

"Putting Youth to Work" Series

Examples of Effective Practice in Distressed Communities

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Overview

Indianapolis faces the challenge of addressing barriers for a significant number of disconnected young people. Nearly 4,000 teens are not attending school and not working, and around 11,000 young adults 18 to 24 with no high school diploma are also not attending school and not working¹. To *address* these barriers, the Indianapolis Private Industry Council (IPIC), the Workforce Investment Board for Marion County and the planning and policy body for workforce development in Indianapolis, work with their partners to create a comprehensive workforce system that engages youth in education and employment-related activities that will help them to be self-sufficient adults.

IPIC focuses on broad strategic workforce issues, including those related to reconnecting out-of-school youth, and operates with public and private funds for planning, administration and implementation of a wide array of business and workforce training and job placement initiatives². With its focus on youth, IPIC contracts with 17 community-based providers serving about 1,500 youth. IPIC also holds a YouthBuild contract that serves 37 youth and an Apollo Program that serves 220 youth.

In addition to efforts by IPIC and its partners to increase education and employment skills for youth, the Marion County Commission on Youth (MCCOY) is working on creating an overall strategy to improve the well-being of the community's young people. MCCOY is currently leading the Indianapolis Ready by 21 Quality Counts effort and using the initiative as an opportunity to align several related but disconnected initiatives in the city in the areas of youth development, child welfare, educational achievement, crime prevention and juvenile detention reform. The Ready by 21 Quality Counts initiative focuses on improving the quality and reach of youth programs and strengthening local policies that guide resource allocation, accountability and workforce development. As part of its Quality Counts work, MCCOY is working to engage city leaders in developing a youth master plan, building an on-line directory of youth-service providers, designing and implementing a data-driven quality improvement system, and increasing local capacity to provide high quality professional development opportunities for youth workers³.

Major Accomplishments

Workforce Development

IPIC offers Youth Employment Services (YES) through its 17 contracted providers. Many of the youth services offered through the Workforce Investment Act are part of YES, but a private grant made by the Lilly Endowment Inc. has allowed IPIC to be more creative and flexible in how it helps at-risk young people. IPIC combines private and public funds to operate a very successful program that helps eliminate barriers such as skill, education, financial, logistical and others, to help at-risk youth ages 14 to 25, get skills, an education and a job⁴.

The providers that IPIC contracts with are community- and faith-based organizations that have experience working with at-risk individuals to provide wrap-around services to program participants who are unemployed and have few work skills, limited education, a limited work history and multiple barriers, including criminal histories.

Youth Employment Service (YES) providers also offer job training and retention, internships and employment and serve the out-of-school population. Providers conduct outreach through word-of-mouth, probation and parole officers and others.

The YES services include: case management; basic skills training, including remedial education, literacy training and instruction in English as a second language; tutoring, mentoring and other services leading to completion of high school, including dropout prevention strategies, alternative high schools and GED completion; job-preparation, placement and retention services; summer employment that is linked to academic or occupational learning; private-sector internships; services that transition from school to work, higher education or apprenticeship⁵.

The signature feature of YES, however, is the flexible, readily accessible voucher funding that can address barriers to employment, such as a broken car, lack of child care, or an eviction to help young people access services, training and employment⁶.

To support the workforce and education efforts, IPIC developed the Central Indiana Community Network, a state-of-the-art, Web-based system that helps human service and workforce development organizations, including YES providers, securely share client information. This allows local program participants to get help quickly and efficiently and enables caseworkers to make more productive use of their time.

IPIC's Youth Employment Service program also offers young adults the opportunity to pursue postsecondary education. Eligible YES participants can be referred to an innovative program that IPIC, with the support of contributions from several local foundations, created in 2004 called Biotech Bound. Biotech Bound supports at-risk young adults to earn an associate's degree in biotechnology or health care. The project follows the YES model, providing comprehensive “wraparound” services, including a

strong mentoring and internship component for its at-risk participants. IPIC became involved when educators, business people and the Indiana Health Industry Forum collaborated to develop a new biotechnology degree program at Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana and Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis⁷.

IPIC also launched a state-of-the-art, interactive Web site, www.bioworksui.com, to allow young people to explore a virtual campus to learn about careers in biotechnology and health care. Site visitors can play games, perform experiments and hear about careers from real people who have health care and biotech jobs. Another similar website that allows young people to explore careers in architecture, construction, manufacturing, green jobs, and design is www.futureINconstruction.com. This interactive website provides information about careers, educational programs and other helpful websites that lead to careers in construction. Registered users can gain simulated credits each time they complete an activity. After completing enough credits from the site, users can move from an “apprentice” to “owner.”

Education

Indianapolis is currently involved in several efforts to reform the way education and workforce development policies and practice intersect. For example, the Common Goal task force, spearheaded by the Chamber of Commerce, engages the mayor's office, business community and nonprofit partners in an effort to boost the countywide graduation rate from 70.7 percent to more than 80 percent by 2011.

