YOUTHBUILD: A NEW VIEW FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
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As YouthBuild programs evolve in structure, organization and continue to struggle with outcomes (particularly around job placement and retention), it may be necessary to re-shape the traditional YouthBuild model, particularly as it relates to entry, exit, and points of measurement of outcomes.

During the days of JTPA, programs were predominantly evaluated around the use of short-term intervention, and measured immediate, post-program job placement with little follow-up. With the advent of WIA, emphasis has been on longer-term follow-up and, to a degree, job retention. Many programs still use “cycles” of a fixed length, albeit with opportunities for “early graduation”. Most programs struggle to maintain contact with graduates, offer services, and track outcomes and progress over time. This structure is also tied, in part, to the desire to “celebrate” a young person’s accomplishment via a graduation ceremony, which can serve to create an impression that “I’m done… now what?”

This new model, or modified model, takes into account research by the Sar Levitan Center1, Public Private Ventures2, as well as the author’s own experiences in program management. It takes the view that the initial job placement is one step in a continuing and long-term relationship with the program or initiative to advance the young person’s employment and income potential. Further, it views “success” from the long-range view, rather than short term milestone achievement.

Key Features:

- Movement through the “program” is really seen as a series of transitions based on achievement of progress in each “phase”, rather than pre-planned cycles or segments.
- The model offers participants a method of viewing their participation more long-term, yet with achievable goals in each phase.
- Greater attention is paid to barriers to steady employment through access to needed support and retention services over the long term.
- Greater emphasis is placed on upgrading skills through access to postsecondary education, work-site training or other opportunities for on-the-job learning such as coaching or mentoring.
- Wider use is made of combinations of work and learning, such as partnerships with employers to created coordinated, supported employment, part-time school arrangements or campus work study.
- Individual development accounts are used in two phases: one to facilitate the move to unsupported employment, and another to reward career progression, skills achievement, and long term support such as college.
- Those making the “transition” to unsupported employment are eventually linked back to other program participants as mentors and coaches.
- Each phase would need specifically identified competencies, benchmarks, and would be sequenced according to individual progress.
- The model better sets the stage for linkage to graduate and alumni programs.

While this concept is not fully developed, it is offered as a means of facilitating discussion surrounding the evolution of YouthBuild programs into multiple career tracks, charter schools, etc. The following diagram illustrates the concept.

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ENTRY AND STABILIZATION

SKILL AND COMPETENCY BUILDING AND REMEDIATION

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

TRANSITION

UNSUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT/EDUCATION

CAREER BUILDING AND JOB RETENTION

FINAL PROGRAM COMPLETION and LIFELONG CONNECTION TO PROGRAM

Orientation; Career Planning; Case Plan; Needs Identification

Traditional YouthBuild programming - 6 to 12 months, but based on competency completion rather than time

Occurs regardless of date of graduation - based on achievement of milestones

Movement through program is viewed as a series of transitions based on progress in each phase, rather than pre-planned cycles or segments. Focus is on long term success, job retention, career advancement, rather than traditional "graduation" and "follow-up".

First Phase Individual Development Account available to help transition to unsupported employment

Job Shadowing; Internships; Job Exploration

Full-time employment, school, combination - PHASE 2 skill upgrades - advanced training.

Job Retention Skills; Alumni Services; Mentor newer trainees

Second Phase Individual Development Account available to help with long term needs, college, etc.