborative efforts and commitments to the neediest youth. At the same time, dedicated resources and support are being scaled back in order to promote self-sufficiency of the state teams. Simultaneously operating with increased expectations and fewer resources poses an inherent challenge that must be managed carefully and conscientiously. Of particular importance is the need to gradually shift the technical assistance strategy to further emphasize skill building and sustainability.

Shaping the “intermediate” vision: State-level partnerships have a clear vision of today’s youth development system as well as a solid view of the long-term system transformation that is underway. To facilitate this extended journey, it will be valuable for federal, state, and local stakeholders to always have a clear understanding of the interim road ahead, specifically as it concerns basic questions about next steps, future funding, and measureable expectations. Most immediately, the states express a need for understanding a transition strategy that addresses potential instability arising from change in administration, agency heads, and partner representatives.

Measuring progress and success: The Federal Partners have a long-standing commitment to measuring and tracking the performance of all of their major initiatives. In this context, it is important to re-emphasize that the Shared Youth Vision is a *process rather than a program*, and does not readily lend itself to traditional evaluation measures. Nonetheless, the Shared Youth Vision does represent a significant strategic investment to transform the youth development delivery system. As such, it will be important for the Federal Partnership to develop an evaluation framework that can begin to capture the progress, value, and benefits of this collaborative effort.

Conclusion

The Shared Youth Vision was not intended to be a new program design or youth development model. Rather, it is intended to guide a collaborative investment in the neediest youth of our society. The Shared Youth Vision’s implementation and evolution will play out differently in different settings depending upon, for instance:

- Existing commitments to at-risk youth
- Competing social and budgetary priorities
- Staff flexibility and expertise
- Economic trends and needs of employers
- Existing infrastructure and initiatives devoted to serving youth
- History and track record of integration and partnerships

The Shared Youth Vision partners within any state or local community must understand this broader context in a way that allows them to chart and navigate their own course. While there is no single approach, there are many common considerations and decisions that each state team will face as it continues to integrate the Shared Youth Vision into its youth development framework to effectively and collaboratively serve those most in need.

“Does our team...?”	“Or rather do we...?”
Create a new partnership structure?	Dovetail with an existing initiative?
Engage the maximum number of partners?	Only engage those who can commit time and resources?
Engage employers from the outset?	Engage employers after developing a more concrete strategy for securing their commitment?
Actively publicize the Shared Youth Vision to attract partners and attention?	Consciously “fly under the radar” where politics are less likely to play a role?
Create program traction and success working with a single target group (e.g., ex-offenders, youth transitioning out of foster care)?	Take a more inclusive approach that may generate a stronger stakeholder base from the outset?
Limit the initial state partnership to a committed set of core players?	Seek to involve ancillary partners that may be only peripherally involved?

Balancing these considerations is more art than science, and there is no single prescription for success. In this spirit, the successful partnerships recognize that the Shared Youth Vision is not a solution, but rather an opportunity to fundamentally re-shape the youth development network by:

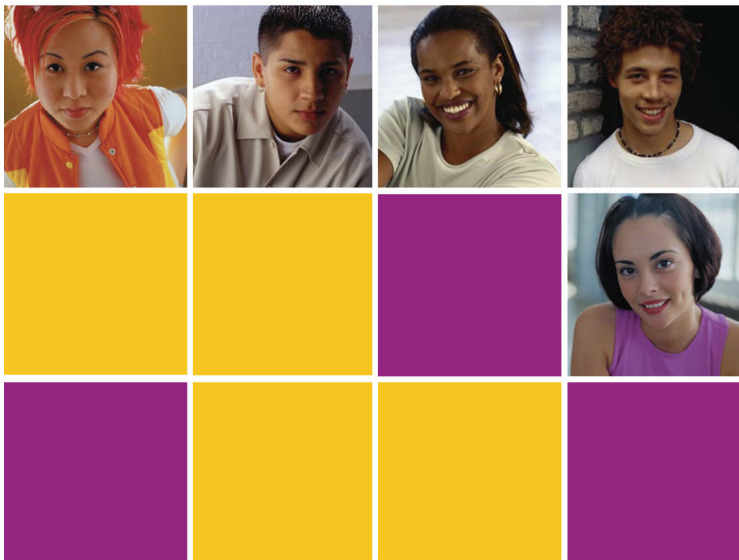
- Emphasizing common interests rather than separate agency missions
- Narrowing the “gap” between “Washington, D.C. and the field”
- Refocusing the youth development discussion on results and returns rather than being inhibited by the shortage of resources
- Planning more strategically and less at the individual program level
- Pursuing more system-wide reforms that strengthen and integrate the delivery network
- Sharing the responsibilities and triumphs of helping the neediest youth to succeed

The Shared Youth Vision will owe its sustained success to the same two factors that have made it a transcendent force for system reform. First, the Shared Youth Vision partnerships take a **common sense** approach, recognizing that collaborative planning and programming will produce better results and returns than a system characterized by fragmentation, duplication, and isolated decision making. Second, they display an **uncommon commitment** to the long-term vision that extends well beyond program and agency boundaries in pursuit of the ultimate goal: workforce success and economic self-sufficiency for our country’s neediest youth.



