key
principles
for effective
youth
councils

YOUTH COUNCIL TOOLKIT **MODULE 1**

table of contents

introduction

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) is intended to improve the quality of youth services. Workforce Investment Boards through their Youth Councils serve as the vehicle to develop comprehensive and integrated strategies to help in-school and out-of-school youth prepare for successful entry into the workforce. This document is a reference tool that provides Youth Councils with key principles for effective operation. These areas represent principle elements identified by Federal, state, and local practitioners.

create a shared vision that reflects the community's needs and values

Develop a vision statement that identifies the target population and states the purpose of the youth service delivery system. A successful vision statement should be brief, easily understood, and foster maximum buy-in from all stakeholders.

fuse the youth development approach with the traditional workforce development approach

Helping a young person find a job is no longer enough – effective youth programs must work together to help youth develop skills, knowledge, and competencies for today's complex workplace and social environment. Youth development focuses on a young person's assets; communicates high expectations; provides opportunities for leadership; encourages a sense of personal identity; broadens a young person's perspective; provides safe surroundings; and connects youth with caring adults. Thus, the youth development approach empowers Youth Councils to create a system of effective services and service connections.

address the economic development needs of local communities

Work in partnership with your public officials and Chamber of Commerce to develop economic development strategies that will attract and retain business and industry. Economic development is important to ensure a high level of employment, job quality, and earnings for the workforce. Youth Councils must encourage business and industry to tap into this untapped resource – youth.

conduct community resource mapping

Community Resource Mapping helps Youth Councils identify youth and employer service needs, gaps, and duplications. This process enables Youth Councils to discover information such as what resources are currently devoted to youth; the extent of their capacity to deliver services; and their geographic reach. Community Resource Mapping will help the Youth Council set its goals and objectives.

create a youth system strategic plan

A strategic plan is the blueprint that outlines the strategies to be utilized by the Youth Council to address identified problem areas. The basic steps of strategic planning are:

1. Developing a full understanding of the issues;

2. Identifying goals to be achieved;

3. Setting objectives that measure the progress toward achieving the goal (s);

4. Developing strategies to achieve goals;

5. Articulating roles and responsibilities; and

6. Creating a timetable and work plan.

broaden the role of the youth council

Youth Councils should work in partnership with the local WIB to become the local planning body for youth development services. These roles include:

1. Advocating on behalf of youth development services;

2. Making funding decisions;

3. Exploring and leveraging public and private resources;

4. Overseeing, assessing and recommending providers;

5. Monitoring and evaluating youth workforce development services;

6. Developing and sponsoring interagency training; and

7. Setting standards and performance measures for services.

determine the staffing needs of the youth council

Adequate staffing will play a major role in the productivity of the Council. Staff functions may include accounting, budgeting, financial and cash management functions; procurement and purchasing functions such as developing Request For Proposals (RFP's); payroll functions; and conducting field visits for oversight and performance monitoring. Additional functions are listed in 667.220 of the WIA: Final Rules. Note that it is allowable to charge staff salaries to program and not administrative costs.

broaden the membership of the youth council to include employers and educators

There are several advantages to recruiting business leaders as members of the Youth Council.

Employers may: promote a market-driven system; build relationships and credibility with other employers; promote an outcome driven Council; help link youth with real jobs and career opportunities; negotiate relationships and broker resources; and promote the alignment of training and services with business needs. Youth Councils may also conduct regular consultation sessions with key business organizations, trade associations and/or professional organizations in the community and recruit a broad cross section of employers to serve on board committees.

There are several advantages to recruiting educators as members of the Youth Council.

Educators may: establish creative strategies on how to leverage funds to meet the academic needs of youth participants (i.e. Average Daily Attendance Dollars); provide creative dropout prevention strategies; monitor service providers to ensure strong linkages between academic and occupational learning; monitor service providers to ensure quality delivery of tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to completion of high school. Programs for in-school youth that are well coordinated with school-based activities will insure support for student learning & achieving academic excellence.

leverage financial and programmatic resources

Leverage both WIA and other available funds and services to ensure that all ten program services are accessible to eligible youth in the community. The ten program services are:

1. Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction, leading to completion of secondary school, including dropout prevention strategies;

2. Alternative secondary school services;

3. Summer employment opportunities linked to academic and occupational learning;

4. Paid and unpaid work experiences, including internships and job shadowing;

5. Occupational skills training;

6. Leadership development opportunities;

7. Supportive services;

8. Adult mentoring;

9. Follow-up services; and

10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling.

Identify those program services that are currently being provided in the local area and identify and fill any existing service gaps through competitive selection or community partnerships.

establish conflict of interest policies

Conflict of interest policies are intended to prohibit any member of the Board from benefitting from decisions made by the Board. Youth Council members should also recuse themselves from any situation which may present a conflict of interest, such as voting on recommendations which involve the selection of certain service providers that would prove financially beneficial to Youth Council members or their families.

engage parents and youth on youth councils

Engaging Parents is critical to the successful operation of Youth Councils. As consumers of the system, parents possess institutional knowledge about what does and does not work in their community. Parents may be recruited in a variety of ways, such as through door-to-door outreach, neighborhood associations, and faith-based organizations.

Engaging Youth, including youth with disabilities, is critical to building a successful client-driven and client-friendly system. Youth Councils may engage youth by establishing a Youth Council composed of young people; hosting small focus groups of youth; promoting program services by sponsoring social/recreational events; establishing paid and unpaid positions for youth on the Youth Council; and offering youth internships and job-shadowing experiences with partner organizations.

The key to actively engaging youth is listening to them regarding their experiences and what they feel is needed in the community. Questions, such as the following, could serve as a guide to helping youth identify what they consider areas of need: 1) What kind of workforce assistance would be helpful? 2) Based on their experience in other programs, what did they like or dislike? 3) What changes would they suggest? and 4) What other kinds of activities would they like in their community – recreation, sports, teen forums, cultural activities, etc.?

establish a youth services system based on accountability

The youth workforce investment system must be based on clear, measurable indicators of success. Youth service providers must meet or exceed board requirements – with the results made public. Councils need to establish effective monitoring systems in accounting and reporting processes, corrective action plans, performance benchmarks, performance review processes, and mechanisms for ongoing feedback and continuous improvement.