CIASP

Center for Law and Social Policy

Learning from the Youth Opportunity Experience

Building Delivery Capacity in Distressed Communities

by Linda Harris

January 2006

On the front cover:

"Preparation + Opportunity = Success"

Twenty-six young artists, ranging in age from 14 to 22, designed and created the mural with guidance from Museum of Cultural Arts of Houston (MOCAH) artists Reginald & Rhonda Adams and Prince Maduekwe. It was the final project of a 300-hour mural training curriculum designed by MOCAH and WorkSource Youth Opportunity Centers. This mural was dedicated in November 2005.

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Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges the assistance of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National Center for Education and the Economy for facilitating initial “Lessons Learned” discussions among Youth Opportunity sites. The author also thanks Joan Crigger, U.S. Conference of Mayors; Connie Doty, Boston Community Development; Clyde McQueen, Kansas City Full Employment Council; Robert Sainz, Los Angeles Workforce Board; Lisa Johnson, Brockton Area Private Industry Council; David Lah, U.S. Department of Labor; and Angela Parker and Caitlin Johnson, CLASP for their assistance.

About the Author

Linda Harris, Center for Law and Social Policy senior policy analyst, specializes in approaches to re-engage disconnected youth. Her current work focuses on community and systemic solutions to the issue of youth who are disconnected from school and work.

Preface

For almost two decades researchers, policymakers, and advocates have been documenting the struggle of disadvantaged youth in America, particularly those growing up in our most distressed communities. In the 1987 publication *Workforce 2000*, economists noted that most new jobs created in the 1990s and beyond would require some level of post-secondary education. They cautioned that without substantial adjustment in policies and investment in education and training, the problems of minority unemployment, crime, and dependency would be worse in the year 2000.[1] Similarly, in the 1988 publication, *The Forgotten Half: Non-College Youth in America*, the William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship warned that our economy, national security, and social cohesion faced a precarious future unless comprehensive polices and programs were developed to address the growing gap between more fortunate youth and those with far fewer advantages. In 1990, the National Center on Education and the Economy released *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages*, which noted that one in five young people in this country grow up in "third-world" surroundings, starting out with severe learning disadvantages from which they never recover. The report called for investment in a drop out recovery system that would build the connection between education and work for youth without high school certification.[2]

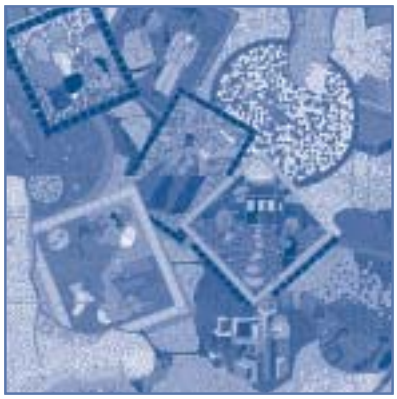
Despite nearly two decades of admonitions and recommendations from noted researchers and commissions, we are a nation absent a coherent national youth policy. The current federal and state-level attention to high school reform is welcome, and long overdue. Our public schools graduate only 68 percent of their students; in some large urban areas, the number drops to 50 percent among minority youth. In other words, absent intervention, half of the young people in the high school pipeline in our most distressed systems will

1 Johnson, W., Packer, A., *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century*, Hudson Institute, U.S. Department of Labor, 1987.

2 National Center on Education and the Economy, *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages*, 1990, pg. 44.

likely disconnect. Each year, half a million youth across the country will drop out and join the nearly 4 million others who preceded them.

This situation warrants attention as a national priority—but the solution will depend on the ability of communities to rally all sectors, levels of government, and systems to re-engage young people and support their transition to adulthood. Toward this end, in 2000, the Department of Labor awarded Youth Opportunity (YO) Grants totaling a little more than $1 billion to 36 high-poverty communities. The grants funded aggressive, community-wide efforts to connect systems and resources to dramatically improve the economic and life options for young people. This report documents the insights, accomplishments, and lessons from this very ambitious effort to reshape the landscape of service delivery for youth in high-poverty communities. ■



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Executive Summary

In May 2000, the United States Department of Labor awarded sizable Youth Opportunity (YO) Grants to 36 high-poverty urban, rural, and Native American communities. These communities were among the most economically distressed communities in the nation, all characterized by high drop out rates, high youth unemployment rates, greater incidence of juvenile crime, violence, and gang activity. The Youth Opportunity Grants—ranging from $3.1 to $43.8 million over five years—provided the resources to put in place comprehensive approaches at considerable scale. The Department's expressed intent in awarding these grants was to demonstrate that the educational outcomes and economic prospects for young people in high-poverty communities could be dramatically improved by infusing these communities with resources; building capacity and infrastructure; connecting systems; and developing comprehensive, age-appropriate opportunities for youth.

The Youth Opportunity Grants were part of the overhaul of the youth delivery system brought about by the passage of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The expectation was that these communities would be at the forefront of a redesigned national delivery system for disadvantaged youth. With the legislative reforms in place, it was anticipated that congressional appropriations would continue and perhaps increase to allow the expansion beyond the original 36 communities. However, this was not the case. Appropriations for the Youth Opportunity Grants ended and the YO communities are in various stages of transition.

The Youth Opportunity Grant was extremely complex to implement, both administratively and programmatically. It required engaging all sectors of the community and pulling together multiple systems. The grantees were required to engage a sizable proportion of the 14- to 21-year-old population, both those in and out of school, in their target areas. They were required to create Youth Opportunity Centers to serve as Safe Havens and focal points for case management and youth-centered activity. Youth were to be connected to education support, workplace and career exposure, youth development activities, and case manage-

ment support until they completed their academic credentials and successfully transitioned into the labor market or higher education. By the end of the fifth year, more than 90,000 mostly minority youth were enrolled in the Youth Opportunity program in the 36 communities.

Much was accomplished in a relatively short period of time in these communities. These accomplishments are particularly notable, considering the complexities of the YO grant requirements, the challenges of the economic and budgetary environments in the local communities at the time of implementation, and the change in governance in the workforce system that was occurring at the same time. The observations in this paper are based on the responses of 22 of the YO sites to a "Learning from Youth Opportunity" survey administered by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), wherein respondents were asked to identify areas of strength and challenges on 120 items in four categories: (1) Mobilizing and Engaging Leadership, (2) Connecting Systems, (3) Implementing Comprehensive Program Strategies, and (4) Engaging the Business Sector. Focus group discussions were conducted with several of the YO sites shortly after the start of the final grant year and then again as the year ended. This paper presents an assessment of the capacity building efforts in YO communities, the strengths and challenges of the program, lessons learned, and recommendations for policy and approach.

General Findings

Several overarching themes were reflected in the survey responses and in the discussions.

YO resources played a catalytic role in elevating the youth agenda. Most communities reported that the competition for and receipt of the grant created the impetus for key leadership to come together to focus on "older youth" and be more strategic in the solutions.

Implementation presented an enormous challenge. Managing a program with such a broad scope of activity, considerable scale, and administrative complexity presented tremendous challenge, especially in the start-up year. Pressure for quick start-up before management systems were in place was detrimental to performance in the first year. Successful implementation requires a much longer planning and start-up time than YO sites were afforded.

By the end of the fifth year, more than 90,000 mostly minority youth were enrolled in the Youth Opportunity program in 36 communities.

Participants felt considerable pride in early programmatic accomplishments. The YO directors and Workforce Investment Board (WIB) directors expressed considerable pride—as individual communities and as a collective movement—in their successful outreach to youth and establishment of community and systems connections. There were clearly short-run accomplishments for the communities and the youth involved, including:

- YO communities were successful in outreaching and engaging a substantial portion of the youth in the target area, particularly out of school youth. Department of Labor estimates that the YO program had a penetration rate of 42 percent of all eligible youth and 62 percent of out-of-school youth. The saturation approach appears to have worked well in terms of attracting and connecting traditionally hard-to-serve (and hard-to-find) groups.

- YO impacted the way communities organized their systems and resources to respond to the needs of youth in high-risk categories.

- The YO experience contributed to the increased professionalism of the youth delivery system. The consistent focus on upgrading staff skills, creating institutes and academies, establishing a youth practitioners' apprenticeship program, and ensuring peer-to-peer collaboration across sites has increased the expertise and caliber of youth workers in these communities.

- The YO sites were successful in dramatically increasing youth participation in academic support or education re-engagement activities. Quite noteworthy are the activities devoted to post-secondary preparation and the high level of post-secondary matriculation.

- The Youth Opportunity sites were very successful in connecting youth to internships and employment opportunities:
  - 23,652 internship opportunities were created
  - 28,302 youth were placed in short-term unsubsidized jobs
  - 18,456 youth were placed in long-term unsubsidized work
  - 23,478 were engaged in training

The infusion of YO funding had an important economic impact. Communities (especially rural communities) reported that YO not only played a role in building the youth delivery infrastructure, but also had an important economic impact. YO required a heavy investment in case management and outreach staff—participating communities added 40 to 70 new jobs, most of which were professional positions. While there is no empirical analysis that documents the magnitude of the YO economic impact, it is reasonable to presume that the increased buying power of new employees and the expanded contracting had a multiplier effect in these local economies.

Survey Findings

Twenty-two communities participated in the CLASP survey: Albany, GA; Baltimore, MD; Boston, MA; Brockton, MA; Buffalo & Erie Counties, NY; California Indian Manpower Consortium, CA; Cleveland, OH; Denver, CO; Detroit, MI; Houston, TX; Hartford, CT; Kansas City, MO; Los Angeles, CA; Lumber River, NC; Memphis, TN; Philadelphia, PA; San Diego, CA; San Francisco, CA; Seattle, WA; Tampa, FL; Pima County (Tucson), AZ; and Washington, DC. Collectively, a significant expertise has been developed, with communities demonstrating strength in different areas.

YO communities experienced the most success in the following activity areas:

- Mobilizing community leadership and involving key public systems in the planning and coordination of service delivery.

- Attracting key leaders to the Youth Council (or similar convening group) and engaging them in a strategic process.

- Accessing resources from multiple systems in support of the delivery of youth services—78 percent of the communities blended staffing and/or resources from at least three youth-serving systems, including the local school district, juvenile justice, post-secondary, WIA one-stops and TANF system. Sixty-two percent of communities had formal referral relationships with the juvenile justice system.

Seventy-eight percent of the communities blended staffing and/or resources from at least three youth-serving systems—local school district, juvenile justice.

- Creating the outreach strategies and networks for reaching youth and engaging them in service design or delivery.

- Developing or accessing alternative education programs for out-of-school youth.

- Creating work experiences and internships for in-school and out-of-school youth.

Areas of greatest challenge tended to be:

- Recruiting adults to serve as mentors.

- Developing special interventions to serve the needs of harder to serve groups such as home-

less youth, youth returning from incarceration, youth with substance problems, and those with limited English speaking ability.

- Engaging the media in a positive, constructive way.

- Assembling local funding and redirecting the funding streams from other systems to accommodate the programming and service needs of youth at very high risk.

- Closing the gap between employer expectations and young people's skills sets.

Conclusions and Key Recommendations

The infusion of the YO resources into these communities at a time when the workforce delivery system was in transition, when the economy was recessing, when resources to other youth service organizations and systems were retrenching and when youth unemployment was on the rise created a synergy in many communities. Out of necessity, and given this opportunity communities coalesced around the older youth agenda creating relationships and interventions that extend beyond the YO boundaries and will most probably continue beyond the grant funding. It also created a national movement uniting communities in a process of learning from each other and building community capacity to implement and manage this effort of significant scale and importance.

The Youth Opportunity experience demonstrates that:

1. Young people by the thousands are anxious for a chance to reconnect. When presented with options to re-engage in schooling, prepare for careers, and transform their paths, youth by the thousands connected through Youth Opportunity. The Department of Labor estimates that 42 percent of the eligible youth and 62 percent of the eligible out-of-school youth in the target areas enrolled in the YO program. The loss of such resources and infrastructure in these most distressed communities would be tragic.

