Chapter 2: Selecting Construction Projects and Partners

Overview

The type of construction project a YouthBuild program selects can have a significant influence on the type and level of training that the youth will receive in the program. Some projects offer a great variety of training opportunities. Others offer too much repetition of the same activity over and over again with little room for varied experiences.

Selecting a partner can also have an impact on the program. Integrating construction training and production is difficult under the best circumstances. The choice in partners can make the difference in whether a project is a viable training project or not. Some partners will be very committed to the goals of the YouthBuild program and will be more flexible with the program to provide the best possible training opportunity for the young people. Others, while very experienced in housing production, may not be committed to the mission of YouthBuild and may be at odds with the program for the duration of the project.

It is helpful to define the criteria for selecting a project in advance, so that potential projects can be evaluated based on the needs of the program, and so that potential partners can understand those needs before the partnership is finalized. It is important to look for projects and partners that are able to meet the criteria.

Which Comes First: The Project or The Partner?

If the YouthBuild program has already been awarded a DOL grant, it should reference the Work Site Description form (ETA-9143) it submitted to DOL to ensure that it is still consistent with the scope of work as anticipated by the partner. If the YouthBuild program is in the process of applying for a DOL grant, then it has the opportunity to select a partner and negotiate the scope of work.

All work sites must be approved by both the regional Federal Project Officer and the national DOL YouthBuild program office before any grant funds can be spent on the work site and before it can be used for construction training. Training youth on an unapproved work site may result in unallowable costs and grant funds that must be paid back to the government during grant closeout. If the work site originally approved with the YouthBuild DOL grant becomes unavailable, the YouthBuild program must locate an alternate work site and must submit a new Work Site Description form (ETA-9143) for approval. The ETA-9143 Work Site Description Form is included in Appendix B.

Some programs have a strong housing partner and work with that partner to identify a project that meets the criteria for a good YouthBuild construction site. Other programs that do not already have an established housing partner may identify a project first and then look for a developer or general contractor to partner with. Some programs talk simultaneously with several potential partners, considering various projects to determine which will best suit the training needs of the program. Then they negotiate their role on the job.
All of these methods can work. The key to successful training is an appropriate project and an effective partnership. All options must be considered before making a decision that will ultimately shape the success of the program. A list of the primary considerations in selecting a housing project and partner, Selecting a Construction Project Checklist is available in Appendix B.

**Selecting a Construction Project: Qualifications, Criteria and Types of Projects**

The following considerations should help the program select projects that make the best training experience for young people:

**DOL Qualifying Work Sites**

DOL has outlined several criteria that determine whether a work site qualifies as appropriate for construction skills training at a YouthBuild program. Complete guidelines are contained in the TEGL_06-15 Qualifying Work Sites and Construction Projects for YouthBuild Grantees in Appendix B.

1. **Low-income**

   The work site must meet the threshold for low-income, as defined by the United States Housing Act of 1937. For this reason, all properties rehabilitated or constructed using DOL YouthBuild grant funds require a restrictive covenant clause that ensures that for a period of at least five years, all residential housing that is constructed or rehabilitated with DOL YouthBuild funds will be rented or sold to low-income or homeless individuals or families. For further information on the restrictive covenant requirements, see 20 CFR 688.730.

2. **Substantial Hands-on Experience**

   DOL YouthBuild work sites must provide the opportunity for participants to have hands-on training and experience of both breadth and depth in order to qualify. Any work site that does not include exposure to multiple modules and skill areas will not be considered a qualifying work site.

   Both rehabilitation and new construction can offer the substantial hands-on experience that is required. However, depending upon the scope of work set aside for YouthBuild participants, there is a chance that neither type of experience will qualify. For example, painting alone or painting in addition to landscaping would not qualify as substantial hands-on experience.

