

"Putting Youth to Work" Series

Examples of Effective Practice in Distressed Communities

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Best Practice Examples in:

- ✓ Convening Body
- ✓ Delivery Agent
- ✓ Workforce and Employer engagement
- ✓ Partnership with Juvenile Justice
- ✓ Partnership with Child Welfare

Overview

Baltimore faces the challenge of addressing barriers to education and employment for a significant number of disconnected young people. Nearly 6,000 teens are not attending school and not working, and around 13,000 young adults ages 18 to 24 also are not attending school and not working¹. To address these barriers, the Baltimore City Workforce Investment Board's Youth Council works to build

a comprehensive youth system that will promote opportunities for youth to acquire necessary life skills, education, work exposure and experiences that enable them to have productive careers and become responsible family members and citizens². The Youth Council is staffed by the Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED) and convenes 50 to 60 people from education, juvenile justice, social services, employers and community organizations. There are several subcommittees on the council around issues such as dropout prevention, summer jobs, systems building, homelessness and apprenticeships. The council recently elected the Vice President of External Affairs Verizon – Maryland, Inc. as chair to connect activities and planning to private sector employer needs. The Youth Council has engaged more divisions and sectors of Baltimore City Schools on the Council to strengthen the connection between education and workforce. Each of the council's standing committees has facilitated the implementation of strategies that will address barriers to youth success.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2000, Baltimore received a national Youth Opportunity Grant funded by the U.S. Department of Labor to increase the long-term employability of youth residents in the Empowerment Zone. Baltimore sought to implement a comprehensive youth service, yet seamless system for out-of-school and disconnected youth. The Baltimore Youth Opportunity System (BYOS) was created to offer youth comprehensive, coordinated programs, which build on youths' strengths, increasing their development and competency. The initiative addresses Baltimore's youth dropout rate, disconnection, high unemployment rate, secondary education completion rate, and linkage to post-secondary education. Although Department of Labor funding ended in 2006, Baltimore's mayor and city council elected to sustain funding for two Youth Opportunity (YO!) centers based on positive impact data documenting success in decreasing recidivism and early pregnancy as well as increases in educational attainment and wages.

The YO! System provides a broad network through which employers can access untapped, skilled youth workforce resources. BYOS developed a continuum of training to prepare youth for the workplace, beyond just summer employment. This includes job readiness training, job shadowing, paid public/private sector internships, employer-based training, and occupational skills training.³

The Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED) serves as the grant administrator, convenes community organizations and businesses with a goal of creating a coordinated, comprehensive, and seamless service delivery system for youth. It also supports a management structure and electronic tracking system to evaluate the performance. MOED, in partnership with the Youth Council, is responsible for the initiative's oversight and direction and serves 7,000 young people during the summer and nearly 2,400 in a host of year-round programming. The city also serves nearly 1,400 18- to 21-year-old young adults in its One Stop System.

The Youth Council, supported by MOED, sponsors an annual technical assistance and capacity building conference for educators, employers, case workers, for profit and non-profits, which provides services to youth and young adults. In addition, the council sponsors several youth practitioner seminars and summits that featured speakers to share best practices for issues such as gang intervention and prevention and dropout prevention and alternative education options. The Youth Council funds education and workforce programs for disconnected youth. The current programs include the Baltimore Career Academy, Health Care Careers Alliance and the Urban Alliance.

Health Care Career Alliance is a partnership between Johns Hopkins Hospital, Sinai Life Bridge, University of Maryland Medical Systems, Genesis HealthCare and Civic Works that annually serves 75 youth ages 18 to 21. The program focuses on academic advancement and occupational training in the health field. When the work-based learning, internship and training phase of the program concludes, youth are placed in regular full-time positions at one of the partnership institutions at a minimum of \$8.50 per hour.

The Urban Alliance's core service is a partnership between corporations and Urban Alliance that provides positive youth development opportunities through internships. The goal is to engage youth year-round through meaningful, paid internships while providing ongoing support services, which include mentoring, life-skills instruction, post-high school planning, and financial literacy training. Once placed, the students work at their job sites part-time during the school year starting at \$7.55 per hour. Students are eligible for raises up to \$10 an hour based on performance.

Baltimore has a contingent of homeless youth that at one time were not being served. The council developed the Transitional Housing Committee and it received a \$750,000 Compassion Capital grant to implement a Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative. The Initiative selected partners to build a 43-unit permanent housing facility with support services for homeless and unstably housed youth to be completed in summer 2010.

Education and Workforce Development

MOED works with Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPP) to create pipelines that link to workforce opportunities. High schools refer students to the BCPP's Alternative Options Program Office (AOP) due to a myriad of academic and personal reasons. AOP reviews and determines to which alternative site the youth will go.

MOED supports several initiatives, including:

YO! Baltimore provides job readiness training, job shadowing, paid public/private sector internships, employer-based training, and occupational skills training and GED classes. YO! Baltimore uses Novell Stars Program which is the approved Maryland Department of Education online program. The programs also collaborate with Baltimore City Community College to provide career training and certification in high growth industries such as, certified nursing assistant, cable installation and banking. BCCC provides curriculum for specific programs.

YO Academy serves youth in 9th through 12th grade and is a high school diploma program staffed by the Baltimore Public School System. Students come in and complete a needs assessment that identifies their academic and other needs. Individual plans are determined for students so that they complete the appropriate coursework and receive the support services they need. YO Academy has credit recovery and accelerated learning, career and college readiness skills training.