2. Communities can manage to scale. YO communities persevered through the start-up challenges, demonstrating that—given adequate resources and planning time—communities can bring effective, comprehensive, coordinated programming to scale.

3. Requiring the involvement of multiple systems and resources as a contingency of funding is effective in bringing disparate players to the table. The directives of grant makers and funders affect how programs and planning occurs in a community. In communities with limited resources, every incentive should be used to leverage systems and resources to work in tandem to address the needs of youth.

4. There must be a convening entity. A Youth Council (or similar vehicle) comprising the appropriate membership can help create a strategic vision for youth—in particular, those falling outside the mainstream—and engage all segments of the community in implementing the vision and benchmarking progress.

5. Local and state officials have an extremely important role to play. Communities that indicated success in engaging their mayor or local official also had greater success in accessing multiple systems.

6. Local delivery capacity is directly related to the ability to hire and maintain quality staff. Most YO sites invested in recruiting, training, and developing quality case management staff. The vagaries of funding make it difficult for communities to maintain a high-quality direct service capacity. Developing and maintaining the professional capacity in youth service

delivery is a critical challenge to overcome if communities are to make a substantial impact on the negative indicators.

7. Communities with large numbers of drop-outs will need to explore multiple avenues for connecting these youth to quality education options. Many of the approaches employed in the YO communities are promising but relatively young and may succumb to a lack of funding support. Given the tremendous need for effective educational alternatives, these collective YO efforts should be maintained and supported—they are a fertile arena for continued study, information sharing, and technical support.

8. The child welfare and mental health systems must be more fully engaged in the local visioning, strategic planning, and delivery of these interventions, in order to address the myriad situations that young people face as they attempt to reconnect. These systems appeared to be tangential in the YO efforts. In fact, the welfare and child welfare systems were least likely to be engaged in the planning process.

9. The YO communities were successful in motivating youth to post-secondary aspirations. Making those aspirations a reality requires greater support for non-traditional students matriculating in college.

10. Economically stressed communities can't replace the loss of millions in federal funding. The provision for Youth Opportunity Grants in the 1998 WIA legislation was built on lessons from several years of prior demonstration funding and was grounded in the findings from years of research on effective practice. The abandonment of a well thought-out, targeted intervention— particularly at a time when drop out rates among poor urban minority youth exceed 50 percent— should be reconsidered.

11. Foundations and other funders have an important role to play in incubating and sustaining these innovations. Many promising—in some cases groundbreaking—approaches were implemented in the YO communities. Many of these will suffer not because they aren't effective, but because the available resources are insufficient to nurture their growth and development in complicated environments. Foundation funds are critical to maintaining and further developing these successful efforts and assisting in their evaluation, dissemination, and replication.

12. There is a need for expanded participation of employers and business leaders in crafting pathways for youth to connect with high growth, high skill areas of the economy. In many communities, the YO effort brought together secondary, post-secondary, and workforce systems to support non-traditional students. The business sector can help these systems define the skills set, exposure, and experiences that can create a pipeline of well-trained candidates for the skilled jobs of the future. Several YO sites noted the challenge of imparting the requisite occupational skills for success—a task that cannot be accomplished without business and industry at the table. Further exploration of incentives and supports to expand business and industry alliances is warranted. ■

Chapter 1: Introduction

In May, 2000 the United States Department of Labor awarded sizable Youth Opportunity (YO) Grants to 36 high-poverty urban, rural, and Native American communities. These communities were among the most economically distressed communities in the nation, all characterized by high drop out rates, high youth unemployment rates, greater incidence of juvenile crime, violence and gang activity. The grants were substantial, ranging from a low of $3.1 million in the Native American community of Grand Traverse to $43.8 million in larger urban areas like Baltimore, Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Houston. The YO grants provided the resources to establish comprehensive approaches at considerable scale. They were catalytic in launching important collaborations in these communities to connect systems, to leverage resources, and to develop and implement comprehensive strategies for reaching these young people and redirecting their paths.

The Department of Labor's intent in making these awards was to demonstrate that investing substantial resources in relatively small geographic areas in order to connect youth to high-quality supports could bring about significant community-wide improvement in the education and labor market outcomes for youth. Unlike traditional federal youth programs that have strict income eligibility requirements, all youth (ages 14 to 21) who resided within the boundaries of the target areas were eligible for service. Emphasis was to be placed on outreach to all eligible youth, especially older youth who were out of school and out of work. The Department of Labor also sought to demonstrate that by infusing high-poverty communities with resources, by building capacity and infrastructure, by connecting systems, and by saturating communities with age-appropriate, horizon-extending opportunities for youth, the graduation rates, college matriculation rates, and employment rates for youth in these communities could be dramatically increased.

The Youth Opportunity Grants were part of the overhaul of the youth delivery system brought about by the passage of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The expectation was that YO communities would be at the forefront of a redesigned national delivery system for disadvantaged youth.

With the legislative reforms in place, it was anticipated that congressional appropriations would continue and perhaps increase to allow the expansion beyond the original 36 communities. However, this was not the case—appropriations for YO grants were dramatically decreased, allowing just enough funding to honor the obligation to the original 36 grantees.

With these awards, the Department of Labor launched a vibrant YO movement that fostered collaboration both within and among communities to elevate the field of practice related to preparing youth in high-poverty communities for successful transition to adulthood and labor market success.

At the time of this analysis, the Youth Opportunity Communities were ending their final year of the five-year grant period and preparing for phase-down and transition. The local YO directors and Workforce Investment Board directors acknowledged the enormity of the challenge of managing at such a scale. They also expressed considerable pride in what was accomplished in such a short timeframe in terms of engaging community leadership and building the capacity of the youth-serving systems to successfully support thousands of youth.

The ultimate measure of success for these communities is the extent to which the education and labor market outcomes for youth are altered; it is questionable whether the funding period was long enough to yield such sustained community-wide impact. Nevertheless, for the 90,000 youth engaged over the 36 sites, many of the short run accomplishments are encouraging. These communities have developed a great deal of knowledge, experience, and delivery capacity that can hopefully survive the retrenchment in funding.

This report serves to document those accomplishments; identify those areas where capacity has been built; highlight the lessons learned; and draw attention to the challenge and accomplishments of communities that have been working earnestly to reconnect their young people. Input for this report was gathered via three sources: two formal meetings with YO directors debriefing on lessons learned and next steps; formal surveys of 22 YO communities; and follow-up phone calls to YO directors and Workforce Investment Board directors.

Several resonating themes emerged from sites, including:

- The catalytic role that YO resources played in elevating the youth agenda—most communities reported that the competition for and receipt of the grant created the impetus for key leadership to come together to focus on "older youth" and be more strategic in the solutions.

- The enormity of the implementation challenge—grantees commented on the tremendous complexities associated with implementing an initiative of this scope and scale. They were required to concurrently convene multiple partners and systems; assemble resources; negotiate formal service agreements; retrofit facilities; develop interventions for in-school, out-of-school, older, and younger youth; implement a complex case management tracking system; hire and train a sizable staff; and establish recruitment and referral networks. Grantees were also required to track youth from the time of enrollment (in and out of multiple activities) through to two years after program completion, and report on interim benchmarks. For some, this meant tracking 2,000-3,000 young people. Pressures to start before management systems were in place was detrimental to performance in the first year. Effective implementation requires a much longer planning and start-up time than YO sites were afforded.

- Pride in the early programmatic accomplishments—the YO directors and WIB directors expressed considerable pride as individual

communities and as a collective movement in their success in reaching out to and connecting youth, and establishing community and systems connections. Most communities felt that accomplishments in the face of such challenge were noteworthy.

- The complexity of the administrative details—in general, YO directors expressed considerable pride in the management information systems that were put in place, and noted that such tracking systems are essential for quality control and program accountability.

- The economic impact of the infusion of YO funding—grantees (especially in rural areas) reported that YO not only strengthened the youth services delivery infrastructure, but also had an important economic impact on communities. YO required a heavy investment in case management and outreach staff; communities added 40 to 70 new jobs—mostly professional positions—to the economy. While there is no empirical analysis that documents the magnitude of the YO economic impact, it is reasonable to presume that the increased buying power of new employees and the expanded contracting had a multiplier effect in these local economies.

- Concern about ability to preserve the infrastructure, programs, and capacity beyond the period of grant funding—while many communities made substantial inroads partnering with other systems, the loss of funding will most likely jeopardize the ability to sustain much of what has been built. At the time of this report, communities were attempting to scale back and eliminate some components.

As the grantees ended their final year of funding, they expressed concern not just about the impending loss of resources, but also about losing ground in areas where they had significant and meaningful progress. ■

Chapter 2: The Workforce Investment Act and Youth Opportunity Grants—Background

The Youth Opportunity Grant was authorized under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), which dramatically changed the way the local workforce system delivers youth services. For youth, WIA required a shift in delivery from one-time, short-term interventions toward a more comprehensive, systemic approach that offers a range of coordinated services. It mandated an increased expenditure of funds on out-of-school youth. Most notable, WIA required the inclusion of ten program elements for youth which can be grouped around four major themes:

1. Improving educational achievement, including such elements as tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to secondary school completion; drop out prevention strategies, and alternative secondary school offerings.

2. Preparing for and succeeding in employment, including summer employment opportunities, paid and unpaid work experience, and occupational skills training.

3. Supporting youth, including meeting supportive services needs and providing adult mentoring, follow-up services, and comprehensive guidance and counseling.

4. Offering services intended to develop the potential of youth as citizens and leaders, including leadership development opportunities.

The stand-alone federal summer jobs program, which had been available to local communities for

WIA in Brief

The federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) streamlined national employment/training programs to give states and communities more flexibility to design effective, accountable workforce development efforts. Title I of WIA authorizes services for youth, adults, and laid-off workers.

Among its provisions, WIA mandated the creation of ***Youth Councils*** *in every local delivery area to develop a coordinated youth policy and strengthen linkages between existing youth-serving systems and resources.*

more than three decades, was eliminated in lieu of the requirement that all youth must be engaged in year-round activity. In recognition of the challenges faced by youth in high-poverty communities, the legislation authorized the Youth Opportunity Grants Program. As stipulated in the legislation, congressional appropriations above a $1 billion threshold in the WIA youth title (up to $250 million annually) would be used by the Department of Labor to provide grants to high-poverty communities.

The Youth Opportunity Grant Program was the largest investment of its kind for the Department of Labor since the youth demonstration projects of the late 1970s, which provided several billion dollars to local communities to create job training, work experience, and conservation corps at considerable scale. YO built on the lessons learned from several smaller demonstrations in recent prior years–including The Youth Fair Chance, Youth Opportunity Unlimited, and the Kulick Demonstration grants. The Notice of Fund Availability for the Youth Opportunity Grant was explicit and prescriptive about the components to be addressed in the grant proposals.

YO Communities

Community	YO funding (in millions)	# of youth enrolled
Urban		
Birmingham, AL	$19.7	1636
Pima County (Tucson), AZ	27.8	2913
Los Angeles, CA	43.8	4412
San Diego, CA	27.8	3057
San Francisco, CA	19.8	2401
Hartford, CT	27.8	2778
Denver, CO	19.9	2535
District of Columbia	31.8	2369
Tampa, FL	23.8	2310
Louisville, KY	27.8	4419
Brockton, MA	17.8	1844
Boston, MA	23.8	3507
Baltimore, MD	43.8	4357
Kansas City, MO	15.9	1721
Buffalo, NY	31.6	2992
Portland, OR	19.8	1947
Cleveland, OH	27.8	2667
Philadelphia, PA	19.8	2629
Memphis, TN	25.8	3535
Houston, TX	43.8	4185
Urban continued		
San Antonio, TX	43.8	4308
Seattle, WA	17.8	1444
Milwaukee, WI	23.8	1937
Rural		
South Eastern, AR	19.8	2191
Imperial, CA	19.8	1145
Albany, GA	14.6	1468
Molokai, HA	8.7	993
Monroe, LA	19.8	1877
Lumber River, NC	19.8	2034
Native American		
CA Indian Manpower Consortium	15.9	1396
Cook Inlet, AK	31.8	3421
Grand Traverse	3.1	143
Navajo Nation	41.0	4020
Oglala Sioux Tribe	15.9	3159
Ute Mountain	8.0	346

DOL. Youth Opportunity Monthly Data and Rate Analysis Report. June 2005.

