

## IMPROVING SAN FRANCISCO'S YOUTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

### BACKGROUND

Over the past five years, a great deal of research and thought has been given to improving San Francisco's Youth Workforce Development System. While the system has been rich with resources, it has been extremely fragmented and lacking an overall vision or coordination. In addition, the quality of services varies greatly, resulting in "islands of excellence in a sea of mediocrity".

Through the San Francisco Resource Mapping Initiative (2004) and a resource mapping of city departments (2005), an estimated \$14 million in services for youth up to age 24 were provided or contracted through more than a dozen city departments. Federal monies accounted for less than 20% of these resources, while local general fund dollars accounted for close to 60%.

In 2007, the Mayor's Transitional Youth Task Force released its report on the conditions of and resources available to young people who have the most difficulty transitioning to adulthood - those who are exiting public systems; have dropped out of high school; are homeless; have a disability or other special need; or are young unmarried parents.

Each of these reports made a number of recommendations to improve San Francisco's youth workforce system.

	SF Resource Mapping	Public Workforce Mapping	Transitional Youth Task Force
<b>System Improvements and Policy Issues</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconstitute the Youth Council</li> <li>• Create a youth workforce intermediary &amp; engage the private sector</li> <li>• Improve One Stop services to be more 'youth friendly'</li> <li>• Make it city policy to help disconnected youth transition to adulthood/workforce</li> <li>• Require City departments to include youth in decision-making</li> </ul>	X	X X X	X  X X
<b>Coordination and Linkages</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align funding and RFP's; overall goals, outcomes, standards and performance measures; recruitment, intake and assessment protocols and MIS requirements of city departments</li> <li>• Integrate SFUSD into the YWD system</li> <li>• Create and sustain relationships with the private sector</li> </ul>	X X X	X  X	
<b>Research, Planning &amp; Evaluation</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use data to inform planning and funding</li> <li>• Develop MIS capacity and evaluation expertise</li> </ul>	X X		
<b>Operational and Field Building Issues</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide forums for all stakeholders to engage</li> <li>• Invest in professional development and capacity building</li> <li>• Expand and strengthen MYEEP and YouthWorks</li> <li>• Develop an information clearinghouse</li> <li>• Develop neighborhood multi-service centers for disconnected youth</li> <li>• Increase opportunities for transitional age youth</li> </ul>	X X	X  X X	X X

## **Strategic Plan of Youth Council**

Following a year long community planning process, the Youth Council developed and adopted a vision, mission and set of strategic priorities to guide its future work. The plan focused on the need for overall system integration and helped to lay the foundation to shift from focusing solely on WIA funds and services to developing an infrastructure and process to coordinate and best utilize all of the City's youth workforce and related support services.

The vision for the system, approved by both the WISF and Youth Council is that *San Francisco offers a comprehensive and coordinated system of care, which provides a continuum of quality services to ensure that all youth are equipped with the skills, knowledge and abilities to prepare them for successful employment, academic and life choices by age 25.*

### **Primary Strategies:**

- I. Focus on occupational preparation that leads to youth employment and successful transitions.
- II. Emphasize HS graduation or certification as minimum performance expectations.
- III. Target investments to at-risk, out-of-school youth, those in-school who are not on track to graduate, youth in the juvenile justice and foster care system, and pregnant and parenting teens.
- IV. Engage youth in leadership roles and evaluation functions to assure service designs support a comprehensive youth development system.
- V. Create a high level of agreement between organizations (DHS, SFUSD, DR, DCYF, and Juvenile Probation) to allow for seamless program delivery.
- VI. Support and finance neighborhood-based youth centers.

### **Supportive Strategies:**

- I. Engage the private sector in creating more youth employment opportunities connected to youth's career aspirations.
- II. Create common intake, referral, assessment tools and strategies, including an individual youth plan for shared accountability of those served. "hand-off, not drop-off".
- III. Invest in contractors who are leveraging multiple funding streams and providing comprehensive services either themselves or with partners.
- IV. Mobilize, expand and align adult mentors to support youth beyond funded activities or timelines.
- V. Align RFP's and agency policies from primary youth investors to create a comprehensive service strategy until age 25.
- VI. Balance investments to assure capacity building of staff and system-building efforts.
- VII. Develop agreements with SFUSD to support in-school and out-of-school alternative systems for student achievement.

