



January 2009

## 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

### Summary of the 2009 Winter Meeting

The [Communities Collaborating to Reconnect Youth \(CCRY\) Network](#) is an affinity group of workforce and youth development professionals that works to support communities across the country in creating comprehensive service delivery systems, strong collaborative partnerships and through innovative peer-to-peer networking to improve the lives of our nation's most vulnerable youth. The CCRY Network is convened and supported by the [Center for Law and Social Policy](#).

For over four years, the communities that make up the CCRY Network have gathered semi-annually to share their best practices and

develop strategies that help communities build capacity to more effectively serve youth. The Network's most recent convening was held in San Diego, California on January 26th and 27th for its 2009 winter meeting: **Looking Forward—Moving the Youth Agenda with a New Federal Administration: What are the New Opportunities and How Can Communities Prepare.**

Gathering for this meeting were Network members from 11 communities across the country, along with four of our national partners; Academy for Educational Development, National League of Cities, National Youth Employ-

ment Coalition, and The Corps Network.

The [agenda](#) for the day-and-a-half meeting consisted of: group discussions on the potential opportunities that exist with an Obama Administration and Congress, including the recovery bill and investments in green jobs, energy and infrastructure; a facilitated workshop on crafting the Network message; and three community presentations and a discussion on connecting out-of-school youth to postsecondary pathways. The sections throughout this newsletter highlight the key discussion points and lessons learned from the meeting.

### Surveying the Landscape: Potential Opportunities with the New Administration and Congress to Elevate Youth Programming

Just one week after this most historic inauguration, CCRY Network members reflected on what the potential implications for this momentous event, within this economic context, may be on their work to reconnect youth both in the short-term and over the coming years.

We began with a discussion on the American Recovery and Rein-

vestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). Although changes on the Hill were likely, it was expected that both the House and Senate versions of the bill would maintain \$1.2 Billion for summer jobs and other youth activities within the Workforce Investment System. Both bills, have several noted provisions that are relevant to youth employment and training that communities must begin to

take into consideration for planning purposes, such as the allowance that funding can be used for both summer and year-round activity, the work readiness performance indicator will be the only measure of performance used to assess effectiveness of summer jobs; and that the age of eligibility has been extended from 21 to 24. DOL has within 30 days of ARRA's passage to allot funds.

to states.

In addition to the Recovery Bill, youth education and workforce development issues have received a great deal of attention with the Obama Administration. Communities must now begin taking steps to prepare for potential new investments or visibility in areas like transitional jobs, green jobs, energy and infrastructure, and

## Surveying the Landscape, Continued

building postsecondary pathways. Communities need to assess what level of capacity and partnerships are already in place and how they position themselves for new funding that must be spent quickly and effectively.

As the Network discussed potential new investments, they remarked on their capacity and proven track-record of handling such a charge. As evidence, Department of Labor funded, and recently released, an independent evaluation conducted by DIR, Incorporated

that showed that the Youth Opportunity grants awarded to 36 communities (17 CCRY Network communities) in 2000 were successful at positively impacting the education and labor market outcomes for youth in these high poverty communities. The evaluation documented that with very little time for planning and implementation communities were able to build partnerships, capacity and infrastructure

that ultimately increased educational attainment, Pell Grant receipt, labor market participation, employment rates and earnings for this population of low income, mostly minority youth.

As new monies come down through States and local Workforce Investment Boards, the Network is confident that their communities will be ready and able to respond efficiently and effectively.

## Crafting the CCRY Network Message

Having the right message is crucial to moving any agenda. As the new administration begins its time in office, we, a network of experts in the area of youth workforce development, have the opportunity to influence decision-makers—and our message is how we do that. The group devoted two sessions during the meeting to determine what our message is and how we want to deliver it. Network members participated in a facilitated workshop on crafting our message and were asked to answer the question, “given the

current and future political landscape, what should be our key messages?”

The group developed several key messages. **The Network insists:**

- that investing in disconnected youth is urgent and necessary for economic recovery and that the costs of ignoring this population are immeasurable;
- that disconnected youth must have the options and opportunities to achieve self-sufficiency;

- that effective cross-system collaboration is essential to enhance the capacity of a community to work with disconnected youth;
- that Network communities know what works and can prove it through data and evaluations; and,
- that member communities stand ready to help.

These key messages will help to shape our agenda in the coming years and to continue to strengthen the voice of communities working on behalf of our nation’s most vulnerable youth.

## Preparing for Opportunities with Green Jobs, Energy and Infrastructure Investments

Investments in green jobs, energy and infrastructure will no doubt be an important part of the solution America will employ to rebuild itself and become strong again. Sally Prouty, President and CEO, The Corps Network led a facilitated conversation around ways youth programming can be built into these efforts and how communities can prepare for such opportunities. Sally shared with the Network what the conversations have been in Washington around green jobs

and [clean energy corps](#) as it relates to the Recovery bill and future investments in the green economy. The group was surveyed to identify the types of efforts happening in communities across the country as it relates to green jobs. While most communities were in the early stages of building the strategic partnerships necessary to develop a skilled workforce that can meet the demands of this new sector, several communities, such as Oakland’s work in partnership with the

[Apollo Alliance](#) and [Green for All](#), provide examples of programming and collaboration that communities can learn from. Suggested **steps in preparing for green jobs opportunities:** *familiarize yourself with the [latest publications](#) around connecting youth to the green economy; communicate with your Mayor’s office; and collaborate with parks and rec, workforce development, utility companies and other likely strategic partners, such as local service corps and community colleges.*

## Connecting Out-of-School Youth to Postsecondary Pathways: The role of the Youth Development System

As it has become abundantly clear that youth need more than just a high school diploma or GED to become self-sufficient in this economy, education and workforce development systems, along with the philanthropic community, such as the [Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation](#), have been putting a great deal of energy and resources into developing pathways to postsecondary success. As such, communities are working hard to strengthen their strategic part-

nerships, develop a continuum of supports and services, and create meaningful pathways that lead youth back into education and onto good jobs.

