Special Topic Report:
The Role of Entrepreneurship in Rural YouthBuild Programs

Background

As more and more resources and affluence are concentrated in urban areas, those living in more rural areas have not seen the benefits of a rebounding economy in the same way such urban areas have. Rural areas are affected by many issues that are not so problematic in urban areas. These include the scarcity of well-paying jobs in diverse fields, lack of access to training opportunities and continuing education, and a lower median income. Further exacerbating these employment barriers are the infrastructure challenges associated with a lack of reliable transportation and access to telecommunications. There are no quick or easy solutions to these issues, which rely on larger investments, partnerships, and legislation across state and federal governments and private corporations to address.

Aside from having enough assets to purchase and maintain a vehicle, there are few options that an individual can tap into in a rural community to address transportation barriers. The same is true for telecommunications such as broadband access; if it is not readily available or affordable, then individuals need to seek alternative means of accessing the internet, such as traveling to a public space that offers internet access, such as a library.

According to a Measure of America March 2018 report, 20.3% of young people living in rural communities were jobless and not in school on average over a five-year period from 2010 to 2014, compared to 14.2% percent in urban areas (“Disconnected Youth”). Overall, higher poverty rates and unemployment are also issues for rural communities. Job opportunities in many rural parts of the country have failed to recover from the recession while urban jobs have bounced back and climbed from pre-recession peaks. The weak outlook for jobs, and in particular employment tied to career pathways in rural communities, forces young people to look elsewhere, but looking to urban locations for career opportunities is challenging. Rural isolation can lead to limited horizons for many students who may only know the career opportunities they are exposed to in their own hometowns. In smaller rural areas, these may be extremely limited.

However, entrepreneurship can help offset the challenges of economic development. Entrepreneurship has always played an important role in making ends meet in rural communities where there are scarcer resources available. Informally, this has taken the form of selling or bartering things a person has grown, produced, or acquired to neighbors or into a local marketplace, or being paid for jobs that neighbors cannot do themselves. With the growth in the digital economy, entrepreneurship has grown to encompass more diverse means of self-employment and earnings. Entrepreneurship is associated with improved rural livelihoods when the businesses created enable individuals and families to increase their income, to accrue assets, and thereby create wealth (Markley and Low, 2012).

This paper explores the role that entrepreneurship training and development could have in increasing the financial security of YouthBuild participants by creating jobs and securing future employment, specifically looking at the potential benefits to rural young people. Entrepreneurship training could be a means for supplementing household income, creating jobs, or merely making a young person more employable. Whether preparing to start a business or
preparing for future employment, the skills involved in entrepreneurship can be integral to participant success, and provide the support needed to assist those in rural areas to develop industry pathways for themselves.

Introduction to Entrepreneurship

While entrepreneurial spirit goes back to the beginnings of human history, the term “entrepreneur” began to be used in the late 17th century as an economic concept related to taking risks in order to exploit opportunities to generate a profit. In the 1990s and 2000s, entrepreneurship became widely embraced with the worldwide visibility of successful entrepreneurs like Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, and Oprah Winfrey. This fueled a widespread desire to be the next self-made success story.

Presently, when thinking of entrepreneurship, Silicon Valley comes to mind – the starting and growing of high tech or software application businesses, hiring people, getting funding from venture capitalists, and “going public” through the sale of stock. However, the majority of entrepreneurs are local “mom and pop” businesses, serving the communities in which they are located but never growing much bigger than supporting the owners and a few employees. In addition, there is a growing subset of “entrepreneurship” that includes more flexible labor opportunities including self-employment, contract labor, freelance work, and piecework (i.e. work done and paid for by the unit completed). More recently, the term “gig economy” was coined to describe short-term or temporary freelance work opportunities, which have been greatly expanded through the use of online applications connecting producers to customers.

According to Bill Aulet, lecturer at MIT Sloan School of Management and serial entrepreneur, “some people believe that there is an entrepreneurship gene. That is misguided and defeatist” (Zetlin, 2014). Instead, it is believed that most people can become successful entrepreneurs if they are motivated and willing to learn.