Appendix

Shared Youth Vision Timeline



Shared Youth Vision Timeline

2002

December 23, 2002: White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth established to develop a “framework for Federal youth policy that encompasses a comprehensive Federal response to the problems facing America’s youth.”

2003

October 2003: Release of the *White House Task Force Report on Disadvantaged Youth* emphasizing the importance of better management, better accountability, better connections and giving priority to the neediest youth.

2004

January 2004: Four Federal agencies of the DOJ’s Coordinating Council form the Shared Youth Vision Federal Partnership. Core team consisted of U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Justice and Labor.

March 2004: A quarterly meeting schedule was established for the Federal Partnership, with rotating hosting responsibilities.

November -December 2004: Regional Youth Forums held in Philadelphia PA; Chicago, IL; and Phoenix, AZ. Designed to formally introduce state youth development professionals to the Shared Youth Vision approach and begin formation of state teams.

2005

Ongoing recruitment of additional Federal Partners for the Federal Partnership.

Structured follow-up to Regional Youth Forums including:

- Assistant Secretary sent follow-up letters to all Governors of states that attended or did not attend the Regional Forums
- Created an email system (youthfed@dol.gov)
- Created “Federal/State Benchmarking Tool”
- Development of Shared Youth Vision website (www.doleta.gov/ryf/)

2006

Ongoing recruitment of additional Federal Partners for the Federal Partnership.

The following agencies joined the Federal Partnership:

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
 - Office of Public Housing Investment, Public and Indian Housing
- U.S. Social Security Administration
 - Office of Program Development and Research
- Corporation for National and Community Service

July 2006: Shared Youth Vision Federal and state strategy session at Workforce Innovations Conference, Anaheim, CA.

September 2006: Advanced Level Technical Assistance Youth Vision Forum held in Atlanta for sixteen states competitively selected to receive additional support in Shared Youth Vision team goal setting, resource alignment, and asset mapping.

2007

Ongoing recruitment of additional Federal Partners for the Federal Partnership.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's United We Ride program became a member of the Federal Partnership.

January-March 2007: Awarded Pilots Grants to 16 states to support the continued formation of state teams and implement either pilot program designs or system reforms that integrate principles of Shared Youth Vision.

March 2007: Establishment of "Solutions Desk" to provide call-in access to Federal Partner representatives who can share agency-specific expertise with state pilot teams. Solutions Desk subsequently responsible for facilitating monthly "community of practice" calls to promote information exchange across states.

April-June 2007: Shared Youth Vision Regional Dialogue Meetings hosted by DOL/Employment and Training Administration's regional offices. The meetings provided all states an opportunity to discuss their youth development strategies in the context of the Shared Youth Vision approach.

June 2007: Abt Associates begins Shared Youth Vision "Implementation Study" designed to document the evolution of the approach and strategies that facilitated or impeded its implementation.

July 2007: Shared Youth Vision Federal and state teams strategy session held at the Workforce Innovations Conference in Kansas City, KS.

2008

Ongoing recruitment of additional Federal Partners for the Federal Partnership.

The Department of Defense, National Guard Youth Challenge Program, became a member of the Federal Partnership.

January 2008: Integration of the DOL's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) as newest technical assistance provider targeting youth with disabilities.

January 2008: Announced pairing of pilot states with 12 new states to promote information sharing, expansion of the Shared Youth Vision.

January 2008: Federal Partners host "mixer" in New Orleans to facilitate coordinated response to local investment in at-risk youth as part of a National Emergency Grant addressing post Hurricane Katrina re-development.

January 2008: Solutions Desk initiates publication of monthly newsletter to enhance information sharing across states.

June 2008: Two day meeting in Tulsa, OK to expand the Shared Youth Vision collaborative approach beyond the original 16 state pilot teams. An additional 12 states were selected to participate in an ongoing "information exchange" with designated partners from the original state pilot teams.

July 2008: Shared Youth Vision federal and state strategy session at the Workforce Innovations Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana.