Mala Thakur, Executive Director of the National Youth Employment Coalition led a facilitated discussion around the efforts happening in the postsecondary movement related to connecting out-of-school youth to pathways. In late 2008 Senator Patty Murray introduced a bill on the [Promoting Innovations in 21st Century Careers](#)

[Act](#) that would establish a new federal grant program to support state and regional partnerships in developing strategies to help youth prepare for a full range of postsecondary education options and careers.

Linda Harris, CLASP, presented to the group several [challenges and possibilities](#) related to this issue that can also be noted in the CLASP publication [Creating Postsecondary Pathways to Good Jobs for Young High School Dropouts](#).

## Promising postsecondary and workforce development partnerships and programs

Moving from challenges and opportunities of connecting out-of-school youth to postsecondary pathways, the Network heard from three California communities—San Diego, Oakland and Los Angeles—who have developed promising postsecondary and workforce development partnerships and programs.

Community College districts in Oakland and Los Angeles (along with Fresno, CA) have begun a three year state-funded demonstration project to create Career Advancement Academies that serve this chronically underrepresented population in the community college system. All three districts are being evaluated by Public/Private Ventures (P/PV); providing each site the opportunity to learn from the other during these early stages of implementation.

Oakland is in its third semester of its [East Bay Career Advancement Academy](#), a one-semester, basic-skills bridge program designed to increase reading, writing and skills

for adults between the ages of 18 –30 and transition them into industry-specific technical and training courses. The program offers foundational and high growth, high-demand industry-driven, contextualized curriculum, and outreach, recruitment and comprehensive, non-academic supports provided through contracted partners.

The Career Advancement Academy is a regional approach to workforce development and is offered at 7 community colleges within 2 community college districts in partnership with a variety of community-based organizations. The approach is a unique opportunity for Oakland to leverage resources from business, education and other governmental systems in order to create pathways for these students.

The [City of Los Angeles' workforce development and community college partnerships](#) is currently working towards a system-wide approach through the LA Community College District. The District includes 9 community colleges with approx 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.

The L.A. Scholars is a 6 week college prep and work experience program that offers 30+ hours of specialized teacher training and soft skills training, 24+ hours of job shadowing and a job fair with career specific employers at the end of the program. The program has seen outcomes such as a 75% attainment level of permanent or part-time employment in the field and 500+ enrollments in community college.

San Diego Community College District has recently developed a [Career Pathways for After School Staff \(CPASS\)](#), modeled after the work around Career Advancement Academies, in partnership with San Diego Workforce Partnerships, Children's Initiative and San Diego City College. CPASS is in its 1st 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 after-school facilities. The courses are taught in cohorts that create learning communities targeted at WIA eligible, young adults with an 8th grade competency. The program also offers a counselor throughout the entirety of the program to help navigate the system.

A policy brief on these postsecondary pathways models will be available at [www.ccrnetwork.org](http://www.ccrnetwork.org) in the coming months..

## CCRY Network: Our Next Steps

As is tradition, the CCRY Network meetings allocate time to reviewing Network goals and accomplishments and determining its future actions. For over four years, the Network has gathered semi-annually to achieve three main objectives: to provide an opportunity for peer-to-peer networking and learning exchange; to concentrate attention on a specific content or issue area; and to develop ways to increase the voice and visibility of communities who are working to address education and workforce development needs of out-of-school and out-of-work youth.

The next steps for the Network are to continue advocating for our youth by creating a strong message that will be sent to Congress and the new Administration that communities in the CCRY Network have solutions that work. To achieve this goal, several Network members have agreed to work together over the coming months to solidify these messages. The Network also plans to host a briefing on the Hill in the early summer that will highlight the positive outcomes that were documented in the Youth Opportunity evaluation and present the innovations that are currently happening in these communities as a result of the capacity and infrastructure that was created during the grant.

The CCRY Network will meet June 15th and 16th, 2009 in Philadelphia, PA. The agenda topics will be determined and posted soon on the Network website's [Conferences and Proceedings page](#).



### CCRY NETWORK

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### The Communities Collaborating to Reconnect Youth (CCRY) Network

The Network's mission is to empower communities to create effective, innovative partnerships among local youth-serving systems to improve young people's opportunities and well-being. Through collaboration and peer-to-peer networking, the CCRY Network member communities share ideas, challenges, lessons and best practices for reconnecting youth.

Network communities have established links between a range of agencies working to reconnect youth to school and educational opportunities, work and civic life. The CCRY Network aims to support communities in creating comprehensive service delivery systems and innovative peer-to-peer networking to improve the lives of youth.

For more information on the CCRY Network, visit [www.ccrynetwork.org](http://www.ccrynetwork.org).