About the Youth Opportunity Communities

The grant solicitation and review process required communities to demonstrate their capacity to coalesce local leadership and resources in support of an effort as comprehensive as YO. More than 150 communities applied; 36 urban, rural, and tribal communities were selected. The grantees were geographically dispersed throughout the country including Alaska and Hawaii. The urban jurisdictions ranged in population from 100,000 in Brockton, Massachusetts, to 3.7 million in Los Angeles.

The jurisdictions receiving awards are listed on the prior page. Within those jurisdictions, funding was targeted to the most distressed neighborhoods located within the designated empowerment or enterprise zones. Grant awards ranged from $3.1 million to $43.8 million.

What Youth Opportunity Grantees Were Called Upon to Do

To appreciate the implementation challenge of the YO grant, it is important to understand the breadth of intervention mandated in each community. Grantees were required to engage the various sectors of the community—specifically, the school system, the juvenile justice system, community-based organizations, and the private sector—in the design and delivery of services. The grants required each area to put in place, at a minimum, the following four components.

- Youth Opportunity Centers. Each site was required to establish at least one physical location (most had multiple locations) that was easily accessible and identifiable as the Youth Opportunity point of access.

- Core of Case Managers. The grant required that each site maintain a low student-to-staff ratio to ensure individualized attention. The Department of Labor prescribed the number and type of staff to be hired in each community. Each site assembled a core staff of between 40 to 60 youth specialists (on average) to develop individualized plans and help young people access appropriate education support programming; health, childcare, housing, and other supports; and career-planning, internships, occupational training, employment and post-secondary opportunities. Youth development staff were required to track youth through program completion and two years beyond.

The Youth Opportunity Grant Program was the largest investment of its kind for the Department of Labor since the 1970s.

- Drop Out Prevention and Intervention Strategies. Increasing graduation and college matriculation rates were important goals for the YO program. Sites were required establish supportive services to increase school retention, improve academic achievement, and increase graduation rates, as well as intensive support strategies to assist youth who had already fallen behind and those at greatest risk of dropping out.

- Alternative Education Connections. YO grantees were required to enroll all out-of-school youth without a diploma in an appropriate education option.

The grant required that youth be involved in activity from the time of initial engagement through successful labor market (or post-secondary) transition and beyond. Probably the most daunting of challenges for these communities was developing the programmatic capacity to meet the educational needs of the hundreds—in some cases,

thousands—of out-of-school youth in need of alternative pathways to high school credentials. For example, large urban sites like Baltimore, Memphis, Houston, Detroit, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Tampa, Philadelphia, Boston, and Buffalo all reported enrolling in excess of 1,000 out-of-school youth in YO activities. The grant required all drop-outs be connected to a program of educational support.

The Department of Labor was quite explicit about the breadth of programming, system innovation, and community mobilization expected in these communities. The selection criteria gave considerable weight to the management plan and to leveraging resources for sustainability. The Department of Labor also invested in building the local capacity by (1) providing coaches for each of the sites to help with start-up, by (2) creating a leadership academy to provide ongoing training for local YO staff, (3) facilitating networking among sites through conferences and monthly teleconferences, and (4) assigning the department's regional staff to assist in oversight. Among the youth-serving efforts to date, YO was unique in its complexity, its scale, the scope of activities, and the required components. The YO grantees engaged concurrently in a broad range of activities related to implementing the grant, including:

Sites were required to involve youth in activities from the time of initial engagement to their transition to school or work, and beyond—and track youth through two years after program completion.

- Mobilizing the community leadership to support such massive intervention and to exert the influence necessary to redirect the programming of systems, agencies, community organizations, service providers, and resource streams in support of the YO effort.

- Negotiating governance arrangements, which were extremely complicated in many areas. The YO grants were funded at the same time that the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 took effect requiring substantial restructuring of the local workforce system, re-designation of local delivery areas, replacement of local Private Industry Councils with local Workforce Investment Boards, and establishment of Youth Councils. Thus many areas were called upon to implement this very complicated grant as they concurrently restructured their organizations and their boards.

- Identifying and rehabilitating physical space sufficient to accommodate the size of staff and level of activity for hundreds of youth at a time. Each community was required to have at least one community-based center serving as the focal point for activity. Most communities had several locations. These facilities needed to be accessible, affordable, engaging, and youth-friendly.

- Assembling and training a sizable staff, large enough to meet the case management requirements of the grant. YO grantees were required to maintain a relatively small ratio of students to staff, thereby requiring substantial hiring.

- Implementing new management information systems to facilitate case management, track youth participation and outcomes, and meet the rigorous data collection requirements of the grant.

- Establishing formal agreements with the various service systems and putting in place the mechanics for procurement of services from a broad range of providers, agencies, and vendors.

- Identifying, expanding, or replicating strong program models to provide effective assessment, case management, and advocacy; career awareness and exploration; tutoring for in-

school youth; pre-GED, GED, or alternative education for out-of-school youth; work experiences and internships; training in civic, life, and soft skills; occupational training; mentoring and adult guidance; and preparation for and transition to jobs.

- Implementing outreach strategies, referral networks, and engagement activities to attract and retain youth who are traditionally very hard to attract and keep connected.

Chapter 3: Youth Opportunity Grants—Early Accomplishments

Implementation for the YO grants occurred amidst several challenges. The roll-out of the YO program occurred during a period of economic recession and a slow jobless recovery. The workforce system was undergoing substantial restructuring. The Youth Councils, designed to provide guidance to the planning process, were just being formed in many areas. State and local governments were experiencing budget shortfalls resulting in reductions in important support programs. In light of the tumultuous environment and shifting structural, economic, and political landscape, the YO movement had quite notable accomplishments in a relatively short period of time.

These accomplishments include:

- Engaging more than 90,000 youth, mostly minority, spanning all age categories. The YO communities attracted and engaged the target population in numbers that exceeded the goals set for the grant. *Forty-two percent of the eligible target population (and 62 percent of the eligible out-of-school population) were enrolled.* Fifty eight percent were African American, 22 percent were Hispanic, and 15 percent were Native American.

Outreach and Recruitment Totals

	In-school Youth		Out-of-School Youth		Total	
New Enrollments	47,892.00	51.9%	44,371.00	48.1%	92,263.00	
Male	22,235.00	46.4%	21,437.00	48.3%	43,672.00	47.3%
Female	25,657.00	53.6%	22,934.00	51.7%	48,591.00	52.7%
14 – 16 Yrs.	32,331.00	67.5%	6,708.00	15.1%	39,039.00	42.3%
17 – 18 Yrs.	11,893.00	24.8%	16,353.00	36.9%	28,246.00	30.6%
19 – 21 Yrs.	3,668.00	7.7%	21,309.00	48.0%	24,977.00	27.1%

DOL. Youth Opportunity Monthly Data and Rate Analysis Report. June 2005.

This is particularly notable considering that during this period, a Government Accountability Office (GAO) assessment of early WIA implementation identified the recruitment of out-of-school youth as a major difficulty for local service providers.[3] As referenced in subsequent sections of this paper, outreach and recruitment was an area in which local directors felt they experienced considerable success.

- **Creating 204 Youth Opportunity Centers or Satellites.** The establishment of these centers fulfilled the grant requirement that there be at least one well-situated youth center, with satellites if necessary, where youth can enroll, receive individual assessment, meet with staff, access program information and referrals and engage in employment development and youth development activities. YO sites invested in creating youth friendly, technology equipped environments.

- **Creating and engaging youth in a broad range of activities.** The YO sites, as required by the grant, created a broad spectrum of activities and succeeded in maintaining an average monthly participation rate of 80 percent of all enrollees engaged in activities.

While youth participation is more a measure of process, the high level of engagement of youth in continuous activity is significant for three reasons.

- It reflects substantial systemic change in the delivery of youth services in the workforce system, towards longer-term comprehensive programming.
- It reflects the incorporation of the youth development principles.
- It shows the ability of these communities to engage service providers, vendors, and community resources to generate the level of programmatic opportunity necessary to address the varying needs of this sizable group of youth.

- **Dramatically increasing youth's participation in academic support or education re-engagement activities.** YO sites paid considerable attention to expanding the range of activities designed to:
  - Support youth's academic progress while in school.
  - Reconnect out of school youth to educational alternatives.
  - Expose, prepare and connect youth to post-secondary education options.

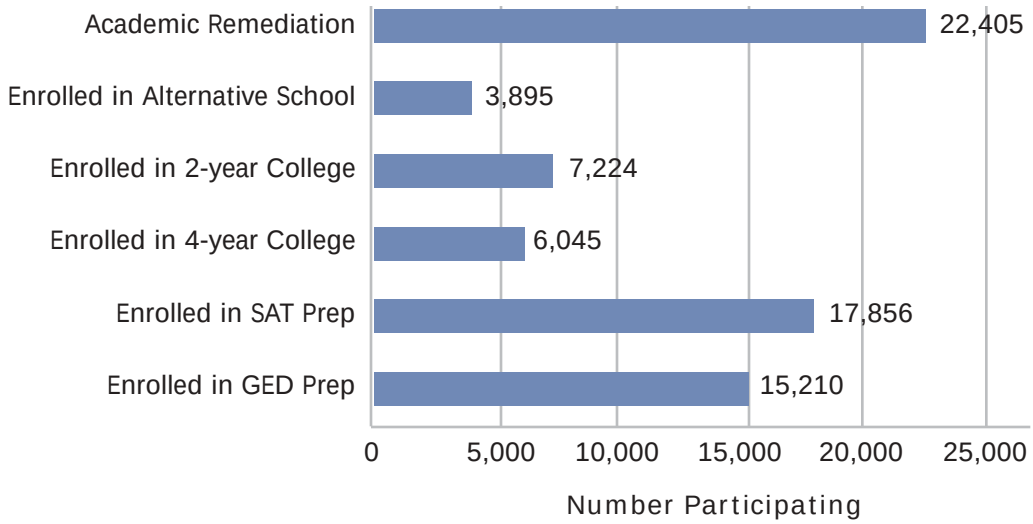
Participation in Activities

Activities	Number of Participants In-School	Out-of-School	Total
Internships/Subsidized Jobs	16,609	9,615	26,224
Community Service	14,348	9,478	23,862
Sports & Recreation	21,352	14,481	35,833
Support Groups	13,649	11,427	25,076
Peer to Peer Mentoring	11,439	8,148	19,587
Job Readiness Training	23,257	20,735	44,092
Occupational Training	9,747	9,798	19,545

DOL. Youth Opportunity Monthly Data and Rate Analysis Report. June 2005.

3 GAO, WIA Youth Provisions Promote New Strategies, But Additional Guidance Would Enhance Program Development, April 2002, p 27.

