Creating Postsecondary Partnerships that Work

A Guide from YouthBuild USA
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Introduction

Guide Purpose

The purpose of the Creating Postsecondary Partnerships that Work guide is to help YouthBuild programs pursue, develop, and sustain partnerships with postsecondary institutions. The goal of these partnerships is to prepare students for postsecondary enrollment, retention and completion.

In 2008, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation funded seven YouthBuild programs to close the postsecondary credential gap so that more low-income young adults can excel in postsecondary education, careers, and leadership. A critical strategy of this work focuses on building strong and mutually accountable postsecondary partnerships that provide students with supports they need to succeed in postsecondary education and training.

In this guide, you will find tools, resources and case studies based on promising work at each of the seven YouthBuild programs piloting this approach. Specifically, this guide will help you identify postsecondary partners who best advance your mission and meet your students’ needs; create a strong postsecondary success plan and Memorandum of Understanding with your partner institutions; and cultivate strong, long-lasting, professional relationships with postsecondary instructors, staff, and administrators.

Guide Organization

This guide is organized into two major parts. Part I addresses general postsecondary partnership development processes. These processes include planning your postsecondary education efforts and researching potential partners (Ch. 1); identifying champions within PSE institutions and building long-term relationships with postsecondary staff (Ch. 2); and formalizing your plans through Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) (Ch. 3). Within each chapter, we link to tools and mini-toolkits that provide practical advice to execute partnership activities.

Part I of the guide will benefit YouthBuild programs in the beginning stages of partnership development, as well as YouthBuild programs that have well-established postsecondary partners. For programs in the beginning stages of this work, Chapter 1 provides tools for setting tangible short- and long-term goals and identifying postsecondary partners that can help you reach these goals. Chapter 2 will help you pick potential postsecondary partner institutions and identify appropriate staff within these institutions to begin partnership conversations. Finally, Chapter 3 will kick start your efforts to formalize this work in written plans and agreements. For programs with a track record of postsecondary partnership activities, Chapter 1 provides recommendations for expanding your postsecondary plans to provide students with more and better opportunities. Chapter 2 will help you extend outreach efforts to additional staff, faculty, and administrators within your partner institution and identify new champions at other postsecondary institutions. Chapter 3 will help you continue to develop clear, strong, MOUs.

Part II of Creating Postsecondary Partnerships that Work offers recommendations and tools for implementing specific postsecondary partnership activities. These activities include exposing students to postsecondary experiences through college tours, workshops, peer-mentoring, and bridge programs (Ch. 4); aligning YouthBuild curricula and instruction with postsecondary
experiences (Ch. 5); supporting YouthBuild graduates enrolled in postsecondary institutions (Ch. 6); and working with your partner to collect data and track student progress (Ch. 7).

A description of each chapter, as well as links to online tools and resources provided in each chapter, are outlined in the chart below.

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**Partnership Guide Chapters and Tools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Tools and Resources</th>
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</table>
| **Chapter 5: Alining YouthBuild Curriculum, Instructional Practice, and Assessment with Postsecondary Experiences** | Refer to this chapter to learn about ways that you can work with a postsecondary partner to increase your YouthBuild program’s academic rigor. These processes include collaborating with postsecondary staff and faculty to align YouthBuild curriculum and instruction with postsecondary expectations, engaging students in dual-enrollment opportunities, and using multiple learning assessments to evaluate student progress.                                                                 | 1) [Academic Alignment Mini-Toolkit](#)  
2) [Dual Enrollment Mini-Toolkit](#)  
3) [Postsecondary Placement Test Preparation Mini-Toolkit](#)  
4) [Free Assessment Rubric Resources](#) |
| **Chapter 6: Creating Graduate Support Systems**                      | This chapter describes processes for supporting students once they are enrolled in postsecondary education. These processes include staffing your graduate support efforts and providing effective case management and advising and connecting students with supports that appropriately meet their needs and challenges.                                                                                                                                  | 1) [YouthBuild Brockton and Massasoit Community College’s MOU](#)  
2) [Recommended Roles and Responsibility of a PSE Graduate Support Liaison](#)  
3) [Case Management Mini-Toolkit](#)  
4) [Working with Youth Without Stable Housing](#)  
5) [Graduate Support Website Resources Mini-Toolkit](#) |
| **Chapter 7: Tracking Students Through to Completion**                | This chapter outlines ways that you can collect and analyze data regarding student and program progress and success so that you can gauge the efficacy of your efforts and use data.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 1) [Student PSE Transition Data-Tracking Template](#)  
2) [Data-Sharing Agreement Sample](#)  
3) [YouthBuild Postsecondary Education Weekly Check-In Report Template](#)  
4) [Sample Student Data-Sharing Consent Form](#) |
Guide Audience

*Creating Postsecondary Partnerships that Work* contains information for all YouthBuild program staff interested in developing postsecondary partnerships. Although this guide is primarily intended for YouthBuild program staff, other community-based organizations, school districts, and schools can also use this guide to help inform your postsecondary partnership development efforts.

Different aspects of postsecondary partnership efforts will prove more appropriate for specific staff roles. The chart below outlines recommended roles and responsibilities for developing and implementing your postsecondary partnership efforts. These recommendations are rooted in the experiences of YouthBuild programs. Keep in mind that this work should reflect the unique context and capacity of your YouthBuild program. For each responsibility, we list the *Creating Postsecondary Partnerships that Work* chapter where staff members can learn more about implementing this aspect of the work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Responsibilities and Relevant Chapter</th>
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| Executive Director and Program Director   | • Works with YouthBuild team to develop PSE-vision and to plan and prioritize overall activities. (Chapter 1)  
• Collaborates with YouthBuild team and PSE partners to develop overall timeline and scope of the work. (Chapter 1)  
• Meets with postsecondary faculty, staff, and administrators to discuss and plan partnership activities. (Chapters 1 and 3)  
• Maintains relationship and regularly meets with high level postsecondary staff (e.g. Provost or Dean) to ensure that partnership activities are successfully executed. (Chapter 3)  
• Seeks funding opportunities to sustain and expand PSE work. (Chapter 6) |
| Graduate Coordinator, Transition Coordinator, or Case Manager | • Researches potential partner postsecondary institutions. (Chapter 2)  
• Meets with postsecondary faculty and staff to discuss and plan partnership opportunities. (Chapters 1 and 3)  
• Works with postsecondary partners to implement specific activities such as financial aid work aid workshops, developing and delivering bridge programs. (Chapter 4)  
• Meets with current YouthBuild students to engage in career and PSE preparation and planning. (Chapter 4)  
• Manages ongoing advising relationship with graduates in postsecondary education. (co-managed with postsecondary partners) (Chapter 6)  
• Creates and implements alumni and cohort programming. (Chapter 6) |
| AmeriCorps VISTA PSE staff                | • Researches potential partner postsecondary institutions. (Chapter 2)  
• Meets with postsecondary staff, faculty and administrators to discuss and plan partnership opportunities. (Chapter 3)  
• Works with postsecondary partners to implement specific activities such as financial aid work, aid workshops, and developing and delivering bridge programs. (Chapter 4)  
• Develops a system for collecting students’ PSE data. Collects data in consistent, timely manner. (Chapter 7) |
### Recommended Postsecondary Partnership Staff Responsibilities

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<th>Responsibilities and Relevant Chapter</th>
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<td>Students (e.g. current and graduate Advisory Councils)</td>
<td>• Work with YouthBuild program team to develop PSE vision and plan activities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Meet regularly with YouthBuild and postsecondary faculty and staff to discuss needed supports. (Chapter 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop and implement peer mentoring groups. (Chapter 6)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Provide feedback around how well students are prepared for postsecondary education.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Inform student engagement strategies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructional Staff</td>
<td>• Collaborates with postsecondary faculty and staff to align YouthBuild curriculum with postsecondary expectations. (Chapter 5)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Collaborates with postsecondary partners and YouthBuild staff to develop bridge program curriculum. (Chapter 5)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Embeds college readiness skills into YouthBuild curriculum. (Chapter 5)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Works with other program staff to infuse postsecondary readiness opportunities into other YouthBuild program components. (e.g. Life Skills and Construction)</td>
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### Why This Work Matters

Supporting and empowering low-income, first-generation college students to complete postsecondary credentials is both an economic and a moral imperative. Labor market access in the 21st century increasingly requires more than a GED or a high school diploma. In order to improve economic competitiveness and the health of our nation, America must dramatically increase the rate at which low-income young people complete postsecondary degrees and credentials with labor market value.

Similarly, the health of young people, their families and their neighborhoods improves when we provide more equitable access to the potentially transformative impact of postsecondary education. Supports through postsecondary completion not only improve access to family-sustaining wages, but also increase likelihood of voting, civic engagement and a multitude of family health measures for low-income young people.

Positive impacts on economic and social mobility are not limited to four-year liberal arts degrees. Our intentionally broad definition of postsecondary education includes two- and four-year colleges, technical schools, apprenticeships (union and non-union), and career credential programs with labor market value.
While our definition of postsecondary success is intentionally broad, our window for creating real momentum toward this goal is much smaller. Despite widespread recognition that postsecondary credentials lead to better career and life outcomes, the rate at which students, especially low-income students, obtain these credentials remains disturbingly low. According to a wide range of research, less than ten percent of students who leave high school without a diploma go on to eventually complete a postsecondary degree.

Given these trends and realities, YouthBuild USA recognizes that our approach should be part of the solution for ensuring that the postsecondary access and success agenda can work not only for young people of privilege, but also for young people of promise.

Building a Back on Track Through College Movement

The Postsecondary Education (PSE) Initiative is part of a national Back on Track through College movement that is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, and New Profit Inc. via the Social Innovation Fund. Developed by Jobs for the Future, this model was informed by JFF’s work with YouthBuild USA and the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) as well as lessons learned through JFF’s work with intermediaries across the country scaling Early College High School designs.

The Back on Track movement is organized around a framework designed to promote the success of students and to allow for scale opportunities across the country. In addition to the framework description, the guide also includes examples of how various scale partners have worked with postsecondary institutions to implement the approach.

The Back on Track Through College framework offers a blueprint for how to re-engage young people who have fallen off-track to graduation or have dropped out of school entirely and put them on a path to postsecondary success through three overlapping phases:

- **Enriched Preparation** integrates high quality college ready instruction with strong academic and social supports
- **Postsecondary Bridging** builds college ready skills and provides informed transition counseling
- **First Year Support** offers appropriate supports in the first year and beyond to ensure postsecondary persistence and success

In order for colleges and community based schools to develop and sustain the model, forming a partnership is essential. Using the Three Phase Model as a framework, college and community-based organization (CBO) partners have worked deliberately in each program phase to develop key activities crucial for student success. Examples of activities in each phase of the model follow:

In the Enriched Preparation phase, partners have worked together to align curriculum and instructional offerings by designing courses so that students place into credit bearing courses the moment they enter college.
In the Postsecondary Bridging phase, partners have co-created bridge courses. The courses are often credit bearing and are usually delivered at the college through a dual enrollment arrangement.

In the First Year Support phase, partners have streamlined counseling and case management services so that students have access to the resources they need to overcome barriers, to feel safe and supported, and to stay focused on learning and completing a degree or credential.

Funding is another important aspect of the partnership development work. Partners are fully aware that for their efforts to have a sustainable institutional impact, they must collectively raise funds to continue efforts beyond this pilot phase of work. It has become increasingly clear that state and federal funds are important levers for longer-term sustainability.

Scaling the Model

Given the value and significance of the Back on Track Through College pathway, sustainability and scaling efforts are currently underway in three sectors that serve the majority of low-income young people seeking to re-enter school and career settings: national youth serving networks, school districts serving low-income youth, and community colleges. For all three sectors, ensuring that second chance programs and schools are increasingly linked with college partners is critical to respond to the aspirations of young people and demands of the modern economy.

National Youth Serving Networks: Three years of work growing and scaling Back on Track Through College designs within YouthBuild USA and the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) network has generated promising results. The combined efforts of these initiatives have increased the numbers of young people graduating with high school diploma or GEDs and enrolling and persisting in college. For example, in the YouthBuild network, 71 percent of all students in the seven initial PSE initiative sites earned a high school diploma or GED—even though over 98 percent of them had dropped out of previous schools. Of the graduates, 51 percent enrolled in postsecondary education and 59 percent of those persisted through their first year of college. These promising results are evidence that the combination of high expectations, rigorous curriculum and instruction, caring and supportive environments, and comprehensive supports can help young people enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

Partners in the PSE Initiative are now working to install the Back on Track Through College pathway as the default program delivery model at network sites all across the country. YouthBuild USA and NYEC started this work in 2008-2009 with 15 total participating programs. After three years of growth, there are now 34 participating programs nationally. In the last six months, The Corps Network has also launched a Back on Track model in their network.

Throughout the initiative, Jobs for the Future has provided training and technical assistance support to all participating programs. In addition, the Center for Youth and Communities at Brandeis University serves as the external evaluator for this work and continues collecting evidence to test the efficacy of the Back on Track model.

School Districts and Local Education Agencies: Beyond the reach of national networks, other partners are critical to the success and growth of this work. School districts routinely develop or contract for alternative education programming to meet the needs of young people who are ‘off-track’ for graduation (and absent an intervention are unlikely to finish) and those who have dropped out without a credential.

Approximately 1.2 million students drop out of school each year around the country (this translates into one student dropping out every 9.2 seconds). Unfortunately, the highest dropout rates are found in poor urban and rural schools with disproportionate numbers of low income, African
American, and Hispanic students. While many of these students eventually return to earn an alternative diploma or GED, less than 10 percent continue on to earn a postsecondary credential. Innovators in a number of districts across the country—Philadelphia, New York City, Chicago, Denver, and others—are revamping their recovery efforts to address new demands for college and career readiness. While promising in terms of intent, these programs often need retooling to ensure that their designs support more intensive preparation and support, improved transition services, and better follow-up services for high school graduates in postsecondary education. As is the case with community-based organizations, school district programming is much more likely to succeed and prove sustainable when connected with committed postsecondary partners.

**Community Colleges**: Community Colleges are a third important scale sector. Community colleges enroll almost half of all U.S. undergraduate students according to a report by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. They are also essential to work force training and retraining and supply workers in areas needed for long-term competitiveness.

In 15 states around the country, Adult Basic Education (ABE) programming, which includes Pre-GED and GED programming, is held on college campuses. In these states and others, community colleges are developing streamlined pathways that allow students to concurrently enroll in basic skills and occupational programs to students’ accelerate progress toward a credential with labor market value.

Partnerships with CBOs and districts are increasingly important for community colleges that wish to improve their graduation rates, especially as accountability for community colleges shifts from an emphasis on enrollment to an emphasis on completion. Community colleges are working with education programs (whether district or community agency sponsored or run) to help create more college-ready preparation, transition, and support programming.

The Backpacks to Briefcases initiative in North Carolina is one example of how a state community college system is working with partner CBOs to redesign ABE and/or GED programs that focus on postsecondary credential completion as the measure of success. In response to increasing unemployment rates and the influx of unemployed workers in the local community college system, Davidson County Community College worked with local CBOs to institute courses and transition programs that prepare young adults for their GED while also teaching critical career development skills. Over three weeks, students engage in an orientation program, a college success program, and an extensive career development and planning series.
CASE STUDY

How Strong Postsecondary and Community-Based Partnerships Serve the Needs of Low-Income Students

The Early College High School Initiative is a bold approach to improving success in high school and postsecondary education. Through the Early College High School Initiative, 13 partner organizations are creating or redesigning more than 250 schools that will ultimately serve more than 100,000 students annually. Early college high schools blend high school and college in a rigorous yet supportive program, compressing the time it takes to complete a high school diploma and the first two years of college. The schools are designed so that low-income youth, first-generation college goers, English language learners, students of color, and other young people underrepresented in higher education can simultaneously earn a high school diploma and one to two years of transferable college credit—tuition free.

Early College High School graduates, who are overwhelmingly low-income and minority, go on to postsecondary education at high rates. More than 65 percent of 2007 graduates were accepted to four-year colleges, and many more chose to complete an Associate’s degree by spending a fifth year at their early college high school. More than 85 percent graduated with substantial college credit.

The College and Career Academy (CCTA) is the result of a partnership between Pharr-San Juan-Alamo school district and South Texas College. CCTA is made possible thanks to innovative work led by Superintendent Danny King, who leveraged favorable state policies that allow the use of average daily attendance funds (ADA) to recover dropouts up to age 26. CCTA’s partnership with South Texas College is a pillar of its service delivery model. Students enrolled at CCTA can take dual enrollment courses at South Texas College through a “skills for success” class. Through these courses, students earn technical certificates in high demand areas such as welding and healthcare.