This paper will seek to explore the following key areas related to entrepreneurship:

- Rationale for entrepreneurship education
- Entrepreneurial mindsets and skillsets
- Emotional intelligence
- Entrepreneurship curricula
- Competency and credentialing
- Documenting placement
- Integrating entrepreneurship into YouthBuild programming

Rationale: Making the Case for Entrepreneurship Education

For rural youth, a deep attachment to home can also make it difficult to leave to pursue opportunities elsewhere, according to Richard Settersten, a professor of family science at Oregon State University. Settersten says, “It has to do with their often deep connections to
place, and the challenges associated with leaving those communities and navigating worlds that are sometimes so foreign from what they’ve known (Henderson, 2018)."

Retaining young people in their communities or regions as skilled workers and leaders is central to sustainable, rural economic and community development. Entrepreneurship can manifest within an economy in a number of ways and includes both formal and informal economic activities for the purposes of creating wealth. In turn, entrepreneurship can contribute to economic development through high-growth enterprises or, as in the case of necessity-driven entrepreneurship, through enterprises that can serve as an important source of income and employment for vulnerable populations (Valerio et al, 2014).

There is little doubt that entrepreneurship is going to be a significant source of future jobs, and skills that have in the past been seen as entrepreneurial will be needed by all workers and valued by employers. That trend is already evident in the research over the past twenty years. For example, in 1999, the Department of Labor estimated that 65% of the jobs that youth would enter in the future were as of yet undefined (USDOL, 1999), and since then some have increased that estimate to 85% (The Next Era, 2017). Many of these jobs will exist in new enterprises created by entrepreneurs.

There is also a trend toward more irregular or flexible employment, sometimes as freelancers or self-employed contract workers, which is being driven in part by industry’s desire to be more flexible and more profitable. In addition, an increasingly diverse workforce with varying motivations for work is looking for more flexibility and more control. They are being called to be entrepreneurs.

Many young people envision being an entrepreneur or being self-employed as their first choice of career options. While many YouthBuild participants cite a desire to be entrepreneurs, doing so requires specific knowledge and skills. Entrepreneurship training can help YouthBuild participants to identify and exploit opportunities available in and beyond their communities. These opportunities can range from mowing lawns, housekeeping, providing childcare, to leveraging formalized training such as home maintenance projects utilizing their construction skills, or providing in-home care for the elderly or infirmed, employing their healthcare knowledge gained from a Construction Plus pathway. In any case, it is essential to provide entrepreneurship education so that they can gain the skills they need to be successful.

In the past, starting a business meant having a storefront or office and interfacing with customers frequently. Technological advances have removed barriers to earning income from entrepreneurial ventures. This new infrastructure can take the form of labor platforms that facilitate transactions between the entrepreneur and the consumer (e.g. Taskrabbit, Uber, Lyft, Freelancer, Upwork), as well as capital platforms where people can sell their own goods and services directly to consumers (e.g. Etsy, craigslist, Amazon).

Women, minorities, and youth, in particular, are being drawn into flexible labor options including gig work. According to a recent Pew Research study, “Participation in labor platforms is more common among blacks and Latinos than among whites, more common among those with..."
relatively low household incomes than those with relatively high household incomes, and more common among young adults than any other age group (Smith, 2016).”

These platforms are especially important in rural settings where both retail establishments and work opportunities are limited. Online commerce serves to bring together workers and consumers who are geographically distant to serve the needs of both.

Our workforce is changing, immigration and other demographic trends are bringing a more diverse population of workers. Youth are also a growing segment of the eligible labor force. However, currently there are an estimated 4.9 million young adults ages 16-24 in America who are neither in work nor school (Burd-Sharps and Lewis, 2017). Of these, there are estimated to be as many as 3 million youth living in poverty who are not in education, employment, or training (Ross and Svajlenka, 2016). These “opportunity youth” need a route to apply their energy, talent, and intelligence to work that is meaningful to them.