   The term rehabilitation is very broad by definition. Examples of substantial rehabilitation might include demolishing existing walls and rebuilding new ones with framing and drywall, completely gutting a kitchen or bathroom and installing new flooring, cabinetry, upgraded plumbing, upgraded electrical, and installation of new appliances to increase energy and water efficiency. Smaller scopes of work in rehabilitation may not include enough variety to meet DOL’s criteria for providing substantial hands-on experience, or may not satisfy the number of modules and skill areas that will provide the necessary scope of hands-on experience to enable a YouthBuild participant to earn an industry-recognized construction credential.
While it may be allowable for participants to do general rehabilitation work, such as deconstruction, light energy- and water-efficiency upgrades, landscaping, fence building, or smaller home repairs, none of these activities qualifies without also including experience in two or more modules within two or more skill areas.

3. **Age Restricted Activities**

There are limitations on the activities in which youth who are under 18 years old are allowed to engage. Roofing, demolition and the use of certain power-driven machines and saws, for example, are not allowable activities for youth younger than eighteen based on the Fair Labor Standards Act (see [http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2004-113/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2004-113/)).

**Scope of Work**

YouthBuild programs have consistently found that the ideal project is one in which the participants can move through all aspects of the construction work during their year of training. For example, the project should include carpentry, sheet rocking, painting, finish work, exterior work, and landscaping, so that participants will receive the widest possible range of skills. Projects that are too large tend to have participants doing the same skill over and over again, e.g. all painting or all framing for most of the year. The program director must consider whether the project will teach those skills which are most transferable to construction jobs available in the community.

**Project Size**

All projects can provide hands-on work experiences, but some projects are too large or too small to be an ideal training project. As a rule of thumb, keep it small. At the same time, it is important to have enough work to keep the participants active throughout the year and provide the necessary scope of work to meet the DOL requirements. The groups should be divided in a way that allows all participants to have the opportunity to demonstrate what they are learning. For example, a program with 30 participants might separate them into two crews of 15 participants, working alternating weeks on the work site with the appropriate staff ratio for each crew.

There are two key issues to consider in evaluating the size of a project:

1. **Can the participants start and complete this project during their year of training?** An ideal project allows the participants to complete the project within one program cycle, which is usually 6-12 months. This project may be the first time a participant has actually started and completed anything. If the community has the type of projects that can be done within a year, the participants will have the opportunity to see the results of their work.

2. **Can the site accommodate the appropriate number of participants?** On a site that is too small, participants could get in each other’s way, which could create safety hazards. A site that is too small may also not have enough work to provide the comprehensive training required by DOL. It is critical that all the participants on the site stay busy and engaged at all times. Also, it must be kept in mind that it is much more difficult to manage several small, scattered sites than one larger project that allows participants to all work at the same work site or on several projects in the same vicinity.
Location
There are many issues to consider regarding the location of the project:

- Is the work site in an area that is accessible by public transportation, or will the program provide transportation for the participants?
- The location of the work site may influence the structuring of alternating groups of participants between the work site and the classroom.
- Is the work site in an area that is relatively safe for participants from different parts of the community?
- Will the participants need access to food for lunch?
- Are toilets accessible?
- How accessible is the program site to the work site? For example, how will participants get access to the counseling staff or to the classroom, if needed?
- Where will materials and equipment be stored?

Impact, Visibility, and Neighborhood Support
How will this renovation impact the immediate neighborhood? How much support will be generated from the surrounding neighborhood? Is there support both in terms of moral support and a willingness to keep an eye on the site when YouthBuild staff are not around? How visible and important is this project to the broader community? One way to increase the visibility and neighborhood support of the project is to utilize signage. Signs that display the names of community partners will help inform residents about the purpose of the project and its positive impact on the community and the youth involved.

Availability
Will the project be ready and available when YouthBuild plans to start the program? The DOL YouthBuild program requires YouthBuild organizations to have an identified construction work site—meaning an agreement with a development partner, documentation of site access, and financing—at the time of the YouthBuild application. This may be as long as three to four months before the grant award announcement and execution of the grant award, and several more months before the beginning of construction. Many programs find that holding a property or developer that long in advance is difficult and that the housing project in their application is no longer available when it is time for construction to begin. Finding and substituting another project is feasible but time consuming and can result in delays in the start of the overall program. Therefore, it is important to understand the time schedules involved and to be realistic in selecting a project that will be available on these schedules.