Furthermore, resources from Pharr-San Juan-Alamo school district and South Texas College ensure that students get what they need as they transition from CCTA to South Texas College. CCTA counselors and college counselors form teams to register students for classes onsite at CCTA. CCTA also provides wraparound support such as childcare, transportation, and housing assistance critical to helping students stay focused on school.
Acknowledgements

The generous support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, and New Profit Inc. (via the Social Innovation Fund) has allowed YouthBuild USA and participating YouthBuild programs to improve pathways for low-income youth into postsecondary education, careers and leadership roles in their communities.

Participating YouthBuild programs were selected based on their readiness and capacity to strengthen postsecondary partnerships, deepen graduate supports, improve academic offerings, and ultimately increase the numbers of YouthBuild graduates who complete postsecondary credentials on their way toward building family sustaining careers and demonstrating leadership within their communities.

We congratulate and thank the outstanding leaders of the initial seven pilot programs. The Executive Directors in each of these entrepreneurial programs are creating stellar opportunities for young people to emerge strong and hopeful: Susanne Fitzgerald in Bloomington, Illinois; Gil Barno in Columbus, Ohio; Lance Wise in Atlanta, Georgia; Jill Walters in Portland, Oregon; Mark Showan in Brockton, Massachusetts; Simran Sidhu in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Connie Ferris-Bailey in Madison, Wisconsin. Furthermore, we would like to congratulate and thank all of the staff within each of these programs. The hard work and dedication of local program practitioners has been a crucial element of success in this initiative.

The postsecondary partnership guide recognizes, shares and celebrates lessons learned through the partnership development efforts of local YouthBuild programs and community colleges. This guide would not have been possible without the guidance, feedback, and honesty of PSE YouthBuild program staff and partners. We would like to thank the following individuals for interviewing with us so that we can share their insights and discoveries: Amanda Huggon-Mauretti, Mark Showan, Loukisha Hyman, Gil Barno, Michael Snider, Derek Steward, Valerie Howard, Alicia Lenard, Elise Huggins, Jill Walters, Ashley Wood, Brian McMahon, Emily Cochran, Jamal Hickman, and Stacy Lum. We also thank Terry Grobe and Mamadou Ndiaye from Jobs for the Future for providing writing and editing support.

We believe that feedback from practitioners in the field is essential for improving the efficacy and relevance of this document. Individuals with questions, comments or feedback regarding the implementation of these or other partnership practices with postsecondary institutions should contact Scott Emerick (semerick@youthbuild.org) or Krista Sabados (ksabados@youthbuild.org) at YouthBuild USA.

We wish you the best of luck as you engage in this important work with your postsecondary partners!
Planning Your Work and Researching Potential Partners

Successful postsecondary partnership development requires strategic planning and needs assessment. Before you reach out to potential postsecondary partner institutions, you must clarify your postsecondary-related goals, determine the programming and resources you need to reach these goals, and plan your efforts accordingly. This preliminary process will help you identify concrete ways in which postsecondary partners can help support your work.

As YouthBuild staff, you must spend time researching potential postsecondary partners during this initial planning process. Conducting background research on potential postsecondary partners will allow you to identify institutions that can best meet the needs of your students. Furthermore, these efforts will help you recognize specific postsecondary partnership opportunities.

In this chapter, you will find tools, tips, and processes that support the strategic planning and research phase of your postsecondary partnership development efforts.

- **Planning Your Work**: Here you will find references to tools for conducting a needs assessment and identifying your highest priority activities for supporting students’ postsecondary success. You will also find references to templates that will help you create a logic model and a more detailed plan and timeline to support your postsecondary efforts.

- **Researching Postsecondary Institutions**: In this section, you will learn how to research and identify potential postsecondary partners in your region, as well as potential partnership opportunities.

### Planning Your Work

Prior to approaching a postsecondary institution to discuss partnership opportunities, it is important that you identify your YouthBuild program’s goals, needs, and priorities for preparing students to succeed in postsecondary education and training.

While participating in YouthBuild USA’s Postsecondary Education Initiative, YouthBuild programs learned that the most successful partnerships evolve when a YouthBuild program approaches potential postsecondary partners with a clear understanding of their own goals and needs and provides concrete recommendations for moving the partnership forward.
In this section, you will find resources to help clarify your program’s goals and determine your needs for effectively preparing and supporting students as they pursue postsecondary degrees or credentials. This section also references a tool containing questions that you can ask former and current YouthBuild students so their perspectives can be integrated into your overall planning efforts. Given their direct experiences, students and alumni are experts regarding what is working and not working for postsecondary opportunities and career credentials.

Before you begin planning, we encourage you to reflect on your current efforts and identify areas where your program can increase its effectiveness in readying students for postsecondary work. The Postsecondary Partnership Needs Assessment Tool (http://tinyurl.com/PSEneeds) will help you think through areas in which a postsecondary partnership might prove helpful.

While planning, be sure to keep in mind that most successful college readiness efforts depend on students adequately practicing college-readiness skills while enrolled in the YouthBuild program. Therefore, it is critical that your postsecondary readiness efforts are infused throughout all of your YouthBuild's program components, beginning with Mental Toughness. In other words, postsecondary skill development and preparation should be emphasized in YouthBuild academic courses, life skills classes, on the worksite, and other components of the YouthBuild program. For example, since strong reading skills are foundational to postsecondary success, YouthBuild McLean County’s construction program engages students in reading and writing development during the construction component of the program as well as in the classroom.

Finally, be sure to treat your postsecondary education plan as a living document and revise it as often as necessary. Throughout the program year, you may also consider reviewing data to ascertain where your program and postsecondary partner can increase the availability and quality of opportunities and support for YouthBuild students and alumni. You can learn more about using data to improve the quality of your programming and postsecondary partnership efforts in Chapter 7, Tracking Students through Completion.

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<tr>
<th>Jobs for the Future’s Back on Track website provides a detailed online assessment tool to assist you in planning for how your program will support students’ postsecondary preparation and success. The website features a comprehensive assessment tool and a full set of resources, tools, and program examples, as well as curricular and design resources to help practitioners ramp up the quality and rigor of instruction in diploma and GED programs and design and deliver bridge activities and first-year supports.</th>
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Creating a Logic Model

Effective postsecondary preparation requires strategic planning. You are strongly encouraged to start your planning efforts by creating a logic model that outlines your postsecondary goals and the activities and strategies that will support these goals.
A logic model is a graphic representation of how a range of activities is intended to produce specific results. Developing a logic model will help you establish your YouthBuild program’s PSE-related goals and realistically determine specific strategies and activities that will help you reach these goals. Logic models are also helpful as you build a case to current and potential funders about how their resources will support your activities and desired PSE-related outcomes.

You can find a Postsecondary Logic Model Template in the Postsecondary Partnership Planning Mini-Toolkit (http://tinyurl.com/PSEplan). This template will help you establish your program’s PSE goals, plan high-level PSE strategies, and determine which specific partnership activities will support your work. For your reference, we also provide a Completed Postsecondary Logic Model Sample in this toolkit.

When thinking through which postsecondary partnership activities would best support your efforts, you may want to consult the Recommended Postsecondary Partnership Activities resource in the Postsecondary Partnership Planning Mini-Toolkit.

Creating a Strong and Detailed Work Plan

Successful planning depends on creating realistic timelines, assigning roles and responsibilities to appropriate staff, and determining the resources needed to support your work. Now that you have created a logic model, you can create a more detailed work plan to ensure successful implementation of your PSE vision. The Detailed Postsecondary Work Plan (http://tinyurl.com/PSEworkplan) is an excel template that you can modify to support your planning efforts.

For each major postsecondary activity (e.g., implementing a bridge program) you plan to implement, break down the activity into a series of smaller activities and list them in the work plan. Consult the appropriate chapter in this partnership guide when determining which specific activities and resources are needed to execute the work successfully (for instance, consult the bridge programming section in Chapter 5 when planning bridge programming work).

Revisit and revise your plan monthly. The plan can also be used during YouthBuild staff meetings to discuss your postsecondary efforts and progress. Once you begin working with a postsecondary partner, you can share your plan (or a version of it) with your partner and use the plan to track your work progress, clarify timelines, delineate roles and responsibilities, and identify potential challenges.

Important: Your work plan should be used as a living document, one that is revised and expanded as your work with postsecondary institutions evolves. Regularly revisit this plan, particularly when meeting with YouthBuild staff or postsecondary partners to implement PSE work.

Considering Student Input When Planning Your Work

YouthBuild alumni enrolled in postsecondary education are important resources to help staff recognize your program’s greatest areas of need when it comes to postsecondary education preparation and support. For instance, if alumni enrolled in postsecondary report that they struggle with time management, you may consider developing activities and strategies that specifically target current students’ time management skills.
Alumni not enrolled in postsecondary education may provide valuable feedback as well. For instance, students might say that they did not enroll in college because they felt like they could not afford to. This feedback may inform the way you provide students with more financial aid and scholarship application support while enrolled in YouthBuild.

The Questions to Ask YouthBuild Students and Alumni tool in the online Postsecondary Partnership Planning Mini-Toolkit lists questions that you can ask students and alumni as you plan your PSE efforts. Asking current and former students their opinions about postsecondary education, their long-term and short-term career goals, and the supports they need to get there will inform your planning efforts while letting students know that you take their perspectives seriously. For instance, many students might say that their primary goal as they engage in YouthBuild is earning their GEDs. This might indicate that your program needs to talk more explicitly about the benefits and importance of postsecondary education and life-long learning. Along with these questions, additional or different questions may be appropriate for your students and program.

You can read about how YouthBuild PSE programs have leveraged student feedback to develop their postsecondary education preparation efforts in the following case study.
CASE STUDY

How Student Feedback Informs YouthBuild Program’s PSE Efforts

Local YouthBuild programs run active youth policy councils where students provide substantive policy and programming recommendations. Following a similar structure, many YouthBuild programs have created leadership opportunities for graduates to inform their postsecondary partnership efforts.

Based on student feedback, YouthBuild Brockton implemented a PSE orientation workshop for all students and changed the focus of its college-exploration course to focus more time on study habits and test-taking skills. Student feedback also pushed postsecondary exposure activities to start earlier during the intake process for the program.

YouthBuild McLean County implements after-school homework and tutoring sessions based on the feedback of graduates in postsecondary education. And instead of a select few program participants participating in the Skills for the Future Camp at Heartland, students have successfully advocated for all YouthBuild McLean County students to have access to the camp.

Student input influenced YouthBuild Brockton to change the focus in its PSE orientation to study habits and test-taking skills.
Researching Postsecondary Institutions

We strongly encouraged you to conduct background research and develop an in-depth understanding of the postsecondary institutions in your region before approaching leadership at these institutions to discuss a partnership. There are several benefits to researching postsecondary institutions prior to approaching its staff, faculty, and administrators, including:

- Understanding the different types of postsecondary institutions that exist in your region
- Recognizing the benefits and challenges that students may face when enrolling in these institutions
- Knowing the tuition and expenses associated with these institutions
- Following completion rates and programs of study within those institutions
- Identifying specific opportunities your students can access if you move forward in a partnership. During this research phase, you may discover additional activities and strategies to include in your PSE plan. For example, you may discover that a postsecondary institution offers a TRIO-funded student support services office that can provide child care, academic counseling, and book vouchers for students.
- Recognizing specific opportunities the institution may be lacking so that you can work with the institution to either directly provide students with these opportunities during YouthBuild or link students to external community supports.

Important: The research phase is also very important to programs that have already developed postsecondary partnerships. First, you may be able to identify additional resources and supports within your partner institution to expand partnership services. Second, researching other postsecondary institutions in your region can help you locate additional postsecondary partners, which is critical for creating a partnership portfolio that reflects students’ diverse needs and interests.

Tools for Researching Potential Postsecondary Partners (http://tinyurl.com/PSEresearch) provides a research rubric and worksheet to help you explore opportunities with both current and potential postsecondary partners.

Benefits and Challenges Associated with Partnering with Different Types of Institutions

There are many types of postsecondary institutions, including community colleges, technical colleges, apprenticeship programs, and four-year institutions and universities. If your program is in its initial stages of postsecondary partnership development, you may want to begin by engaging one primary partner before branching out to others. Over time, expanding partnerships with a variety of institutions will help your YouthBuild program provide more diverse opportunities and pathways for students.

Community colleges are a great place to start building partnerships. Compared to other types of institutions, community colleges are relatively affordable, have open-access policies, offer a wide range of courses and certifications, and provide students with opportunities to transfer and earn baccalaureate degrees (e.g., by transferring to four-year institutions). For some students, four-year institutions, technical colleges, and apprenticeship programs might also be strong options to help your program reach its postsecondary goals.
The chart below outlines some of the general benefits and challenges associated with partnering with these different types of postsecondary institutions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Postsecondary Institutions</th>
<th>Time Enrolled Before Earning Credential (Full Time)</th>
<th>Examples of Credentials Earned</th>
<th>Potential Benefits</th>
<th>Potential Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical Colleges</td>
<td>1 to 3 years</td>
<td>• Nurse assistant certificate</td>
<td>• Open access</td>
<td>• Credits earned often do not articulate to other institutions (e.g., community colleges and four-year institutions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Certified warehousing and distribution specialist</td>
<td>• Credentials earned relatively quickly</td>
<td>• High tuition costs (particularly for-profit colleges)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Students receive direct career certifications and training</td>
<td>• Technical certifications may not translate into high-growth, high-paying careers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Training often provided by industry experts to ensure labor market value of credentials</td>
<td>• Certifications restricted to specific fields (lack of transferability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public 4-Year Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>2 to 5 years</td>
<td>BA in criminal justice</td>
<td>• More scholarship funds typically available</td>
<td>• May not directly accept GED students unless they transfer from a community college (check your state and PSE institution’s policies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BA in mathematics</td>
<td>• Gateways to higher levels of degree completion (PhD, MD)</td>
<td>• Higher tuition costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Fewer supports for non-traditional students (depending on institution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Highly selective (depending on institution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Rigid admission requirements (e.g., specific secondary coursework requirements, GPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Colleges</td>
<td>1 to 3 years</td>
<td>AA Liberal arts</td>
<td>• Very affordable</td>
<td>• Lack of funding, resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AS nursing</td>
<td>• Open access</td>
<td>• Students with aspirations to earn four-year degrees are less likely to do so than students who enroll directly into four-year institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Credits earned often articulate to four-year institutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Technical and apprentice-ship certifications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Technical Colleges, Community Colleges, Four-Year Colleges and Universities: Partnership Benefits and Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Postsecondary Institutions</th>
<th>Time Enrolled Before Earning Credential (Full Time)</th>
<th>Examples of Credentials Earned</th>
<th>Potential Benefits</th>
<th>Potential Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Apprenticeship Programs            | 1 to 6 years, depending on the trade               | Certified general electrician  | • Students often earn wages while enrolled in an apprenticeship program.  
• Students receive direct vocational training. | • Certifications restricted to specific fields (lack of transferability).  
• Many programs have application requirements, including aptitude tests. |
CASE STUDY

Identifying a Partner Institution with an Established Commitment to Non-Traditional Students

Portland YouthBuilders was able to develop a strong partnership with a postsecondary partner in part because it identified and engaged a community college with a track record of successfully supporting non-traditional students through completion. Its postsecondary partner, Portland Community College (PCC), developed effective supports and resources for non-traditional students as the launch site of the nationwide Gateway to College program. Gateway to College serves young people who are not on track to graduate and places them on a path to postsecondary success.

Building on PCC’s commitment to the success of non-traditional students, Portland YouthBuilders began talks with the college to establish a formal partnership. Portland YouthBuilders leaders met directly with the PCC Southeastern Campus president, who also serves as the president of Gateway to College’s national board of directors, to discuss their goals as pilot members of the YouthBuild USA Postsecondary Education Initiative. Impressed with the goals of the PSE Initiative, the PCC president signed a memorandum of understanding with Portland YouthBuilders, establishing a series of bridge programs and dual-credit courses offered exclusively for Portland YouthBuilders students and alumni while assigning PCC faculty to teach the credit-bearing courses that are part of the YouthBuild program.

Over the course of the partnership, Portland YouthBuilders developed a close working relationship with the dean of instruction and student development, a guidance counselor, career counselors, reading instructors, and math instructors.

Visit www.gatewaytocollege.org to learn more about Gateway to College.
Knowing What's Out There: Locating Postsecondary Institutions in Your Area

Before researching specific potential postsecondary partnership opportunities, become aware of all of the postsecondary opportunities available within your area. The following websites can help you locate technical, community college, apprenticeship, and four-year institutions in your region:

- **College locators:** Visit [nces.ed.gov/globallocator](http://nces.ed.gov/globallocator) or [nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator](http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator) and type in your zip code, and then select the "colleges" box to obtain a list of all community colleges, technical programs, and four-year institutions within your region.

- **Technical college locator:** [www.technicalschool.org](http://www.technicalschool.org) will help you identify technical colleges.