Entrepreneurial pursuits have long had appeal to more marginalized segments of the population (i.e. minority groups; Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersexual, Asexual, Pansexual (LGBTQIAP); justice-involved) that often face more difficulty gaining traditional employment. Entrepreneurship offers an income generating alternative for groups and individuals who find difficulty in mainstream pathways and an opportunity for the expression of culture and identity. It is not, however, without challenges.

For example:

- The LGBTQIAP community frequently must make a choice to either stay closeted or face risks in accessing capital, as well as markets, as they may face stigma, discrimination, and violence.
- Native American entrepreneurs face challenges including poverty linked to lack of job experience, lack of financing, isolated geography, limited networks and mentors, and government regulation, as well as discrimination and oppression (Fetsch, 2015). In addition, there are cultural barriers to utilizing Native American art and design on products.
- Justice-involved entrepreneurs lack sufficiently broad networks, may lack adequate numeracy and literacy levels, and have difficulty accessing credit.

Even so, entrepreneurship can provide an outlet for self and group expression with the development of identity- and culture-related products, including clothing, jewelry, and art. Developing resiliency and supporting the ability of young people, particularly those who feel marginalized, to express themselves nurture the development of pride in themselves and their identities.

While there is considerable research suggesting that youth are particularly interested in entrepreneurial pursuits, there is still a misconception that opportunity youth lack the self-discipline, motivation, or basic work skills to be successful entrepreneurs. However, these youth often have more motivation and drive to succeed on their own and evidence supports that opportunity youth can be very successful as entrepreneurs. In order to encourage entrepreneurship, especially in youth who may have limited formal business exposure or experience, it is important to develop both the entrepreneurial mindset (soft skills) as well as technical skills that will increase their likelihood of long-term success.
The lack of role models, combined with challenges of these young people’s social and emotional development, are likely to be deficits in any employment setting and must be addressed. Utilizing a trauma-informed care approach, as well as building resilience and the ability to persevere in the face of adversity, is critical for success in both traditional employment and self-employed settings.

**Entrepreneurial Mindset and Skills**

Entrepreneurial training begins with the most basic development of an “entrepreneurship mindset” – a way of thinking – that leads a person to entrepreneurship and particularly to seeing opportunities. Included are skills such as:

- risk taking
- financial literacy
- innovation
- communication
- collaboration
- leadership
- resiliency
- independence
- persistence
- teamwork

YouthBuild programs actively focus on developing these skills, referred to as “21st century skills.” They are highly desired by employers of all types (2015 Millennial Majority Workforce, 2015).

Increasingly, as employment trends move more toward flexible labor, workers will need to have an “entrepreneurial mindset,” regardless of whether they work for themselves or for someone else.

**Emotional Intelligence (EQ)**

EQ is more broadly referred to as Social/Emotional Competencies or Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and refers to a self-awareness that allows one to successfully seize opportunity and navigate the emotional setbacks of life, as well as the ability to empathize with, relate to, and work with others. All young people should have the opportunity to develop EQ competencies, including: self-awareness, social awareness, self-motivation, self-management, and relationship management.

According to EQ experts Steven Stein and Howard Book (2011):

> In everyday language, emotional intelligence is what we commonly refer to as “street smarts,” or that uncommon ability we label “common sense.” It has to do with the ability to read the political and social environment, and landscape them; to intuitively grasp what others want and need, what their strengths and weaknesses are; to remain unruffled by stress; and to be engaging, the kind of person that others want to be around.

According to Hadia FakhrEldin, there is a strong correlation between high levels of EQ and new venture creation defined as opportunity recognition, development of the business concept, and assembly of the resources to create an organization (FakhrEldin, 2017). FakhrEldin also identifies two types of motivation for new venture creation: Necessity (insufficient economic provision) and Opportunity (desire for independence or family/work balance), both of which exist in YouthBuild participant populations.
There are evidence-based programs that integrate the development of EQ, either formally or as a result of the types of activities in the classroom, school, family, and community settings, including RULER, EL Education, Facing History and Ourselves, and Buck Institute for Education. High-quality implementation at the organizational and staff levels leading to successful EQ development efforts should include staff development and support.