## **LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT**

### **Common Performance Measures**

Over the past five years, six federal agencies have been tasked with simplifying the various outcomes reported for both youth and adult funded programs. The Department of Labor has proposed streamlining WIA Youth Measures to focus on basic and occupational skills training

Local Workforce Investment Act Areas in California have begun reporting against the Common Measures beginning in July 2007. In December of 2007, the CA Employment Development Department applied for and got approval from the Department of Labor to implement these Common

Measures retroactively to July 2007. Common Measures apply for all youth ages 14-21. There is no longer a distinction between younger and older youth. The new common measures are:

- Placement in employment or education
- Attainment of a degree or certificate
- Literacy & numeracy gains (for out-of-school youth only)

The implications of these Common Measures are that:

- There is a shift from Older/Younger Youth to In-School/Out-of-School Youth
- In-School Youth must remain engaged until they graduate or receive a GED and go onto employment or post-secondary education or military or advance training.
- Out-of-School youth who are basic skills deficient will likely need more time to improve one or more EFLs.
- Programs that enroll WIA youth for the summer only are unlikely to achieve positive outcomes.

Common Measures have not changed eligibility requirements for participants. In addition, the local plan must ensure that all youth have access to the 10 required program elements outlined in the WIA legislation

## **FISCAL CONTEXT**

Over the past 25 years, the federal investment in workforce training has steadily declined, generally averaging a 10-20% reduction each year. A 15% reduction is anticipated for 2008/09. WIA funds currently account for approximately 15% of San Francisco's youth workforce development resources. In addition, the shift from short term interventions and stand-alone summer programs to longer term and more comprehensive services for youth has resulted in a severe reduction in the number of youth being served.

While San Francisco served over 2000 youth in summer employment in the early 1990's, the system now serves approximately 250 young people each year through more comprehensive strategies. The decrease in investment for workforce training is mirrored in the decrease in the numbers of young people who successfully find independent employment. Nationally, the summer youth employment rate last year was only 34.8%, the lowest annual average employment rate for teens ever recorded since the end of World War II.

During this same period, however, San Francisco has countered many of these cuts with local investments to create workplace opportunities for young people. The majority of this increase has been in services provided through the Children's Fund for youth up to age 18 administered by the Department of Children, Youth & Their Families – over 10.5 million for 2007/08 providing services to over 2200 youth. But despite increased policy attention, there continues to be a significant gap in funding and services targeted to transition age youth, ages 18-24.

## **CURRENT YOUTH WORKFORCE SERVICES**

During the 2007/08 contract year, OEWD contracted with 11 providers that offered a range of activities to in and out-of-school youth to improve their educational and workforce outcomes.

In addition, over 2200 young people access services through the City's One Stop Centers each year - using on-site computers, receiving program orientations, job search assistance and job placement. While large numbers of young people walk through the doors of the One Stops, however, there has been limited capacity to provide more intensive or individualized services needed by young people. In addition, the sites are frequently identified as being "non-youth friendly" and lacking in youth cultural competence.

## **STRATEGIC DIRECTION**

Given the continuing decrease in federal workforce funds for youth workforce development, it is imperative that San Francisco better utilize and leverage other available resources to provide employment and training opportunities for youth, particularly those who face the greatest challenges in transitioning to adulthood.

In accordance with the recommendations of the aforementioned research and the priorities adopted by the Youth Council and WISF, OEWD will focus on the following in 2008-09:

- ➔ Develop an allocation plan that prioritizes the primary and supportive strategies identified by the Youth Council
- ➔ Prioritize the use of WIA funds for services targeting youth ages 17-21 and involved in public systems
- ➔ Allocate funding to improve youth services at the One Stops and Neighborhood Based Workforce Centers