- **Apprenticeship programs locator:** You can learn more about apprenticeship programs and search for apprenticeship opportunities at Career One Stop and California's [Department of Industrial Relations](http://www.dii.ca.gov).

**A Word of Caution about Private, For-Profit Postsecondary Institutions**

While some private, for-profit postsecondary institutions may provide promising postsecondary pathways for YouthBuild students, YouthBuild programs should approach these institutions with caution. Many of these institutions have high tuitions, high dropout rates, and false promises of the marketability of the credentials they offer. In addition, due to the high tuitions, students at for-profit colleges are more likely to take out private loans and plunge into substantial debt.

You can learn more about these issues by reading a report issued by the Education Trust: [Subprime Opportunities: The Unfulfilled Promise of For-Profit Colleges and Universities](http://www.edtrust.org/our-work/higher-education/higher-education-research/school-choice/subprime-opportunities-the-unfulfilled-promise-of-for-profit-colleges-and-universities).

Learning about Potential Partners

Once you identify potential postsecondary partners in your area, thoroughly research these institutions to determine fitness for your students and program. In addition to determining overall fit, conducting background research on potential postsecondary partners will help you identify partnership opportunities to bring to the table once you meet with staff, faculty, and administrators from the institution.

**Conducting Internet Searches:** The Internet is a great tool for researching potential postsecondary partnership opportunities. Here are some ways that you can use the Internet to get a deeper look into a postsecondary institution, its services offered, and the success of its students.

- **The Community College Survey of Student Engagement:** The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), conducted annually at hundreds of community colleges across the country, asks students to rate their institutions on measures of student engagement. This is a great resource to get a more in-depth look at the quality of a specific postsecondary institution, including an important dimension that is often difficult to measure—instructional quality.

  Visit the site and then click “Understanding Survey Results” in the left column. Once you understand the measurements used and the national benchmarks for each category measured, click “Reports” and search for the institution you are interested in to see the relevant survey results. Some of the areas measured include presence of active and
collaborative learning, student-faculty interactions, and presence of higher-level thinking opportunities in courses.

- **The NCES College Navigator:** In addition to being a great tool for locating postsecondary institutions in your region, the NCES College Navigator provides comprehensive profiles of postsecondary institutions.

**Browsing the Postsecondary Institution’s Course Catalogue:** Browsing postsecondary institutions’ course catalogues can help you learn more about the variety of credentials offered at the institutions. You can download an institution’s course catalogue online or contact the admissions office and request that one be mailed to you.

**Interviewing Students:** Former YouthBuild students who are currently enrolled in or have attended the postsecondary institution are valuable sources of information when it comes to determining whether or not a postsecondary institution might be a good fit. Key factors to consider when speaking with students:

- What types of support do they receive from the postsecondary institution to encourage their success?
- How do they like their courses? What aspects of their courses are most satisfying? What aspects are the least satisfying?
- What types of support have they received from staff and instructors at the institution?
Building Numerous Partnerships to Reflect Students’ Diverse Interests and Needs

Over time, YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School built a diverse and extensive portfolio of postsecondary partners. Student voice proved a critical factor in helping the program identify these partners. As graduates of a larger YouthBuild charter school, a number of alumni have entered a variety of postsecondary institutions throughout the Philadelphia region. When YouthBuild Philadelphia staff followed up with these alumni, many of these students had positive things to say about their colleges and technical colleges. Staff decided to pursue partnerships with these institutions since it was apparent that they already provide the right supports and opportunities for YouthBuild graduates. As a result of their outreach efforts, the YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School now has established or is in the process of establishing memorandums of understanding with seven postsecondary partners.
Online Resources

Websites and Publications
Back on Track Website: http://tinyurl.com/bot787
Career One Stop: http://tinyurl.com/cos4444
College Locator: http://tinyurl.com/ies1245 or http://tinyurl.com/nces321
The Community College Survey of Student Engagement: http://tinyurl.com/ccsse333
Department of Industrial Relations: http://tinyurl.com/doir222
Gateway to College Website: http://tinyurl.com/qwtc333
Jobs for the Future Assessment Tool: http://tinyurl.com/amja6se
Subprime Opportunities: The Unfulfilled Promise for Profit: http://tinyurl.com/spofpc505
Technical College Locator: http://tinyurl.com/techsch222

Tools
Detailed Postsecondary Work Plan: http://tinyurl.com/PSEworkplan
Postsecondary Partnership Needs Assessment Tool: http://tinyurl.com/PSEneeds
Postsecondary Partnership Planning Mini-Toolkit: http://tinyurl.com/PSEplan
Tools for Researching Potential Postsecondary Partners: http://tinyurl.com/PSEresearch
Once you have assessed your partnership needs, planned your work, and researched potential partners, you are well-positioned to start building relationships with staff, faculty, and administrators within a postsecondary institution.

YouthBuild programs are strongly encouraged to engage and develop relationships with “champions” – influential advocates within the postsecondary institution – who will help you move the work forward while introducing you to other supportive staff and faculty relevant to the partnership.

There are two essential components to successful postsecondary partner outreach. One is reaching out to the right people; specifically staff, administrators, and faculty who can help you meet your goals. The second component is building strong, long-lasting, and mutually beneficial partnerships with these individuals.

This chapter contains tools, processes, practices, and case studies that will assist you as you work toward identifying champions and building mutually supportive relationships with postsecondary staff, administrators, and faculty.

- **Reaching Out and Building Relationships**: Postsecondary institutions are complex and, at times, difficult to navigate. We provide a rubric offering explicit suggestions to help you identify key staff, faculty, administrators, and student services within postsecondary institutions to help move your partnership work forward. When meeting with postsecondary partners, it is also critical that you start off on the right foot. We reference a tool that offers specific strategies for conducting successful outreach and meetings with staff, faculty, and administrators and establishing committed postsecondary champions.

- **Creating Long-Term Buy-in**: Successful relationships depend on consistent and long-term outreach and engagement. In this chapter, we offer suggestions for building meaningful, trusting, mutually accountable, and sustained relationships with postsecondary staff, faculty, and administrators.
Reaching out and Building Relationships

Finding the Right People to Talk To

Now that you are ready to reach out to postsecondary faculty, staff, and administrators to discuss a partnership, it is critical that you become familiar with the institution’s student-services offices and academic and vocational departments.

_A Guide to Navigating Postsecondary Institutions_ (http://tinyurl.com/PSEnav3) can help focus your efforts as it outlines offices and staff typically housed within postsecondary institutions, as well as questions you may ask staff members, administrators, and faculty as you explore potential partnership opportunities. The tool also provides specific examples of how other YouthBuild programs successfully engaged these specific postsecondary resources.

Keep in mind that the structures for delivering student support services vary widely across postsecondary institutions; this rubric only serves as an outline of typical higher education services. And remember to use your existing network: YouthBuild partners, board members, staff, and alumni may have connections with postsecondary administrators and staff in your community. Share your postsecondary goals with these individuals and ask if they can make personal introductions to potential postsecondary champions.
YouthBuild programs often ask: “With so many offices and programs within postsecondary institutions, whom should we engage first?” YouthBuild programs may be able to engage high-level administrators such as provosts, deans, and presidents to help execute the partnership. For instance, YouthBuild Columbus Community School was able to involve multiple faculty and student-services offices through Columbus State Community College interim provost’s leadership and advocacy. However, you can also experience success reaching out to student support offices directly if you are unable to engage a high-level administrator.

The staff, faculty, and offices you engage within the postsecondary institution should largely depend on your YouthBuild program’s postsecondary goals (See Chapter 1 for resources to assist your goal setting and planning efforts). For example, if one of your goals is to increase the number of YouthBuild students completing the FAFSA before critical state and federal deadlines, you may ask your high-level postsecondary contact to introduce you to financial aid office staff. If you do not have such a contact, you may consider reaching out to the financial aid center directly.

Conducting Productive Outreach Meetings
YouthBuild programs have learned important lessons while meeting with postsecondary staff, faculty, and administrators, including:

- **The earlier the better**: Planning and executing postsecondary partner activities takes time. More critically, building relationships and buy-in from postsecondary staff so that you can implement these activities successfully also takes time. In light of these realities, YouthBuild program staff stress the importance of planning activities long before your desired launch date of these activities.

- **Meet with postsecondary staff, administrators, or faculty armed with clear vision and a list of targeted questions**: Review your postsecondary plan (see Chapter 1 for resources to assist your goal-setting and planning efforts) and develop your questions and agenda items before you meet with postsecondary staff, administrators, or faculty

- **Highlight the benefits of a YouthBuild partnership**: Successful partnerships, in part, rest on both parties recognizing real benefit from the engagement. Therefore, it is important that YouthBuild programs help postsecondary partners recognize the benefits of working with YouthBuild.

You can access tools and checklists to assist with your postsecondary relationship building efforts in the [Postsecondary Partner Outreach Strategies Mini-Toolkit](http://tinyurl.com/PSEoutr).

Pitching a Mutually Beneficial Partnership
Successful partnerships, in part, rest on whether both parties genuinely benefit from the engagement. Therefore, it is important that YouthBuild programs highlight for PSE partners the potential benefits of engaging in a mutual partnership. Key benefits to highlight during your conversations with postsecondary partners include:

- YouthBuild students may prove more likely to succeed in postsecondary settings than other college-going students because they will receive ongoing support from their former YouthBuild program.

- YouthBuild students will have participated in extensive leadership development and service opportunities throughout their YouthBuild experience, which will add considerable value to any postsecondary setting.
Many YouthBuild students have overcome challenges in their lives and most all have made the commitment to re-engage in school after previously leaving high school. The diversity of these experiences and the resiliency of YouthBuild graduates will enrich the learning environment of any institution.

Many YouthBuild students have access to additional financial resources. Graduates from the participating programs earn Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards of up to $5,400 that can go toward postsecondary education expenses in return for their community service.

YouthBuild program staff are eager to discuss strategies for effective teaching practices and youth development principles that make a difference for young people and could help inform the work of postsecondary faculty and staff members.

Many YouthBuild programs participate in an active national network of YouthBuild programs with access to related technical assistance, tools, resources, and funding opportunities to support the development and implementation of meaningful postsecondary pathways for YouthBuild students and graduates.

Creating Long-term Buy-in

Strong relationships are central to successful postsecondary partnerships. YouthBuild programs should work toward cultivating trust and long-term commitments from student-services staff, developmental-education and college-level faculty, deans, and provosts. This relationship-building process is ongoing and should occur throughout the duration of the partnership. Based on the experiences of program staff, the following tips help create strong, long-lasting buy-in from postsecondary partners:

- **Thank-you’s go a long way**: Thank the postsecondary staff and faculty after initial meetings and successful implementation of projects. Programs have found success with handwritten cards or signed T-shirts from both YouthBuild staff and students.

- **Make sure the right people engage in relationship management**: Programs are strongly encouraged to ensure that staff members charged with relationship management represent the best fit for this work.

- **Involve multiple staff in relationship management**: Multiple staff from the YouthBuild program are encouraged to engage with postsecondary partners and build meaningful relationships. Case managers, instructors, and other staff are well-positioned to interact with student support services and multiple faculty members. Program leadership should work to create efficient communication so multiple points of contact do not duplicate conversations.

The tool, *Strategies to Create Long-term Buy-in*, in the *Postsecondary Partner Outreach Strategies Mini-Toolkit* offers more suggestions for creating strong, long-lasting relationships with postsecondary institutions.
CASE STUDY

Identifying an Influential Champion

YouthBuild programs have been able to develop partnerships with staff from many levels and departments within postsecondary institutions by first developing a relationship with a high-level leader, such as a provost, dean, or president. YouthBuild Columbus Community School is one such example. This YouthBuild program approached Columbus State Community College’s (CSCC) interim provost, Mike Snider, with a clearly defined vision: provide YouthBuild students with opportunities to earn substantial college credit during YouthBuild and follow up with comprehensive support services to help them succeed after enrollment at CSCC. As an influential advocate for low-income students and students of color, Snider agreed to serve as a consultant and introduce the program to faculty and student-services office staff while advocating that all aspects of the work are executed successfully.

Now YouthBuild Columbus students have access to a wide range of opportunities before their postsecondary enrollment. For instance, students engage in nursing assistance training offered by CSCC’s nursing program so that they can acquire relevant career credentials while earning college credit.

Mike Snider represents an ideal YouthBuild partner and advocate. His leadership within the community college ensures deep connections with and knowledge of the inner-workings of the large community college partner institution. His genuine commitment to ensuring that more individuals have the opportunity to earn family-sustaining credentials makes him a great advocate of YouthBuild’s mission.
Reaching Out to Relevant Student Support Services

Some YouthBuild PSE programs have created meaningful student supports with a postsecondary partner by first establishing a relationship with staff within specific postsecondary student-service offices. For example, YouthBuild McLean County engaged the TRIO-funded program at Heartland Community College known as Project RISE, a program serving low-income students and students with disabilities. Through its collaboration with Project RISE, YouthBuild McLean County was able to create a number of college-immersion and support opportunities that benefit current YouthBuild students and YouthBuild alumni enrolled at Heartland Community College. For example, YouthBuild McLean County and Project RISE offer a college-orientation course focused on career and college readiness skills.
Online Resources

Tools

Postsecondary Partner Outreach Strategies Mini-Toolkit: http://tinyurl.com/PSEoutr
CHAPTER 3
Developing and Implementing Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)

Now that you have planned your postsecondary education work and met with postsecondary staff, faculty, and administrators, you are strongly encouraged to collaborate with the postsecondary institution to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU). An MOU is a formal written agreement outlining roles, responsibilities, and proposed partnership activities of the YouthBuild program and the postsecondary institution.

MOUs will help you:

- Increase buy-in and commitment from both partners to improve the overall quality of services for students
- Strengthen and sustain partnerships beyond the tenure of individuals currently responsible for the relationship.
- Avoid misunderstandings because parties are clear about issues such as financing, space utilization, how credits will be awarded, prerequisites for taking college classes, and access to college or university facilities.

This chapter contains tools and resources to help your program develop an MOU in collaboration with your postsecondary partner. These resources include guidelines and recommendations for developing successful MOUs, including a Basic MOU Checklist outlining critical components of successful MOUs, an Element-by-Element MOU Guide offering recommended activities and shared responsibilities, and Sample MOUs providing template language to incorporate within your MOU.

When referring to the tools in this chapter, please note that MOUs should reflect the unique context of each partnership between YouthBuild programs and respective postsecondary institutions. The capacity of YouthBuild programs and their postsecondary partners, the most pressing needs facing students within each postsecondary environment, and the available resources available to support low-income students at the postsecondary institution will shape the development and implementation of each MOU.

In addition, please note that establishing MOUs with postsecondary institutions represents a promising beginning for partnership work but not a sufficient end point. The successful implementation of the roles and responsibilities outlined in the MOU agreement presents an important ongoing scope of work. This review process will result in periodic revisions, renewals, and recommitments to MOUs.

What if the postsecondary partner is unable to formalize the partnership through an MOU?

Some YouthBuild programs have engaged in successful partnership activities without an MOU. Just be sure to work with the postsecondary institution to develop clear goals, activities, roles, responsibilities, and timelines. The tools provided in this chapter will guide you in these efforts.
### Recommended Roles and Responsibilities

A question often asked by YouthBuild program staff in the process of engaging postsecondary partners is: which YouthBuild program and postsecondary institution staff should be involved in the MOU development process? This largely depends on the unique context and relationships between your YouthBuild program and partner institution. For instance, a YouthBuild case manager may have the primary relationship with a postsecondary decision-maker and should play a central role in the MOU development process. Although responsibility for MOU development varies, we can offer general recommendations to help you engage postsecondary and YouthBuild staff as you move forward with this work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOU Development: Recommended Roles and Responsibilities:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouthBuild Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouthBuild staff involved in planning and executing activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean, provost, or president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary institution’s legal department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff, faculty, and administrators involved in planning and implementing activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MOU Development: Recommended Processes and Practices

Now that you have identified the appropriate people to engage as you create an MOU, here are general processes and practices that you should consider when developing the document and implementing outlined activities:

- **Refer to your postsecondary work plan, timeline, and logic model:** In Chapter 1, we discuss the importance of developing a logic model, detailed work plan, and timeline to help you successfully carry out your partnership efforts. The MOU will help ensure that the appropriate resources and activities are in place so you can complete your PSE plan successfully. You should also make sure the timelines and desired project completion dates expressed in your work plan are represented in the MOU.

- **Start with a range of smaller, clearly defined activities and incorporate additional activities as the partnership progresses:** Successful postsecondary partnerships often start small and grow over time. You and your postsecondary partner may consider identifying a few targeted and achievable activities to outline in the MOU and plan to revisit, expand, and incorporate new activities in the coming months or year. For example, you and your partner could develop a bridge program this year and then revisit and revise your MOU the following year to include curriculum alignment work with postsecondary faculty.