Keep in mind that despite best abilities, planned partnerships sometimes fall through, or the proposed work site loses funding. It is important to plan ahead for potential work site loss by having a second or even third alternative in mind, should the proposed work site fall through and/or not qualify to DOL YouthBuild standards.
Types of Projects

There are three major types of residential affordable housing construction projects that YouthBuild programs can undertake: new construction, substantial (gut) rehabilitation, and moderate rehabilitation. The chart on the following page compares the advantages and disadvantages of each of these types of projects.

Repairs and alterations do not generally qualify as a DOL YouthBuild work site because the participants are not gaining the required level of construction skills across multiple modules and skill areas. However, YouthBuild programs may find these small-scale projects useful as supplementary projects when the work on the site has slowed down due to subcontracting schedules, bad weather, or other delays. Often these are community service projects for other nonprofit organizations in the community on which youth can still practice basic construction skills. The importance of supplementary projects is discussed in Part II of the handbook.

Green Building

Green building is quickly becoming the new global standard for building design, construction and maintenance. Because developers of affordable housing have greater limitations on cost considerations, it is important to know that some green building practices may include somewhat higher upfront costs while others are just as economical, or even less expensive than conventional building.

Research studies on the costs and benefits of green affordable housing are very encouraging with regard to financial viability. Getting students and construction staff involved in researching greener options will help a YouthBuild program find affordable opportunities to build healthier, greener housing with lower operating costs for the occupants. Green building practices are always beneficial to the occupant and the environment, reduce utility bills, and oftentimes can result in tax incentives or rebates for the builder that make it even more than affordable in the long run.

The U.S. green building market grew from two percent in 2005 to 44 percent in 2012 according to research by McGraw-Hill Construction (World Green Building Trends, 2013). Research by Dodge Data & Analytics (DD&A) and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) reported in 2015 that over half (51 percent) of home builders expect that more than 60 percent of the homes that they build will be green by 2020, and over one-third (36 percent) of remodelers expect the same level of green in their projects (http://www.nahb.org/~media/Sites/NAHB/Research/Priorities/green-building-remodeling-development/Green-and-Healthier-Homes%202015.ashx).

Whether or not the YouthBuild program intentionally seeks partners and projects on green construction work sites, its staff should have a basic understanding of the main elements of green building and the main drivers of its demand during the process of partnership and project selection.

**Main elements Include:**
- Whole building as a system design process
- Location and community linkages
- Land stewardship, surface water management, landscaping
- Water efficiency
- Energy efficiency and renewable energy
- Materials and product selection
- Waste reduction and recycling
- Indoor air and environmental quality
- Building operations and maintenance

**Main benefits Include:**
- Lower utility bills/operating costs for occupants
- Healthier indoor environments for occupants
- Increased productivity for occupants (especially in offices and schools)
- Branding and public relations for builders
- Higher building values and occupancy rates for builders
- Significantly reduced environmental impacts such as lower carbon emissions

**Main drivers Include:**
- Client and market demand
- Increased water- and energy-efficiency building code standards
- Increased local, state, and national legislative regulations
- Social and environmental responsibility concerns
- Local and global competition
Weatherization

Weatherization activities are allowable for DOL YouthBuild programs, and are included in its definition of housing rehabilitation. Typical weatherization measures needed in substantial housing rehabilitation jobs include the replacement or installation of insulation, extensive air sealing, window and door replacement, and the replacement of electrical and mechanical systems and appliances.

Visit the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy website for more information on the definition and scope of weatherization work:

The term weatherization as defined by the industry is not limited to energy-efficiency upgrades, instead referencing a whole house systems approach to protecting a home or building from the elements, and thus in addition to improving energy efficiency includes increasing water efficiency, ensuring effective moisture control, improving indoor air quality, and ensuring combustion safety and carbon monoxide protection. A qualified energy auditor performs a series of systematic tests and thorough analysis and then uses those results to determine a prioritized list of weatherization measures needed for the home or building.

Less extensive retrofits that are more limited in scope may not require a full audit but instead a more informal housing assessment. Retrofits in this category may be limited to only energy and/or water efficiency upgrades such as showerhead and light bulb replacement, basic air sealing methods such as caulking and weather stripping, and other less intensive work.

