

“Putting Youth to Work” Series

Examples of Effective Practice in Distressed Communities

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Overview

Seattle faces the challenge of addressing barriers for a significant number of disconnected young people. Nearly 2,000 teens are not attending school and not working and around 5,000 young adults 18 to 24 with no high school diploma are also not attending school and not working¹. To address these barriers, the Seattle Human Services Department, the Workforce Development Council’s (WDC) Youth Committee and their private-sector, educational and community partners come together to develop a continuum of support and services for youth to be successful in education and employment.

The WDC of Seattle-King County is a nonprofit organization established in 2000 to lead an effective and innovative workforce development system for employers, youth and the adult workforce. The WDC Youth Committee provides strategic direction for its youth programs. The Youth Committee is composed of business people, educators from K-12 schools and colleges, and representatives from youth programs as well as several WDC board members who also serve as members of the Youth Committee. The Youth Committee’s purpose is to educate and advise the board on shaping a youth development system that can serve youth’s education and vocational needs².

The annual budget of approximately \$20 million is administered by a staff of 30 and an active board of directors. Funding comes from the Department of Labor and other federal agencies as well as from private foundations. The WDC helps more than 2,000 disadvantaged young people throughout the County to gain work experience each year. Programs, provided by community partners and with the collaboration of community colleges and school districts, include: stay-in-school programs for at-risk teens; a youth center where drop-outs can explore careers, look for a job or work toward a GED; programs that target the needs of young offenders, homeless youth, youth with disabilities and youth from immigrant families; and job training and paid work experience³.

In partnership with the efforts of the WDC, the **Seattle Youth Employment Program**, operated by Seattle’s Department of Community and Human Services Work Training Program, is a year-round academic support and job training program for youth ages 14 to 21. The program helps participants graduate from high school, move on to college or trade school and develop skills needed for apprenticeships or jobs in high-demand fields. Each participant in the Seattle Youth Employment

Program works with a development specialist to develop a contract with academic, personal and employment goals⁴.

The Seattle Human Services Department has operated the program for more than 25 years. About 60 percent of the annual budget comes from the city’s General Fund and 35 percent from the federal Workforce Investment Act, administered by the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County. Another five percent comes from the United Way of King County and private donations⁵.

Major Accomplishments

Workforce Development

Youth@Work’s campaign for youth employment is an initiative of the WDC which combines academic support with job training and other work experiences to build skills and prepare young people for adulthood. Youth@Work began in 2005 with the publication of the [WDC's Youth@Work Report](#). The report showed a significant decline in employment of 16- to 24-year-olds in King County⁶.

Since the publication of Youth@Work, the WDC:

- Launched a website, www.youthatwork.info, to connect youth with local employers***
- Developed new ways to serve young jobseekers in the WorkSource employment sites in King County, including financial literacy classes funded by Washington Mutual***
- Partnered with high schools and hospitals in new initiatives to help youth explore and transition into health care careers***
- Funded three employment and education centers for juvenile offenders in 2008 through a new federal grant***

The Seattle Youth Employment Program is the lead agency for the Seattle **In-School Youth Employment Consortium**, which includes partner agencies the Center for Career Alternatives and Metrocenter YMCA. Additional partners include the Seattle Public Schools, other City of Seattle departments, community agencies, businesses, employers and local colleges. The Stay-In-School Program helps teens who are at risk of dropping out of school build the skills needed to succeed at school, home, work, and in the community. Youth receive a mix of year-round services that include: case management, earn and learn opportunities, after school activities, and service learning opportunities⁷.

The King County **Out-of-School Youth Consortium** is a collaborative partnership led by the Work Training Program within the Department of Community and Human Services Program in King County. Partners include local Community and Technical Colleges and community-based agencies. Thirteen training sites are available throughout King County ready to assist young people as they re-engage in education and work readiness. The Consortium model builds on the unique strengths, service delivery strategies, and communities served by each partner agency⁸.

Out-of-School Youth Consortium provides at-risk-youth (high school dropouts not attending school and unemployed youth with GEDs or high school diplomas) with education, training, employment services and case management to help them obtain: basic life skills, occupational skills, work readiness skills, high school diplomas or GEDs, employment and career pathways, transition into postsecondary education opportunities⁹.

In partnership with The Department of Community and Human Services, WDC contracts with its providers under **YouthSource** - a consortium of youth providers offering an array of opportunities and programs that focus on education, employment and leadership. These services include connections to youth programs, links to community resources for life stabilization, job readiness and placement and comprehensive case management.

Education

The Digital Bridge Technology Academy

The Digital Bridge Technology Academy, managed by the King County Work Training Program, was founded to provide access to technology and computer training to low-income, at-risk youth to help bridge the Digital Divide. The Academy is a decentralized team of instructors partnering with out-reach sites, inter-agency schools, and learning centers. The program is for students between the ages of 16 to 21 who have dropped out of high school and are currently working to earn their G.E.D or high school diploma. Youth are encouraged to explore new technology and careers through hands-on classes, workshops, community service, and internships.