- **Use existing resources:** When developing the MOU, identify existing resources and staff within both institutions that will help support the work and then outline specific activities that will help improve students’ access and success when involved in these opportunities. For instance, you may identify a TRIO-funded student support program that can provide specific opportunities to YouthBuild students. In your MOU, you could outline provisions that ensure students’ access to these services while they receive additional support from the YouthBuild program.

- **Include student feedback:** You can ask current and former students their opinions about postsecondary education, their long-term and short-term career goals, and the supports they need to get there. Their feedback will inform what activities you should prioritize in the MOU.

- **Involve all relevant YouthBuild and postsecondary staff:** Determine who will be responsible for executing the work in the MOU development process. By involving staff, you will clarify roles and responsibilities and facilitate buy-in for all individuals involved in the partnership.

- **Revisit and revise:** Once you launch the partnership, you and your partner should participate in regular, informal communication (via in-person meetings, telephone calls, and e-mails). Throughout the partnership, YouthBuild programs and their postsecondary partners should have more formal meetings (at least three times a year) to discuss overall progress of the activities outlined in the MOU and next steps for implementation. Furthermore, you may want to have conversations with your partner as the partnership progresses about how you intend to expand or revise the activities outlined in the MOU.

“I used to think a postsecondary partnership consisted of an MOU or articulation agreement and that was it. Now I think that it’s much more than that. It’s not a hands-off relationship, but it’s a relationship that reaches out and over, both ways.

– Derek Steward, YouthBuild Columbus Community School Principal
Getting Started: Elements of Successful MOUs

Reviewing Sample MOUs

Before developing an MOU with your postsecondary partner, it may be helpful to review MOU samples from other YouthBuild programs and postsecondary institutions engaged in partnerships.

We provide Sample MOUs (http://tinyurl.com/PSEMOU) in the online appendix. These sample agreements reflect language developed by participating YouthBuild sites and their partners. You may use these samples as references as you develop agreements outlining the roles and responsibilities of your program and your partnering postsecondary institution. Please note that these documents are intended only to aid your discussions and planning. MOUs are documents that must be developed and ratified based on specific needs and available resources of your local site and partner postsecondary institution.

The National College Transition Network provides additional MOU samples.

The Early College High School (ECHS) network created a resource kit for developing and negotiating MOUs and articulation agreements between secondary and postsecondary institutions. The kit provides sample MOUs and articulation agreements that your YouthBuild program may adapt to its specific needs.
Basic Components of Successful MOUs

While developing an MOU with your postsecondary partner, keep in mind that agreements should vary according to each institution’s unique needs and contexts. However, all MOUs should have key basic components, including a statement of the goals of the partnership, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and an agreed-upon timeline. While developing your MOU with your partner postsecondary institution, consider the following checklist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Components of Successful MOUs</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Not Yet</th>
<th>Comments/Revisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the MOU highlight the <strong>goals</strong> and <strong>missions</strong> of both parties?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the MOU outline the intended <strong>objectives</strong> and <strong>outcomes</strong> of the partnership?</td>
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<td>Does the agreement identify specifics of the <strong>target audience</strong> served by the partnership (e.g., students)?</td>
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<td>Does the agreement describe the <strong>roles</strong> and <strong>responsibilities</strong> of each partner organization/institution?</td>
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<td>Does the agreement designate <strong>primary points of contact</strong> within the postsecondary institution and the YouthBuild program?</td>
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<td>Does the agreement specify the intended <strong>financial obligation</strong> of each party?</td>
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<td>Does the agreement state the <strong>duration</strong> and <strong>timeline</strong> implementing the proposed activities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the agreement outline an <strong>annual review or evaluative process</strong> for the partnership?</td>
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<td>Does the agreement require <strong>names</strong> and <strong>signatures</strong> from both parties?</td>
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You can find this checklist online at [http://tinyurl.com/MOU8y88](http://tinyurl.com/MOU8y88).
A successful MOU specifically outlines which parties are responsible for driving specific aspects of the work while describing the levels of support and resources needed to make the partnership efforts successful. Keep in mind that each MOU should reflect the unique needs and responsibilities of YouthBuild programs and their postsecondary partner. The following checklist outlines specific roles and responsibilities potentially addressed in an MOU.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element of an MOU</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Potential Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Agreement for dedicated staff member(s) at the postsecondary institution to provide student support services (academic advising, counseling, financial aid, etc.) | • Eases alumni tracking  
• Simplifies and improves postsecondary transition for students  
• Improves efficiency of partnership | • Limited postsecondary staff capacity  
• Cost and resource implications for both sides of the partnership |
| Commitments for guaranteeing student access in specific courses (e.g., reserving 10 seats in summer bridge program courses). | • Provides low-cost way of ensuring student access to needed course work/support | • Tuition often required for course enrollment  
• Increased competition for seats in over-enrolled courses and many institutions |
| Terms for students accessing dual enrollment and institutions awarding related credits (partners sometimes commit to these terms in separate articulation agreements) | • Creates early momentum for students entering postsecondary settings and increases their likelihood of completion | • Institutional or governing board policies that may prevent or delay the awarding of postsecondary credit to GED earners  
• Increasing tuition and competition for access to postsecondary course work |
| Commitments to engage postsecondary faculty from a variety of disciplines to work with YouthBuild staff and instructors to align YouthBuild curriculum with postsecondary expectations | • Helps YouthBuild instructors better design curriculum that prepares students for postsecondary course work | • Finding sufficient planning time and overlapping time available for educators from both sides of the partnership |
| Conditions for using and/or sharing postsecondary facilities, space, resources, etc. | • Makes follow-up and graduate support meetings on postsecondary campus less disruptive to graduates’ schedules  
• Improves attendance for on-campus YouthBuild support meetings  
• Creates better recognition and credibility on campus for YouthBuild | • Limited space at postsecondary campus |
## Element-by-Element MOU Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element of an MOU</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Potential Challenges</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Commitments for supporting the development of YouthBuild alumni as a recognized student group on campus | • Makes the transition to postsecondary setting more comfortable for YouthBuild graduates  
• Makes managing follow-up services easier | • As postsecondary institutions’ enrollment rises, particularly at community colleges, they may have difficulty recognizing a specific and small cohort of students |
| Plans for accessing, tracking and sharing student data, including enrollment, attendance, grades, course completion, progression, and graduation (partners sometimes commit to these terms in a separate data-sharing agreement) | • Allows PSE Initiative sites to monitor their effectiveness  
• Helps transition coordinators target support services for students in real time before students leave school | • Concern over Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations (privacy laws) makes some postsecondary institutions hesitant to share some student performance and attendance data |
| Structures for supporting continued interaction and collaborative decision making by representatives from both partners | • Creates structure for shared goals and accountability, making PSE Initiative more sustainable  
• Helps establish better curricular alignment between YouthBuild programs and postsecondary institutions | • Establishing an institutionally recognized agreement rather than an individually recognized agreement |
| Assurances for fulfilling related financial obligations and pursuing sustainable funding to support a full scope of ongoing partnership work | • Creates structure for shared goals and accountability  
• Provides assurance of long-term commitment  
• Incentivizes productive partnership | • Many postsecondary institutions having difficulty raising funds for their existing programs |

This guide is available online at [http://tinyurl.com/MOUGD99](http://tinyurl.com/MOUGD99).
CASE STUDY

YouthBuild Brockton and Massasoit Community College’s MOU Development Efforts

Over the last several years, YouthBuild Brockton and Massasoit Community College (MCC) have built a strong, mutually beneficial partnership. Their MOU development process yielded several important lessons that can benefit other YouthBuild programs and postsecondary institutions engaged in similar efforts.

Lesson 1: Strong Relationships are the Foundations of Strong MOUs

YouthBuild programs are encouraged to leverage existing connections and relationships when cultivating a postsecondary partnership and creating an MOU. The transition coordinator and the executive director at YouthBuild Brockton were both graduates of Massasoit Community College (MCC) and maintained many strong relationships at the college. Mark Showan is the executive director at YouthBuild Brockton and previously served as the director of student services at MCC. Showan leveraged his relationships and knowledge of the school to create plan work with Amanda Huggon-Mauretti, MCC’s special programs coordinator primarily responsible for collaborating with secondary institutions to provide non-traditional students with transition support. Huggon-Mauretti’s role made her an ideal primary point of contact to help lead the partnership work. Once they established connections with relevant MCC staff and personnel, YouthBuild Brockton staff regularly visited MCC and interacted with Huggon-Mauretti and other student support services staff and administrators to establish their presence on MCC’s campus and to build and deepen relationships at multiple levels.

Lesson 2: Collaboration is Key

Once they identified partnership activities, YouthBuild Brockton and MCC developed the MOU in a highly collaborative way. Showan and MCC’s director of student services diligently involved all staff charged with implementing their planning partnership activities. All staff were aware of the expectations of the partnership and actively contributed to the overall planning process. Once YouthBuild Brockton and MCC staff drafted the MOU, they sent the draft to the college’s legal department to obtain final approval.

Lessons 3 and 4: Leverage Existing Resources and Start with a Range of Smaller, Clearly Defined Activities

When planning partnership work and outlining plans and activities into an MOU, both YouthBuild Brockton and MCC thought it would make sense to use existing resources currently offered by the college. Engaging students in Massasoit’s summer bridge program was a great way to begin exposing students to postsecondary options and to provide them with skills and strategies needed to be successful. In the MOU, YouthBuild Brockton and MCC worked together to outline additional opportunities that would support students’ success. Supports included access to MCC’s tutoring services, participation in enrichment workshops held by MCC faculty and staff on the YouthBuild Brockton campus, and ongoing support from Huggon-Mauretti as the primary postsecondary point person for the partnership. Over the course of the year, YouthBuild Brockton and MCC expanded the commitments outlined in the MOU to include agreements around collecting student data and providing students access to additional student services.
CHAPTER 3

Online Resources

Websites
National College Transition Network: http://tinyurl.com/nctn5577
Early College High School Resource Kit: http://tinyurl.com/MOU5453

Tools
Basic Components of Successful MOUs: http://tinyurl.com/MOU8788
Sample MOUs (2 documents: MOU Sample A and MOU Sample B): http://tinyurl.com/PSEMOU
CHAPTER 4 | Exposing Students to Postsecondary Experiences

Many low-income young people come from families and communities with limited history of postsecondary enrollment and success. These students often have trouble picturing the differences between secondary and PSE experiences, as these experiences often differ greatly from each other. Therefore, it is important that YouthBuild programs work with their PSE partners to expose students to the culture and norms of higher education.

In this chapter, we introduce strategies that expose students to postsecondary environments and increase what David Conley refers to as “college knowledge.” Some of these strategies are low-touch exposure strategies meaning that they provide lower levels of exposure and preparation but are less resource and time intensive. These approaches include peer mentoring, PSE faculty-led workshops, and college tours. Low-touch exposure activities may be promising options for YouthBuild programs in the beginning stages of a postsecondary partnership.

Once a stronger partnership is established, you and your postsecondary partner are encouraged to engage in high-touch exposure strategies, specifically by creating new bridge programs aligned with students’ interests and needs. Although bridge programs require more resources and planning, they immerse student in the postsecondary culture in order to develop the attitudes, skills and behaviors needed for success. You may also have the option of pursuing bridge program opportunities currently offered by the postsecondary institution. This option is less resource intensive and can serve as a great starting point in which to introduce students to the demands of postsecondary education.

Low-Touch Exposure Strategies: Campus Tours, Workshops, and Peer Mentoring

Successful postsecondary partnerships often start with small, clearly defined activities and then expand to more comprehensive efforts. The goal of these low-touch exposure efforts is to inspire students to pursue postsecondary credentials while they learn critical postsecondary skills, knowledge, and behaviors. In the following sections, we describe low-touch practices in detail while providing resources and case examples.
Campus Tours

Many YouthBuild programs have found early and consistent use of campus tours as an effective way to expose students to postsecondary life. In addition, tours increase students’ comfort with postsecondary environments while introducing them to a variety of pathways.

YouthBuild Metro Atlanta is one example of a YouthBuild PSE program experiencing success with campus tours. The YouthBuild staff work with admissions officers from a variety of postsecondary institutions who then provide YouthBuild students with a personalized tour of the campus. Students are also introduced to key faculty and student support service staff. Admissions officers have been very enthusiastic and willing to provide personalized campus tours free of charge.

It’s always a good option to engage students in a variety of college tours including four-year colleges and technical/vocational programs. For example, students at YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School visit a range of schools, including a four-year college, community college, and a vocation-specific truck-driving program.

To locate all postsecondary institutions in your region, visit http://nces.ed.gov/globallocator/ or http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/ and type in your zip code.

Ask your postsecondary champion or point person if he or she knows the appropriate staff who can provide a comprehensive tour. While working with postsecondary staff, be sure to structure the tour so that it resonates with the young people in your program.

Before going on a tour, assess students’ interests and needs. For example, you may want to ask students: What aspects of the postsecondary institution are they most curious about? What do they know about the postsecondary institution? What aspects of attending postsecondary education do they see as most challenging? Many programs require students to journal and reflect about their postsecondary aspirations, questions, and fears.

During the tour, structure activities so that students explore the resources offered by the college and become familiar with the supports available to them if and when they enroll. The Campus Exploration Activity Checklist (http://tinyurl.com/tour89) in the online appendix recommends activities and places to visit on campus during your tours. In addition, the College for Adults offers useful college tour activity recommendations.

After the tour, be sure to follow up with students to process what they learned. This can be the perfect time for students to explore their past and present perceptions about higher education and identify questions and challenges that arose during their visit.

Workshops Conducted by Postsecondary Faculty and Staff

Postsecondary workshops/seminars represent promising strategies that introduce students to credential and career options, PSE institutions’ enrollment and application procedures, the financial aid application process, and other skills and knowledge needed for success. These workshops are typically short (lasting 1-2 hours) and are held at the YouthBuild program or at the postsecondary
institution. Postsecondary staff (such as financial aid counselors, career advisors and instructors) help facilitate these events.

Ask your postsecondary point person or high level champion (strategies for engaging champions are discussed in Chapter 2 of this guide) if they could appoint relevant staff and faculty to run these workshops. Some YouthBuild programs have had success involving postsecondary staff free of charge by taking advantage of existing postsecondary programs. For example, YouthBuild Brockton engaged Massasoit Community College’s Special Programs Coordinator to lead a series of workshops through a program that exposes secondary students to Massasoit’s degree and credential opportunities. YouthBuild Metro Atlanta and Atlanta Technical College engaged students in a series of college readiness workshops to learn financial literacy, begin career planning, and improve time management and study skills. Ask your postsecondary point person if there are programs or student-service offices or staff within the postsecondary institution that deliver these exposure opportunities to secondary-level students.

Important: We recommend that you ask students about their interests and questions related to postsecondary education when working with postsecondary partners to plan and implement workshops. This will make certain that students are optimally engaged and that the workshops reflect their needs.

We provide resources and case studies that support financial aid sessions, weekly postsecondary orientation courses, and brown bag lunches in the following sections.

**Financial Aid Orientation Sessions:** Each year, the federal government and the states provide millions of dollars to support students’ postsecondary tuition and living expenses. YouthBuild programs should encourage both students and parents (who must provide income tax information for Expected Family Contribution calculations) to submit financial information before critical Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) deadlines. Financial aid orientation sessions are an effective way to communicate important deadline and financial aid application information. Postsecondary staff, particularly financial aid administrators and/or TRIO-funded counselors, are well-positioned to lead these sessions.

Be sure to learn federal and state financial aid deadlines when supporting students’ FAFSA completion.

“Parent Night” events inform students and parents about important financial aid process and deadlines. Every year, YouthBuild Brockton hosts such an event. During these events, a Massasoit Community College financial aid administrator leads a financial aid awareness session to inform parents and students about financial deadlines and procedures.

According to YouthBuild Brockton staff, the following resources are needed to execute this type of event successfully: ample time to plan a quality event (YouthBuild staff and students/graduates should be involved to help plan); consistent communication to students’ parents about the event and importance of their attendance; stipends to encourage student attendance; and dinner provided at the event.

You can learn about YouthBuild Brockton’s process for creating a successful parent night by reviewing the 2010 YouthBuild Brockton Parent Night Overview (http://tinyurl.com/parentnight98).

**Weekly Postsecondary Orientation Courses:** Some YouthBuild programs worked with their PSE partners to offer weekly workshops addressing topics such as financial aid, personal finance, postsecondary enrollment processes, and study skills. A variety of postsecondary staff are ideal candidates to deliver these workshops. These candidates include student support service staff (e.g.
TRIO staff), financial aid administrators, and instructors. You should make sure that you allocate time within the YouthBuild schedule for students to engage in these workshops and provide transportation to and from the postsecondary campus, if workshops are held there.