Because weatherization work in housing rehabilitation can be more or less extensive depending on the funding source, time available, and assessed needs of the building, a DOL YouthBuild program must determine whether or not the weatherization work available to its participants will provide them with a variety of skills, knowledge, and abilities to meet the DOL requirements for depth and breadth of construction skills across at least two modules of construction. Since weatherization is a module in the most widely used construction credentialing curricula used by DOL YouthBuild grantees, and because most gut rehabilitation by nature, and in many cases as mandated by local code, must include the work of installing or replacing insulation, protecting the building from moisture and air infiltration, and installing energy- and water-efficient appliances, it is likely that the DOL threshold can be met.

However, a YouthBuild work site where participants are only installing new light bulbs, showerheads, and/or minimal air sealing will not qualify. In this case, the limited weatherization work would fall into the category of repairs and alterations, which can supplement a DOL work site but will not qualify as a sufficient level of work for a work site on its own.
Single Site vs. Scattered Sites

It is always easier for management, supervision and logistics to have all the participants working in close proximity to one another at any given time. Depending upon the housing stock in the community, the program may or may not be able to find one site that provides enough work to keep the crews working all year. Programs have tried to keep all the participants within one area through a variety of strategies:

- Some programs have been able to work on several single family homes on the same street or within the same vicinity
- Some programs have found buildings that contain two to four units of housing on which they can work simultaneously
- Some programs have taken on a few units within a larger residential construction project
- Some programs with multiple sites have all the participants work together on one site and then move to another site when the first site is completed

Some programs have not been able to find enough work in one location and are forced to have participants working in more than one location at a given time. If the program is faced with that situation, it is important to think through the following logistical considerations:

Selecting a Construction Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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</table>
| New Construction           | • Provides clean work with no environmental hazards  
|                            | • Assures no surprises behind walls, which can stall a project  
|                            | • Provides wide range of learning—all phases of construction can be taught  
|                            | • Provides experience with production, which may match employment opportunities in your area  
|                            | • Excellent vocational education tool and learning opportunity due to systematic steps, repetition, and straight-forward nature  
|                            | • Provides an opportunity to introduce and train participants in green building skills, knowledge, and abilities representing a high growth industry in America                                                                 | • Excavation and foundation must be done by others prior to participants coming onto site. Excavation and foundations cannot be done in winter in Northern climates.  
|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                           | • Until building envelope is up, participants can only work in good weather.  
<p>|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                           | • Availability and cost of sites in urban areas may not be as compelling and fundable as renovating existing housing stock.  |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th><strong>Advantages</strong></th>
<th><strong>Disadvantages</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substantial (gut) Rehabilitation</td>
<td>• Provides wide range of learning—all phases of construction can be taught</td>
<td>• Environmental hazards, such as lead paint and asbestos, must be dealt with prior to participants entering the site, or through specialized participant training</td>
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<td>• Provides an opportunity to introduce participants to weatherization and green building skills, knowledge, and abilities representing a high growth industry in America</td>
<td>• Interior demolition phase can be dangerous</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interior demolition/rubbish removal phase at start of project is excellent way to channel unskilled participant energy</td>
<td>• Hidden problems can create delays and involve extensive change orders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Provides excellent problem-solving experience</td>
<td>• Requires higher level of construction management skill to make adjustments for unexpected conditions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Can usually start participants immediately</td>
<td>• Range of work and skills necessary can be so diverse that it hinders vocational training possibilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Can usually work in all seasons</td>
<td>• May run into issues securing the required five-year restrictive covenant</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• Usually readily available at discount price</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate Rehabilitation</td>
<td>• Can achieve a finished product in a shorter time period</td>
<td>• Not all phases of construction can be taught</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Usually involves a safer site than gut rehabilitation</td>
<td>• Difficult to predict scope of work - often involves extensive change orders due to field conditions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• If functioning as developer, financing package may be easier to assemble</td>
<td>• May run into issues securing the required five-year restrictive covenant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides an opportunity to introduce participants to weatherization and green building skills, knowledge, and abilities representing a high growth industry in America</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repairs, Alterations and Specialty Projects</td>
<td>• May serve as good “back-up projects” during delays in major construction</td>
<td>• Not allowable as DOL YouthBuild work site project so can only be worked on as community service project, which limits use of grant funds that can be spent on the project to 15%</td>
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<td>• Skills learned can be useful for entrepreneurial training</td>
<td>• Higher level of problem-solving skills, requiring high trainer/participant ratio (1:2)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Projects can be finished quickly</td>
<td>• Tool and material needs may be unpredictable, requiring multiple trips to hardware store and suppliers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide useful “community service” for other non-profit organizations or low-income individuals or families</td>
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- How will the program ensure appropriate participant and staff supervision on each site?
- What kind of transportation is needed to allow the construction manager and others to move back and forth between sites?
- Does the program have enough equipment and tools to run multiple sites simultaneously?
- How will the program keep track of equipment and tools as they are moved from site to site?
Occupied Housing
YouthBuild programs do not always undertake construction in vacant buildings or on vacant land for their training projects. All other options must be very carefully considered before putting participants to work in occupied housing. Working in occupied housing opens the program to complaints and accusations of theft and damage to personal property. The risk and liability can be a serious challenge.