In addition, Indianapolis is involved in the Alternative High School Initiative (AHSI). AHSI is a network of youth development organizations working with local communities to open top quality high schools for vulnerable youth across the country. The AHSI policy framework seeks to: increase college access; focus on need-based adequacy approach to funding; institute rigorous and reasonable standards and assessment; ensure strong accountability at the school level; establish a set of expanded options for students and parents; and open sector (open toward partnership) and close coordination with the city and state offices. Collaboratively, these organizations have created a portfolio of small, alternative high school options⁸.

Recent AHSI efforts in Indianapolis made by its partners, The Mind Trust (as lead), Goodwill, Indy Met, the Mayor's office, City of Indy, multiple school districts and Ivy Tech, have focused on developing new, student-centered high schools that ensure that all young people, particularly those for whom traditional school settings have not been successful, have the opportunity to graduate and achieve success in college, work, and life. Partners also have focused on the adaptation of AHSI models, as well as broadening local partnerships for college access and wraparound support services. Thus far, Indianapolis has opened a YouthBuild, five Diploma Plus schools in four Indianapolis school districts and the Indy Met Big Picture program within two new schools.⁹

Employer Engagement

One strong example of employer engagement in Indianapolis is IPICs Life Sciences Connections. Life Sciences Connections is a three-pronged approach that combines traditional training, capacity building of higher education, and establishing pipeline projects that result in partnership-building and significant outcomes. Since its inception in 2004, IPIC has partnered with 13 regional hospitals to train more than 400 employed workers in high-growth and high-demand life sciences professions. A partnership with Ivy Tech Community College established a night and weekend Associate in Nursing degree track, which expanded local capacity by 30 students a year and developed an accelerated master’s degree in nursing education with Indiana University.

Last year, the Indianapolis Private Industry Council (IPIC) received a Distinguished Honoree of the Theodore E. Small Workforce Partnership Award by the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) for Life Sciences Connections. This award recognizes top quality workforce investment boards around the nation that advance innovative partnerships with their business communities¹⁰.

Juvenile Justice

Serving vulnerable populations is a focus at the Indianapolis Private Industry Council. IPIC was awarded \$1 million, one of five federal grants for its Apollo 13 project, which provides comprehensive services – with long-term employment as the goal – to 270 people, ages 18 to 29, who are returning to Marion County’s neighborhoods from state prison or community corrections.

IPIC formed partnerships with the Marion Superior Court Probation Department and the Marion County Community Corrections’ Community Transition Program to get referrals for Apollo 13. Ex-offenders released on probation from state prison are required, within two days of their release, to report to the court, where they are assigned to services appropriate for or required of them. Apollo 13 is among the programs to which ex-offenders may be referred. Similarly, ex-offenders emerging from the Community Transition Program, who were sent there by a judge in the final phase of their incarceration, are referred to Apollo 13¹¹.

Upon release, a client registers with the WorkOne system, which IPIC oversees in Marion County, where he or she will undergo a series of assessments of skills, aptitudes and challenges. After appropriate services are identified and a plan to deliver them is developed, the client may choose to receive them from one of five community or faith-based organizations with which IPIC has partnered for the project. The providers all offer work-readiness training, career counseling and follow-up services in a variety of methods and settings¹².

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

² Indianapolis Private Industry Council Web site, <http://www.ipic.org/ipic/about/history.jsp>.

³ Marion County Commission on Youth, Ready By 21 Quality Counts Web site, <http://www.mccoyouth.org/our-impact.aspx?id=21&sid=0&pid=2>.

⁴ CCRY Network Web site, www.ccrynetwork.org.

⁵ CCRY Network Web site, www.ccrynetwork.org.

⁶ CCRY Network Web site, www.ccrynetwork.org.

⁷ CCRY Network Web site, www.ccrynetwork.org.

⁸ AHSI web site <http://www.ahsi.info/>

⁹ AHSI web site <http://www.ahsi.info/>

¹⁰ Press Release, National Association of Workforce Boards, Indianapolis Private Industry Council Recognized for Life Sciences Connections During National Ceremony, February 29, 2008. <http://www.ccrynetwork.org/images/IPICHonoredbyNAWB.pdf>

¹¹ Press Release, “Mayor announces new initiative to link ex-offenders with jobs, support services; IPIC wins \$1 million federal grant to begin Apollo 13: Reentry Success”, City of Indianapolis, July 11, 2007, <http://www.ccrynetwork.org/images/IPICgrantrelease7-11-07-FINAL.pdf>

¹² Press Release, “Mayor announces new initiative to link ex-offenders with jobs, support services; IPIC wins \$1 million federal grant to begin Apollo 13: Reentry Success”, City of Indianapolis, July 11, 2007, <http://www.ccrynetwork.org/images/IPICgrantrelease7-11-07-FINAL.pdf>.