**Brown Bag Lunches with Postsecondary Instructors:** A promising way to expose students to career and credential options is to invite postsecondary instructors to your YouthBuild program. These instructors are well positioned to discuss potential majors and career credential programs. For instance, Portland Community College instructors visit Portland YouthBuilders students to engage in “brown bag lunches” while they talk about their respective disciplines.

Portland YouthBuilders collaborated with Portland Community College staff to implement a weekly workshop series addressing postsecondary-related topics such as financial aid, personal finance, computer basics and understanding Portland Community College’s online systems. The counseling team at the Portland YouthBuilders supported this work by developing their own brown bag lunch series for students focused on soft skills (time management, planning strategies, communication, etc.).

**Peer Mentoring**

Some YouthBuild programs successfully involved YouthBuild alumni (enrolled in postsecondary institutions) to serve as advisors, mentors, and champions for current YouthBuild students and students newly enrolled in postsecondary education. YouthBuild alumni inspire students to believe that postsecondary education can be a reality for them if they continue to embrace the opportunities provided by the YouthBuild program and postsecondary partners. YouthBuild programs across the board have found that students respond strongly to the messages of alumni who were recently in their shoes and experienced similar challenges.

Review [Engaging Peer Mentors: 6 Tips](http://tinyurl.com/pmentips) in the online appendix for more information and tips to create strong alumni engagement.
CASE STUDY

YouthBuild Columbus’ On Point Peer-to-Peer Program

The primary goal of YouthBuild Columbus’ On Point program is to inspire current students to pursue higher education. YouthBuild Columbus staff realized that YouthBuild alumni enrolled as postsecondary students are better positioned to motivate current students. According to YouthBuild Columbus’ graduate coordinator, Valarie Howard, “YouthBuild alumni can do a much better job than staff convincing current students that if they hang in there and get educated, it will be a rewarding experience. On Point Peer Mentors planted the seed for students to believe that postsecondary education can be a reality for them.”

The On Point Peer-to-Peer program consists of 8 students who meet as a group several times a year at Columbus State Community College to discuss their roles of mentors and to engage in leadership enrichment activities. Howard facilitates “hot topic” conversations, chosen by the group, so that students actively brainstorm strategies for effective peer mentorship and how they will help their mentees overcome challenges. These students have been enthusiastic about their role as mentors and honored to give back to their YouthBuild program.

The mentors visited the YouthBuild program throughout the year to meet with their assigned mentee to discuss their college and career goals and progress toward completing their diplomas. The mentors and mentees also participate in postsecondary exposure activities such as college tours and college fairs. During their one-on-one meetings, alumni help students create postsecondary plans, assess progress toward benchmarks in the plans, and commit to concrete next steps for putting these plans into action. The mentors also meet with YouthBuild Columbus case management staff to discuss challenges and ways in which the mentor and YouthBuild program will support the staff.

“On Point Peer Mentors planted the seed for students to believe that postsecondary education can be a reality for them.”

– Valarie Howard
High-Touch Exposure Strategies: Bridge Programs

YouthBuild programs interested in preparing students for postsecondary education may consider involving students in more intensive bridge programming. While low-touch exposure activities such as orientations and workshops, college tours, and peer mentoring give youth a sense of what college is like and the skills needed to succeed, intensive bridge programs can be more effective in preparing students for the demands of postsecondary education. Bridge programs increase the overall time available with students to address academic needs. Furthermore, bridge programs create space for providing students with a range of social and emotional supports to facilitate success in postsecondary settings beyond the classroom.

YouthBuild programs and postsecondary partners typically offer bridge programs either at the ‘back end’ of the YouthBuild program, during the summer before the start of the postsecondary fall semester, or as supported coursework while students are enrolled full-time in YouthBuild. While the content and focus of bridge programs vary, the design is typically built around these focal areas:

- Providing intensive and focused support to develop students’ reading, writing, and math skills toward higher levels of college-readiness;
- Helping students develop a range of college success strategies such as time management, note taking, organization, and stress management skills;
- Helping students navigate the postsecondary environment, including knowledge of how to access academic help, financial aid and other key support services;
- Exposing students to postsecondary policies, culture and expectations; and
- Encouraging students to develop supportive relationships with postsecondary faculty, staff, and other students.

There are two approaches to engage students in bridge programming or college readiness courses: linking students to existing immersion or bridge programming courses or collaborating with partners to develop new bridge programs specifically for YouthBuild students (either at the program or college).

The online Bridge Program Mini-Toolkit (http://tinyurl.com/PSEbridge) provides detailed tips, recommendations, and curricula to help you work with a postsecondary partner to engage students in bridge programming through these two approaches.

Linking Students to Existing Bridge Courses

The most efficient and cost effective way to ensure students’ access to bridge programs is to enroll students into programs currently offered by the postsecondary institution. There are numerous benefits to linking students with existing postsecondary bridge programs. Already supported by the postsecondary institution, these bridge programs require minimal resources from YouthBuild programs. Postsecondary institutions may provide students free or low-cost access to these...
Creating Postsecondary Partnerships that Work: A Guide from YouthBuild USA

CHAPTER 4

courses as a part of existing initiatives to support low-income students’ first-year transitions. For example, some Achieving the Dream-funded community colleges offer first-year college success courses and extensive first-year supports. Enrolling students in bridge programs may also serve as a promising entryway for a deeper long-term postsecondary partnership. For example, YouthBuild Brockton and Massasoit Community College began their work together through a preexisting bridge program and then expanded their efforts in subsequent years to include data collection, active student case management, and instructional alignment.

Bridge programs’ content, focus, and duration vary across postsecondary institutions; some may not be well-suited to the needs of your students. Regardless of these challenges, bridge programs can certainly benefit young people by exposing them to the postsecondary environment and opening their eyes to higher education’s promises and challenges.

Developing New Bridge Programs

You may consider developing new bridge courses in collaboration with your postsecondary partner. This represents the best option for YouthBuild programs whose postsecondary partners may not offer bridge programs or when existing programs do not meet YouthBuild students’ needs. Developing a new bridge program is also an appropriate next step for YouthBuild programs and postsecondary institutions looking to deepen their partnership and create opportunities more aligned with students’ interests, challenges, and strengths. For example, YouthBuild McLean County and Heartland Community College collaborated to create an extensive bridge program course based on YouthBuild McLean County students’ feedback. The program was developed as an extensive “boot camp,” requiring students to engage in rigorous reading and writing activities, career planning, and postsecondary success skill development.

It becomes easier to design the bridge and take advantage of the many resources available to inform an emerging bridge program once you and your partners have identified students’ needs. For example, teachers should embed math and English preparation into the course if students demonstrate a need for remedial math and English. College success strategies, such as time management, note-taking, and research skills represent important learning goals to include in a bridge program. Instructors often present these skills in a workshop format or a college success course.

Some YouthBuild programs have arrangements with postsecondary partners to use online resources to help students practice taking placement tests during the bridge program. These online resources can also diagnose students’ learning needs. In addition, some of these programs have agreements with their partners to allow students to take the placement test more than once, at no or low cost, so they have an additional chance to test out of developmental education. It is also useful for teachers to take postsecondary placement exams so they are aware the skills are needed to place into credit-level courses. This process will help instructors individualize instruction so students use bridge time to focus on the skills they need the most.

Bridge program courses may not be available at your postsecondary institution or your local postsecondary institutions may be unable to help you develop one. If this is the case, your YouthBuild program can independently develop and offer the bridge program. The online Bridge Program Mini-Toolkit provides resources and tools to help you select materials, design a curriculum, and provide students with the right supports.

The Illinois State Community College Board developed a highly detailed, step-by-step guide to plan and implement a successful bridge program.
CASE STUDY

Working together to Develop Effective Bridge Programming: Operation Fresh Start and Madison Area Technical College

Through their ongoing collaborative efforts, Operation Fresh Start (OFS) and Madison Area Technical College (Madison College) successfully delivered the “Learning to Learn Camp.” The intensive, one-week college-immersion course occurs each summer before the college’s fall semester. After the camp, students attend 8 weeks of follow-up sessions. The Camp, developed by Madison College professor Sandy Parks, represents an effective way to help students learn critical postsecondary habits and knowledge while reflecting on how postsecondary education can advance their long-term and short-term personal and career goals.

OFS engaged Parks to design and deliver the camp after discussing how a partnership would help both institutions serve the needs of students entering the college. OFS was able to reach out to Parks through its postsecondary champion Keith Cornille, the Madison vice president of student development. Both parties agreed that the best way to ensure student success was to engage OFS staff to provide ongoing supports for students enrolled in the course. The college involved OFS staff in the college’s professional development trainings so that they can assist with the delivery of the program. OFS could provide dedicated support staff (a function that the college lacked) to support all enrollees including non-YouthBuild students.

OFS provides students with additional resources beyond their involvement in the Camp. For instance, the YouthBuild program offers students transportation to and from the college, meals before and after the course, and homework assistance. OFS was able to develop some of these additional supports by convening volunteers to provide students with childcare and tutoring assistance which have been key to students’ success.

One important lesson from Madison College and OFS’ efforts is that consistent reflection and program refinement are necessary to make the Camp work for students. Each year, the course is slightly modified and improved based on the lessons learned the year before (taking into account outcomes and direct student feedback). For instance, initially students enrolled in the camp as a single cohort and did not attend the boot camp alongside other Madison students. YouthBuild students shared their concerns that they wanted to take the course alongside other Madison students outside of OFS so that they could feel more immersed in the college environment.

You can view the course syllabus for the Learning to Learn Camp (http://tinyurl.com/SBS767) and other YouthBuild programs’ bridge syllabi in the online appendix.
Online Resources

Websites
College Locator: http://tinyurl.com/ies1245 or http://tinyurl.com/nces321
College Tour Activity-College for Adults: http://tinyurl.com/cfa4567
Achieving the Dream: http://tinyurl.com/atd8855

Tools
Campus Exploration Activity Checklist: http://tinyurl.com/tour8q
Engaging Peer Mentors: 6 tips: http://tinyurl.com/pmentips
Bridge Program Mini-Toolkit: http://tinyurl.com/bridgeprogramming
Sample Bridge Program Syllabi: http://tinyurl.com/samplebridge
Illinois State Community College Board Bridge Program Guide: http://tinyurl.com/cyzhqnj
Academic preparation is one of the most important factors contributing to students’ postsecondary success. Academic preparation is also one of the most challenging goals while YouthBuild programs prepare students for their postsecondary journey. Many students enter YouthBuild with significant academic deficiencies, particularly in reading and math. Further complicating these challenges, most YouthBuild programs have only 9-12 months to help students earn GED/High School diplomas while preparing them for postsecondary success.

Despite these obstacles, YouthBuild programs and their postsecondary partners dedicate considerable time, energy, and resources to improve curriculum and instruction. Finding the right balance of rigor and supports for students to develop career and postsecondary skills and knowledge is a complex process. An effective alignment effort requires ongoing commitment, communication, and accountability from leadership and instructional staff on both sides of the postsecondary partnership.

Staff from postsecondary institutions play an important role in collaborating with YouthBuild staff and students to increase academic rigor and supports within the YouthBuild program. When done well, this collaboration can ensure that students transition into postsecondary education with the tools to succeed. Specifically, PSE leadership, staff, and faculty can support the academic alignment process by working with YouthBuild instructors and staff to develop a clear sense of what teaching and learning looks like in postsecondary settings. For example, postsecondary instructors can offer YouthBuild teachers explicit recommendations on how to develop assignments and curriculum that help students work toward clearly specified academic benchmarks.

Postsecondary partners can provide students with access to tutoring resources and practice placement tests in order to prepare to take college entry tests such as the COMPASS or Accuplacer, test out of developmental education, or test high enough to need only one developmental education course. In addition, partners can collaborate with YouthBuild programs to create dual-
enrollment agreements so that students are exposed to postsecondary coursework while enrolled in the YouthBuild program.

In this chapter, we provide resources to help you work with a postsecondary partner to increase academic rigor. We start by introducing curriculum alignment practices that have helped YouthBuild programs and their postsecondary partners establish common goals and definitions of postsecondary readiness to plan for how to help students reach these benchmarks. Next, we discuss dual-enrollment as a promising strategy for acclimating students to the demands of postsecondary coursework. Finally, we discuss the role of assessment in measuring student progress and how to use this information to increase the overall quality and relevance of academic support provided throughout the YouthBuild program.

Curriculum Alignment Practices

Improving academic rigor and aligning YouthBuild curricula with postsecondary experiences will prepare students for authentic college-level coursework and reduce their need for remediation. Studies suggest that secondary students’ likelihood of entering postsecondary education and completing postsecondary credentials increases after engaging in intensive curriculum and instruction during secondary education.

Curricular alignment typically involves YouthBuild staff and postsecondary partners working together to analyze YouthBuild curricula relative to postsecondary and remedial-level course requirements, assignments, and required content knowledge. This process helps YouthBuild instructors plan curriculum around needed requirements and provides students with the right level of support.

YouthBuild programs are not the sole beneficiaries of curricular alignment. Postsecondary instructors and staff benefit from fully understanding the YouthBuild approach. YouthBuild instructors and staff can help postsecondary instructors and staff deepen their understanding and awareness of youth development principles and teaching practices that engage, inspire, and support first-generation, low-income students. These practices create authentic and caring classroom environments where mini-communities of adults and young people commit to each other’s well-being.

A great way to begin the curricular alignment process is to build a “postsecondary success committee” consisting of YouthBuild and postsecondary instructors and instructional deans. Once established, the group can meet and develop clear postsecondary readiness goals and think of concrete ways that YouthBuild can help students work toward these goals. For example, Portland YouthBuilders, through the advocacy of Portland Community College’s president, was able to convene academic deans, college and remedial level math instructors and conduct day-long retreats and follow-up meetings. In these meetings, they discuss a vision for college readiness and
brainstorm curricular pathways and instructional strategies. You can read about their process in detail in the next case study.

The following sections, Tips for Building a Postsecondary Success Committee and Strategies for Working with Postsecondary Staff to Align Curriculum offer tips and practices based on the successes of Portland YouthBuilders and other YouthBuild programs.

You can find detailed tips, sample agendas, and other resources to support your academic alignment efforts in the Academic Alignment Mini-Toolkit (http://tinyurl.com/Align767).

Tips for Building a Postsecondary Success Committee

Building a postsecondary success committee consisting of YouthBuild staff and educators, postsecondary instructors, and administrators is a promising way to engage in honest conversations about how well YouthBuild students are prepared.

When convening a postsecondary success committee, make sure to identify the right postsecondary instructors to be a part of your alignment team. Participating postsecondary instructors should demonstrate commitment to student success and use student-centered instructional techniques. Ask departmental deans or other high-level administrators to help you engage the right instructors.

During your alignment process, also make sure that you engage developmental English and Math instructors as well as college-level instructors. One of the goals of your alignment efforts is to provide students with the support needed to test out of developmental education. For students to master developmental education requirements, they should practice engaging in work required in college-level English and math courses.

Strategies to Align Curriculum

Once your success committee is in place, work with your partner to facilitate meetings and/or retreats with postsecondary and YouthBuild instructors. These meetings will provide space in which you can work together to define common goals, clarify desired student outcomes, and develop concrete strategies to align YouthBuild curriculum with postsecondary experiences.

Tips for Facilitating Successful Postsecondary Alignment Meetings in the Academic Alignment Mini Toolkit recommends activities when convening YouthBuild and PSE staff or faculty. These tips will make your alignment conversations more productive. The toolkit also offers a Sample Alignment Meeting Agenda that you can modify as you facilitate these meetings.

After your initial meeting, the postsecondary success committee may wish to review progress and challenges in the curriculum alignment process, meet regularly to discuss how things are going, and make suggestions for improvement. Staff at Portland YouthBuilders meet with Portland Community College instructors and deans three times a year to discuss progress, strategies, and challenges.

“Student success is not a matter of exclusive classroom practice. It’s a complete team approach. Everyone in the community college and YouthBuild program should be working toward the complete success of students.”

– Mike Snider, Columbus State Community College Interim Provost.
CASE STUDY

Working with Postsecondary Partners to Align Curriculum with Postsecondary Expectations

Portland YouthBuilders collaborates with leaders and faculty within Portland Community College (PCC) to ensure that their courses and teaching methods promote students’ seamless transition into colleges, apprenticeships, and vocational or technical programs. As the result of this work, Portland YouthBuild instructors cultivated an intimate understanding of developmental and college-level coursework requirements (including content knowledge and soft skills) and have elevated the academic rigor of their courses.