Career Academy is an alternative education center directly administered by the MOED and the Baltimore City Workforce Investment Board. CA provides GED preparation, and intensive career exploration, skills training, and employment readiness, and is funded jointly by WIA dollars, Baltimore City Public Schools and Job Corps. It offers a diploma plus model where students are working on getting their diploma while enrolling in BCCC (Baltimore City Community College) in the Early College Enrollment program. This program helps students transition into postsecondary education. Students must take at least one class at BCCC. Career Academy also offers the Woodstock Job Corps Center, the only non-residential job corps in Maryland, on-site.

The Career Academy is a structured program that implements a multiple pathway approach for obtaining an academic credential. Students ages 16 to 21 may take the traditional approach to obtaining a high school diploma, enroll in the General Education Development program to prepare to take the state test for obtaining a high school diploma and/or enroll in the Diploma Plus model. Youth may simultaneously enroll in Job Corps to take the Business Technical course, leading toward MOUS and IC³ certification. The Career Academy has a more than 90 percent graduation rate. Many of its graduates pursue postsecondary education or employment upon graduation.

FUTURES Works is an innovative, youth development and dropout prevention initiative focusing on education, personal growth and teamwork. FUTURES is a comprehensive program supporting students in eighth and ninth grades who are at risk of academic failure based on indicators identified by Baltimore City Public Schools staff, including reading level and attendance.

Afterschool Matters, sponsored by MOED, Mayor Sheila Dixon and the Baltimore City Council, is a work program designed to support at-risk students after school. The program provides increased life and employability skills, exposes and trains youth in workplace career skills, provides employment during the school year and summer months and ensures that students remain academically successful. Students work eight hours a week while in school and are placed in careers of interest. Employer partners are sports management, fire safety, hospitality and child care.

Try Out Employment is an internship program for 16 to 22 year olds in the YO! Baltimore centers to work up to 25 hours for three months. Roughly 75 young people are in this program and about 75 percent of the youth get hired. YO! subsidizes the wages for employers who have been identified by their Job Developers.

YouthWorks Summer Employment Program is Mayor Dixon’s successful campaign to engage employers to hire young people. Employers, community organizations, foundations, state and city agencies, and individual citizens are being asked to build upon the success of YouthWorks 2008 in hiring 6,500 teens and invest in Baltimore’s teens by connecting them to meaningful summer activities. Mayor Dixon asks everyone in the city to become involved to identify enough job opportunities and allocate sufficient funds so that every Baltimore City youth who wants a summer job will have that opportunity⁴.

Through federal recovery funding received in 2009, YouthWorks provides summer employment opportunities to at least 100 22 to 24 year olds. These young adults serve as Team Leaders for the more than 500 worksites that have committed to host city teens. The program assigns team leaders to worksites that host at least 10 other youth.

Additionally, YouthWorks has implemented its first Mayor's Green Jobs Youth Corps for 350 youth. The program uses a work and learning model to education youth on green jobs. This is a partnership between the city's Department of Recreation and Parks, MOED, and the BWIB Youth Council. Instructors and Teams Leaders coordinate with worksite supervisors to deliver instructions and practical application of works and lessons learned around the green job industry.

Juvenile Justice

Baltimore City Schools contracts with the Mayor's Office of Employment Development, YO! Baltimore and the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) to support the Building School District-Based Strategies For Reducing Baltimore's Workforce Development Initiative to Reduce Youth Gangs and Violent Crime discretionary grant awarded by The U.S. Department of Labor to curb gang violence and crime by reducing the number of youth who drop out of school, increasing school reengagement, providing educational and workforce training and supporting youth in the city who are most likely to become victims and perpetrators of violence and crime. The initiative supports the following objectives: 1) prevention and intervention; 2) recovery and remediation, and 3) reintegration efforts. The grant provides tutoring to in-school youth in math and reading and GED preparation at the YO! Baltimore Centers along with workforce development and support services.

There are two components to the grant subcontracted to MOED. The FUTURES Works program serves eighth- and ninth-grade students who are at least two years behind grade level and who are returning from detention with the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS). Youth receive follow-up support provided by the Baltimore City Public School System. Youth Opportunity (YO!) Baltimore provides GED and pre-GED classes on-site, careers screenings, classes and on-line courses to help these youth earn a diploma, life skills, job readiness and placement services, and career training in high growth industries.

Other grant partners include Baltimore Mental Health Systems, New Vision Youth Service, Inc (Violence Free Zone Implementation) and Community Law in Action (mentoring component) to round out and support services to youth in Baltimore.

Child Welfare

The Mayor's Office of Employment Development also partners with Baltimore City Department of Social Services (BCDSS) and YO! Baltimore to support a grant from the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation to use Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds to serve foster youth aging out of the system. The grant funds a program liaison position to work closely with BCDSS case managers to identify foster care youth for targeted recruitment. The Youth Opportunity Bridge to Career Success program provides a comprehensive menu of career development, job readiness, literacy and support services to 200 Baltimore City out of school Foster Care youth ages 16 to 21 over a 16-month period. The Youth Opportunity Bridge to Career Success program works to create a realistic "individual opportunity plan" for academic and employment goals, expanded life skills, including nutritional basics, communication skills, personal responsibility, and financial literacy as well as job readiness, physical and mental health services, GED preparation and support for college placement. Youth also acquire career preparation and work experience in several occupational areas with a focus on high growth industries⁵.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Kids Count 2007 Data, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, <http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/KIDSCOUNT.aspx>

² Baltimore City Workforce Investment Board Youth Council, Request for Proposals, Youth Workforce Development Services, September 19, 2007

³ CCRY Network website; www.ccrynetwork.org

⁴ Baltimore Office of the Mayor, <http://www.ci.baltimore.md.us/mayor/>

⁵ Youth Opportunity, December, 2008 YO! Highlights, New Grant to Serve Foster Care Youth

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