Learning Centers on Community and Technical College Campuses

Campus-based Learning Centers provide an entry point into community college for young adults who don't have high school diplomas but want to pursue a postsecondary education. Case Management support is provided at these centers.

In addition, in April 2008 Governor Gregoire signed a bill that includes \$100 million to expand the state's networks of skill centers — including a new center focused on healthcare careers as well new state funding for career and technical education (CTE) in high schools¹⁰.

Employer Engagement

Other components of Youth@Work campaign geared toward increasing employer engagement in youth workforce development as well as educating youth on high growth industries include the One-Stop Sector Forums, Business Solutions team, and Sector-Focused Training.

The WDC hosts **One-Stop Sector Forums** that cover current trends, labor market outlook, skills and training needed for employment, hiring practices, and an inside look at a variety of occupations within a given industry. These forums, led by a panel of employers, are conducted at One-Stop employment and training centers throughout the county¹¹.

The WDC’s **Business Solutions team** coordinates with the Youth@Work campaign, educating employers on providing opportunities for youth, assisting with youth job fairs, coaching youth on how to dress/prepare for interviews, and helping youth service agencies in the region better prepare youth for the world of work¹².

The WDC funds **Sector-Focused Occupational Skills Training** for youth. Examples of this include the WDC’s Health Careers for All where youth receive Certified Nursing Assistant credentials and articulation with more advanced healthcare training opportunities, and the Digital Bridge Academy, mentioned above, where youth learn specific hardware and software skills in the IT industry¹³.

Through the partnership with Seattle Public Schools and the King County International Airport, the Opportunity Skyway and Aviation program was created. This Opportunity sets youth on a track focused on manufacturing careers and aerospace training. Youth build a small aircraft and explore the field of manufacturing through field trips, speakers and hands-on project based training. The program is located on-site at the King County International Airport¹⁴.

Juvenile Justice

The mayor’s 2009-2010 budget includes \$5.6 million in new spending and \$3.6 in redirected spending for the Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative. The initiative will include approximately \$3.6 million in re-directed programs and about \$5.6 million in new spending over the next two years¹⁵.

The Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative creates three neighborhood networks in central, southwest and southeast Seattle, focuses on young people who are most at risk of perpetuating violence or becoming victims themselves. The networks will identify and provide services to children who are repeat offenders, youth who have been arrested, middle-school truants and students at risk of suspension, and victims of violence or their friends and relatives who may engage in retaliation¹⁶.

In addition, YouthSource case managers partner and communicate with Superior Court Probation officers in order to more effectively work with youth participants involved in the justice systems. The

work of the case managers supports young people so they can successfully complete court obligations through education, training and community service and become ready to enter the workplace unfettered by legal issues¹⁷.

For more information, contact:

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

² Workforce Development Council of King County Web site: http://www.seakingwdc.org/Templates/yp_programs.html.

³ Workforce Development Council of King County Web site: http://www.seakingwdc.org/Templates/yp_programs.html.

⁴ King County Department of Community and Human Services, Community Services Division, Work Training Program Web site: <http://www.metrokc.gov/dchs/csd/WorkTraining/Consortium.htm>.

⁵ King County Department of Community and Human Services, Community Services Division, Work Training Program Web site: <http://www.metrokc.gov/dchs/csd/WorkTraining/Consortium.htm>.

⁶ Workforce Development Council of King County, “Summer Employment: Key for Youth, King County Summer of 2008”, <http://www.seakingwdc.org/pdf/reports/youth/ysotw4.pdf>.

⁷ King County Department of Community and Human Services, Community Services Division, Work Training Program Web site: <http://www.metrokc.gov/dchs/csd/WorkTraining/Consortium.htm>.

⁸ King County Department of Community and Human Services, Community Services Division, Work Training Program Web site: <http://www.metrokc.gov/dchs/csd/WorkTraining/Consortium.htm>.

⁹ King County Department of Community and Human Services, Community Services Division, Work Training Program Web site: <http://www.metrokc.gov/dchs/csd/WorkTraining/Consortium.htm>.

¹⁰ Workforce Development Council of King County, “Summer Employment: Key for Youth, King County Summer of 2008”, <http://www.seakingwdc.org/pdf/reports/youth/ysotw4.pdf>.

¹¹ CCRY Network Web site: <http://www.ccrystnetwork.org/?q=node/69>.

¹² CCRY Network Web site: <http://www.ccrystnetwork.org/?q=node/69>.

¹³ CCRY Network Web site: <http://www.ccrystnetwork.org/?q=node/69>.

¹⁴ King County Department of Community and Human Services, Community Services Division, Work Training Program Web site: <http://www.metrokc.gov/dchs/csd/WorkTraining/Consortium.htm>.

¹⁵ Office of the Mayor, Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/mayor/issues/youthInitiative/>

¹⁶ Office of the Mayor, Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/mayor/issues/youthInitiative/>

¹⁷ King County Superior Court, King County’s General Jurisdiction Trial Court Web site: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/courts/superiorcourt.aspx>.