

From: Education Working Group
To: Youth Council
Re: Recommended Goals, Priorities, and Structure of Youth Workforce Programs
Date: November 26, 2009

Background

In 2004, the Youth Council adopted the following vision for the youth workforce system along with a strategic plan designed to achieve this vision:

“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”.

In March 2009, the Youth Council reaffirmed its support of this vision and the existing strategic plan. It also recognized that, in the current and future economy, in order for young people to thrive as adults, they need a strong academic foundation. Therefore, the Council further adopted that:

- the youth workforce system be designed to make it possible for every youth in San Francisco to complete high school and to obtain a post secondary credential, and
- all City departments, the San Francisco Unified School District, City College of San Francisco, the business community, and non-profit organizations should work together to achieve this goal and.

The Council charged its Education Working Group with developing recommendations for implementing this goal. This memo contains the recommendations of the Working Group.

Recommendation One: Adopt a Unified Purpose for Youth Workforce Programs

The purpose of youth workforce programs should be to prepare young people for career success. Since educational attainment is the single best predictor of future career and economic success, the central purposes of providing workforce development opportunities for both youth ages 14-17, and young adults ages 18-24, should be to support the educational attainment necessary to reach their career goals and to provide them with opportunities to explore career alternatives. While work opportunities also provide young people with income and contribute to their general development, the City’s workforce investments will have the greatest pay-off if they are used primarily to help youth obtain the academic and other skills critical to career success

**Recommendation Two:
Target Investments and Strategies to Serve the Youth and Young Adults Most in need of Educational-Oriented Workforce Opportunities**

In order to examine the priority populations for services and the types of programs and services needed to achieve the above goals, the Working Group developed a framework that focuses on the needs of various groups of youth and young adults. This framework defines youth as either: ‘Younger’ (14-17) or ‘Older’ (18-24) Further, youth can be seen through an academic and system connection lens as either positively connected to a support system and closer or on-track to high school completion (‘Close’) or disconnected from systems and further from high school completion (‘Far’), This framework helps identify youth who are the most in need of services, as well as craft interventions that are most appropriate for the target populations and make program goals clear to service providers and to youth.

Aligning workforce interventions to target youth

		CLOSE <i>½ or more credits completed</i>	FAR <i>Less than ½ credits &/or risk indicators</i>
Y O U N G E R	14 - 17 y.o.	<p>On track to graduate, low likelihood for dropping out of HS Majority of students</p> <p>Goal: Graduate high school prepared for postsecondary education</p>	<p>Struggling students</p> <p>Goal: Credit recuperation and completion of high school diploma or GED</p>
O L D E R	18 - 24 y.o.	<p>ID: A few credits short of H.S. completion and/or require remediation in college</p> <p>Goal: Completion of high school diploma or GED (if needed) workforce preparation and connection to postsecondary</p>	<p>ID: Extremely under credited with low literacy rates</p> <p>Goal: Completion of high school diploma or GED and workforce preparation</p>

We recommend the following general goals and strategies for each of these population groups

A. For youth of high school age (17 and under) who are close to high school graduation:

- ✓ Support and facilitate their completion of high school and prepare them for entering a post-secondary education program.

B. For youth of high school age (17 and under) who are far from graduation:

- ✓ Support high school completion by using workforce opportunities to enhance school attachment and to demonstrate utility of education to career alternatives

C. For young adults (18 and over) who have not completed high school or attained a GED:

- ✓ Provide work opportunities with academic programs that lead to re-engagement in learning and the attainment of a high school degree or GED and provide ongoing supports needed to stay attached to these programs.

D. For young adults that have a high school degree or GED but face difficulty in connecting to the labor force:

- ✓ Provide work opportunities to serve as both an opportunity to acquire meaningful labor market skills and an incentive for continued learning and post secondary training.

