

# *"Putting Youth to Work" Series*

Examples of Effective Practice in Distressed Communities

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## **Los Angeles, CA**

### **Overview**

Los Angeles faces the challenge of addressing barriers for a significant number of disconnected young people. Nearly 22,000 teens are not attending school and not working and around 65,000 young adults 18 to 24 with no high school diploma are also not attending school and not working<sup>1</sup>. To address these barriers, the Los Angeles Youth Council and the Los Angeles Community Development Department (CDD) have been working collaboratively to create partnerships to develop promising policies and practices to connect young people, especially those who are out of school and out of work, to education and employment. The youth council brings together representatives from the City of Los Angeles, L.A. Unified School District, L.A. County, L.A. Community College, businesses and others. The philosophy in Los Angeles is to have a one-table approach in which all entities have buy in to the mission, goals and strategies developed to address youth employment and education issues.

In 2004, the Workforce Investment System in Los Angeles and Long Beach, in partnership with the U.S. Conference of Mayors, commissioned a study to examine the plight of local disconnected youth. Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies produced the [One Out of Five report](#), which used labor market and demographic data to present the problem facing youth in the labor market. Following the release of the report, the Los Angeles WIB convened [Crossroads 2005](#), a two-day conference and policy forum involving 130 experts and local leaders who produced a set of recommendations for increasing the scale and scope of strategies to boost the workforce participation of young offenders. These recommendations guide ongoing policy and practice efforts in the area.

### ***Major Accomplishments***

#### ***Workforce Development***

OneSource is the overall workforce system for youth in LA and supports the strategic planning of the youth council. Under OneSource, 13 different operators or contractors provide services. Three of these fall under the [Los Angeles Youth Opportunity Movement \(LAYOM\)](#) Centers, which are operated by city staff and focus on serving out-of-school youth. The other 10 contractors serve mostly in-school youth and are provided by community-based organizations. OneSource uses a franchise model where all 13

providers operate under the same system guidelines, banners, and service delivery structure. There are formalized relationships and processes used by OneSource for the strategies and services that are provided through their contracts. Funding used to support these contractors comes out of funding from the Community Development Block Grant, Workforce Investment Act, County, State, and Federal grant funding, among others. WIA contributed \$12 million last year to services and supports for in-school and out-of-school youth programming.

Since 2000, Los Angeles’ Workforce Investment System and community partners have been one of the country’s leaders in the development of comprehensive and collaborative strategies to serve the disconnected youth population. Los Angeles Youth Opportunity Movement (LAYOM) plays a major role in connecting these youth to education and employment opportunities. LAYOM was created as part of the national Youth Opportunity employment and training program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Partners in LAYOM include the L.A. Workforce Investment and Juvenile Justice Systems, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, local comprehensive and alternative schools, and postsecondary educational institutions.

*Examples of LAYOM programs include:*<sup>2</sup>

Stand and Deliver provides youth 17 to 24 career development exposure to healthcare professions through mentoring and work experience.

L.A. City Works program prepares participants for employment in entry-level positions with the City of Los Angeles, focusing on demand occupations with clearly defined career paths.

Clean and Green L.A. Conservation Corps provides employment, leadership, and service opportunities that allow youth to work part-time on urban beautification projects throughout the city.

A prominent piece of the program offerings is the work readiness certification. The Community Development Department, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, L.A. Youth at Work and the Youth Council, have developed a work readiness certification that can ensure that work-readiness (as defined by business) is achievable within the system that prepares youth, and that youth can earn a certificate that will put them at the head of the line when seeking employment in the city. The certification builds on and documents basic workplace, academic and employability skills that pertain to all industries at the entry level<sup>3</sup>.

### ***Employer Engagement***

In May 2007, Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa and the Los Angeles City Council challenged the business community to “Hire LA’s Youth.” The Hire L.A.’s Youth program supplements education and provides youth 14 to 24 with private- and public-sector work opportunities to develop the necessary skills to enter the workforce. Hire LA’s Youth brings together the Chamber of Commerce, City of L.A., the

Mayor’s Office, the City Council, LA Unified School District, Community College District and a host of CBOs. Hire L.A.’s Youth also partners with community-based organizations both for providers as well as placements for youth employment<sup>4</sup>.