Portland YouthBuilders kicked off their curriculum alignment efforts through a retreat with Portland Community College English and math faculty and the dean of academic instruction. During this retreat, PCC and Portland YouthBuilders instructors and administrators first identified specific academic and soft skills needed for postsecondary success. Once they established the vision of postsecondary readiness, instructors from both institutions convened into smaller groups, according to their respective disciplines, to discuss specific course requirements. During these conversations, PCC instructors shared their expectations of students in the areas of content-related academic skills, study skills, and non-cognitive skills. As a larger group, PCC and Portland YouthBuilders staff then engaged in an honest conversation regarding how well Portland YouthBuilders students were meeting these requirements. The conversation was informed by careful evaluation of various data points including former Portland YouthBuilders students’ PSE grades, samples of student work, developmental courses taken, and overall retention rates. Furthermore, they asked Portland YouthBuilders alumni currently enrolled in the college about the areas in which alumni felt they needed the most support.

The Portland YouthBuilders and PCC postsecondary success committee meets three times a year to continuously review and improve Portland YouthBuilders curricula in ways that support students’ transition into the community college. Since their initial meeting with the postsecondary success committee several years ago, Portland YouthBuilders academic instruction has evolved substantially. For instance, the Portland YouthBuilders has dramatically improved its writing instruction by making explicit the processes of critical thinking and expository and research-based writing in all areas of the program (including the construction component). The program also instituted an Introduction to College Algebra course that is explicitly aligned with PCC’s developmental math courses and the COMPASS placement test. Further, Portland YouthBuilders designed college-like course syllabi for all academic courses that teach students habits of reading, understanding course expectations, and planning ahead for deadlines. Over the last several years, Portland YouthBuilders staff report increased rigor, focus, and cohesiveness in their program.
Dual-Enrollment Opportunities

Dual-enrollment opportunities represent promising ways to expose students to postsecondary course requirements and culture. These strategies also create early momentum for students to enter postsecondary education with credits toward graduation and gain academic confidence. Students engage in dual-enrollment courses when they take courses offered or credited by the postsecondary institution while enrolled in the YouthBuild program. Courses are considered “dual-credit” when a student receives simultaneous academic credit for the course from both the college and the YouthBuild program.

The Dual Enrollment Mini-Toolkit (http://tinyurl.com/Dual84) describes various ways that you can collaborate with a postsecondary partner to create dual enrollment opportunities for YouthBuild students. We also provide tip sheets identifying ways that you can support students once they are dual-enrolled.

Working with a postsecondary institution to provide dual-enrollment opportunities is a promising starting point for YouthBuild programs in the beginning stages of a postsecondary partnership. As your partnership evolves, you can incorporate additional dual-credit opportunities that allow students to earn credits and credentials leading toward promising careers.

Before pursuing dual-enrollment opportunities, you should research your state’s dual enrollment policies to determine the best methods to provide student access to these courses. For example, your state may have specific age requirements, tuition policies, funding opportunities, and instructor certification requirements.

In addition, consider how you and your postsecondary partner will deliver dual enrollment or dual-credit opportunities to students. For instance, YouthBuild instructors (certified as adjuncts) can develop these courses and teach them on the YouthBuild campus or they can be taught by a postsecondary instructor on the YouthBuild campus. When choosing a dual-enrollment delivery structure, determine where the course will be taught, who will teach the course, and whether the course will be dual-credit or non-credit. The Dual-Enrollment Delivery Structures tool in the Dual Enrollment Mini-Toolkit describes ways that you can deliver these courses. The tool also provides key questions that programs leads should address with postsecondary partners when considering these opportunities.

Programs interested in dual enrollment should also identify which types of courses best suit students’ needs: developmental English and/or math courses, vocational or certificate courses, college level courses, or college preparation courses. Be sure to assess students’ preferences and needs carefully when identifying appropriate coursework.

Lastly, we recommend that you and your partner plan appropriate student supports to ensure students’ success once enrolled in dual enrollment courses. Supports may include transportation to and from the postsecondary campus, grants and stipends to assist book and other classroom material purchases, tuition assistance, and tutoring.
CASE STUDY

YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School and Community College of Philadelphia’s Dual-Enrollment Efforts

In 2011, YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School (YPCS) launched a dual-enrollment program in collaboration with the Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) to offer students two credit-bearing, high-interest general studies courses: Spanish 101 and Art Computer Graphics. Engaging students in these courses provided an important opportunity to expose students to postsecondary coursework.

YPCS decided that these courses were promising due to their use of high engagement teaching methods (including classroom dialogue and project-based learning) and applicability to all majors. Students paid for these courses with their AmeriCorps education grant awards.

YPCS helped students succeed within these courses by providing support before and during students’ course enrollment. Before students officially begin the courses, YouthBuild Philadelphia instructors and staff provided a two-week orientation to articulate course expectations, emphasize postsecondary study habits, and promote postsecondary-success behaviors. During this time, students also visited and became familiar with CCP’s campus.

Once the course began, a YPCS staff member provided students with in-class support while also helping with financial aid and Fall registration. YBPCS also offers a one hour tutoring lab after every class to assist students with homework and course assignment, as well as school supplies and books.
Using Assessments to Improve Student Learning

Successful academic alignment work also requires strengthening assessment of student learning in ways that align with the demonstration of skills and knowledge necessary for postsecondary access and completion. The purposes and uses of assessment are three fold: 1) to create a more complete and nuanced understanding of student learning; 2) to inform instructional practices and other support strategies in a timely way; and 3) to ensure that assessment data can begin to demonstrate that more students are fully prepared for college-level work.

Assessments should reflect a comprehensive mix of basic skill assessments, classroom assessments, employability skills measures, student work portfolios, and college placement tests. In this guide, we do not go into detail about some of the more nuanced types and uses of assessments, as these efforts require substantial support and planning. However, we highlight two types of assessments that are critical for supporting students’ postsecondary readiness: rubrics and college placement exams.

Assessment Rubrics

A rubric is an assessment tool that lists the criteria instructors use to evaluate student work. These are powerful tools for assessing students’ academic progress toward postsecondary readiness. They clearly articulate the skills, knowledge, and levels of understanding that students need to engage successfully in postsecondary level work.

Rubrics typically contain detailed descriptions of components of quality assignments and characteristics that make up each level of quality (e.g. excellent, good, fair, and poor) for a particular assignment. For example, YouthBuild educators have worked with postsecondary instructors to develop a clear set of criteria of what constitutes a strong argumentative essay and built coursework around providing supports for students to develop these skills. Rubrics help students think, learn, and produce high quality postsecondary work. They also provide a description of the desirable characteristics to pursue and the pitfalls to avoid while emphasizing the goals and focus of each assignment.

When developing assessment rubrics, collaborate with your postsecondary partner to identify clear indicators of quality postsecondary work within the subject areas that you teach. See the Curriculum Alignment Practices section in this chapter to learn about engaging in these discussions with postsecondary instructors.

You also want to ensure that your rubrics are high quality and coupled with appropriate instructional support. There are many free resources available on the web to support your rubric development efforts, as well as tips to help you couple your rubrics with quality instruction. You can find links to free and high quality assessment rubric resources in the Free Assessment Rubric Resources (http://tinyurl.com/assess8) tool.

Have students actively use the rubrics to assess their work and the work of their peers. This process will help students internalize the criteria of quality academic work and develop a strong command of these criteria through practice over time.
Preparing Students for Postsecondary Placement Tests

Postsecondary placement exams are one of the most commonly-used assessments to gauge students’ postsecondary readiness. Postsecondary institutions use these tests to evaluate students’ academic skills and determine if students need developmental coursework before entering college level courses. These tests include Compass, Accuplacer, ACT, and SAT.

We describe common placement tests within the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement Tests</th>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accuplacer or COMPASS</td>
<td>Community and Technical Colleges</td>
<td>Postsecondary institutions typically use test scores to evaluate students reading, writing, and math skills and to determine whether or not developmental course work is required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>Four Year Institutions or Universities</td>
<td>The most widely used college admissions test. Viewed by university admissions officers to assess students qualification for admission (in addition to other application materials).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Four Year Institutions or Universities</td>
<td>Viewed by university admissions officers to assess students’ qualification for admission (in addition to other application materials).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most community colleges either use the Accuplacer or the Compass to assess students’ needs for developmental education coursework. Almost 60 percent of students enrolling in community colleges require at least some developmental coursework, thus lengthening the timeframe in which they can expect to graduate while reducing the likelihood that they will complete their postsecondary degrees or certifications. Ideally, YouthBuild programs should aim to have students bypass developmental coursework altogether or enter higher level developmental courses. When students place into developmental coursework, YouthBuild educators should partner with developmental education instructors to make teaching and learning approaches as strong as possible for participating students.

**Important:** Students’ preparation to test into college placement does not necessarily translate into college readiness. If staff teach and remediate toward college placement tests alone, programs will send graduates into postsecondary settings dramatically underprepared to succeed in college-level math courses. While YouthBuild can benefit from using online assessment programs intended to predict success on college placement tests, these tools must not constitute the primary means of assessing students’ math learning and understanding.

You can find resources to support student postsecondary placement test preparation in the **Postsecondary Placement Test Preparation Mini-Toolkit** (http://tinyurl.com/placetest8). Here we provide links to fee-based and free postsecondary placement test resources, tips for successfully preparing students for placement tests, as well as links that more authentically measure students’ postsecondary competencies.
YouthBuild McLean County Prepares Students for the COMPASS

YouthBuild McLean County has taken great strides to prepare students for the COMPASS test (required by its postsecondary partner, Heartland Community College) in addition to helping students develop broader competencies not addressed on the test. To prepare students specifically for the COMPASS test, the program implemented the A+dvancer college readiness program, a fee-based computer software program that targets specific math and English skills. The YouthBuild program also contracted a math tutor to work one-on-one with all students.

While tutoring and software help students develop key skills to be successful in the COMPASS, the YouthBuild program recognizes that students still need to develop foundational skills for college such as acceptable behavior, time management, completing college-level work, and maintaining high levels of attendance. To minimize these barriers for students, YouthBuild McLean County aligned its academic curriculum with postsecondary standards, creating a “college like” instructional culture integrated into the weekly program schedule.
Online Resources

Websites
States’ Dual Enrollment Policies: http://tinyurl.com/sdep4312

Tools
Academic Alignment Mini-Toolkit: http://tinyurl.com/Align767
Dual Enrollment Mini-Toolkit: http://tinyurl.com/Dual84
Postsecondary Placement Test Preparation Mini-Toolkit: http://tinyurl.com/placetest8
Free Assessment Rubric Resources: http://tinyurl.com/assess8
Creating Graduate Support Systems

YouthBuild graduates, as well as many low-income, first-generation college students across the country, often face tremendous challenges on their postsecondary journey. Although these challenges are complex and vary from student to student, education researchers and YouthBuild program staff observe common barriers. For example, students face family, work, and transportation challenges, making postsecondary engagement and attendance difficult. To make matters more challenging, students do not have access to financial resources to support rising tuition costs and other college expenses. In light of these challenges, students need support navigating PSE policies, procedures, and culture. Furthermore, students should have access to multifaceted and robust graduate supports that address their financial, academic, and emotional needs.

In this chapter, we highlight three elements necessary to provide students with effective graduate supports in collaboration with your postsecondary partner:

1. **Staffing your Graduate Support Efforts** to ensure that postsecondary and/or YouthBuild staff are available to provide consistent advising. Students need regular contact with staff to discuss personal and academic challenges, as well as plans for addressing these challenges.

2. **Providing Effective Case Management and Advising**. In this chapter, we offer recommendations for how to conduct successful case management meetings with postsecondary partners so that you can create appropriate game plans for helping students move forward on their postsecondary journey. In addition, we suggest ways to offer quality advising to graduates.

3. **Connecting Students with the Right Support Services**. Once you have the staffing and systems in place for consistent and high quality graduate support, you should implement specific strategies for helping students access the right resources as they experience personal and academic challenges.
Staffing your Graduate Support Efforts

Traditional college counseling is oftentimes not proactive or consistent enough to keep students on track. In these settings, students might meet with a counselor once or twice a semester to review their education plans without discussing concerns such as housing stability, financial troubles, and mental health. Over the course of the YouthBuild USA Postsecondary Education Initiative, YouthBuild programs and PSE partners learned that they must provide students with more consistent advising while addressing students’ emotional and financial needs. Ideally, a postsecondary partnership creates conditions in which your YouthBuild program and postsecondary partner combine resources, staff knowledge, and staff-to-student relationships to provide more comprehensive support.

Engaging Dedicated Postsecondary Liaisons

Engaging dedicated postsecondary liaisons is a critical part of creating a team-based approach to graduate support. This liaison can help both YouthBuild staff and graduates connect with relevant postsecondary departments, programs, and services. Additionally, this individual works with YouthBuild staff to identify student challenges and ensure that both the YouthBuild program and postsecondary partner offer appropriate assistance.

We list possible postsecondary staff who might serve as liaisons below. However, since some institutions have unique student-service offices, you may be able to identify other staff to serve in this capacity. Visit the Recommended Roles and Responsibility of a PSE Graduate Support Liaison (http://tinyurl.com/LAZ3543) for more tips and information to support these efforts.

**Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) staff:** TRIO programs are federally-funded programs designed to support low-income students as they complete credentials. Many TRIO programs, typically called “Student-Services” or “Educational Opportunity Programs,” offer academic tutoring, book grants, counseling, and 4-year college transfer supports. Programs also provide qualified students with personal counseling, career counseling, opportunities to engage in cultural events, housing assistance for former foster-care youth, and mentoring opportunities. Visit this link to find out if your local postsecondary institutions offer these types of programs.

You can read about YouthBuild McLean County’s success with working with TRIO programs in the next case study.

**Academic counselors:** When combined with YouthBuild staff resources, postsecondary academic counseling is an effective method for providing quality advising and follow-up support. YouthBuild programs identified specific academic counselors to serve as primary advisors for YouthBuild students. These advisors meet with YouthBuild staff on a regular basis to share student progress and challenges.

**Special initiative staff:** Many postsecondary institutions participate in special initiatives to support under-resourced students. In many cases, staff from these initiatives can serve as highly effective liaisons. For example, YouthBuild Brockton engaged Amanda Huggon-Mauretti at Massasoit Community College (MCC). Huggon-Mauretti is responsible for coordinating the college’s outreach efforts to secondary students. She is a natural fit as a liaison for YouthBuild Brockton because her work at MCC includes providing college-orientation workshops, bridge programs, and graduate advising to low-income students.

Once you identify a dedicated liaison or liaisons, you should meet with them— in addition to other postsecondary administrators and staff— to clarify roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, you should outline specific commitments from both your YouthBuild program and the postsecondary
Co-locating YouthBuild Staff on the Postsecondary Campus

Co-locating YouthBuild staff on the postsecondary campus improves graduate advising and increases YouthBuild staff’s collaboration with postsecondary student support staff. For example, Columbus State Community College (CSCC) and YouthBuild Columbus established an onsite YouthBuild office at CSCC so that the graduate coordinator, Valarie Howard, can provide students with academic counseling, mentoring, and early intervention support.

Co-location of YouthBuild staff benefits YouthBuild programs, PSE partners, and students. The postsecondary institution benefits because YouthBuild staff are present to help students overcome academic and personal challenges. YouthBuild staff benefit from meeting with students in private and convenient areas on the campus. Students benefit because they can meet YouthBuild staff between classes without leaving campus.

Be sure to incorporate co-location provisions into your MOU agreement. This formalizes a commitment for YouthBuild graduates to receive on-going support services from staff on both sides of the partnership.

Empowering Students to Use PSE Resources: Many YouthBuild programs do not have the full capacity or resources to offer consistent proactive graduate support. Consequently, it is essential that YouthBuild programs help students develop the knowledge and skills necessary to advocate for themselves and take advantage of existing postsecondary resources. For example, Operation Fresh Start (OFS) staff stress to students the importance of using Madison Area Technical College’s resources, which include academic counseling, tutoring, student clubs, and activities. OFS staff help students take the first steps towards benefiting from postsecondary resources by accompanying them to their first meetings with college advisors. During these initial visits, OFS staff coach students on asking questions and gathering the right information so students can take charge of their academic planning. Students also start to develop trusting relationships with PSE staff and create a support system once they enroll.
Providing Students with High Quality Graduate Supports through TRIO

Former and current YouthBuild McLean County students receive quality, personalized support through Heartland Community College’s “Project Rise.” This TRIO-funded program provides low-income, first-generation college students with personalized counseling and case management, a bridge program, learning workshops, academic tutoring, college visits, and opportunities to participate in cultural events. In many ways, Project Rise staff serve as YouthBuild McLean County’s “eyes on campus,” by providing McLean graduates with consistent check-in meetings and support while communicating issues to YouthBuild McLean staff. McLean graduates report that Project Rise introduced them to their new college environment while helping them overcome personal and academic challenges. According to YouthBuild McLean’s Director of Organizational Advancement, Alicia Lenard, “Project Rise is the college level YouthBuild. Students meet with and build relationships with Project Rise staff during the bridge program before enrolling at Heartland Community College. Knowing someone in the new college environment helps students develop the courage to succeed.”