Youth Placed in Selected Education Enhancement Activites

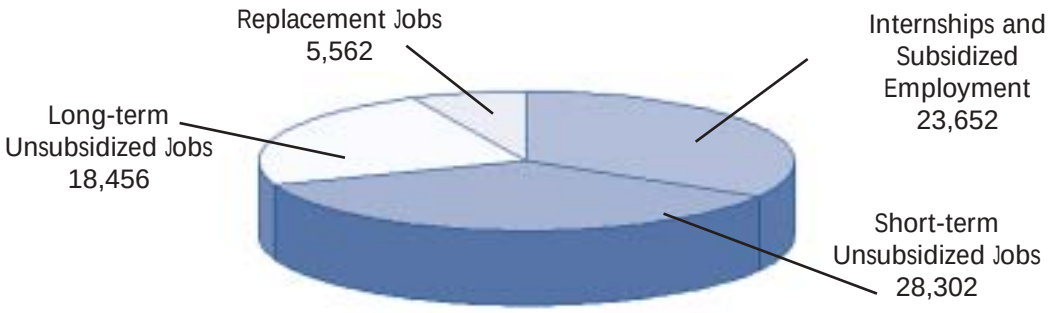


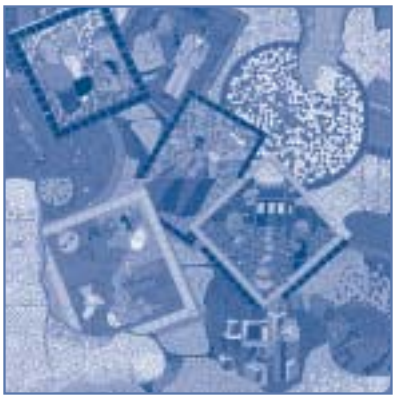
Quite noteworthy is the substantial level of participation in SAT preparation and the number of youth engaged in a post-secondary activity. The post-secondary matriculation for the Youth Opportunity students is particularly remarkable considering the very low level of post-secondary achievement for minority populations in the urban communities receiving YO grants. According to the Brooking Institute's Census Data profiles on 22 of the 24 cities, only 13 percent of the Black and Hispanic population over the age of 25 achieved a college diploma, on average, compared to 38 percent for the White population[4]. Thus, the focus on college matriculation for these youth was important not only for improving their labor market status, but for potentially impacting the disparity in post-secondary achievement.

- Creating a substantial number of work experience and labor market exposure opportunities for youth. More than 70,000 work or labor market connections were developed as part of the preparation or transition experiences for these youth. It should also be noted that these opportunities were being developed at the same time that the federal summer jobs program was being eliminated and as the funding for youth programs in general was being decreased. ■

4 Brookings Institution, Metropolitan Policy Program, Living Cities Data Books. http://apps89.brookings.edu:89/livingcities/.

Youth Participation in Work and Labor Market Exposure Activities





Chapter 4: Survey Results—Areas of Success and Lessons learned

CLASP emailed surveys to the Workforce Investment Board directors and the Youth Opportunity project directors in each community. The survey was designed to identify those areas of planning, programming, or delivery where considerable success was achieved and to also identify the areas of continued challenge or common concern. The survey items can be grouped in five categories: Mobilizing and Engaging leadership, Connecting Systems, Assembling and Redirecting Funding, Implementing Comprehensive Program Strategies, and Engaging the Business sector. There were a total of 120 questions across these categories. For each question the respondent was asked to indicate whether they (1) achieved considerable success worth replicating; (2) achieved some success; challenges still exist; (3) attempted, but had little success; or (4) did not attempt. Respondents were then asked to comment on their successes or problems and to identify barriers.

Twenty-two of the 36 communities responded to the survey: Albany, GA; Baltimore; Boston; Brockton, MA; Buffalo & Erie Counties; California Indian Manpower Consortium; Cleveland; Denver; Detroit; Gulf Coast, TX; Hartford, CT; Kansas City; Los Angeles; Lumber River, NC; Memphis; Philadelphia; San Diego; San Francisco: Seattle; Tampa; Tucson; and Washington, DC.

Follow-up phone calls were made to several of the respondents to clarify responses and gather more descriptive information. Areas of strength are those where at least half of the sites had achieved success, according to survey responses and follow-up discussion, and where they felt their activities were worth replicating or sharing. Similarly, areas of continued challenge or concern are those wherein less than a quarter of the sites indicated considerable success, and more than a quarter indicated that they were not successful or that it was an area of challenge. Appendix 2 shows areas in which specific communities felt they had developed considerable capacity worth sharing.

In general, the survey responses suggest that, collectively, a great deal of expertise has been generated, and that different communities developed

strength in different areas. YO communities experienced the most success in the following activity areas:

- Mobilizing community leadership and involving key public systems in the planning and coordination of service delivery.
- Attracting key leaders to the Youth Council (or similar convening group) and engaging them in a strategic process.
- Accessing resources from multiple systems to support service delivery—in particular the education system, the WIA one-stop system, and juvenile justice system.
- Making connections with the education and post-secondary systems for academic enhancements and post-secondary preparation.
- Creating effective outreach strategies and networks for reaching youth and engaging them in the design or delivery of service.
- Developing or accessing alternative education programs for out-of-school youth.
- Creating work experiences and internships for both in-school and out-of-school youth.

Areas of greatest challenge tended to be:

- Recruiting adults to serve as mentors.
- Developing special interventions to serve the needs of harder-to-serve groups such as homeless youth, youth returning from incarceration, those with substance problems, and those with limited English proficiency.
- Engaging the media in a positive, constructive way.
- Assembling local funding and redirecting the funding streams from other systems to accommodate the programming and service needs of the very high-risk youth.
- Closing the gap between employer expectations and young people's skill sets.

The following sections examine YO communities' successes and challenges in the five survey item areas.

Mobilizing Community Leadership

There were several items on the survey related to engaging community leadership, formulation of the Youth Council (or similar advisory group), visioning, and planning. Based on the survey responses and follow up discussions with the YO directors and WIB directors, this was an area of strength for the YO communities. In analyzing the survey responses across all 15 items on mobilizing leadership and strategic planning, several communities appear to have had considerable success in multiple areas, including Kansas City, Boston, Baltimore, Tucson, Detroit, Hartford, San Diego, San Francisco, California Indian Manpower Consortium, and Memphis.

The majority of communities indicated considerable success in involving their elected officials or other key community leaders in focusing attention on the challenges of out-of-school youth and youth in high risk situations. They also indicated success in attracting the participation of key players on the Youth Council (or similar group) and engaging the Council in policymaking and strategic planning related to youth service delivery. From follow-up discussions with several sites, it was clear that success evolved over time as communities strengthened partnerships to meet the implementation, programmatic, and sustainability challenges. What emerges from the survey responses and comments is that multiple communities were successful in convening key representa-

tives from disparate youth efforts, various youth service systems, the public and private sector, and community-based organizations to strategize about a better-coordinated, effective delivery system for disadvantaged and disconnected youth.

In Kansas City, the business community played a leading role in focusing attention on the older youth agenda, with the Full Employment Council performing the intermediary function. Prompted by statistics from Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies on Kansas City demographic and labor force trends, the board presented an economic development imperative rather than a social imperative to draw multiple partners into focusing on strategies to prepare older youth for productive participation in the labor force.

In Boston, the Youth Council had very active participation from both the private and public sectors in the design of their youth strategy. Most notable were the strong collaborations with the law enforcement community—including the police department, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, the Departments of Probation and Youth Services, and the District Attorney's Office. The Boston Public School's Director of Alternative Education and the principals of the public high schools were also actively engaged in the YO effort. Boston's "Friends of YO" sustainability effort was launched after Mayor Menino, a longtime supporter of youth programming, addressed a Town Hall Breakfast meeting of political, business, and community leaders gathered to learn about the Youth Opportunity Program and discuss effective ways to coordinate activity.

In Baltimore, at the outset of the YO initiative, multiple organizations, agencies, and businesses signed a formal "Declaration of Partnership" committing their "collective efforts in support of realizing the shared vision of ensuring all youth develop the skills, abilities, and personal attributes necessary for the successful transition to productive adulthood." The partnership—which included the workforce system, school system, the university and community college, the housing authority, social services, the mental health system, the Maryland Business Roundtable, the Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice, and others—remained active throughout the entire grant period, with all players contributing to the implementation and service delivery.

The YO grant enabled **Pima County** to establish a youth services network of community-based organizations and key youth-serving institutions and to fund a staff position to support the collaboration. Each agency agreed to dedicate staff to the One-Stop Center system. The use of a network of agencies offered youth multiple points of entry and a choice of service-delivery locations, including schools, the public housing authority, the juvenile justice system, neighborhood centers, and agencies focused on gang prevention, homeless youth, and disability services. The state foster care system also dedicated in-kind staffing to the network.

The success of the YO communities in bringing together this leadership across sectors and systems suggests that the infusion of resources was catalytic and helped bring the problems of older and disconnected youth to the forefront. The comments from the field indicated that even with resources, successful mobilization required significant and dedicated leadership. Active mayoral involvement appears to correlate highly with programmatic success. Those communities that indicated that they had considerable success in engaging their mayor (Boston, Detroit, California Indian Manpower Consortium, Buffalo, Memphis, and Brockton) also indicated having considerable success in engaging multiple systems and implementing comprehensive programs.

Most of the communities were not starting from scratch. The strength of the Department of Labor approach to the implementation of the grants was its insistence on multiple systems coming together and building on community resources. Many other organizations and efforts—including United Way, Safe and Sound, Job Corps, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, the empowerment zones, transitional jobs initiative, 21st Century Schools, and mayoral and county-level initiatives—were cited as playing important roles in (and in some cases facilitating) this strategic process. Nearly half of the communities indicated that such strategic youth programming required a community-wide vision and plan and extended beyond just the implementation of the YO grant.

Dedicated leadership matters: active mayoral involvement appears to correlate highly with programmatic success.

Several communities referenced the structural and economic impact that the YO funding had in the community. The physical facilities that were rehabilitated to serve as Youth Opportunity centers in many instances will remain beyond the grant. One economically distressed rural community that had lost most of its industry base due to plant closures and foreign trade, noted that the YO grant represented the first major financial infusion of any kind in long while. Thus, in addition to being a catalyst for youth programming, it also served as an economic stimulus for the local economy. YO grant dollars created business opportunities for small contractors and community-based providers of goods and services. The case management model for the YO grant required communities to create many new job opportunities leading to more dollars being spent by staff and youth in the community. While there is no empirical analysis that documents the magnitude of economic impact, it is reasonable to presume that the buying power associated with an infusion of several million dollars over several years and the multiplier effect as contractors, staff, and youth spent money in the community had important economic and community development impacts.

A significant challenge noted by several communities was that the grant requirement restricted YO activities to a specified geographic area—generally within an empowerment zone or enterprise community. The Department of Labor imposed geographic boundaries in an effort to test the impact of saturating a defined area. Many communities indicated that the geographic parameters imposed by the YO grant and the requirement that the Youth Opportunity Grant retain a separate identity complicated the community engagement process.

Connecting Systems and Accessing Resources

In most economically distressed communities, the systems and supports that should reinforce youth development are strained and often dysfunctional. Young people disconnect from the systems that are charged with their education and care, often without notice. There are few organized retrieval options, and the well-intended efforts in place in these communities are generally insufficient in

Reflections from the field—Mobilizing Community Leadership

(selected comments from local WIB and YO Directors, gathered from surveys and focus groups)

- ★ *In mobilizing a youth strategy it is important to use the economic development imperative versus a social imperative. We need these youth to be productive in the economy. The demographics of an aging workforce and growing skills gap—especially in the crafts and skilled trades—are good reasons to make this investment. There is a positive return on investment for this type of intervention. This makes a more compelling reason for business to get involved.*

- ★ *It was important that the YO process be viewed as leveraging funds and not soaking up funds. The more YO funds are used to mobilize resources, broker services, and support community-based delivery, the greater the community-based constituency for sustainability.*

- ★ *Creating a comprehensive coordinated youth strategy takes committed stakeholders, willing to collaborate, coordinate and bring resources to the table. However, the agencies and partners concurrently experienced cutbacks in federal, state, and foundation funding. These cuts heightened the need and willingness to collaborate and coordinate, but resulted in very little redirection of dollars.*

- ★ *These youth efforts are often in competition with the early childhood, after school, or school-based initiatives for budget attention and priority. Foundations and funding are more often sympathetic to the children's or in-school initiatives. Must form the constituency and the data to elevate these youth, particularly drop-outs for attention.*

scale and coordination to have a significant impact.

