

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT SAN FRANCISCO BOARD YOUTH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Workforce Investment Act challenges local communities, through the Youth Council, to establish a collaboration that brings together school, community organizations, training providers and others to create a comprehensive and cohesive youth service system.

The San Francisco Workforce Investment Board Youth Council is outlining a strategic plan for the future and believes the strategies should build on a youth development framework: ¹

- viewing young people and families as partners, rather than clients and involving them in designing and delivering programs and services;
- giving all youth access to both prevention and intervention services and programs that meet their developmental needs; and
- offering youth opportunities to develop relationships with caring, supportive adults.

Youth Development is the ongoing process in which all young people are engaged and invested while attempting to meet their basic personal and social needs and to build competencies necessary for successful adolescent and adult life. It is an approach, framework, and a way to think about young people that focus on their capacities, strengths and developmental needs, rather than on their weaknesses and problems. All young people have basic needs that are critical to survival and healthy development. These needs include but may not be limited to:

- a sense of safety and structure;
- belonging and membership;
- self-worth and ability to contribute;
- independence and control over one's life;
- closeness and several good relationships; and
- competency and mastery

¹ This framework and approach to youth development comes from *Developing the WIA Youth Request for Proposals: A Technical Assistance Tool for WIB Staff* developed by the RFP Topical Study Group of the 2002-03 class of the National Youth Employment Coalition's WIA Leaders Academy.

At the same time, to succeed as adults, all youth must acquire positive attitudes and appropriate behaviors and skills in six areas:

- * health
- * personal/social
- * knowledge
- * reasoning and creativity
- * vocation
- * citizenship

Basic Youth Development Principles

Employment and education researchers and practitioners in the youth field believe that they have identified the basic principles directly related to the WIA 10 elements that help build effective programs for youth. They believe that the importance of integrating the following principles into the design of youth programs cannot be underestimated.

Adult Support/caring and knowledgeable Adults

Effective youth initiatives connect young people with adults who care about them and who serve as role models.

Structure and Expectations

Youth interventions must set clear and high expectations for young people while carefully supporting each young person so they can attain them.

Creative forms of learning

Learning should be engaging and relevant, with curricula and teaching strategies that are creative, substantive, and attuned to the learners and to provide effective pathways to finish high school, or move into post secondary training or employment.

Holistic approach

Treating individual holistically may provide sufficient protective factors to overcome a variety of risk factors, thus preventing one or more of the many behavioral indications of deeper problems manifested by young people.

Youth as resources

Programs should move away from focusing on eliminating youth deficits to supporting youth assets.

Implementation quality

Programs clearly work better when they are thought through and well managed.

Follow-up Services

Programs offering services over a long period of time, possibly many years, foster trust in youth because there is time to develop relationships with caring, knowledgeable adults.

With the above context in mind the Youth Council is reframing its focus and proposing the following:

OUR VISION: ALL YOUTH---ONE SYSTEM:

Our vision 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.

The conditions one would find in a comprehensive youth serving system include, but are not limited to:

1. Youth are aware of options/services available to them;
2. Environments for learning and services are safe;
3. Networks of support for youth are available and apparent;
4. Caring adults are involved in supporting youth to attain goals;
5. Access is present for achieving educational and employment support;
6. A continuum of care exists that supports all areas of youth development;
7. The investments made are strategic and connected to other resources;
8. Services and support are ongoing and outcome based, not time/age based;
9. Intake, referral and assessments are common and shared between agencies;
10. Neighborhoods are receiving services that address local concerns;
11. Individual service plans exist for youth and are used across agencies.

MISSION/PURPOSE:

To ensure quality, safe and healthy learning environments and opportunities, built on youth development principles, which lead to a high school diploma or certificate, and successful transitions to work or further education.

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.