“Project Rise is the College-Level YouthBuild.”
- Alicia Lenard
Providing Effective Advising and Case Management for Graduates

Students face the greatest challenges and need the most support during their first year of postsecondary education. Therefore, YouthBuild programs and secondary partners should regularly meet with graduates to discuss their progress and identify current and potential barriers.

In addition to meeting with students, YouthBuild programs and postsecondary partners should collaborate to create a “game plan” for guiding students’ progress, particularly for those struggling academically, financially, and emotionally. Case management meetings between postsecondary and YouthBuild staff serve as effective tools for creating these game plans.

In this section, we highlight effective practices for providing graduates with follow-up support and engaging in case management meetings with postsecondary partners.

Effective Graduate Support Practices

YouthBuild programs often have many questions regarding graduate support. How often should staff meet with students? What should staff and students discuss during check-ins? How can YouthBuild programs effectively maintain contact with YouthBuild graduates? The answers to these questions depend on the resources and time program staff have available to check-in with students, the capacity of postsecondary partners to provide graduate support, and graduates’ needs. However, YouthBuild programs have worked with their partners to develop general parameters that promote effective student support.

**Frequency of check-in meetings:** During students’ first year of PSE enrollment, PSE programs and their partners have found that checking in with students once a week or more is the best bet for ensuring student success. Once students are enrolled in postsecondary education for a year, you may consider checking in monthly or bi-monthly. Students who are struggling academically may need more frequent check-ins. You should collaborate with students and your postsecondary partner to collectively determine the right balance of how often students check in with staff.

Face-to-face check-in meetings are not always necessary or feasible. YouthBuild staff have found texting, phone calls, Facebook, and Twitter as effective communication tools to help students stay on the right track.

**Keeping in touch with graduates:** It is critical to maintain up-to-date graduate contact information to succeed with regular check-in meetings. An extremely important part of maintaining an effective graduate support system is keeping updated details for students’ email addresses, Facebook accounts, and telephone numbers. During your check-ins with students, always ask if their contact information is up to date. [4 Ways to Stay in Touch with YouthBuild Graduates](http://tinyurl.com/4waysgrad) offers specific recommendations for maintaining effective contact with graduates.

**Focus of check-in sessions:** The focus of your check-in sessions should largely depend on your students’ individual needs. However, it’s useful to refer to a checklist of topics to guide your conversations and assess students’ overall progress. YouthBuild programs often use check-ins to discuss students’ upcoming and past assignments, progress on course enrollment and financial aid applications, current obstacles or challenges, and an action plan with next steps. You can find a checklist of topics in the [Student Check-in Template](http://tinyurl.com/weeklygrad). This template can also help you maintain records of your conversations with students so you can provide the right follow-up, track student progress and data, and ensure contact information is up-to-date.
Running Case Management Meetings

Case management meetings allow YouthBuild and postsecondary staff to regularly discuss student progress, challenges, and ways that you collectively support students moving forward. In this section, we offer resources to support your case management efforts.

In the best-functioning partnerships, case management teams meet approximately twice per month (or more if time and capacity allows). These meetings typically involve YouthBuild student support staff (e.g. case managers, graduate coordinators, and counselors) and postsecondary student support staff (e.g. academic advisors, counselors, and TRIO staff). Whenever possible, postsecondary leadership (e.g. provosts and academic deans) and YouthBuild directors should also participate in these case management teams.

For case management meetings to be truly effective, YouthBuild transition coordinators and counselors should establish meaningful relationships with students during their secondary school experience. YouthBuild staff must deeply know students and all of the personal, family, medical, financial, social and legal issues that could influence their transition into postsecondary education. College counselors ought to be aware of students’ navigational needs such as understanding financial aid; enrolling in courses; responding to drop-add dates; selecting majors, degree, or credential programs; and finding the right instructors. As partnerships expand and improve, community college and YouthBuild counselors can share more insights across their roles to increase the quality of students’ social and emotional supports and academic advising.

The overall goals and partnership roles and responsibilities involved with running effective case management meetings are described in detail in New York City Partnership for College Access and Success in the Case Management Mini Toolkit (http://tinyurl.com/caseman4). Some of these goals include expanding the network of resources that benefit students, bridging the cultures of postsecondary institutions and community-based organizations, and finding ways to build strong, long-lasting relationships with students.

The use of student data is essential to productive case management meetings. Effective meetings typically involve using protocols that outline detailed information about individual students including their grades, majors, family situations, and employment statuses. The Youth Development Institute developed a Sample Student Progress Report with some of these key data indicators. You can locate this report in the Case Management Mini Toolkit. In this toolkit, you will also find a Case Management Protocol to help guide your conversations during these case management meetings. You can learn more about collecting useful student data in Chapter 7 of Creating Postsecondary Partnerships that Work.
CASE STUDY

Running Effective Case Management Meetings: Cypress Hill Local Development Corporation and City Tech

Staff from Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, a community-based organization serving low-income students, and New York City College of Technology (City Tech) meet each month to discuss Cypress Hills alumni’s progress as City Tech students. Staff from the college – including the college’s provost, the dean of curriculum and instruction, and academic advisors and Cypress Hills’ counselors and director attend these meetings. With the Youth Development Institute facilitating, the partners review quantitative and qualitative data about student progress and their general life circumstances (such as their employment and housing status). These discussions lead to a deeper understanding of each student than would be possible if each partner acted without the insights of the other. Discussions of individual students yield guidance on such topics as: how to help those who are struggling academically; what courses students need to take to pursue a major of choice and minimize the waste of financial aid; appropriate internships and employment options; and specific referrals responding to a range of students’ social, health, and financial needs. Participating team members decide on follow-up and next steps through these meetings.

These discussions lead to a deeper understanding of each student.

You can learn more about Cypress Hills and City Tech’s efforts in “The Best of Both Worlds: Lessons from a Community College-Community Organization Collaboration to Increase Student Success.”
Connecting Students with the Right Support Services

In addition to creating effective graduate support and case management structures, your YouthBuild program should implement effective strategies to support students’ connection with available services. These strategies should help students benefit from a range of services and programs so that they overcome significant academic and personal barriers.

- **Increasing students’ institutional engagement**: YouthBuild programs and postsecondary partners can help students integrate themselves into the PSE environment by facilitating on-campus mentoring, peer-to-peer learning communities, enrichment opportunities, and on-campus Work-Study opportunities.

- **Providing enriched academic opportunities**: Academic support is critical for increasing students' likelihood of academic success. Academic supports can include tutoring, modified supplemental instruction, and strategic course planning.

- **Addressing student’s personal needs**: Challenges outside of school can affect students while they are in school. For this reason, YouthBuild programs and postsecondary partners should work with students to address financial, family, and emotional barriers that can interfere with their progress. This support involves careful financial planning, financial aid and scholarship assistance, child-care support, housing support, and referrals to mental health services.

**Online Graduate Support Resources** (http://tinyurl.com/gradsupre) provides links to free resources to help you increase students’ institutional engagement, provide academic enrichment opportunities, and address students’ personal needs.

You can ensure that YouthBuild graduates receive critical academic and personal supports at virtually no cost to the YouthBuild program by using existing postsecondary student support services. Through discussions with postsecondary staff and faculty, YouthBuild programs have identified and collaborated with appropriate postsecondary support offices to help students maximize the benefits offered through these programs. For example, former and current YouthBuild McLean students receive high quality, personalized support through Heartland Community College’s TRIO support service, “Project Rise”. Through Project Rise, current and former YouthBuild McLean students access the following opportunities: personalized counseling and case management, enrichment opportunities, academic tutoring, college visits, and opportunities to participate in cultural events. YouthBuild McLean graduates report that Project Rise supports have been extremely helpful in helping them acclimate to their new postsecondary environment while helping them overcome both personal and academic challenges.

**Increasing Students’ Institutional Engagement**

Students who are engaged and involved on the postsecondary campus are more likely to persist than students who are less engaged. There are many ways that you and your postsecondary partners can work together to increase students’ involvement on campus.

**Peer-to-Peer Communities**: You and your partner can provide funding, recognition, and support to establish and convene a YouthBuild alumni group on campus. This is a promising strategy for creating a strong support network for YouthBuild students. Students meet regularly to discuss personal and academic challenges, attend postsecondary skill-building workshops, and participate in fun, informal events. Some YouthBuild programs’ peer-to-peer efforts involve an “academic buddy system” where students enroll in the same classes and provide each other with encouragement and support. For example, YouthBuild Brockton students in the “Bridge Mix” program attend the same math and English courses where they support each other as peers and access specialized tutoring, career, and academic advising services. Furthermore, as a student-
driven “club,” the Bridge Mix program helps students develop important leadership skills as they facilitate and plan weekly meetings, organize fundraisers, and plan cultural events.

**On-Campus Activities:** On-campus activities encourage student involvement while offering students opportunities to learn important success strategies such as budgeting, tax, and financial aid planning. You and your partner can also offer workshops addressing students’ time management and study skills in addition to planning fun events such as movie showings, pizza parties, and networking opportunities. For example, Portland YouthBuilders implemented a weekly workshop series with titles such as Computer Basics, Financial Aid, MyPCC (Portland Community College’s intranet), Stress Management, and Personal Finance.

**Work Study Opportunities:** Connecting students to Work Study funds can be another effective strategy to help them move toward credential completion. A growing body of research shows that engaging in long work hours to support school costs and living expenses negatively impacts students’ postsecondary engagement and persistence. Work Study provides students with opportunities to work for a limited number of hours on (or near) the campus, sometimes in fields related to students’ career interests. This program can help students maintain engagement with the institution so that they can ultimately dedicate more time and attention to their academics. Operation Fresh Start (OFS) is working with its partner, Madison Area Technical College, to develop Work Study opportunities in which students serve as tutors to current OFS students. Other YouthBuild PSE programs are attempting to work with their postsecondary partners to create or reserve Work Study slots for YouthBuild graduates.
C H A P T E R  6

CASE STUDY

On Point: YouthBuild Columbus’ Peer Mentoring Effort

YouthBuild Columbus launched a peer-to-peer group called “On Point.” YouthBuild alumni enrolled at Columbus State Community College met regularly to discuss topics such as balancing life, work and college; overcoming the fear of success; and navigating social issues impacting their achievement. The group meets every other week while elected officers provide an organized leadership structure for the work. The group collectively decided to develop three subcommittees: 1) On Point “Street Team” designed to promote YouthBuild in the community by attending fairs, community events, festivals, etc. 2) On Point “Newsletter Team” responsible for communicating information about Peer-to-Peer on a monthly basis and 3) the On Point “Alumni Banquet Committee” whose role is to honor nominated YouthBuild students for their commitment and accomplishments. These subcommittees not only deepen students’ involvement on the postsecondary campus, but also offer students many opportunities to “give back” to their YouthBuild program and continue their legacy of leadership on the YouthBuild campus.

On Point deepens students’ involvement on the postsecondary campus.
Providing Academic Support

Many YouthBuild students continue to need additional academic support while enrolled in postsecondary institutions. This often proves true even for graduates coming from YouthBuild programs that dedicate significant time and resources toward academic preparation. Therefore, it is critical that YouthBuild programs and postsecondary partners provide additional academic assistance while students are enrolled in postsecondary education.

One way to support students academically is by connecting them with tutoring and/or supplemental instruction. Contact the staff at your postsecondary partner’s academic tutoring center; they should be willing to collaborate with your program to provide students with academic services. When advising graduates, YouthBuild staff should inform students of these services and the process for both scheduling tutoring appointments and taking advantage of available office hours.

If funds are available, you can also hire tutors to assist students with college coursework. Some programs have had success engaging qualified tutors as volunteers.

Students, particularly those struggling academically, are most successful when they take advantage of instructors’ office hours. When coaching students, also consider the value of reminding them about office hour etiquette such as taking notes during meetings, bringing an agenda with their questions and concerns, and turning off media devices.

Addressing Personal Barriers

Personal issues such as financial difficulties, family problems, mental health, and drug use can pose significant barriers to students’ postsecondary success. YouthBuild programs and postsecondary partners can help students navigate these barriers through consistent case management and collaboration. This requires much more than just providing students with the right opportunities. Providing authentic support should also empower students to use available resources and take charge of their education.

Financial Aid, Financial Planning, and Incentives: Many students drop out of their coursework before completing credentials due to financial difficulties. Therefore, YouthBuild programs and their partners should encourage students to apply for financial aid grants, scholarships, Work Study, and loans before critical deadlines.

Important: Students should submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid before critical deadlines to apply for federal and state financial aid opportunities. Applying for financial aid is sometimes a complex process. The free handbook for counselors on the Federal Student Aid website will help inform you so that you can better serve students.

Beyond helping students access financial aid, you can emphasize to students the importance of money management. Effective financial literacy programming can help students develop budgeting and money management skills so that they make the most out of their financial aid and employment income. You can access free budgeting tools and lesson plans to support students’ budgeting knowledge in Online Graduate Support Resources (http://tinyurl.com/onlinegrad88).

If funding is available, YouthBuild programs can provide scholarships and incentives to support students’ postsecondary attendance costs while motivating them to persist. You can award incentives and scholarships based on students’ completion of significant academic milestones (e.g., degree or developmental course completion), exemplary GPAs, and non-academic course behaviors such as checking in with graduate support coordinators and/or postsecondary advisors.
Several YouthBuild programs run robust incentive systems. For example, YouthBuild McLean County’s (YBMCC) incentives are based on students’ college academic performance and graduate-check-in attendance. Graduates receive a $25 Wal-Mart gift card for completing an initial PSE self-performance assessment and then receive $50 per month as long as they achieve a grade of C or higher in all courses. YBMCC has relied on the strength of its incentive program to increase student engagement and commitment. Since the onset of the program, students come to check-in meetings with little additional prompting. Students’ increased commitment has allowed YBMCC program staff to allocate less time towards tracking down out-of-touch students and more time providing students with direct service and support.

**Childcare and other Forms of Family Assistance:** Many YouthBuild students face the challenge of balancing postsecondary attendance with the need to support families, including young children.

Some postsecondary institutions offer useful family-support services. Check if your postsecondary partner offers affordable, onsite childcare and/or family student housing. In addition, TRIO-funded Educational Opportunity Programs (EOPs) often provide supports to low-income students with children, including book grants and food stipends.

YouthBuild programs and PSE partners should also consider connecting students to external agencies and programs. Many Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs provide low-income families with assistance to support students’ postsecondary attendance (such as childcare, book grants, and transportation assistance) as well as traditional food stamp and financial assistance. Single Stop is available at many community colleges across the country to link students to additional financial resources.

Your state’s Workforce Investment Agencies may also offer programs that support students’ postsecondary attendance.

**Mental Health and Drug Addiction Treatment:** As you and your postsecondary partner attempt to minimize students’ immediate, tangible barriers (e.g., finances, access to housing, and transportation) you may find that students also experience deep-rooted problems associated with living in poverty and, in some cases, engaging in negative and destructive friend and family relationships. Students’ mental health issues are also a concern in many postsecondary environments.

Some postsecondary institutions offer assistance to help students navigate deeply personal challenges that affect their academic success. For example, counselors from the Student Development Center at Madison Area College offer Operation Fresh Start graduates psychosocial support and refer them to external community agencies to address mental health and drug addiction issues. However, since not all postsecondary institutions provide these services, YouthBuild program staff (e.g., case managers) may need to link students to these opportunities. You can find websites to assist your efforts to link students to community mental health and drug treatment resources in Online Graduate Support Resources.