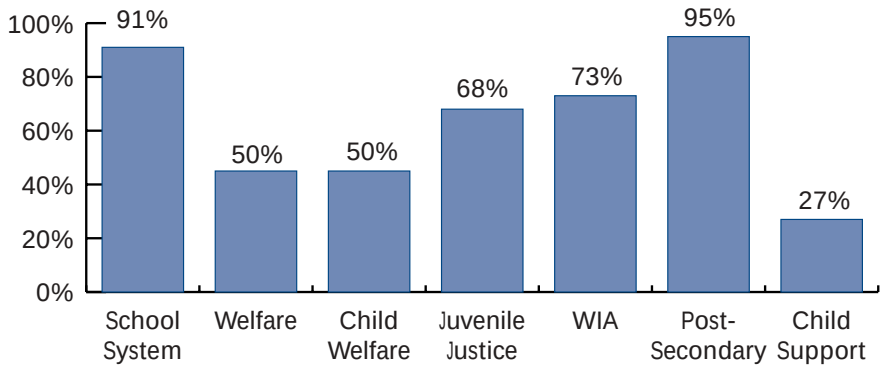
YO funding provided a vehicle for focusing, coordinating, and building on the various efforts and existing strengths in each community.

Communities were very successful in engaging multiple youth-serving systems and resource streams. The CLASP survey asked about the nature of the involvement with several systems, including public schools, welfare and child welfare, juvenile justice, WIA one-stops, and post-secondary systems. Respondents were asked to indicate whether each system was involved in planning, provided funding, provided dedicated staff, provided special programming, established formal referral agreements, or made informal referrals. The analysis looked at how many systems were formally engaged (beyond planning) and how many systems provided resources in the form of funds, staff, or special programs, and found substantial success in this area. As indicated in the chart below, 20 (91 percent) of the respondents had established formal referral relationships with at least three of the above mentioned youth-

Number of YO Respondents that engaged:

	4 or more systems	3 systems	1 or 2 systems
In providing resources in the form of funding, staff, or special programming	13	4	5
In establishing formal referral arrangements	15	5	2

Percent of Responding Communities with Formal Relationships with Selected Systems



serving systems. Seventeen (77 percent) of the YO communities negotiated resources in the form of funding, staff, or programming from at least three systems. More than half of the communities secured resources and had formal referral arrangements from four or more systems.

The communities that were able to attract resources from four or more systems also tended to be those that:

- Secured the active involvement of their elected officials.
- Attracted key leadership to serve on their Youth Council or similar advisory group.
- Felt that their Youth Council engaged actively in their strategic planning.
- Established formal referral relationships with several systems.

Youth Opportunity communities had more success with some systems than with others. The chart above indicates that they made significant inroads with the school system, the juvenile justice system, the One-Stops, and the post-secondary system.

The most significant observations related to the how YO communities engaged the systems within their respective communities are detailed below.

Secondary and Post-Secondary Education Systems

The YO communities evidenced a high degree of success in engaging the secondary and post-secondary systems in non-traditional ways to keep struggling students in school and provide options for engagement of out-of-school youth. Undoubtedly, this high level of formal connection between the local education system and the YO projects contributed to the relatively high level of participation in education support activities and the high level of post-secondary matriculation for the Youth Opportunity enrollees described in previous sections.

In communities that reported accessing resources from their school system, half reported their school system provided funding, nearly half indicated the schools dedicated staff to the effort, and approximately two-thirds reported their districts provided special programs. From the comments accompanying the survey responses, much of these resources were used for expanded academic support and special programming as opposed to systemic shifts in educational programming or funding. These school-based efforts included the provision of additional counseling and support staff for YO students, tutorial assistance, establishment of career-focused academies, and enhanced college prep support. A brief description of the various connections between the YO program and the public school system is presented in Appendix I.

Survey respondents cited the following barriers to formal connection with education systems:

- Difficulty in gaining school-based access for case managers and other support staff.
- Confidentiality limitations on access to school records or information regarding school status.
- Decentralized school-based decision-making made it difficult to put in place system-wide policies.
- Shortfalls in the local district budget or funding caps that precluded access or retrieval of ADA (average daily attendance) funding to support alternative program operation.

Several communities—Kansas City, Boston, Tampa, Seattle, Cleveland, and Pima County—rested substantial programmatic responsibility within the school system and these areas reported having considerable success with their drop out prevention and/or their educational strategies for out-of-school youth.

Among communities that reported accessing resources from the post-secondary system, the support was most often in the form of staff or special programming. The special programming included activities such as: SAT preparation; study skills and soft skills classes; occupational training offerings; financial aid counseling and scholarship assistance; or college exposure (Los Angeles created Community College Centers at each YO center and UCLA provided summer immersion activities). Additional detail is provided in Appendix 1.

Juvenile Justice System

The majority of communities engaged their juvenile justice system in the design and planning of the YO efforts and most succeeded in accessing resources from the juvenile justice system. Communities reported making inroads at varying points in the justice system—with the police, the prosecutor's office, the courts, and at re-entry (see Appendix 1). Demographic information was not available on the number of young offenders enrolled in Youth Opportunity program. A CLASP survey of 193 drop-outs across 15 YO sites revealed that approximately one-third had been engaged in some form of criminal or gang-related activity. It appears that the YO communities were active in reaching out to those youth in the justice system. Addressing the complex needs of those re-entering from incarceration was a common area of concern (see Areas of Program Challenge, below). Many areas had formal referral agreements with the juvenile justice system to receive youth as part of the diversion or release programming. In follow-up discussion, YO directors reported that many young offenders found their way to the YO centers without formal referral from the juvenile justice system. Communities met with varied success in serving the complex educational and support needs for this population and this area emerged as one that several communities expressed interest in networking with each other for technical assistance and exchange.

Welfare and Child Welfare

The YO communities were not quite as successful in accessing the welfare, child welfare, or child support systems. The welfare or child welfare system participated in the planning process in less than one-third of the communities. Only two communities reported having formal referral arrangements with either of these systems. Despite this lack of formal engagement in the design and planning process, almost half of the communities were able to get resource support, in the form of dedicated staff or special programming, from their welfare or child welfare agency suggesting that the door may be open for greater collaboration.

WIA One-stop System

Start-up of the Youth Opportunity grants coincided with the transition of the workforce system to meet the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act

of 1998. Communities planning YO implementation were at the same time, in the midst of forming new workforce boards, Youth Councils, and structuring their WIA One-Stop systems. Despite the substantial changes that were underway, the overwhelming majority of the communities surveyed reported success in engaging the One-Stop system in planning. Seventy (70 percent) indicated that they received resources from the One-Stop system to support the YO efforts and nearly half had formal referral arrangements in place with the One-Stop system. This success is partly because in 17 of the 22 communities, the workforce agency is also the grant recipient for the YO grant. With one exception, the five communities where the YO grant is separately administered from the WIA grants were just as successful in engaging the One-Stop system.

Youth Councils—a new requirement under the Workforce Investment Act—were just in their start-up phase. Despite this, the majority of the responding communities indicated having considerable success in attracting key leadership to the council and being highly successful in having the council engage in policymaking and planning for their youth efforts. This close connection between YO and the WIA system will be of key importance, in that WIA youth resources may be essential to the sustainability of some of the delivery capacity once YO funding ends.

Assembling and Redirecting Funding

Earlier sections of this report noted that communities were successful in accessing resources from other systems including funding, staff, and special programming. Questions were also asked on the survey to get an indication of how successful communities had been in accessing funding from other systems or other funding streams. Many communities noted that with the general cutbacks in funding across all systems, it was easier to get other agencies to extend staffing, services, or programmatic support than it was to achieve any redirection of funds. There were several communities that were able to access funding from multiple funding streams and systems.

Provided Funding Support for YO Service Delivery

	School System	Welfare	Child Welfare	Juvenile Justice	WIA	ADA	Perkins	Adult Basic Ed	Higher Ed Act
Boston	■			■		■			
Brockton, MA	■	■	■	■	■			■	
Buffalo	■	■			■	■		■	
CA Indian Manpower Consortium	■	■			■				■
Detroit	■				■		■	■	
Hartford	■			■	■				
Kansas City	■		■	■		■		■	
Los Angeles				■	■	■		■	
Lumber River				■	■	■			
Philadelphia	■	■						■	
Tucson	■				■	■			
San Diego	■		■			■	■		
Tampa	■				■	■	■	■	■

Implementing Comprehensive Program Strategies

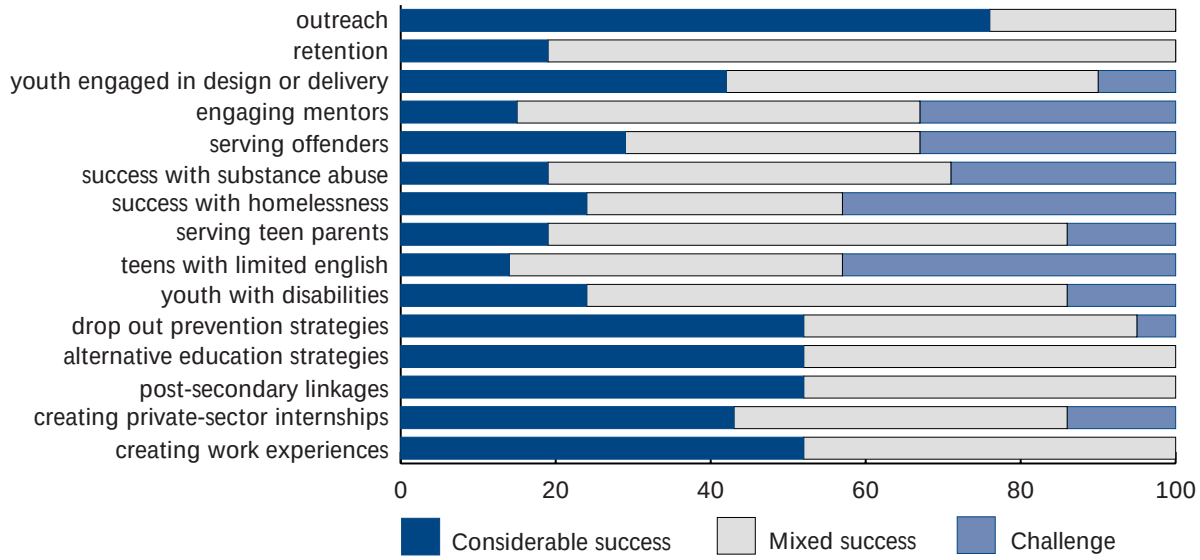
There were 25 questions on the survey designed to provide information on how successful the YO sites were in assembling the mix of programmatic services and supports to provide such comprehensiveness. The questions included: evidence of youth engagement, ability to meet the needs of youth in high-risk categories, good education support strategies, strong employer engagement, and solid work experience/work exposure component. Areas of strength include: outreach and engagement of youth, creating work experience and internship opportunities, and developing effective education support strategies for in-school and out-of-school youth. Those areas presenting most challenge were those related to delivery of service to youth in high risk categories—offenders, homeless youth, and those with substance problems or limited English ability. Engaging adults as mentors also proved challenging.

By year four, the enrollment levels well exceeded the goals set by the Department of Labor. The existence of Youth Centers, the use of communications strategies and events geared to young people, the use of youth in peer-to-peer outreach, involvement of youth in the design of facilities and in management decision-making, the infusion of arts, culture, sports and recreation activities, and the use of youth in community mapping and survey activity were all ways that communities made the service more accessible and youth-friendly.