If the program does select a work site that is occupied, it will be noted on the required DOL Work Site Description form (ETA-9143) as will the need for relocation of occupants. In the event that relocation is necessary, the program will complete and submit the ETA-9143 Attachment 1B containing a narrative that identifies the person(s), the business, or others occupying the property on the date of submission of the YouthBuild application; the estimated cost of relocation; the funding source for relocation; and who will be providing the relocation assistance, along with the contact person’s name and phone number.

Home Ownership vs. Rental Housing
Housing projects for home ownership are often undertaken in small numbers. It is possible to construct a single house or several houses simultaneously. Many nonprofit community-based housing organizations that would be suitable partners for a YouthBuild program, including such organizations as Habitat for Humanity, frequently undertake small home ownership projects ranging from one to eight units. Home ownership projects are often appropriate in scope for YouthBuild, can be completed during the program cycle, and offer a diversity of construction tasks. However, single-family housing projects are often small, and it can be useful to have at least two houses to work on simultaneously. Existing housing stock in some areas includes three-unit multifamily buildings that can also provide home ownership and an opportunity to produce income for the program.

In general, rental housing projects must be larger to be economically feasible. Many rental housing projects for the homeless or for low-income tenants are dependent on financing from low-income housing tax credits or from special grants. These rental projects may take longer to organize.

Site Inspection
Before committing YouthBuild to work on a housing site, it is important to conduct an initial inspection to ensure that the site is appropriate for training young people. The site visit is essentially a field double-check by the construction staff of a housing site that has already been identified with the housing partner. It is important that the construction staff evaluate the site since they will be the ones responsible for training and production. What might look appropriate to the program director may present difficulties from a construction point of view. The site inspection will also help the program identify unique conditions or special problems that will need to be considered in planning the budget or the work schedule. This should include an assessment of types of hazards to which participants may be exposed.
Sample YouthBuild Housing Projects

YouthBuild programs have historically completed a variety of housing projects. On the following pages are some examples of the types of housing partners most often selected by YouthBuild programs as collaborators on the construction project.

YouthBuild Programs Develop, Build, and Rehab Housing

1. Prologue YouthBuild, Chicago, IL

The participants from Prologue YouthBuild undertook the task of transforming a nineteenth century 3-story brick building into a home for low-income veterans transitioning into the community.

The participants conducted extensive deconstruction on the structure and then installed a thermal barrier to the masonry building shell to increase energy efficiency and demonstrate building science principles. Participants then started on the interior of the structure where they observed and assisted a variety of professionals in updating the mechanical and electrical systems before going on to install new framing and flooring, with all new drywall to replace the original plaster.

This project included many aspects of renovation and new construction that were beneficial to the participants’ learning about construction in a turn-of-the-century home and how the occupants can benefit from the science and strategies of green building.

2. YouthBuild Austin, Austin TX

YouthBuild Austin, a program of American YouthWorks, is a proud supporter of Mobile Loaves & Fishes at Community First! Village. Community First! Village is a 27-acre master planned community that provides affordable, permanent housing and support for people who are disabled and chronically homeless in the area. Their value of empowering people into a lifestyle of service is what made this project a perfect fit for YouthBuild participants.