**Housing issues:** Housing issues can pose a huge barrier to student success. This is also one of the most difficult challenges that YouthBuild program staff and postsecondary partners attempt to address. However, there are ways that you can link students to appropriate support. In 2012, Jobs for the Future launched a webinar, Working with Youth Without Stable Housing: GED/High School Diploma and Beyond (http://tinyurl.com/housing8973), presented by Katherine Roubos and Patricia Julianelle, that addresses strategies for assisting homeless youth.
Undocumented Students: Many YouthBuild programs work with undocumented students who face unique challenges as they apply for postsecondary education and financial aid. The following resources will help both students and programs navigate common challenges. The Resource Guide for Undocumented Students is a great tool that contains a brief overview of current laws, tips and resources on how undocumented students can increase their chances to pursue higher education. This guide also contains list of scholarships opportunities. YouthBuild staff and postsecondary partners can also access a more detailed resource guide from College Board.
Online Resources

Websites and Publications

The Best of Both Worlds: Lessons from a Community College-Community Organization: http://tinyurl.com/bbwlcociss4556

Work Study: http://tinyurl.com/ws7722


Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: http://tinyurl.com/abouttanf

Single Stop: http://tinyurl.com/ss6754

Workforce Investment Agencies: http://tinyurl.com/mentips


Tools

YouthBuild Brockton and Massasoit Community College’s MOU: http://tinyurl.com/MOU8248

Recommended Roles and Responsibility of a PSE Graduate Support Liaison: http://tinyurl.com/LAZ3543

Case Management Mini-Toolkit: http://tinyurl.com/caseman4

4 Ways to Stay in Touch with YouthBuild Graduates: http://tinyurl.com/4waysgrad

Student Check-in Template: http://tinyurl.com/weeklygrad

Working With Youth Without Stable Housing: GED/High School Diploma and Beyond: http://tinyurl.com/housing8973

Online Graduate Support Resources: http://tinyurl.com/onlinegrad88
As the postsecondary access and completion landscape has grown in both the number of programs and the array of services offered, so too has the need for evaluating these programs, documenting their best practices, and infusing data analysis into strategic planning. Postsecondary access programs can no longer thrive with a myopic focus on final outcomes such as student enrollment and completion rates. While these measures are still central and critical, programs are expanding their data collection and analysis beyond enrollment and completion to include a more holistic and locally nuanced understanding of student success. Furthermore, programs are using data not just to document outcomes, but also to inform program planning. For these reasons, it is essential that any YouthBuild program looking to implement some or all of the design principles from YouthBuild USA’s Postsecondary Education Initiative model have a clear understanding of their postsecondary goals, indicators they will use to measure their progress, how they intend to track and collect this data, and how this information will be used to improve overall program quality.

In this chapter, we review the following framework for using data to inform and improve program practice and highlight key strategies for implementing this framework successfully:

- **Establishing Clear Outcomes**: Postsecondary enrollment and degree attainment are critical outcomes for student success. However, most YouthBuild programs are accountable to an array of other benchmarks due to the number and diversity of services they provide. Given these complexities, YouthBuild programs will need to combine existing college access designs and frameworks with their own accountability measures to develop an effective and locally contextualized postsecondary pathway. Postsecondary bridging opportunities and transition support models, while essential to any YouthBuild program’s college access and success work, can and should look very different based on local context and availability of existing resources.

- **Identifying Key Indicators**: Any successful postsecondary access and completion program is best understood as a continuum that involves multiple services and interventions that students engage in over time. Therefore, it is important to identify and track key indicators and use them as milestones toward reaching your designated outcomes. Key indicators include students’ financial aid application completion rates, college application status, COMPASS and/or Accuplacer test status and scores, and students’ participation in postsecondary preparation services such as college fairs, college tours, and workshops. Without these indicators, practitioners will not be able to identify specific causes of success.
and failure, to recognize their program’s strengths and weaknesses, or to implement the appropriate changes needed to improve practice.

- **Collecting and Managing Data:** In order to ensure that you capture and record indicators and outcomes accurately, your YouthBuild program must prioritize and commit to high quality data collection and management. Specifically, your data collection should be accurate, consistent, and timely. Additionally, your program should have the systems and staffing in place so that you are clear about staff’s data-collection responsibilities and how you will access and share the information collected.

- **Informing and Improving Practice:** Finally, it is important that you move beyond the typical practice of reporting data as a compliance measure and move toward analyzing data to improve the quality of your YouthBuild program. Furthermore, you can not only use data to inform and improve program practice, but also to build relationships with other stakeholders and make to cases for additional funding.

### Establishing Clear Outcomes

For most postsecondary access and success programs, defining final outcomes is not the challenge. As mentioned in the introduction, “college enrollment” and “college completion” are simple and straightforward measures. However, designing a highly effective program that achieves these outcomes while addressing and taking into account other accountability measures is not as simple.

A typical YouthBuild program offers a comprehensive array of services that includes leadership development, community service, job training, secondary credential attainment, case management, and advocacy, among others. Even with a high level of seamless program integration, local YouthBuild programs face the challenge of presenting these components as part of the same continuum rather than a disparate group of activities housed under the same roof. Therefore, prior to implementing any or all of the three main components of YouthBuild USA’s Postsecondary Education Initiative (enriched preparation, postsecondary bridging and transition support), programs must engage in a structured process of collecting and analyzing data to determine which results are related to which intervention strategies.

Pulling from a number of resources, including the Lumina Foundation’s *Results and Reflections: Making the Numbers Add Up* and the Kellogg Foundation’s *Logic Model Development Guide*, YouthBuild programs can establish a set of outcomes by defining their internal strengths and weaknesses, unmet needs in their community, the population they intend to serve, the specific services and strategies they intend to offer or adopt, and their indicators for success. The clearer the definitions and assessments, the more direct the outcomes and the pathways toward those outcomes will be.
Though your YouthBuild program may already have an idea about which strategies you’d like to implement and how you’d like to implement them, engaging in early data collection and analysis to improve program practice and outcomes is a must. Prior to redesigning any existing practice or implementing new ones, YouthBuild programs should engage in an organized data collection process both internally and externally. Internally, this is necessary to establish both a baseline for how the program is performing according to its current outcome measures and how your students are performing against college access and completion benchmarks. Externally, assessing existing partnerships, creating community maps to identify resources, and surveying local postsecondary institutions to identify additional resources and credentialing tracks will help you recognize available services and gaps in those services. This latter point is especially important since not all YouthBuild programs are currently equipped or will have the capacity to address all identified areas of need.

Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) charts (see table below) and logic models (see Chapter 1 for logic model templates and resources) are important tools as you define appropriate outcomes. They can also help you assess your program’s existing capacity to handle the proposed scope of work. Additionally, these tools will provide a frame of reference that your YouthBuild program staff and postsecondary partners can revisit and revise once you launch your efforts. Finally, a clear understanding of your program’s strengths and weaknesses and the landscape of relevant partners will allow your program to develop and adopt strategies around your own core competencies and organizational priorities while determining which external resources might best support your work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SWOT Analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths are positive assets within your organization. Examples include a respected board member, a talented group of volunteers, or ownership of a smart way of doing things, such as a proven organizing strategy.</td>
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</table>

**Identifying Key Indicators**

With the typical YouthBuild student enrolling with 6th and 7th grade math and reading levels, it is often the case that they are several years away from postsecondary readiness. As a result, even with clearly defined and measurable outcomes, programs may go several cycles before recognizing whether or not their services are actually working. In response to this challenge, college access programs are using research-based indicators or milestones as interim measures that communicate where students are on the postsecondary access and success pathway. The research base has expanded to create a useful base of knowledge for documenting the efficacy of a more granular subset of performance metrics to use as best practices.
Program Level Data

As part of YouthBuild USA’s PSE Initiative pilot, several key indicators were selected as interim measures to track the progress of both participating programs and the initiative as a whole. These indicators, designed to fit the YouthBuild context, identify areas both during the YouthBuild program and immediately after as graduates transition into postsecondary placements. The indicators, which can also be found in the PSE Data Guide (http://tinyurl.com/PSEdatagd) are detailed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree or Certificate Attainment (includes high school diploma and GED)</td>
<td>75% for all who have joined the program without a GED or Diploma at entry will attain a GED/HS Diploma.</td>
<td>Asked every quarter for students identified as Current or Active, Completer, Termination, Previous Completers. (Please note: students who had a diploma or certificate prior to entry will not be included in this metric).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and Math Level Improvement</td>
<td>60% of all students will achieve an education functioning level increase (approximately two levels) in math and reading.</td>
<td>Math and reading level data are collected at enrollment and exit. Scores at entry and exit are compared to determine if the student improved in math and reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Completion</td>
<td>100% students in the PSE Initiative will complete the FAFSA by completion of the program.</td>
<td>The FAFSA completion question is asked when a student completes the program. After the student is identified as a Previous Completer, the FAFSA completion question is asked during Quarter 2 and Quarter 4 follow-up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE Application Submission</td>
<td>100% of enrollees in the PSE Initiative will complete at least one postsecondary institution application.</td>
<td>The college application question is asked when a student completes the program. After the student is identified as a Previous Completer, the FAFSA completion question is asked during Quarter 2 and Quarter 4 follow-up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Acceptance Rate</td>
<td>At least 75% of students will be accepted into a college program by the point of program completion.</td>
<td>The question regarding postsecondary acceptance is asked of students who have either completed or terminated from the YouthBuild program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Placement in Postsecondary Education Institution</td>
<td>50% of students in the PSE Initiative will be placed in postsecondary education institution.</td>
<td>After a student has completed the YouthBuild program, staff will report whether a student is placed in postsecondary education. This question is asked of completers and previous completers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>At least 50% of students enrolled in a postsecondary institution will continue to be enrolled or have completed their postsecondary placement.</td>
<td>After a student completes the YouthBuild program and their placement is reported in WebSTA-Q, programs will be asked to report on the previous completers’ postsecondary placement every quarter until either credential is attained or the student dropouts of placement.</td>
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Several other college access and success organizations have published lists of performance metrics tailored to their own program designs. One particularly good and comprehensive example is a recent list published by the National College Access Network (NCAN). NCAN, a membership organization consisting of over 350 college access and success programs from across the country, utilized best practices from its member organizations to compile a set of Common Measures. These measures, mapped to the two main outcomes of college enrollment and completion, include not only the individual metrics, but also the potential sources of data as well their overall importance and priority. It is important to note, however, that unlike their Postsecondary Success Measures, which are applicable to all college-going students, NCAN’s Postsecondary Access Measures are designed with traditional secondary school students and settings in mind and therefore may have limited relevancy for YouthBuild programs and disconnected youth.

Individual Student Level Data

While the metrics listed above are clear indicators for measuring a program’s progress towards their college access and success outcomes, they are insufficient on their own for tracking and supporting individual student success. As a result, programs will need to track a different subset of data points regarding individual student level progress prior to reaching more final benchmarks like “GED or diploma attainment” and “postsecondary application submission.”

As we described in preceding sections and chapters, the process to determine these indicators should be a joint venture between your YouthBuild program and postsecondary partners. More specifically, the goal of this work is to build a locally contextualized postsecondary access and success pathway. You should work with your partner to explicitly define the knowledge and skills students will need when they transition from your YouthBuild program to a postsecondary institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Indicators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
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By utilizing resources like the Academic Alignment Mini-Toolkit (http://tinyurl.com/Align767). YouthBuild programs and their partners can begin co-constructing a list of student level interim measures that align and map specific college readiness skills to the activities that will improve those skills while students are still enrolled in YouthBuild.

Collecting and Managing Data

Almost every front-line program staff member in any youth-serving organization collects and accesses important information about their students and program. Directors, teachers, transition coordinators, construction trainers, and case managers all look at different types of data that reflects students’ progress toward specific goals. At any point during a program cycle, directors will be charting overall program outcomes, teachers reviewing academic progress and transition
coordinators tracking FAFSA completion. As a result, it is important that any successful data management strategy include three crucial activities: collection, entry and verification.

Collection
At a glance, the list of key indicators outlined in the “Postsecondary Education Initiative (PSE) Performance Measures” table can be overwhelming for the staff responsible for collecting the data. As a result, it is important for the entire program to plan for who collects the data and clearly define what is collected and when. In the YouthBuild context, this means understanding which pieces of information are available at what times during the year and which data points are required for different types of students (i.e. completers, previous completers, terminators, etc.).

In addition to providing the full list of data points being collected by sites participating in YouthBuild USA’s PSE Initiative, the following graphic, included in the PSE Data Guide created by YouthBuild USA’s Data Services Team, provides a visual representation of what YouthBuild programs are required to report, for whom, and during what quarters. Using this timeline can ease the burden of data collection, particularly during quarters where additional data is necessary.

Entry: Since WebSTA-Q data reporting happens only quarterly, every YouthBuild program should have another method or system for organizing and storing their data locally. Though professional data management systems like ETO, Salesforce and Education Northwest come with pre-packaged benefits like built-in data analysis and the ability to synchronize a comprehensive list of data points across multiple reporting systems, YouthBuild programs may find the costs associated with using these programs prohibitive. While less sophisticated, smaller YouthBuild programs may find a less costly alternative in utilizing a well-developed Excel spreadsheet with the proper organizational support around data collection and management.

Verification: Checking data for accuracy should be done consistently when the data is collected, when the data is entered AND when the data is ready to be submitted. Omitting any of these steps can lead to inaccurate and/or incomplete data sets. This is especially important since migrating data from one reporting platform requires accuracy and precision.

Additionally, some combination of Executive and Program Directors and front-line staff should be directly involved in the data verification process prior to any final submissions. Although many programs will have designated staff members for data entry, these staff members may not be close enough to students and identify any obvious errors and irregularities.
CASE STUDY

YouthBuild Brockton and Portland YouthBuilders' Data Collection Efforts

Charged with developing a system to track students and graduates from postsecondary access through to completion, Ashley Wood, an AmeriCorps VISTA at YouthBuild Brockton, developed a **Student PSE Transition Tracking Template** (http://tinyurl.com/PSE8782) to accurately record and organize data regarding postsecondary success. By working closely with YouthBuild Brockton’s executive director, Wood was able to execute a **Data Sharing Agreement** (http://tinyurl.com/ybdatashare) with the program’s postsecondary partners, Massasoit Community College (MCC) and Massasoit’s dean of academic support and assessment. The agreement helped to finalize protocols that allowed for timely access to critical student information without violating the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**. To track academic progress, YouthBuild Brockton also set up a **YouthBuild Postsecondary Education Weekly Check-In Report Template** (http://tinyurl.com/weeklygrad) and worked with MCC to provide students with real-time supports, interventions, and progress reports.

Portland YouthBuilders executed a similarly structured data sharing agreement with their postsecondary partner, Portland Community College (PCC). They utilized the data and existing early warning systems to consistently track student progress and make informed and targeted advising decisions. All Portland YouthBuilders students sign a student consent form as part of their program application to address any privacy issues related to FERPA. The consent form, co-constructed with PCC, is designed to release important student information to Portland YouthBuilders staff, including grades, transcripts, and outstanding bills to allow for immediate transition and case management support. Staff from the YouthBuild program and the community college meet regularly to discuss individual student progress in addition to their overall program strategy while reviewing this data.
Informing and Improving Practice

As described in preceding sections, data can and should be used to drive practice and improve outcomes. Your YouthBuild program should commit to a system that makes this data accessible to all staff (not just those responsible for collecting and reporting data), reviews data across major program components on a regular basis, and allows staff to make recommendations based on what they review. By committing to such a structure, you will not only promote a culture of effective data use, but will also encourage communication between internal and external staff, connect departments, break down silos, and empower staff and students to take ownership of the college access and completion pathway that they are co-creating.

Mid-Year Adjustments

When used effectively, data can be used to inform and improve program practice in real time. Although figures on final outcomes will not be available until the end of the program year, your performance benchmarks measuring progress toward those outcomes will be accessible. By consistently asking questions about progress, reviewing interim data regularly, and seeking feedback from students and staff, YouthBuild programs can single out a specific measure and decide whether corrections are necessary. Similar to how teachers and career developers approach ongoing academic and skills assessments, YouthBuild programs can use metrics like FAFSA completion and PSE application submission rates or can chart progress toward other metrics like literacy and numeracy gains to identify gaps and address them accordingly.
As a site participating in the initial cohort of YouthBuild USA’s Postsecondary Education Initiative, Portland YouthBuilders had to simultaneously develop strategies while gauging the overall effectiveness of these strategies. Fortunately, with an experienced and committed leadership team and a strong postsecondary partnership in place, Portland YouthBuilders was well-positioned to achieve the early goals of the initiative. The staff at Portland YouthBuilders, rather than feeling content with existing levels of success achieved during earlier cycles, committed to significant improvements. These staff reviewed a combination of quantitative data (i.e. student postsecondary enrollment rates, average postsecondary G.P.A.’s, and course drop rates) and qualitative data (i.e. student and staff feedback) and decided that the program needed a major redesign to more effectively and appropriately prepare students for postsecondary success. To facilitate this significant shift in program design, Portland YouthBuilders appointed a steering committee to oversee the process and ensure that staff members from all departments, not just education, were included. With the steering committee’s guidance, Portland YouthBuilders revised their organizational vision to include a more central focus on postsecondary education and training, reexamined every existing component of their programming, and reevaluated their identity and purpose as a youth-serving non-profit.
Online Resources

Websites and Publications

Results and Reflections: Making the Numbers Add Up: http://tinyurl.com/rrmna546
Logic Model Development Guide: http://tinyurl.com/lmdq5247
National College Access Network: http://tinyurl.com/ncan4562
Common Measures: http://tinyurl.com/cm54321654
Postsecondary Success Measures: http://tinyurl.com/psm67541
Postsecondary Access Measures: http://tinyurl.com/pam6314

Tools

YouthBuild Postsecondary Education Weekly Check-In Report Template: http://tinyurl.com/weeklygrad
Sample Student Data-Sharing Consent Form: http://tinyurl.com/dataconsent
Data Sharing Agreement Sample: http://tinyurl.com/ybdatashare