

# "Putting Youth to Work" Series

Examples of Effective Practice in Distressed Communities

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## San Diego, CA

### Best Practice Examples in:

- ✓ **Delivery Agent**
- ✓ **Convening Entity**
- ✓ **Partnership with Education**
- ✓ **Partnership with Child Welfare**

### Overview

The San Diego School-to-Career Youth Council is the primary policy body that addresses youth issues under the Workforce Investment Act. The Council 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 15,000 young adults 18-24 are also not attending school and not working<sup>1</sup>. The Council reports to the Workforce Investment Board and is staffed by the San Diego Workforce Partnership. The Council is the driving force behind emerging or youth workforce development, and is a collaborative partnership among employers, educators, community-based organizations, parents and youth. The Council has three standing committees – the Capacity Building committee, the Executive Committee and the Youth Advisory committee – and often forms committees on a time-sensitive or as-needed basis.

The Youth Council's mission is to build and support a regional youth workforce system and to manage state and federal workforce development funds on behalf of vulnerable youth throughout San Diego County. Its three overarching goals are: to provide quality training programs to the most needy youth, to build a bridge between the local workforce system and stakeholder groups and to build and sustain a strong governing body and structure<sup>2</sup>.

The San Diego Workforce Partnership staffs and supports the San Diego Youth Council and works to implement the youth workforce system strategic plan developed and guided by the council. The Workforce Partnership oversees programs that help at-risk youth plan and achieve their educational goals and secure employment through a network of community-based, youth-service providers. The Workforce Partnership provides a comprehensive, countywide system of services to youth through a network of youth services agencies, schools and the One-Stop Career Center Network. Roughly 1,000 youth receive services through WIA funding.

### MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The leadership of the San Diego Youth Council and the Workforce Partnership has made a strategic choice to concentrate funding and programming on targeted groups of at-risk youth, including foster and former foster youth transitioning to self-sufficiency and youth returning from juvenile facilities or those involved in the juvenile justice system. The council was able to do this by bringing the "right" people to the table. In the last four years, council leadership revamped the membership to include strategic leaders that represent these targeted youth populations within other systems. Together, these leaders assessed what the collective group was funding

and how they could maximize their resources. With the appropriate buy-in, the Youth Council was able to “change the funding map” to target dollars specifically to programs that serve the most needy and least served youth in San Diego County.

One example of the “right” person sitting at the table is the chair of Youth Council. She brings a comprehensive understanding of youth issues and also sits on San Diego’s Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (a state-mandated body), is the executive director of the Children’s Initiative, the chair of the state Disproportion Minority Contact Commission, the chair of the Governor’s Afterschool Advisory Board for California and is a Workforce Investment Board member. Because of her role, she is able to strategize how these entities can partner better and how resources can be effectively leveraged. Other examples of leaders sitting at the table are the chief probation officer for the county, the dean of Economic & Workforce Development at San Diego Community College District and the executive director of the Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention. All bring a unique, yet essential perspective into the decision-making process.

Among other accomplishments, the Youth Council spearheaded the San Diego Youth Resource Mapping Project, which is a user-friendly database of organizations that provide services core to the local youth system to improve the education and employment services available for youth across San Diego County. The purpose of the database is to improve the responsiveness of workforce preparation programs to better serve youth, build toward a comprehensive system that is responsive to needs identified by the community, educate the community about the value of youth workforce preparation services, increase the availability and access of youth workforce preparation services, and increase community and youth participation in youth workforce preparation program design.<sup>3</sup>

## ***Education***

San Diego Community College District has recently developed a Career Pathways for After School Staff (CPASS), modeled after work around Career Advancement Academies, in partnership with San Diego Workforce Partnerships, Children’s Initiative and San Diego City College (SDCC). CPASS is in the first year of this bridge program that offers basic skill remediation, college readiness courses, selected coursework in career pathways, along with work experience and employment in afterschool facilities. The courses are taught in cohorts that create learning communities targeted at WIA eligible, young adults with an eighth grade competency. The program also offers a counselor throughout the entirety of the program to help navigate the system.<sup>4</sup> The Chancellor committed \$1.5 million statewide for a two-year project for five of these programs. SDWP is providing the planning and the development and used their provider network to help enroll their participants into community college and connect to employment. Youth maintain their case management from WIA program’s supportive services component as well as receive counseling and support staff at the SDCC campus. Youth receive \$800 in support services to help pay for transportation, child care, and other living expenses.