Volunteers assemble tiny "kit home" walls and roofs, and the participants are taught to install rigid insulation, metal siding, roofing, interior/exterior trim, and other items to make the homes ready for living. They also learn from journeyman electricians how to run wiring and hook up outlets and switches.

YouthBuild Austin has completed 24 tiny kit homes and 1 tiny custom home in the Community First! Village over the course of 18 months and will complete the final 9 units by the end of 2017.

3. LA CAUSA YouthBuild, East Los Angeles, CA

LA CAUSA YouthBuild teamed up with construction manager Walton Construction and a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) developer named East Los Angeles Community Corporation to build a 25-unit apartment complex from the ground up. Housing partnership agreements made by the general contractor and developer required all subcontractors to allow LA CAUSA YouthBuild participants to work alongside and be trained by their employees.
Due to the timing of the program year and project, trainees were able to learn plumbing, drywall, electrical and HVAC.

The partnership was a great success and led to two more new low-income housing projects, including a 54-unit apartment complex and 25 more units at the Whittier Place Apartment complex.

4. Project REBUILD, Canton, OH

Project REBUILD took over ownership from the city of a 3-story single-family historic home. The YouthBuild participants performed a full gut rehab on the home to restore it to a jewel of the neighborhood. The benefits of the rehab project are that the participants were able to see older building styles and compare them to the preplacement method of construction. Participants of Project REBUILD completed a 2-day green design charrette facilitated by YouthBuild USA to incorporate green building strategies and materials into the whole house. It was determined that the house would be built to qualify for LEED certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. The trainees then met with a LEED professional and through their knowledge and insight made critical changes to the house to better serve the occupant. They then completed the many phases of carpentry work on the project, including framing, drywall, paint, and trim.

National partnerships through YouthBuild USA with CertainTeed and Benjamin Moore have brought in-kind donations of green building materials and non-toxic paints to the project while cultivating volunteer relationships with employees.

As a result of the hands-on and classroom education and training in Green Building, the participants earned an industry-recognized credential in green building to enhance their construction career opportunities. The curriculum and exams they took to earn that credential make up the NCCER module titled “Your Role in the Green Environment.”

5. YouthBuild San Joaquin, Stockton, CA

YouthBuild San Joaquin has a strong partnership with the local Habitat for Humanity affiliate, and through the commitment and knowledge of Habitat staff and YouthBuild San Joaquin, the program is contributing to the building of a whole community of affordable green homes. The participants are introduced to a strategy that saves materials and energy through optimum value engineering while also using other techniques to build a safe, healthy, durable, and resource-efficient home.

San Joaquin YouthBuild has made a concerted effort to partner with the local unions to be able to have direct placement into the union for qualified graduates.

6. OWATC YouthBuild, Ogden, UT

Ogden-Weber Applied Technology College YouthBuild participants worked with the Homeless Veterans Fellowship (HVF) in Ogden, Utah on completing the gut rehab of 12 apartments, 2 houses, and 1 duplex. The units that the participants completed are for veterans who have come in off the street and who work with the staff at the Homeless Veterans Fellowship to get them back on their feet and reintegrated into society.

Units at the HVF included "row houses" that were built at the turn of the 19th century to house railroad workers who worked for the Union Pacific Railroad. These units have undergone several renovations and were in a serious state of disrepair. Participants stripped the units down to the framing and completed framing, drywall, tile, and the installation of new sub-flooring,
hardwood and carpet. They repaired and restored lath and plaster, hardwood flooring, built-ins, original trim, cabinets and brick. Repairs and restorations were completed to maintain the look of the building and to practice green construction techniques.

Participants also crafted high quality and durable oak nightstands and dressers in the college’s carpentry shop as gifts for the veterans housed at the HVF. The veterans are given the furniture when they are ready to transition from the HVF to independent living.

During the course of construction, OWATC YouthBuild participants hosted periodic service days where they worked alongside members of the community, including members of the Chamber of Commerce, Rotarians, caseworkers from the local Workforce Development Board, members of the staff from the Ogden-Weber Tech College, the veterans they served, and various other members of the community.