Almost all of the communities felt that they had met with some success in the implementation of drop out prevention and alternative education strategies. Half of the communities felt that their efforts were exemplary and others could learn from what they had to share. There was a wide range of educational approaches cited. They included credit retrieval options, charter schools, twilight schools, community-based alternative schools, supported GED options, and linkage with Job Corps. Others like Kansas City and Seattle rested substantial responsibility for drop

Areas of programmatic success and challenge

How successful was the community in the following areas:



From the field—Successful Strategies for Youth Engagement

(selected comments from local WIB and YO Directors, gathered from surveys and focus groups)

★ **Detroit**—*The Youth senate provided critical programmatic feedback and ideas that were incorporated into youth programming. Youth were also used as peer counselors and recruiters*

★ **Baltimore**—*Youth management teams participated in the facility design and made input into program development and development of incentives. Youth were trained to serve on other advisory councils. YO members developed monthly community service activities to give back to the community. Youth also participated in the interview and selection of staff.*

★ **Houston**—*Each of Houston's 4 youth centers had a Youth council, comprised of young people from the center. They assisted with planning and implementing special services and were encouraged to develop entrepreneurial programs to fund their activities. These activities were used to develop leadership and business skills such as budgeting, planning, marketing, organization development and follow through.*

★ **Seattle**—*Youth serving on the youth advisory board served a maximum two year term. They received academic or vocational credit for their internship on the board and helped design all facets of youth programming. They maintained the thematic activity calendar and planned and implemented community service events.*

★ **Pima**—*Youth In Action Council (YIAC) members received facilitation training and designed an ambitious peer survey process which ultimately reached 700 youth in Pima County. The YIAC formed a service Learning Committee in Conjunction with a handful of paid internships. The all-youth committee designed a service learning program to engage youth throughout the One-Stop system in community service. Each month the program implemented community service projects that were planned and managed entirely by youth. Each project culminated in a reflection and celebration activity. The YIAC also publishes a monthly newsletter for the One-Stop community.*

out recovery with their school system and reported considerable success. The diversity in approaches across the sites, with reported success, is an important by-product of the YO movement.

Most of the Youth Opportunity sites felt that they achieved some success in the majority of programmatic areas. The dark areas on the chart below represent the programmatic areas where respondents felt considerable exemplary practice is occurring. The programmatic areas with the most light blue are those that presented the most challenge.

Areas of Programmatic Strength

Outreach and Engagement of Youth. As the enrollment and participation numbers in the earlier section indicate, the programs were highly successful in engaging both in-school and out-of-school youth. The Department of Labor estimated that the YO program enrolled approximately 42 percent of the eligible youth (62 percent of eligible out-of-school youth) in the target area. In discussions, the local directors expressed feeling considerable pressure to enroll quickly and to hit the enrollment goals established by the Department of Labor. There was the sense that the continued

appropriation of federal funds was, in fact, contingent on being able to demonstrate that these local interventions could be successful in attracting and retaining youth, who traditionally have been very hard to engage.

In one discussion of lessons learned from their experience, the directors reflected on the challenges posed by having to outreach and enroll youth as they were concurrently hiring staff, renovating facilities, negotiating for service, and establishing systems. The feeling was that their ability to adequately program for and service the youth coming through the doors in first year was compromised by the enormity of all the other tasks that had to be put in place to assure quality delivery. The consensus seemed to be that adequate time needs to be allowed to put staff, facilities, and systems in place to receive youth before the start of enrollment. There was also the consensus that the first year obstacles were replaced by robust strategies for outreach and engagement that are now highly successful.

Several components contributing to success in this area—including the existence of Youth Centers as the focal point of activity and staff support; involvement of youth in planning, on youth advisory boards and in program delivery; peer-to-peer word of mouth; the infusion of arts, culture, sports and recreation activities; and effective referral relationships with multiple youth-serving agencies.

The Arts played an important role in engaging and retaining the interest of youth. Art-related activities were evident across the network of YO sites. The YO Memphis Academy offered a college prep curriculum and offerings in visual and performing arts including drawing, painting, graphic design, dance, filmmaking, musical theatre, performing band and recording Industry. In Pima, Las Artes combined education with training and work experience in the creation of mosaic tile public art. The New Media Program, also in Pima, combines pre-GED classes with training and experience in video, TV and film production, website design and computer animation. Lumber River established a YO Records studio and a Broadcast Media Academy at the public high school in Robeson County Career Center. In San Diego, Steps of Praise, a nationally acclaimed dance troupe, partnered with the San Diego Youth Opportunity program to provide dance workshops and encourage creativity through art expression. The National Endowment for the Arts partnered with several YO communities—Milwaukee, Oglala Sioux, San Diego, Memphis, Rural Arkansas, Kansas City, and Albany—in projects related to dance, drama, production, graphic arts, murals, photography, choir and voice, and cultural exposure. In Houston, two dozen young artists participated in the design and creation of a 1200 square foot ceramic tile mosaic mural which adorns the external wall of a newly built center (and the pages of this report). The youth made the design, which reflects the values and mission of the YO program.

The YO sites succeeded in meeting the monthly requirement that they engage 80 percent of all enrollees in activities.

In addition to setting high enrollment goals for the YO sites, the Department of Labor established the expectation that each month, 80 percent of enrollees would be actively participating in defined youth development activities. While tracking and measuring this proved unwieldy for the YO sites, it required them to incorporate a range of activities that would motivate and sustain the interest of young people.

Effective Education Support Strategies. Almost all of the communities felt that they had met with success in the implementation of drop out prevention and alternative education strategies. Half of the communities—Tucson, Boston, Brockton, Lumber River, Baltimore, California Indian Manpower Consortium, Tampa, Cleveland,

Philadelphia, Seattle, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Denver, and San Diego—felt that their efforts were exemplary and others could learn from what they had to share. A synopsis of some of the education strategies in these communities is presented in Appendix 1.

The high level of perceived success can probably be attributed to several factors:

- The DOL guidance to the potential respondents to the YO solicitation required that all proposals be explicit about their strategies for drop out prevention and drop out retrieval. The Department of Labor in its SGA also identified several education support models that sites should consider replicating including the Futures program in Baltimore, Rheedlan Foundation efforts, Quantum Opportunity Program, Community in Schools, LA's Best After-School Program, and Job Corp. Variations of these models were employed by the YO sites.

- Most of the communities that indicated that they were highly successful with their educational support strategies were those that had successfully engaged their school systems in planning and had negotiated resource support from their school system.

- Most communities built upon the relationships with their school district or their existing alternative education deliverers to implement or expand innovative approaches for connecting drop-outs or struggling students (see Appendix I).

Across the sites that indicated considerable success in implementing alternative programs for drop outs, a wide range of educational approaches were cited—these included credit retrieval options, charter schools, twilight schools, community-based alternative schools, supported GED options, and linkage with Job Corps. Some communities worked with their school system to build delivery options outside the system. Others like Kansas City and Tampa, rested substantial responsibility for drop out recovery with their school system and reported considerable success.

The activities noted below are examples of some of the types of interventions that were employed across the sites:

- Cleveland's Quantum Opportunity Program, Baltimore's Futures Plus, Seattle's In-School Connection Program, and Brockton's In-School Access Center all provided students with school-based staff support, intensive advocacy, academic support, career exploration, cultural activities, and connections to community service or work experience.

- Memphis established the YO! Memphis Academy—offering College Prep Curriculum, Tutoring/Intensive Test Prep, an Honors Program and College Credit Courses.

- In several sites, the local districts or colleges created special academies or occupationally focused programs. Houston, Tampa, Cleveland, and Baltimore all had programs focused on Fire and Rescue. Lumber River established broadcast television academies at the Public Schools of Robeson County Career Center and a Mixed Media Program at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. In Tampa, the school district created "Summer Academies" providing occupational training in areas such as Fire Rescue and Certified Nursing Assistant. The Tucson Medical Center provided YO students with entry training for the Health Care field.

- In Seattle, the University of Washington Pipeline Project recruited, trained, and placed tutors in YO schools and centers to help youth perform at higher academic levels and prepare for college.

Serving the educational needs of youth in these communities where the drop out rates exceed 50

percent requires a diversity of approaches in the same community. The range of educational approaches employed by the YO sites provide an important collection of practice that can benefit other communities confronting the same challenge. While many of the approaches are relatively young, these collective efforts are a very fertile arena for continued study, sharing, nurturing, and technical support.

Work Experience Opportunities. As noted earlier, the YO sites appeared to have considerable success in creating work experience, internship, and community service opportunities for the youth enrolled in the program. More than 50,000 such opportunities were created and more than half of those responding to the survey indicated that they had considerable success in this area. This is not surprising given that the YO activities are well anchored in the workforce development system in most of the communities and many have a long history of experience playing the intermediary role in the school-to-work and other employer engagement efforts.

Providing high-quality, hands-on experiences to acquaint youth with the demands of the workplace and develop their employability skills appeared to be a priority across most of the sites. More than half of the communities responded that they had considerable success in developing high-quality internships, work experiences, or community service experiences in either the public or private sector. Several communities—Tucson, Boston, Lumber River, Brockton, Kansas City, Denver, Philadelphia, Houston, and Los Angeles-indicated considerable success in accessing paid internships in the private sector.

The sequential models that were put in place in Boston and Pima are worth noting. Boston's four-tiered employment system transitions youth from supported community-based employment to competitive private sector employment. The levels in Boston's Transitional Employment System (TES) are:

1. Level I, for youth at high risk, features an intensive focus on training and coaching on employability skills and team-building and participants complete a short-term community service project.
2. Level II provides a stipend accompanying a community-based internship. Though supported through a weekly employability skills support group, youth work more independently in the community than in Level I.
3. Level III placements may be in either private-sector employment at a basic entry-level job or occupational skills training programs with Career Specialists providing advice and coaching on an individual basis.
4. Level IV placements for older youth are in primary labor-market positions in the private sector or long-term occupational skills training programs. Career Specialists provide advice and support to individuals at this level, with a view to bringing youth to a point where they can compete independently in the labor market.

In Pima, vocational high school students progress from a classroom employability-skills training phase to a structured work crew experience to an individualized placement in a public sector internship. Students participating in their Rewarding Youth Achievement program go through a career exploration phase on a college campus to prepare them for a complementary work experience.

Many YO sites linked to existing intermediaries to broker with business in the establishment of work experiences and internships. WorkReady Philadelphia coordinates public resources and private sector resources to provide work exposure and career preparation experiences for youth. WorkReady includes a training curriculum for youth and adult mentors as well as project-based learning and portfolio components. Youth can earn credit in certain placements in addition to work experience. The San Diego Partnership's School to Work Intermediary and the Pima Pledge a Job Intermediary both assisted YO participants in connecting to work experiences and preparatory support.

Areas of Programmatic Challenge

Based on the survey responses and the feedback from directors, there were several difficult areas related to program implementation.

Inadequacy of Planning Lead Time. There was consistent feedback that the planning lead time was inadequate for an undertaking of this scale. Many felt pressure to enroll youth even though the facility, staffing, and programming were not fully in place. Awardees were announced in March. Grants were finalized 60 to 90 days thereafter (depending on negotiations) thereby giving the authority to spend. All communities were expected to have their YO center doors open with youth enrolled by the beginning of September. Feedback from directors suggests that the time frame was too aggressive for an undertaking of this magnitude. Several indicated that it undercut the ability to nurture relationships and achieve up front buy-in needed for ultimate sustainability. Others commented that the lead time was insufficient for hiring and training staff and putting management systems in place. There was a general feeling that the initial start-up complications were overcome as the program reached a more steady state. It was believed that the initial pressure for enrollment was to secure future congressional appropriations for the YO effort. Ultimately, those appropriations were cut assuring no expansion or extension of Youth Opportunity Movement. Several directors expressed the concern that start-up challenges may have negatively impacted first year operations, outcomes, and early perceptions about the YO movement.