Prior to receiving funding for summer youth employment from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the goal of Hire L.A.’s Youth was to create 15,000 jobs for youth, which includes 3,600 subsidized placements for summer employment. The Mayor supported the program with \$4 million from the general fund. In addition, Los Angeles County provided \$2.5 million to support 14 to 18 year olds in subsidized work placements. There was also outreach to private employers for about 1,300 year-round placements for 18 to 24 year olds using non-WIA dollars. The Workforce Investment Board and the L.A. Unified School District last summer partnered to offer 3,000 jobs on school campuses, paid by the district’s Community Development Block Grant. The Mayor required every city department to hire a target number of young people for entry-level positions, adding another 1,000 jobs.

The Chamber of Commerce and the City persuaded 200 employers to recognize the work readiness certification and prioritize employment for youth who earned the certification.. The Chamber also encourages local employers to “Hire L.A.’s Youth” for summer jobs and internships.

In addition to overall support for the initiative, the Mayor’s Office gave funding to LAYOM to support two staff people who could work to develop employer partnerships and centralize those relationships, especially with larger employers, so that employers need only deal with one person and not several community-based organizations at a time.

### ***Education***

To bring education and employment related strategies together in Los Angeles, LAYOM has assembled more than 30 partners in education to create a range of opportunities for in-school and out-of-school youth based at three sites across the city. These partners included technical high schools, charter schools, alternative schools, community colleges, four-year universities, community-based programs and vocational skills centers. LAYOM also partners with employers to foster internship and job opportunities for youth who are receiving focused education within specific sectors<sup>5</sup>.

There are three major partners in this work to provide multiple pathways for youth. L.A. Community College (LACC) works with older youth on remediation, recovery and GED support. The LA Unified School District offers programs within the comprehensive high schools and alternative education programming for younger youth. And, the L.A. County Office of Education offers open-enrollment day schools.

The L.A. Community College has hired a new vice chancellor for Workforce and Economic Development to make the connections between workforce and economic development in the area. As an example, LACC created the L.A. Scholars program during the summer. The program focuses on giving 12th graders

who are on track to graduate 80 or more hours of work experience by enrolling them in career development classes. It also prepares them for the fall semester.

The City of Los Angeles’ workforce development and community college partnerships are currently working toward a system-wide collaborative approach for postsecondary and workforce success through the LA Community College District. The District includes 9 community colleges with approximately 180,000 students and offers, in addition to its career advancement academies, two targeted programs: a workforce readiness academy and an L.A. Scholars Teacher Prep Academy<sup>6</sup>.

L.A. Scholars is a six-week college prep and work experience program that offers 30 or more hours of specialized teacher training and soft skills training, 24 or more hours of job shadowing, and a job fair with career specific employers at the end of the program. The program outcomes include a 75 percent attainment level of permanent or part-time employment in the field and more than enrollments in community college<sup>7</sup>.

### ***Child Welfare***

Los Angeles is making a strong effort to support the transition of youth from the child welfare system to successful adulthood. The Los Angeles Youth Transition Action Team Initiative (YTAT), part of the state-wide initiative conducted by New Ways to Work and Casey Family Programs, focuses on bringing together the resources of the workforce, education, and child welfare systems to better prepare current or former foster youth to achieve economic, educational, and employment success as they transition into the adult world. L.A. YTAT assists foster youth in connecting their summer jobs experience to their career and educational goals as part of Foster Youth Summer Jobs Plus. Partnering entities in this effort include: City of Los Angeles, Community Development Department, Youth Opportunity System, Workforce Development System; DCSF Emancipation Services; LA Probation; Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD); Youth Council; Education Coordinating Council; Human Services and Family Development<sup>8</sup>.

In this effort, emancipating foster youth augment their summer employment experience through work-based learning contracts that identify the skills they will develop during their summer employment experience. Youth and their supervisors document the skills acquired through the experience with a goal of preparing youth for future career and educational options. Youth will receive evaluations from their worksite supervisors, be prepared to garner a Work-Ready Certification, sharpen their career and educational plans, and be working or enrolled in school (or both) after program completion<sup>9</sup>.