### ***Child Welfare***

The San Diego Workforce Partnership awarded six community planning grants to help direct community investment strategies across systems, foster inter-agency agreements and relationships, and encourage the formation and the continued growth of collaboratives that focus on the development of coordinated educational and workforce strategies for youth. The Workforce Partnership staff as well as members of the Capacity Building Sub-Committee on the Youth Council are participating in each of the six collaboratives.<sup>5</sup>

One example of a community planning grant is the a large set-aside from SDWP’s WIA formula dollars leveraged with the County’s Child Welfare Services resources to provide Independent Living Services that have a strong workforce, education and youth development focus to current and former foster youth as they transition out of the foster care system.

ILS/WIA foster youth services is a partnership between San Diego County’s Independent Living Services with the Workforce Partnership to provide, under one joint contract, both independent living skills plus workforce development skills to youth transitioning from the system. Youth receive work readiness training, work preparation, employment opportunities, youth development services and independent living services such as identifying educational barriers, long-term mentoring, incentives to reinforce learning to encourage participation in activities and/or achievement of goals, individual service strategy with a youth-centered approach, and follow-up services to assist youth sustaining a successful transition<sup>6</sup>.

Another example of collaboration in San Diego that enhances services for foster or former foster youth is one between the Workforce Partnership, the County Child Welfare Services, the nonprofit New Horizons, and the San Diego Office of Education to support San Pasqual Academy (SPA). SPA is a residential educational campus designed specifically for foster teens who live and learn at the academy as they prepare for college and/or a career path.<sup>7</sup> San Pasqual Academy is the first residential education campus for foster youth in the nation and was developed in response to the critical issues that many foster youth experienced such as high numbers of placements, lack of fully developed independent living skills and exiting the foster care system without earning a high school diploma<sup>8</sup>.

### ***Juvenile Justice***

Another example of a community planning grant awarded by the Workforce Partnership is a large set-aside from WIA formula dollars to serve adjudicated youth transitioning out of juvenile detention centers. This is a partnership between the Workforce Partnership and the County Probation Office. The San Diego County Office of Education, Juvenile Courts and Community Schools and Second Chance Strive were awarded this funding. The San Diego County Office of Education’s (SDCOE) Juvenile Court and Community Schools (JCCS) Youth One-Stop Career Centers offer various programs to prepare JCCS students ages 16 to 21 for job and career prospects.

The Workforce Partnership also supports the Youthful Offender Re-Entry Program that provides assessment, work-readiness training, and behavior modification training while a young person is incarcerated. Subsequently, it provides post-release intensive case management, educational support and job placement. The program also helps identify employers, eliminate employment barriers, and help youth obtain a GED or diploma. The Work-force Partnership drafted the RFP based on specific recommendations from probation about their identified needs.

The Workforce Partnership is also an active partner with the City of San Diego Commission on Gang Prevention & Intervention and funds secondary school-based gang prevention programs that provide year-round work readiness and educational support to youth ages 14 to 16. The Commission's Strategic Action Plan works to bring cooperation and accountability within the city to quell gang-violence. The plan includes the use of technical teams composed of various city agencies, including a strong workforce component, that would meet monthly and be responsible for producing reports to the Commission on Gang Prevention that the action plan would create.<sup>9</sup>

**For more information, contact:**

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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> San Diego Workforce Partnership Web site, <http://www.sandiegotwork.com/>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.sandiegotwork.com/generate/html/Youth/youthmappingpage.html>.

<sup>4</sup> CCRY Network Winter 2009 Meeting Summary, <http://www.ccrynetwork.org/reports/winter2009summary.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> San Diego Workforce Partnership Web site.

<sup>6</sup> San Diego Workforce Partnership Web site.

<sup>7</sup> San Pasqual Academy Web site, <http://www.sanpasqualacademy.org/>.

<sup>8</sup> San Pasqual Academy Web site.

<sup>9</sup> CCRY Network 2008 Summer Meeting Summary, CCRY Network Web site, <http://www.ccrynetwork.org/reports/BostonNewsletterFinal.pdf>.

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