7. Operation Fresh Start YouthBuild, Madison, WI

Operation Fresh Start YouthBuild participants built two single-family homes implementing multiple innovative framing and insulation techniques that result in high-efficiency homes.

Participants built the exterior walls as “double stud,” 12-inch thick walls with 2x4 studs spaced two feet on center. The two-foot stud spacing utilizes fewer studs and allows for most of the windows to be placed in between existing studs, so that headers and trim studs become unnecessary. This saves money on lumber and allows insulation to replace the framing in those areas. When these narrower windows are installed in a combination of two or three, they give the feel and visual effect of larger picture windows.

The participants filled the 12-inch thick walls with dense-pack cellulose insulation with an R-value of 44. This choice is a huge improvement over the conventional and more common single 2x4 wall insulated with batt insulation and one-inch rigid foam built in this area, which has an R-value of only 18. This “double stud” wall construction also has a very low environmental impact because it uses all cellulose-based materials as opposed to other fiberglass and foam-intensive wall constructions. The attics are insulated to an R-value of 60 instead of the R-value of 38 required by the building code.

These features altogether allowed Operation Fresh Start YouthBuild to build a super-insulated home without costly and environmentally unfriendly exotic materials while using low-tech building techniques that participants are able to become proficient in quickly.

8. YouthBuild Schenectady @ SEAT, Schenectady, NY

Participants of Schenectady YouthBuild rehabilitated a single family home that, upon completion, received a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. More than 80 young adults worked on the project, turning a run-down building into an energy-efficient showcase. The property is owned and maintained by Northeast Parent and Child Society, which was the YouthBuild program sponsoring agency at the time, and is being rented to a low-income family.
“In just the first few months of living in the home, we realized the advantages of living in a healthy, energy-efficient and air-tight home,” said Tonia Thomas, the resident. “Even during the especially frigid winter we had this year, we experienced dramatically lower energy bills and increased comfort due to fewer variations in temperature from room to room. It means a lot to me to know that my home is healthy and that my children are breathing clean air and are not being exposed to mold and pollutants.”

Participants learned green job skills and worked closely with technical assistance partners including the Saint-Gobain Corporation and subsidiary CertainTeed, YouthBuild USA’s Green Initiative, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s “Options in Green Program” to learn many of the best practices in constructing a LEED home.

Selecting a Housing Partner

Unless the program decides to take on the role of developer, it must find a housing developer with whom to collaborate. It should not be assumed that just because an organization or company has been in the business of developing housing for a long time that they are good partners for a YouthBuild program.

In selecting a housing developer for collaboration, the program director must consider the following issues:

1. **What is the organization’s reputation and track record in the development of housing?** Even longstanding developers go through ups and downs. The YouthBuild program will want to find out about the developer’s reputation regarding its ability to deliver on the timelines, its commitment to quality, its ability to assemble needed funds, and its follow through.

2. **Will the developer have an appropriate project available on the program’s timeline?** A developer may want to work with YouthBuild, but may not have a project that will be ready by the time that YouthBuild is ready to start the program. Or it may not be able to wait until the program is up and running to start the project. It is important to discuss in detail the program’s schedule, when the participant Mental Toughness orientation will be completed, and when the program will actually have participants ready for the work site.

3. **Does the developer have a commitment to supporting the training needs of a YouthBuild program?** While recognizing the pressures of the development process, it is critical that the partner be flexible and committed to working with the YouthBuild program to resolve the natural tensions between training and production.

4. **Is the developer considering this partnership partially because he or she expects to save money on the job?** Housing developers often have a very unrealistic concept of how much money they will save by working with YouthBuild. In fact, the savings are only modest. At best, savings include carpenters’ and laborers’ labor costs. At worst, delays and waste generated from the training process can offset the savings or even result in a greater total development cost. For example, if dry wall was damaged during installation by the participants, then the developer would incur additional costs to replace the dry wall.