**Entrepreneurship Curricula**

There are many organizations offering entrepreneurship curricula, and they range from more traditional offerings focusing on small business start-up skills to newer innovative programs focused on the “gig economy” and “side hustles.” With much of entrepreneurship now being facilitated online, any curriculum should include skills such as social media, online marketing, and web development.

Most entrepreneurship curricula include both soft skills, such as entrepreneurial mindset, collaboration, design thinking, and presentation, and technical skills, such as finance, marketing and sales, production, risk analysis, and business planning. For YouthBuild programs, these curricula can enhance employability skills and also build financial literacy, develop basic numeracy and literacy skills, and support overall academic readiness. In this way, entrepreneurship curricula are a natural enhancement to contextualized learning in the YouthBuild classroom. A blended approach that includes both face-to-face coursework, as well as online modules, provides the most flexibility and individualized approach to learning for the opportunity youth audience.

Finally, an ideal curriculum should take a project-based learning approach that prompts students to address their own interests and real world problems. In most entrepreneurship curricula, this is done initially through a design thinking project (a process of addressing a real world problem by first understanding and empathizing with end users, then defining the problem, ideating, prototyping, and iterating various solutions) and later through business plan creation for an actual business idea the student wants to pursue.

“Appendix A” contains a list of entrepreneurship curricula options. The curriculum that is most appropriate for each YouthBuild program will depend on how entrepreneurship is integrated into the program. For example, questions to consider include the following:

- Is entrepreneurship a central component of the training or is it an opportunity for general career exposure?

- Is the entrepreneurship focus on a specific industry, e.g. construction or healthcare, or is it a more general focus on how to develop a gig opportunity?
**Competency and Credentialing**

There are several entrepreneurship curricula, with exams resulting in certificates, for youth to learn entrepreneurial skill proficiency and competency. YouthBuild grantees could choose to affiliate with national (or international) youth-oriented organizations that provide curricula, award credentials or certificates, and support opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs to compete. Most competitions are judged by experienced entrepreneurs and investors -- industry leaders capable of determining whether the young person has mastered the skills. These are the same people who have the capacity to bring the appropriate resources and connections needed to launch entrepreneurial endeavors, to mentor young entrepreneurs, and to support industry recognition in entrepreneurship competencies.

The following programs, though not an exhaustive list, include business plan competitions as a component, which have become a popular way for young entrepreneurs to present their ideas and demonstrate their skills:

**SAGE** (Students for the Advancement of Global Entrepreneurship) provides curriculum, mentoring, and competitions to support young people to launch socially responsible businesses and social enterprises designed to solve critical problems.

**NFTE** (Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship) has both classroom-based and modular curricula, offers credentialing, professional development and support for teachers, competitions and opportunities for students to showcase their skills. NFTE utilizes the Certiport ESB exam to award the first industry-recognized entrepreneurship credential.

**YEP** (Youth Entrepreneurship Program) is a 24-week program that is integrated into a variety of organizations and schools. Host organizations create business plan competitions, provide mentoring and financial support, and host summer boot camps.

**YE** (Youth Entrepreneurship) is a year-long accredited program embedded in high schools. They provide teacher training and, through their YE Academy, incentives for YE students and alumni to continue their education by earning points for participating in YE events outside the classroom that can later be translated into capital grant funding.

**REAL** (Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning) offers a facilitated entrepreneurship curriculum, as well as several specialty certificates including Agricultural Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship in Healthcare, and Specialty Craft Entrepreneurship.

**Documenting Placement**

Documenting placement in entrepreneurial fields within a year after exit from YouthBuild may be difficult. The only concrete way to establish that someone is self-employed and to establish their income level requires obtaining a copy of an IRS Schedule C (Income from Self-Employment) and their 1099s. This underscores the importance of ensuring continuing contact and support for all YouthBuild participants who have exited the program in order to ensure the ability to gain necessary documentation. Some YouthBuild exiters may not directly pursue entrepreneurial work but may seek to gain additional experience in a skill or service related to the enterprise they are interested in creating or pursue post-secondary education or training to support their interest in being self-employed. For example, a young person may aspire to own a fencing enterprise and enroll in a local technical school to get certified in welding. These types of placements will be easier to document.
Integrating Entrepreneurship into DOL YouthBuild Programs