Recommendation Three:

Fund Programs That Provide All Essential Program Elements Needed by Target Youth

The Four Key Elements of Highly Effective Programs

Programs need to be tailored to young people's life stage and academic status, based on a comprehensive assessment of each individual's needs and assets. At the same time, a review of best practices indicates that there are common elements to the most effective programs. All youth workforce programs should have four elements in order to address the academic, workforce, and psychosocial needs of young people. Young people are not successful when providers have a piecemeal approach that fails to see the whole youth. The City needs to support and fund a holistic approach to service delivery that takes into account the peripheral issues and important transitions to lead youth and young adults to success. There are different models that have proven to work best with certain target populations, but all have these basic four elements in their construction:

1. Education Core

All youth need to have an education component integrated with their current or planned workforce services. If youth are not currently in school, the workforce program should actively identify an education provider to connect youth back to formal learning. For youth who are in school, workforce providers should create supports and incentives to keep youth engaged in their academic environment.

2. Career Education

Career & work-based experiences should be centered on the interest and aptitudes of youth, build workplace knowledge and readiness, as well as support school-based learning.

3. Wraparound & Transition Support

Many young people face significant barriers to success and are navigating challenges in their lives. Accordingly, all youth need wraparound support that can act as the glue between the workforce and academic learning and also address the real life issues that often inhibit youth from being successful in the program. Activities may include referrals to health and wellness services, barrier removal, and coaching. At the core of strong wraparound services is a relationship with skilled, committed adult allies. Wraparound is a relationship-based approach that continues to build the client/provider connection and actively unearths emerging issues while working to address them. If workforce providers do not have the capacity to address outside issues, they need to have active partnerships to support service providers in order to create a safety net for youth and young adults. At a minimum a strong referral network should be built into the program and youth should experience a seamless set of services as they progress towards their goals

4. Planning for Post Secondary Education or Training

All youth need to have a plan that leads to post secondary training or college. A plan not only ensures that young people and their allies know what must be done – it gives young people hope. Providers must encourage youth and also build in career pathway planning and college access activities such as college visits, placement tests, FAFSA (financial aid) application completion and occupational skills pathways.

Recommendation Four: Strengthen the System

To achieve this vision, San Francisco needs to strengthen its youth workforce system to develop a seamless, coordinated set of services for youth offered by school, workplace and community partners. They should provide career awareness, exploration and preparation opportunities which are holistic and designed to support youth to reach independence and self-sufficiency.

Therefore, the City should adopt the following system-level approaches in the youth workforce arena:

- **Connect youth workforce programs more closely and intentionally with secondary schools and post-secondary institutions.** This shift will require all participants in the system, especially the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), City College of San Francisco (CCSF), and workforce service providers, to support and assist change in this direction. SFUSD schools and leadership will need to provide data and collaborate closely with other partners to

help prioritize participants and assess and improve programs. CCSF and other postsecondary institutions should build upon linkages with SFUSD by providing concurrent enrollment, college access and educational bridge programs. Service providers must shape workforce program activity to support academic achievement, and educate themselves on the SFUSD's Balanced Score Card.

- **Involve employers and organized labor more fully in the design, coordination and implementation of the youth workforce system.** Youth must be prepared to meet current labor market and employers' needs. The employer community is a partner of particular importance in this work, one that citywide stakeholders must leverage in better ways in order to reach these goals. The skills and resources of workplace partners are the critical link between learning and work and must be brought to the table early in planning all efforts. Citywide stakeholders should leverage existing industry advisory bodies and build an effective intermediary to engage all employers in youth workforce.
- **Invest in evidence-based strategies** that incorporate these elements and achieve the goals described above. Funders must coordinate the use of data and fund programs that demonstrate their ability to reach positive outcomes for youth.

Conclusion

We believe that adoption of these recommendations will lead to significant improvement in the youth workforce system. San Francisco now spends over \$15 million a year supporting work opportunities and training for youth ages 14-24. These expenditures are made by a number of City departments, most extensively by the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), and the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD). Current expenditures now reach approximately 5,000 youth. However, the City lacks a clear, unified vision regarding the purposes to be served by much of these resources. As a result, there is little information on the effectiveness of the expenditures-without clear outcomes, effectiveness cannot be assessed. With the adoption of the recommended vision and standards, we believe that many more of San Francisco's youth will receive the support and services they need in order to complete their education and make a successful transition to meaningful and rewarding careers.