Recruitment of Adult Mentors. It is not surprising that finding mentors for older and often troubled youth posed a challenge. Most communities reported either mixed success or lack of success in this area. Only respondents from Kansas City, Washington, DC, and the California Indian Manpower Consortium reported being very successful in this area. Reasons cited for this challenge included:

- The difficulty in recruiting adults who are good role models and are willing to make the type of firm and sustained commitment that is needed from a volunteer.
- The need for significant level of staff support to address the recruitment, matching, training, ongoing problems that arise.
- Concerns related to accountability, security, and liability.

Some communities implemented creative approaches to address these problems. Pima County structured its case management staffing to maximize opportunities for mentoring by assigning one case manager to each youth, often matching the youth with a case manager at an agency in their own neighborhood or school. They trained volunteer worksite supervisors to provide mentoring.

Programs and Services for Youth at Very High Risk. This was cited repeatedly, specifically, related to those returning from incarceration, those with substance problems, homeless teens, and those with limited English speaking ability. Factors that were cited as contributing to the difficulty included: lack of resources in the community to address intensive service and support needs, and inadequate housing and shelter options for homeless

Communities with Successful Interventions for Difficult Youth Populations

The communities in the table below indicated on the survey that they had considerable success—worth sharing—with the special populations below.

Special Group	Communities indicating having Considerable Success
Incarcerated youth	Pima, Boston, Brockton, San Francisco, Tampa, Los Angeles, Hartford
Limited English Ability	Washington, DC, San Francisco, Buffalo
Parenting teens	Pima, Washington, DC, Brockton, Seattle
Homeless youth	Boston, Pima, Washington, DC, Seattle, Denver
Substance impaired youth	Brockton, Denver, Seattle, San Diego
Youth with disabilities	Pima, Lumber River, Kansas City, Philadelphia, Detroit

youth and young parents. More active participation of the welfare, child welfare, and health and mental health systems in the design and implementation of the YO activities might have resulted in better access to the supports needed for these difficult populations. Many of the youth finding their way into the YO program had a history in the foster care, juvenile services, welfare, protective services, possibly mental health systems. Several sites indicated a desire for technical assistance and networking to learn what has been effective in meeting the special needs of the most troubled youth and strategies for better accessing the support of multiple systems to support those services.

Some YO sites indicated considerable success with special populations, and could be valuable resources for networking.

Media Engagement. The inability to effectively engage the local media was cited as a concern by several respondents. Very few communities indicated having success in engaging the local media in any sustained way. The YO directors identified communications and marketing as an area of collective concern. Respondents expressed frustration over the difficulty in getting media attention switched from the negative coverage of youth to positive activity, and frustration that outside of their network there is little knowledge of the YO efforts.

Data Reporting. While most communities effectively used the data management system mandated by the Department of Labor for tracking and reporting, the system fell short of providing access to the type of reporting needed to document impact. The Department of Labor prohibited local sites from using the federal YO funds for evaluation or analysis, because it had contracted for an extensive evaluation. While most sites received monthly statistical reports, no information on impact or evaluations has been provided to the communities.

Engaging the Business Community

Survey respondents indicated mixed success in engaging the business community. A notable accomplishment is that two-thirds of the YO communities reported considerable success in either accessing private sector internship positions, creating customized training opportunities, or establishing effective intermediary relationships to coordinate access to jobs or business resources. It was clear in the survey responses that all of the YO communities valued the role of the business sector and sought to actively engage that community in the planning and in opening up opportunities for both in school and out of school youth.

Interestingly, when asked separately about success creating private sector opportunities for in-school youth versus out-of-school youth, sites reported being equally successful. This is encouraging in that it suggests that communities recognized that exposure to the private sector workplace and to careers was an essential component in programming for both in school and out of school youth.

An informal survey in 2003 of the directors of all the YO sites regarding their business partnerships revealed that the communities had made progress in gaining access beyond the traditional retail and food service establishments that traditionally hire youth. Partnerships with businesses in the health industry was the most predominant, followed by retail, tourism and entertainment (not including hotels), communications and technology, banking, and then, manufacturing, warehousing, business support and hospitality. Most of these partnerships yielded internships, exposure, business participation in job readiness preparation, and opportunities for placements.

Respondents reported greater challenge in engaging the business community in more formal sustained efforts to create pipelines. The overwhelming majority of communities reported that while they had met with some success working with employers to identify the growth areas of the economy and the entry-level skill set, they were much less successful in engaging business or industry representatives in the development of curriculum or special training programs, pathways or pipelines to specific industries. Respondents provided some possible reasons for this:

- Much of the early YO activity occurred at a time of economic down-turn. Many companies were laying-off and therefore the environment was not conducive for bringing in younger workers.
- There was competition from adult workers for the limited jobs that were available, meaning youth were not the priority for hiring.
- Pressures at the workplace related to lay-offs and downsizing made it difficult for employers to release staff to participate in the level of discussion necessary to build effective pipeline programs.

Several communities indicated that their success in connecting youth to employment opportunities was directly related to job development and the one-on-one work between job coaching staff and youth, and with employers to make the matches. Pima County (Tucson) reported having success using an OJT model, where employers provided very specific information on the competencies to be gained before an intern was assigned. They reported success with most of those entering OJT being hired into positions. Washington, DC partnered with the unions to expose youth to the construction trades.

Baltimore also reported success in using paid internships in the private sector as a gateway to employment in higher-wage jobs. Job developers solicited employer partnerships where youth could be trained in technical workplace skills for occupations. Interested employers worked with the job developer to structure the internship. The wages for the youth were subsidized by the Baltimore Youth Opportunity System with the formal agreement that the employer will identify positions within their business or organization in which the youth could be hired upon completion of the internship. The youth's supervisor and the job coach monitor closely the youth's development of the essential workplace skills.

Houston, Baltimore, Tampa, Cleveland all established pipeline programs to introduce and prepare young people for careers in the field of fire and rescue. ■

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications of Findings

The infusion of the YO resources in these communities at a time when the workforce delivery system was in transition, the economy was recessing, resources to other youth service organizations and systems were retrenching, and youth unemployment was on the rise created a synergy in many communities. Communities coalesced around the older youth agenda, creating relationships and interventions that extend beyond the YO boundaries and will most probably continue beyond the grant funding. YO also created a national movement uniting communities in a process of learning from each other and building community capacity to implement and manage this effort of significant scale and importance.

Following are the conclusions and recommendations based on observation and analysis.

1. The Youth Opportunity experience demonstrates that young people by the thousands are anxious for a chance to be reconnected. When presented with options to re-engage in schooling, prepare for careers, and transform their paths, youth by the thousands connected through Youth Opportunity. The loss of such resource and infrastructure in these most distressed communities would be tragic.

2. Communities can manage to scale. In highly distressed communities, where thousands of teens drop out and disconnect, a single program intervention can't change the landscape for these youth. A well coordinated cross-system approach with all partners on board can make a difference. Such complicated programming requires leadership, management skills, administrative capacity, and delivery capacity. A lingering question has always been: can community capacity be developed to manage such large scale efforts? YO communities persevered through the start-up challenges and in most communities appear to have demonstrated that, given the resources and the planning time, such comprehensive coordinated programming can be implemented.

3. The grant requirement that multiple systems and resources must be involved was essential

in bringing disparate efforts to the table. The directives of funders affect how programs and planning occurs in a community. Often, grant makers, federal and otherwise, send funding through a system or entity without any real requirement for involvement of other systems or existing infrastructure. This contributes to the fragmented landscape of youth delivery that is duplicative and inefficient. In resource-challenged communities, every incentive should be used to leverage systems and resources to work in tandem to address the youth challenge.

4. A convening entity is necessary. A Youth Council (or similar vehicle) comprising appropriate membership can be a vehicle for creating a strategic vision for youth—in particular, those falling outside the mainstream—and for mobilizing all segments of the community to be part of the design and benchmarking progress.

5. Local and state officials have an important role to play. It appeared that those communities that indicated success in engaging their mayor or local official also had greater success in accessing multiple systems. Accessing state education funds and connecting with the justice and child welfare systems require the active involvement of state systems. Navigating the state/local relationship to create flexible, innovative system connections on behalf of drop-outs, foster youth, and offenders requires active state leadership.

6. Local delivery capacity is directly related to the ability to hire and maintain quality staff. Most YO sites invested in recruiting, training, and developing quality case management staff. The vagaries of funding make it difficult for communities to maintain high-quality direct service capacity. Developing and maintaining the professional capacity in youth service delivery is a critical challenge to be overcome if communities are to make a substantial impact on the negative indicators.

7. YO efforts to engage drop-outs warrant further study. Communities with large numbers of drop-outs will need to explore multiple avenues for connecting these youth to quality education options. Many of the approaches employed in the YO communities are promising, and can guide this effort. Unfortunately, some of these newer approaches may succumb to a lack of funding. Given the tremendous need for effective educational alternatives, these collective YO efforts are a fertile arena for continued study, sharing, nurturing, and technical support.

8. The child welfare system and the mental health system must be pulled into the local visioning, strategic planning, and delivery. They appeared to be tangential in the YO efforts. YO directors indicated substantial participation of former foster care youth, of offenders, and of homeless youth. These youngsters benefit most from the supportive programming with caring adult advocacy and hands-on labor market experiences that YO program provides. But, they also come with greater challenges requiring the services of health and mental health professionals. With the increased focus in WIA reauthorization for greater service to the most at risk youth, the participation of these two systems is critical.

9. The YO communities were very successful in motivating youth to post-secondary aspirations. A separate CLASP survey of nearly 200 drop-outs enrolled in YO revealed that 40 percent indicated their desire to enroll in college. Of those with college ambitions, 65 percent had specific majors in mind.

Changing these youth mindset is a tremendous accomplishment.[5] Making their aspirations a reality requires greater support for non-traditional students matriculating in college.

10. **Economically stressed communities can't replace the millions being lost in federal funding.** The provision for Youth Opportunity Grants in the 1998 WIA legislation was built on lessons from several years of prior demonstration funding. It was grounded in the findings from years of research on effective practice. WIA reauthorization is eliminating Youth Opportunity Funding in lieu of Challenge Grants, not necessarily targeted to distressed communities. The abandonment so quickly of a well thought-out, targeted intervention, when drop out rates for poor urban minority youth exceed 50 percent, should be reconsidered.

11. **Foundations and funders are needed to sustain the innovation.** Foundations and other funders may be reluctant to simply step in and replace retrenching federal dollars. But when federal interventions give rise to promising approaches or interventions, foundations can incubate these efforts and assisting in their evaluation, dissemination, and replication. Many promising—in some cases groundbreaking—approaches were implemented in the YO communities; some will suffer not because they aren't effective, but because the available resource support is insufficient to nurture their growth and development in complicated environments. This is particularly true of fledgling arrangements with the school system and justice system.

12. **There is a need for expanded participation of employers and business leaders in crafting pathways for youth to connect with high-growth, high-skill areas of the economy.** The YO effort in many communities brought together the secondary, post-secondary, and workforce systems to structure support for non-traditional students. The business sector can play an incredibly important role in helping these systems define the skill set, exposure, and experiences that can create a pipeline of well-trained candidates for skilled jobs of the future. Several YO sites noted the challenge involved in delivering young people with the requisite occupational skills for success. This can not be accomplished without the participation and willingness of business and industry at the table. It is worth further exploring ways to provide incentives and supports to expand business and industry alliances. ■

5 Harris, L. *Don't Hang Up—Their Future's on the Line: What Youth Say About Being Reconnected*. Center for Law and Social Policy, pending publication Spring 2006.

Appendices

Appendix 1: YO Community Collaborations with Other Systems

This appendix contains a brief description of the collaborative efforts in which YO communities were engaged.