The YouthBuild USA Rural and Native Department has developed a general career pathway framework, which can be beneficial for entrepreneurial skill development in a rural setting. The framework is divided into three levels:

**Level 1: Exposure.** This includes soft skill development, including EQ, job skills, career interest/aptitude, and career exposure. These are broad topics and include the full cohort of YouthBuild participants, allowing them to improve their overall employability and expand their knowledge about career opportunities within their communities and beyond. Strategies include linked learning activities, such as journaling, assignments that support research into career options and role models, presentations by local business people, and career interest and aptitude testing. Ideally, this phase would contribute to the development of an individual Career Development Plan (CDP).

**Level 2: Experience.** This involves continued personal skill development, continued linked learning, and beginning implementation of CDPs. Work experiences are off site and integrated into both leadership and community service opportunities. Activities that get students experience in real work settings (short-term, voluntary, or paid internships, where possible) are encouraged and integral to this phase. This phase also includes an introduction to post-secondary education/training in the desired industry sectors, including college visits to meet instructors and see programming in students’ area(s) of interest.

**Level 3: Structured pathway that leads to an industry-recognized credential.** This could be a pathway developed at the YouthBuild program level or a specific set of activities designed for either before or after graduation that leads to a credential.

Using this framework, programs can better integrate career exploration and planning for participants throughout their time in YouthBuild and can choose from multiple levels of integration of entrepreneurial training:

- At the most basic level, all YouthBuild participants would benefit from training in entrepreneurial thinking, exposure to entrepreneurship (self-employment), and development of emotional intelligence.

- Beyond this, entrepreneurship could be integrated into other career pathways, such as Construction, Information Technology (IT), or Healthcare through somewhat more in-depth units that highlight the entrepreneurship opportunities in specific career fields and give students a basic foundation in skills they might need, such as beginning business planning and online marketing.

- At the highest level, training can include targeted entrepreneurship training to assist participants to consider self-employment within a chosen industry. This would include a breadth of business skills, such as design thinking, management, marketing, business plan development, and start-up fundraising, in addition to the industry-recognized pathway training and could culminate in students developing their own business plan and then launching that business.
Applying entrepreneurship to a career pathways model might include:

Table 1: Career Pathway Model for Entrepreneurship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Level (included in all career pathways)</th>
<th>Elements and skills</th>
<th>Linked learning opportunities</th>
<th>First-hand experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entrepreneurial mindset</td>
<td>Research projects using online resources</td>
<td>Entrepreneur visits</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EQ training</td>
<td>Interview real world experts</td>
<td>Entrepreneur career fairs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction to entrepreneurship for any career pathway (options, gig economy, self-employment, starting a business, etc.)</td>
<td>Write letters to entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Resume building</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interest and aptitude assessments (i.e. O*Net Interest Profiler)</td>
<td>Do a presentation on an occupation or industry sector of interest</td>
<td>Interviewing business owners in the community</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Budgeting/financial literacy</td>
<td>Look at basic personal financial statements</td>
<td>Visits with experts to teach specific skills (entrepreneurship or project/industry specific)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Personal reflection</td>
<td>Write a resume and cover letter</td>
<td>Identification of community challenges</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Creating a personal aspiration plan</td>
<td>Participate in team design challenges, e.g. spaghetti and marshmallow towers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning about design thinking</td>
<td>Identify self-employment opportunities in industry segment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learning about personality types (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, e.g.)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Module</th>
<th>Elements and skills</th>
<th>Linked learning opportunities</th>
<th>First-hand experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basic financial literacy</td>
<td>Create a budget (personal, project, enterprise)</td>
<td>Visits, job shadowing, or conduct of an internship with entrepreneurs in specific career pathways (e.g. construction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EQ development</td>
<td>Create a project requirement list, budget, and implementation plan</td>
<td>Participation in a banking internship</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Business plan basics</td>
<td>Conduct market research</td>
<td>Design thinking exercise for a local business or non-profit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Basic marketing (including online)</td>
<td>Write a marketing plan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Design thinking</td>
<td>Use design thinking to plan a community service project</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Exploration of applications to connect with consumers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construction Plus</th>
<th>Elements and skills</th>
<th>Linked learning opportunities</th>
<th>First-hand experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Design thinking</td>
<td>Interview a local business or non-profit about a need they have and follow through with the design thinking process to address it</td>
<td>Design thinking consulting services for local businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Product development</td>
<td>Develop and share a leadership philosophy</td>
<td>Apprenticeships with entrepreneurs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Write mission and vision statements</td>
<td>Business plan competition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-depth business plan development</td>
<td>Write and present a business plan</td>
<td>Pitch contest</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Legal environment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Operation of a short term business selling to peers, family, or public</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Capital sources</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team development and human resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Practice running a business</td>
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The above table outlines how a YouthBuild program might integrate entrepreneurship training based on levels of exposure and experience. Another approach could be to integrate entrepreneurial skills into the five program components of a YouthBuild program as follows:

