YouthBuild Strategic Placement Plan

A successful placement strategy must help participants not only secure meaningful advancement into the worlds of work and postsecondary education but must also help them to identify and pursue promising career or vocational tracks. To do so, programs need to help participants identify and define their educational and career goals; prepare for what they want to do after leaving the program; and support them when they are ready to be placed into jobs, postsecondary opportunities, or both.

YouthBuild programs must adopt approaches to career and postsecondary development that are purposeful, targeted toward specific placements, and relevant to local economic opportunities. These approaches must be engaging and must introduce students to the world of work and college early in the program.

The objective of this guide and the Strategic Placement Tools is to help you develop and document a placement plan, which describes how your YouthBuild program, in addition to coordinating internal support for participants, will engage partners in a range of services and activities that will facilitate each YouthBuild graduate’s entry into employment and postsecondary education.

Your Strategic Placement Plan should include the following main components and activities:

- Identification of employers, apprenticeship programs, and postsecondary institutions;
- Engagement with partners in crafting appropriate education and training programs as well as skill attainment assessments to ensure that program activities are aligned with entry requirements for jobs, postsecondary education or apprenticeship programs;
- Establishment of clear roles and responsibilities for each participating partner;
- Strategies that address staff engagement, roles and responsibilities;
- Implementation of the YouthBuild career and postsecondary model and case management to ensure participants find and remain in jobs after exiting the program;
- Identification of the appropriate support services to ensure that participants are able to succeed in education, training and employment; and
- Strategies for retention and follow-up.

Top recommendations for successful placements

- Ensure that all program staff and students understand the importance of successful placement.
- Make placement a high priority! Provide data to staff regularly to let them know the results of their efforts. Celebrate improvements in placement outcomes.
• Find a way to improve communication and relationships among staff and between staff and students. Communication and relationship building are key to improved placement rates!
• Strengthen your career and postsecondary development practices. Use all the resources available to you, including the Career & PSE Development Model and other resources we have created for you.
• Train all staff on how to develop strong relationships with students, serve as mentors, and be team players in accomplishing successful placements for their students!

**Strategic Partners Needed**

To create a successful placement plan it is essential that you work with key stakeholders that can help you identify viable opportunities for your students. The goal of collaborating with these strategic partners should be to foster the development of mutually beneficial relationships. Keep in mind that building these relationships takes time, commitment, respect, and support. Capacity and resources are big challenges, but by working closely with partners your program will improve its placement outcomes.

**Key Partners:**

**Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs):** Each community is represented by a WIB which is comprised of leaders from business, organized labor, educational institutions, CBOs, and state and local entities. These institutions can help you identify the sectors that are experiencing growth and in which the state is investing workforce money.

**One-Stop Career Centers:** Are overseen by WIBs. Job seekers can access information about jobs, career development training, and local programs.

**Businesses:** Employer and business partners can help you understand the local labor market and how best to prepare participants for positions that may be open to them—and can provide valuable placement opportunities.

**Postsecondary Institutions:** Can assist you in preparing and placing students in postsecondary education.

**Apprenticeship Programs:** Can provide key placements for your students, opening doors to careers in construction.

**Chambers of Commerce:** A membership organization of the business community is a good place to meet potential employers and let them know about your YouthBuild program.

**Developing Employer Partnerships**

The technical/occupational skills that YouthBuild students acquire must align with and meet employers’ expectations that employees enter the workforce with technology expertise and fundamental job-success skills. Given the rate of technological changes and the specific skills needed for different sectors, it is necessary to have close cooperation with these local employers. Employer partners can support YouthBuild programs by providing guest
speakers, mentors for students, or possible internship opportunities. Employer partners can also provide equipment, information about job opportunities, and even financial aid for students going onto postsecondary education. For more information on how to identify potential employer partners see Finding Strategic Postsecondary and Employer Partners.

**Using Labor Market Information:** Before you approach potential employer partners, you should have an understanding of your local labor market and the sectors within which potential partners operate. While labor market data is helpful, know that it has limitations—employers and workforce development organizations can help to fill in the blanks.

*MyNextMove* is a Web site linked to the U.S. Department of Labor that offers a wealth of information to both you and your students. Profiles of occupations and industries include:

- State and national trends in employment and wages
- Knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the job
- Tasks and activities associated with the job
- Typical educational levels
- Information on training programs (e.g., apprenticeships, community colleges, four-year colleges, certification)

For further information see Labor Market Research.

**Establishing College Partnerships**

When selecting postsecondary partner institutions, YouthBuild programs need to take into consideration the realities of the local labor market and discuss the availability of vocational credentials linked to career tracks in high growth sectors. Partnerships with colleges should ensure that YouthBuild students receive the support they need to succeed both from YouthBuild program staff as well as from college staff.

You should discuss the management structure of potential partnerships with colleges, as well as staffing roles and responsibilities, oversight, monitoring and quality improvement decisions. For more information on factors to consider when selecting a postsecondary partner see: Creating Postsecondary Partnerships that Work and Postsecondary Partner Outreach Strategies Mini-Toolkit.

**Considering Placements in Apprenticeship Programs**

If part of your strategy anticipates placing participants into an apprenticeship program, you should consider the following questions:

- Are you familiar with each apprenticeship program’s process for accepting applications?
- When (what months) are applications accepted?
- What is the timeframe from application submission to apprenticeship acceptance?
- When (what month) will apprenticeship programs begin?
- Will participant entry into an apprenticeship program be considered “direct entry” upon completion of pre-apprenticeship program or “preferred consideration”?
- What type of work experience will participating students acquire and what type of assistance and support will they receive?
Staffing Your Placement Plan

Maintaining and developing community partnerships and providing students with support both during the program and after to succeed in their placements requires significant staff time and investment.

Below is a list of steps to help you begin to think about how to staff your placement plan.

Step 1: List program staff, including all staff names, position titles, statuses (full time v. part time) and roles and responsibilities.

Step 2: Answer the following questions:

- What is the staff team’s experience with career and postsecondary placement? Who will be responsible for career and postsecondary development?
- Who will be ultimately responsible for placement outcomes? To whom is this person accountable?
- What role will the other staff play in your placement strategy? What is the accountability process?
- What will be the process of assigning students to staff members? What criteria will be used?

Step 3: List the activities, steps, and services each staff member is providing to students to meet placement outcomes

Step 4: Explain how each of the proposed set of activities will enable students to develop the skills needed to prepare for targeted placements.

Step 5: Consider how staff members will help students overcome personal barriers to successful completion and employment (e.g., transportation, child care, tuition support). If they are unable to provide support directly what will be the referral process? The follow-up?

Tools

Career & Postsecondary Education Development Plan

Site Placement Readiness Assessment Tool