## *Juvenile Justice*

Los Angeles also has also created initiatives to for prevention and reentry from the juvenile justice system. The Community Development Department’s Youth Opportunity System (YOS) acquired funding from the County of Los Angeles Probation Department to form a Youth Opportunity Intensive Transition (YOIT) team. The team’s purpose is to: lead relationship-building efforts with the juvenile justice facilities through a juvenile referral mechanism; provide outreach and marketing of services to probation staff, youth, and parents; and act as a bridge between probation, the city, and more than 50 contracted partners. YOIT is intended to provide both the city of Los Angeles and the L.A. County Probation Department with specific tools to identify and connect incarcerated city juveniles with the WIA-funded community-based job training, work experience, and supplemental education programs<sup>10</sup>.

The Los Angeles YOIT has an Internet-based client data Integrated Services Information System (ISIS) that refers youth being released from probation camps to a WIA youth service provider. Probation officers are trained to utilize the YOIT system to refer and monitor probation youth, ensuring that youth are served immediately upon release. The Students For Higher Education (SFHE) program provides intensive intervention services for youth serving time in Los Angeles County Probation Camps. The goal of the program is to move youth into postsecondary educational/occupational opportunities and reduce recidivism rates by providing education, training, mentoring/case management, leadership development, work-study, supportive services, and intensive transition support prior to and following youth being released from camp<sup>11</sup>.

In Addition, LAYOM offers resources in education and employment to incarcerated youth and those recently released through the Youth Opportunity Movement Amends Program. Participants take online classes through the Los Angeles Trade Technical College and complete courses in employment preparedness. Los Angeles Youth Opportunity Movement has case managers on site at Los Angeles County Probation Camps and offers direct services to prepare youth for a positive entrance back into the community. The program connects incarcerated and probation youth with resources to reduce participants' return to juvenile detention camps by: referring youth to probationary conditions, tracking youth's educational plan (strive for high school diploma), referring to a vocational/postsecondary education training program, and linking youth to community activities<sup>12</sup>.

As a city approach to gang reduction, Mayor Villaraigosa created the Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development in August 2007. The Mayor’s Office oversees the Gang Reduction Program, which is a large initiative addressing gang violence. OneSource has committed to placing 500 of these youth in employment. A key part of the mayor's strategy to combat the city's gang epidemic is the establishment of Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) Zones in the most affected areas of the city. GRYD zones will receive additional resources focused on prevention, intervention and re-entry programs for those involved or otherwise affected by gangs<sup>13</sup>.

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

<sup>2</sup> Los Angeles Youth Opportunity Movement Web site, <http://www.layo.org/>.

<sup>3</sup> Los Angeles Youth Opportunity Movement Web site, <http://www.layo.org/>.

<sup>4</sup> Hire L.A.’s Youth Web site, <http://www.layouthatwork.org/hirela/Welcome.html>.

<sup>5</sup> CCRY Network Web site, <http://www.ccrnetwork.org/?q=node/97>.

<sup>6</sup> Summary of the CCRY Network 2009 Winter Meeting, *Looking Forward—Moving the Youth Agenda with a New Federal Administration: What are the Opportunities and How Can Communities Prepare*, <http://www.ccrnetwork.org/reports/winter2009summary.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Summary of the CCRY Network 2009 Winter Meeting, *Looking Forward—Moving the Youth Agenda with a New Federal Administration: What are the Opportunities and How Can Communities Prepare*, <http://www.ccrnetwork.org/reports/winter2009summary.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Foster Youth Summer Jobs Plus, Los Angeles Youth Transition Action Team, *New ways to Work*, 2009, <http://www.nww.org/documents/ytatdocuments/YTATFYSJPOverview.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Foster Youth Summer Jobs Plus, Los Angeles Youth Transition Action Team, *New ways to Work*, 2009, <http://www.nww.org/documents/ytatdocuments/YTATFYSJPOverview.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Harris, Linda. *Making the Juvenile Justice—Workforce Connection for Re-entering Young Offenders: A Guide for Local Practice*. Center for Law and Social Policy, 2006. [http://clasp.org/publications/making\\_connection.pdf](http://clasp.org/publications/making_connection.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Harris, Linda. *Making the Juvenile Justice—Workforce Connection for Re-entering Young Offenders: A Guide for Local Practice*. Center for Law and Social Policy, 2006. [http://clasp.org/publications/making\\_connection.pdf](http://clasp.org/publications/making_connection.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Los Angeles Youth Opportunity Movement Web site, <http://www.layo.org/>.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.lacity.org/mayor/villaraigosaplan/PublicSafety/GangReductionStrategy/index.htm>.