### Table 2: Integration of Entrepreneurship into YouthBuild Program Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YouthBuild Program Component</th>
<th>Entrepreneurship Activities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>• Linked learning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• EQ building lessons, journaling and writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Project-based learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Pathways</td>
<td>• Self-employment opportunities in various industry sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Licensing requirements for self-employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Service</td>
<td>• Identification of community needs and ideation around addressing those needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Starting an enterprise that addresses a community need (garden for fresh vegetables, delivery service for elderly, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership Development</td>
<td>• Introduction to design thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mobilizing a team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Delegation of duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Creating a community survey and managing an interview process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Skill Development</td>
<td>• Budgeting and financial literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Building resiliency activities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mindfulness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Networking</td>
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### YouthBuild Programs and Entrepreneurship

The following are examples of ways that YouthBuild programs are, or have in the past, incorporated entrepreneurship.

**ReSOURCE**, the parent organization of the Vermont YouthBuild program, began over 25 years ago as an entrepreneurial organization repairing and reselling household items that otherwise would go to the landfill. They currently operate four retail locations across Vermont, and these stores provide the primary funding for the organization’s training work.

YouthBuild students and graduates can work in the ReSOURCE stores as reuse specialists. This YouthBuild program also provides some exposure experiences in entrepreneurship for youth working in construction. Starting their own business is viewed as an attainable goal for YouthBuild participants in this rural area, where many jobs involve self-employment.

**YouthBuild of Southeastern Ohio** (YOSO), which is a part of Sojourners Care Network, operates the Sojo Eco Recycling Center. As a part of this, YOSO created a small recycling business which included a metal buyback center. This center functions not only as a training mechanism for youth, but also as a way to generate revenue for the program and to serve a community need for recycling.

YouthBuild participants are engaged in various aspects of designing the business, as well as the ongoing operation, marketing, and planning functions, thereby giving them
entrepreneurial skills of great value, whether they pursue a career in logistics or start their own business.

**Quad YouthBuild**, under Quad County Community Action Agency, in Louisiana has a concession program through which they sell food and drinks to youth in their program and use the proceeds to fund activities. This program has been operating since 2012, and participants have been involved in choosing the food, keeping inventory, and handling retail transactions. Participants in this program have limited options for food otherwise, as there is no lunch program and there are few retail establishments that students can walk to in this rural community. The program generates a significant amount of unrestricted funding and also provides participants with food. Participants have gained valuable retail sales, marketing, and accounting skills through their involvement in this enterprise.

**Bi-County Community Action Programs, Inc.**’s YouthBuild program (BI-CAP) has involved participants in entrepreneurial pursuits through both a greenhouse program and vending machine operations. The greenhouse program was started with a U.S. Department of Agriculture grant in 2011. Participants grow plants from seeds and then sell the plants at their site. They also transplant some of the plants into a garden, which is used for food for the program.

Participants in this program get some school credit and leadership development and have learned about business basics such as sales, marketing, and finances. The revenue from this program is used to fund future development and for field trips.

