The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) requires Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to establish Youth Councils as a sub-group focused on low-income youth at risk, ages 14-21, who face barriers to school completion. Youth Councils present an opportunity to develop a comprehensive employment and training system. The WIA's vision of a comprehensive system has 10 essential elements that contribute to life/career development, including work experience, leadership development, counseling and support of caring adults and peers, meaningful connections to education and employment, community service, and sustained follow-up support. The challenge for Youth Councils is not to continue existing patterns of resource allocation, but to seize the opportunity to help youth at risk avoid self-destructive behaviors, develop skills, and build personal and professional support systems for their future careers. (Contains 19 resources that provide guidance for establishing Youth Councils and developing programs.) (YLB)
Youth Councils and Career Development
Trends and Issues Alert No. 27

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Youth Councils and Career Development

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 requires Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to establish Youth Councils as a subgroup focused on low-income youth at risk, ages 14-21, who face barriers to school completion. Youth Councils present an opportunity to develop a comprehensive employment and training system that differs from earlier efforts narrowly focused on job training (Brown 1999). Research and practice experiences affirm the need for a broader focus for career development: in addition to information, guidance, academic preparation, and work-readiness skills, youth need life skills that enable them to become healthy, productive citizens. “The WIA’s emphasis on youth development encourages the work force system to treat youth as developing beings, for whom getting a job is not the only adult behavior they must master” (Youth Can Work! 1999, p. 13). The WIA’s vision of a comprehensive system has ten essential elements that contribute to life/career development, including work experience, leadership development, counseling and support of caring adults and peers, meaningful connections to education and employment, community service, and sustained follow-up support.

If Youth Councils are to achieve the goal of comprehensive life and career development, a major issue must be addressed (Callahan and Pines 1999; Kazis 2001): Will their approach be minimalistic, acting as the WIB’s advisor on youth issues—the minimum role required by law? Or will they serve as the WIB’s “architect of a comprehensive youth service delivery system” (Callahan and Pines 1999, p. 21), bringing together the multiple and fragmented funding streams and agencies that currently deliver some piece of the whole. Another issue is how and whether Youth Councils will integrate with existing school-to-work infrastructures and incorporate career development lessons from School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) projects (Kazis 2001; Spangler 1999). The challenge is not to continue existing patterns of resource allocation, but to seize the opportunity to help youth at risk avoid self-destructive behaviors, develop skills, and build personal and professional support systems for their future careers. The following resources provide guidance for establishing Youth Councils and developing programs.

Resources


Gives an overview of the role, responsibilities, and activities of Youth Councils. Outlines roles for university extension, given their expertise in 4-H youth development and youth leadership programming.


Outlines principles of youth development that are reflected in the WIA, summarizes many of the key youth provisions of the act, and details how states can promote the fuller incorporation of the youth development principles advanced by the new legislation.


This guide for local leaders describes how they might address the challenges of forming Youth Councils. It discusses the WIA, how to leverage resources to build a youth development system, and the role youth councils. Case studies of existing councils describe how they were formed, what obstacles they faced, and what they have accomplished to date.


Discusses what is known about involving youth effectively, questions to consider before engaging youth, mentoring youth retreats, ideas to implement once youth have been engaged, and retention strategies.


Individuals interested in influencing local WIA youth program implementation should take the following steps: (1) encourage elected officials to appoint individuals well versed in youth employment/ youth development to the local WIB; (2) encourage a full range of key stakeholders to participate on the Youth Council, including K-12 and postsecondary education; (3) build broad-based local coalitions from the bottom up; and (4) encourage development of Youth Councils that embrace a mission that includes youth employment/ youth development system building rather than just the dispensing of WIA formula funds.


This assessment of the early progress of eight Youth Councils depicts their evolution, approaches they are using to promote comprehensive youth service planning and programs, challenges they have faced, and practical lessons. Concludes that many are trying to move beyond the mandated planning and monitoring role to a more comprehensive approach to coordinating and planning community responses to youth needs. Includes the Framework for Youth Council Development in Massachusetts developed by the Commonwealth Corporation.


This guide includes a work plan; description of the wide range of Youth Council responsibilities, from organization and staffing to strategic planning and accountability; resource allocation decisions,
follow-up services, the performance system, selection of service providers, and other important administrative decisions; and pathways to comprehensive service delivery that are based on proven principles and practices.


Discusses the WIA’s youth provisions, issues of mutual concern in the STWOA and WIA, key issues for WIA youth implementation and potential support from the STWOA (defining youth-oriented work, building collaboration between councils and schools to improve the performance of WIA-eligible students, building year-round programs providing school year and summer activities, engaging employers and union), challenges to collaboration, and early experiences connecting WIA youth and STW activities in selected sites.


Lists do's and don'ts for effective council meetings and activities.

**Technical Assistance to Workforce Investment Act Youth Councils**


Includes downloadable versions of the following: Youth Services Survey Instrument, Twenty-Five Questions that Describe the Condition of Youth, and Strategic Priorities assessment tool.


The law mandating Youth Councils and the Final Regulations from the Federal Register, April 15, 1999.


Outlines key expectations of the legislation. Describes Youth Councils’ role as a catalyst for systemic reform. Discusses youth services in the one-stop system.

**YC Works**. www.lginc.org/eayouth/ycworks.html

Newsletter produced by the ETA Youth Council Network, a partnership of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration/Office of Youth Services, the National Office of Job Corps, and the Leonard Resource Group, Inc.

**Youth Can Work! Charting Youth Councils under the WIA**. New Brunswick, NJ: John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Rutgers University, 1999. www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/publications/ACF615E.pdf

This primer will help WIB and Youth Council members understand the requirements, responsibilities, and opportunities of youth councils; understand the balance between the concepts of youth employment and youth development required under WIA; understand and use best practices in many areas of employment, training, and youth development; and develop new resources and support for Youth Councils.


Provides examples and ideas for collaborating with business and education, developing a proposal, retaining youth on the Youth Council and in programs, collaborating with program operators, and addressing future technical assistance needs.


Covers legal and regulatory requirements, scope of work, membership and council models; provides planning and implementation worksheets. Appendices contain a list of websites, sections of the WIA and interim regulations, and sample forms (council member nominations, memorandum of understanding, bylaws).


Modules include: (1) Youth Councils—the challenge; (2) building a youth development system in your community; (3) strategic planning for Youth Councils; (4) effective youth programs and practices; and (5) accountability. Handouts include worksheet for identifying council members, self-assessment for council membership, strategies to keep council members active and engaged, youth resource scan, and planning template.


Results of an informal survey to several local employment and training directors regarding the implementation of Youth Councils that identified emerging trends in council development.


Presents the rationale and agenda of an overnight youth retreat for youth who are being considered for Youth Council involvement in New Jersey. The activities include team building and group projects that stimulate thinking and problem-solving skills and develop employability skills.


Includes links to Youth Opportunity Movement, Youth Opportunity Grants 2000, Youth Councils resources, Laws and Regulations, WIA Planning and Implementation, Education, Youth Training.

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under Contract No. ED-99-CA-0013. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. Trends and Issues Alerts may be freely reproduced and are available at http://eca.vee/fultext.asp.
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EFF-089 (3/2000)