YO Collaborations with Secondary and Post-Secondary Systems

Lumber River, NC	Lumber River established broadcast television academies at the Public Schools of Robeson County Career Center and a Mixed Media Program at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. They partnered with the Basic Education Department of Robeson Community College (RCC) to engage out-of-school youth in a high school diploma program. RCC also established an early college program with the intent of attracting students who may not be considering higher education. In that program, students are charged no tuition for the college-level courses. They are asked to follow the rules set by the public schools until they begin taking full-time college courses during their fifth year.
Seattle, WA	The University of Washington Pipeline project recruits, trains, and places tutors in YO schools and centers to help youth perform at higher academic levels and to prepare them for college. YO participants were assisted by the Seattle School Connection Program, which provided prevention and intervention services for students who were increasingly absent from school and experiencing school failure and to those returning to regular school after completing a re-entry program. YO students were enrolled into this program based on an assessment of risk factors. Individual plans were developed for each youth, building on his/her strengths and engaging the family in a set of activities, agreements, supports, and incentives to address the truancy and behavioral issues.

YO Collaborations with Secondary and Post-Secondary Systems – continued

Seattle, WA continued	YO partnered with the Seattle Interagency School to provide open-entry enrollment, mentoring, community service, individual assessment, individualized instruction, and academic remediation. The Interagency school serves youth who have dropped out of school, are homeless, street-involved, or are low skilled and have been unsuccessful in other programs.
Baltimore, MD	Baltimore expanded its Futures Plus model for grades 9 through 12; it offers comprehensive, year-round, student-centered programming including intensive advocacy, academic support, youth development activities, career exploration, coaching for personal strengths, college tours, cultural & arts trips, summer work and enrichment experiences. Baltimore also developed a "funds following students" credit recovery program for out-of-school youth. The YO program partnered with Baltimore City Public Schools to re-engage high school drop-outs and re-enroll them in community-based diploma programs run by contract providers. The youth were able to earn a regular high school diploma in a small, community-based learning environment that could better meet students' academic needs, individual strengths, and circumstances. Baltimore had a strong partnership with the College Bound Foundation to increase youth enrollment in college by placing staff at the YO Centers and providing SAT prep, college tours, fee waivers, and information.
San Diego, CA	San Diego established a charter school on-site at the YO Center to provide small class room and individualized instruction and academic guidance to complete the high school diploma. Also provided on site was psychological/social counseling using a program partner's funding through the CA Endowment Foundation.
Tampa, FL	In partnership with the school district, YO Tampa established several award-winning "Summer Academies" such as Fire Rescue and certified nursing assistant (CNA) occupational training programs. The Tampa school district delivered all of the YO tutoring, remediation, GED prep, and occupational skills training through its Career and Technical Education division.
Cleveland, OH	Cleveland established a collaborative project with the Cleveland Municipal School District (CMSD) to create the Twilight school. Intended for youth who had dropped out of school, it was a full-service high school taught by CMSD teachers and offering a CMSD diploma. The Twilight School provided nontraditional teaching that was tailored to each individual so high school drop-outs and students with special needs were able to earn a diploma at their own pace. Quantum, an in-school support program, was started as part of the original grant. The program worked directly with area high schools to provide long-term mentoring and after-school activities with the goal of increasing each member's chances of graduating from high school and planning for after school. Members were each assigned a counselor who guided them through the program. After-school activities included community

YO Collaborations with Secondary and Post-Secondary Systems – continued

Cleveland, OH, cont.	service, life skills training, youth development projects, and visits to art and cultural museums. In addition, Quantum arranged academic tutoring and offered a financial stipend based on performance. Cuyahoga Community College partnered with YO Cleveland to introduce program members to higher education. TRI-C provided computer-assisted and traditional classroom learning modules to help prepare YO members for college-level work. In addition, it offered services that were designed to help acclimate YO members to a college atmosphere.
Pima County, AZ	Pima YO program partnered with Pima Vocational High School, which is a state-charted diploma program combining instruction with individualized support and work experience in public-sector internships. The program established an occupational training voucher system to maximize post-secondary access to occupational training and expand the number and selection of occupation training programs that youth could pursue. The vendor list includes technical colleges and non-profit training providers. The YO program also bought education classes from the largest school district's extensive technical education resources and made them available to YO members, including drop outs and those residing outside the district.
Los Angeles, CA	The Los Angeles YO effort assembled over 30 Partners in education to create a range of opportunities for in-school and out-of-school youth. The partners included technical high schools, charter schools, alternative schools, community colleges and four-year universities, community-based programs, and vocational skills centers. Upon enrollment, each youth developed a plan that identified short- and long-range goals and connected them with the most appropriate education and employment preparation options. College Career Centers were housed at the Youth Opportunity offices in Watts and Boyle Heights. The College Career Centers were set up to be a comfortable place for students to research colleges and speak with recruiters and staff. The College Career Centers allowed students to explore possibilities in postsecondary education. YO provided students with the information and materials they needed to go to college. Other program supports were provided—including (1) ACT/SAT preparation offered in partnership with Kaplan, UCLA Early Academic Outreach Program, and UCLA Center for Experiential Education and Service Learning; (2) a public speaking class provided via the community college; (3) summer immersion programs at UCLA; and (3) a student/parent workshop.
Kansas City, MO	The Kansas City Public Schools out-stationed a full-time staff person to the One-Stop Center. This staff person had access to school systems records and support programs and was responsible for connecting drop-outs to the most appropriate educational option. The school system was cited as one of the most productive providers of educational services for out-of-school youth.

YO Collaborations with Secondary and Post-Secondary Systems – continued

Boston, MA	Boston engaged the Boston Public School's Director of Alternative Education, many headmasters from the district high schools, and the guidance department, and worked with its extensive network of community based alternatives to provide education options for out-of-school youth.
Memphis, TN	YO! Memphis Academy—a secondary school offering college-prep curriculum, tutoring, intensive test preparation, an honors program, college credit courses, and a Visual Arts Connection—was established. Students can explore drawing/painting and graphic design, forensics, and performing arts including dance, filmmaking, musical theatre, performing band, and recording industry classes.
Hartford, CT	The site established a Diploma Plus program in cooperation with (and housed within) the Hartford Public Schools' adult education system. Internships and career work experiences were incorporated as an integral part of curriculum. The "Plus" phase included courses at Capital Community College. Hartford also established a Credit Retrieval program for out-of-school youth and those involved in the justice system. The college prep program will have helped almost 300 youth into college by the fall of 2005. The Youth Opportunity effort strengthened School Prevention Teams in several schools, linking school attendance and achievement data to the YO database (Hartford Connects) to have a real-time, comprehensive in-school youth database to track outcomes.
Brockton, MA	Brockton began a distance learning program for young people seeking a GED but unable to make it to class due to full-time work, child care issues, and other barriers. Donated computers were placed into member's homes along with GED software. An instructor worked with students via the Internet, telephone, and home visits. This program was successful and received continued funding through the Department of Education. An Access Center was created at the Brockton High School and school case managers were co-located there during the school day to be available to YO members. The Access Center provided supervision to youth during their directed academics, lunch breaks, and after school. The center also provided one-on-one tutoring, and peer mentoring and tutoring alternatives as well as career exploration. Center staff tracked the academic and disciplinary progress of the members and offered support and referrals to the appropriate resources to help with youth development. Youth advocates were stationed at the community college to provide support to youth as they transitioned to higher education.

YO Collaborations with the Justice System

Houston, TX	The Houston YO program worked with the juvenile justice system to identify youth before they were released and to develop planning as to how the workforce system would assist them in their educational and employment goals.
Brockton, MA	Brockton established strong relationships with the court system, the juvenile justice system, the Department of Youth Services, and Plymouth County House of Corrections. Young offenders are recruited and offered support, guidance, and connections to education and employment opportunities. This strong partnership assisted Brockton in creating the Gateway Program of the Youthful Offenders Demonstration Project.
Tampa, FL	YO Tampa has established an agreement with the local State Attorney's office that identifies YO as an official diversionary program for adjudicated youth.
Los Angeles, CA	The Intensive Transition "IT" Team has created a partnership between the County Probation Department, Los Angeles YO Movement (LAYOM), WIA, and the City of Los Angeles Information Technology staff to create a new referral system for probation clients. The IT team helps probation camp returnees enroll in LAYOM or WIA services within 48 hours of their release.
Boston, MA	The Boston YO program worked with the Department of Youth Services to connect young offenders to their transitional jobs program, providing work, stipends, connections to education, and case management support.
Philadelphia, PA	Philadelphia's three YO Centers, now known as E3 Power (Empowerment, Education and Employment), have partnered with the City's Department of Human Services to enhance community reintegration efforts on behalf of youth returning from juvenile placement facilities. Returning youth deemed most likely to experience recidivism participate in step-down activities at E3 during their first three months after release for up to four hours each day, 6-7 days/week. Programming offered to youthful offenders includes academic support, life skills training and employment-related activities, including work readiness training, referrals to employment and job support. In addition, youthful offenders have access to a range of other programs and services offered through E3. The E3 centers continue to serve this population in addition to other populations of disconnected.
Hartford, CT	Youth involved with the justice system are referred directly to a youth development specialist who develops a service plan and enrolls them in the most appropriate educational option—for example, credit retrieval, Diploma Plus, Credit Diploma program, GED, or a return regular school. Assigned staff worked directly with Community Court and other justice agencies. YO staff provided justice-involved youth with employability skills, work experience, and jobs.

YO Collaborations with the Justice System continued

Washington, DC	Re-Focus was launched as a pilot project involving a collaborative partnership with the juvenile courts, government probation and retention organizations and the DC YO program, to provide anger management/conflict resolution, substance abuse education, life skills and peer adult mentoring to improve behavior and attitude of youth involved with the criminal justice system. These services supported youth for transitioning to education, employment and occupational skills training.

Appendix II: Communities Indicating Success Worth Sharing in Various Areas

On the CLASP Survey "Lessons from the Youth Opportunity" respondents were asked to identify areas of considerable success that they felt were worth sharing or replicating. They were also asked to identify the systems which provided resource support to the effort. The charts below identify the areas of strength identified by specific communities.

Mobilizing Leadership/ Strategic Planning	Comprehensive Preventive or Alternative Programming
Communities below indicated high level of success in engaging their political and community leadership in elevating youth issues and supporting the YO effort	*Communities below indicated considerable success in developing programming that combined education, work experience, and support*
Baltimore, MD • Boston, MA • California Indian Manpower Consortium • Detroit, MI • Hartford, CT • Kansas City, MO • Memphis, TN • Pima County, AZ (Tucson) • San Diego, CA • San Francisco, CA •	Baltimore, MD • Boston, MA • Brockton, MA • California Indian Manpower Consortium • Denver, CO • Hartford, CT • Houston, TX • Kansas City, MO • Los Angeles, CA • Lumber River, NC • San Diego, CA • Tucson, AZ •

Connecting Multiple Systems

Communities below were successful in getting resource support from at least four of the following systems: school, juvenile justice, WIA, welfare, child welfare, or post-secondary.

	Schools	Juvenile Justice	Welfare/ Child Support	Child Welfare	WIA	Post-secondary
Albany	■		■	■		■
Brockton	■	■	■	■	■	■
Buffalo	■		■		■	■
Detroit	■	■	■		■	■
Hartford	■	■	■		■	
Houston		■		■	■	■
Kansas City	■	■		■	■	■
Los Angeles	■	■			■	■
Lumber River	■	■			■	■
Memphis	■	■	■	■	■	
Philadelphia	■		■		■	■
Pima County (Tucson)	■	■	■	■	■	■
Tampa	■	■	■	■	■	■

Appendix III: Contact Information for Respondents to the ***Youth Opportunity: Lessons Learned*** Survey

YO Site	Organization	Contact Information
Albany, GA	Albany/Dougherty Community Partnership	Lynn Borders, Executive Director partners@adpartnership.org
Baltimore, MD	Mayor's Office of Employment Development	Karen Sitnick, Director ksitnick@oedworks.com Ernest Dorsey, YO Project Director edorsey@oedworks.com
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Kansas City, KS	Kansas City Full Employment Council, Inc	Clyde McQueen, President and CEO cmcqueen@feckc.org

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