**Conclusion**

Particularly in rural areas, where jobs can be scarce, having the wherewithal to generate income from a skill or hobby can mean the difference between having essential needs met or not. It can also mean the difference between a minimum wage and a livable wage. It is not anticipated that all or even most YouthBuild participants introduced to entrepreneurship and basic entrepreneurial skills will leave the program and start a business, but it can stimulate their interest in further exploration, and definitely make them more valuable as employees.

The process starts with an entrepreneurial mindset and emotional intelligence, foundational skills that can and should be part of any YouthBuild program’s activities and which all employers are looking for. Thus, whether a participant becomes self-employed or not, they will benefit from the training.

Entrepreneurship training is also a technical endeavor. Recent changes in information technology have changed the landscape of enterprise start-up and the ability of an enterprising entrepreneur to reach both local and distant markets with a product or skill. In-demand skills now include understanding current technological applications, maximizing visibility on the internet, and conducting transactions where the buyer and seller may never be face-to-face.

Integrating entrepreneurship skill development into education, community service, leadership, and career pathways, participants will gain valuable skills that are transferrable to any career pathway.
References


Three Ways to Bring Entrepreneurship into the Classroom. SeedSpot.org


Appendix A: Entrepreneurship Curriculum Offerings

The following are examples of entrepreneurship curriculum packages and entrepreneurship training programs. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list but rather to highlight available curricula.

- **National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship** (NFTE) partners with schools and other organizations to offer high-impact student programs through certified teachers in the NFTE Entrepreneurial Teacher Corps. The curriculum includes in-school and modular components that begin with awareness building, proceed through exposure (career and start-up tech) and expertise (business plan creation), and culminate in application (product development, marketing).

- **SamaSchool** (SMSA) started their work overseas to support freelancers doing piecework in the tech world, and now they have adapted their curriculum to gig work in America. They offer a train-the-trainer model for their curriculum, which is designed to have blended online and in-classroom delivery. It is specifically designed for the world of freelance or “gig work.”

- **VentureLab** was founded to teach youth, especially girls, entrepreneurship skills. Their packaged curriculum includes modules on creativity, introduction to entrepreneurship, idea generation, opportunity analysis, market research, design thinking, business models, and pitching.

- **Google for Entrepreneurs** partners with start-up communities around the world and builds hub campuses where entrepreneurs can learn, connect, and create companies. While the focus of this program is not opportunity youth, their products, including a library of video lessons, data tools, local business groups, and development tools, could be used for this audience.

- **Etsy Craft Entrepreneurship Program** was created to give underrepresented creative entrepreneurs the skills they need to succeed with Etsy businesses. The curriculum is offered through local partners and includes 14 hours of classroom time and is designed to be taught in a computer lab setting. Each lesson covers a different topic, such as marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), product photography, and basic accounting.

- **Prison Entrepreneurship Program (PEP)** is a program in Texas that includes nine months of in-prison programming and additional support after release. The curriculum includes a three-month leadership academy focused on character development, and a six-month business plan competition. Graduates earn a certificate in entrepreneurship from Baylor University’s Hankamer School of Business, and once out of prison, they have the potential to earn seed funding from PEP supporters as well as micro loans.

- **Defy Ventures** is an employment, entrepreneurship, and personal development training program that supports incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people. They operate through locally-based affiliates using a blended approach that leverages video-based training with in-person coaching and mentoring.

- **Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning** (REAL) is a 30-year-old curriculum designed for high schools and is based on the Experiential Learning Circle. Students
identify opportunities and unmet needs in their communities and set about creating businesses to serve these markets. The REAL curriculum is now offered in the community college setting in both credit and non-credit formats. REAL offers a certificate.

- **Kauffman FastTrac** was developed by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, known for supporting the development of entrepreneurship. This curriculum is offered online as a self-paced course, in a classroom with peers, or in a blended setting, as well as through a national delivery network including many Small Business Development Centers.

- **Community college networks, such as this example in California**, offer a wide variety of business and entrepreneurship courses and other resources that could be adapted for use with opportunity youth. This option would be particularly appropriate where YouthBuild programs are currently housed at, or collaborating with, community colleges.