5. **Does the developer have a long history of OSHA citations?** You can check for a company’s safety records on the OSHA website: [https://www.osha.gov/pls/imis/establishment.html](https://www.osha.gov/pls/imis/establishment.html)
It is important to find a housing developer who wants to work with YouthBuild because it is committed to the mission of training young people and supports the need to expand the supply of low-income housing, not primarily because the developer hopes to save a lot of money. At the same time, it is important to remember that housing developers cannot afford to pay more for working with YouthBuild than they would have to pay otherwise. The following are the types of housing partners most often selected by YouthBuild programs as collaborators on the construction project.

**Sponsoring Agency as Housing Partner**

Some YouthBuild programs are housed within larger nonprofit organizations and public agencies that have a history of developing affordable housing. This built-in partnership does not ensure that the YouthBuild program will have an easier relationship than with an outside entity. Housing development departments within nonprofit organizations or public agencies face the same economic constraints as any other housing developer and may be no more sympathetic to the YouthBuild program’s training needs than anyone else. In fact, additional difficulties can arise if the housing staff of the parent agency does not fully understand and support the training mission of the YouthBuild program because the YouthBuild program generally is not in a position to choose a different partner from its parent agency. Issues of training and production should be discussed with the agency’s executive director and housing development department as candidly as possible and the information in this handbook shared with them. The most critical point is that they need to know the job may take twice as long as it normally would. They must be reassured that the quality will be as good or better; it is only the length of time that is the issue.

**Community Development Corporations**

Community Development Corporations (CDCs) can be good housing partners for YouthBuild programs. They are community-based, often do rehabilitation and new construction projects on a scale that is ideal for construction training, and they may be more sympathetic to the schedule of a training program that is enrolling neighborhood youth. But not all CDCs are alike, and the reputation of the organization for quality, timeliness, and commitment to the program’s mission should be checked.

**Habitat for Humanity**

YouthBuild programs have long worked successfully with Habitat for Humanity organizations. Here again, every Habitat for Humanity operates as an independent organization. It must be determined if the organization in the community is an appropriate partner. The advantage of working with Habitat is that they provide the building and materials for free. The disadvantage, in some instances, is that they may want to involve other community volunteers, which may be difficult to coordinate with the participants, or they may want to operate on a schedule that is not appropriate for training.
Habitat for Humanity builds durable, healthy and sustainable houses at the lowest possible cost (green building). Habitat for Humanity’s practice of building green affordable homes offers YouthBuild programs the opportunity to provide their participants with hands-on training in increasingly sought-after qualifications in the construction industry, where local and national codes in addition to consumer demand have greatly transformed buildings to higher levels of green standards.

**Public Housing Authorities**

Some YouthBuild programs are operated out of housing authorities and automatically take on housing authority projects. But some nonprofit YouthBuild programs may also consider a partnership with a housing authority. Housing authorities that may be good partners for a YouthBuild program are those that are able to operate with flexibility and efficiency on development projects. The advantage of a housing authority partner is that the financing is generally available and they focus solely on building low-income housing that meets the requirements for YouthBuild.

However, some housing authorities tend to function as large bureaucratic organizations. In these cases, YouthBuild projects may find themselves bogged down with red tape, especially in receiving payments or obtaining approvals or even access to properties. This can slow down or delay projects, creating a lot of down time for the participants and leaving the programs scrambling for back-up projects. Another disadvantage to housing authority partnerships is when they can offer YouthBuild programs only the work of making apartments ready for new occupants, which usually entails a very limited scope of work, including painting and carpeting and so does not fulfill DOL’s work site requirement of providing substantial hands-on experience.

An additional benefit of partnering with housing authorities occurs after participant exit. Public Housing Authorities are required by HUD to meet Section 3 guidelines that give priority for hiring on-construction projects to housing authority residents or YouthBuild participants. Section 3 is a starting point for YouthBuild programs to obtain job training, employment, and contracting opportunities for their participants after exit.

In 2015, DOL and HUD issued a joint letter to DOL YouthBuild grantees, recipients of HUD funding, contractors, and registered apprenticeship sponsors to alert these programs to a partnership between the two agencies in order to 1) strengthen local registered apprenticeship opportunities for graduates from DOL’s YouthBuild program, and 2) connect contractors working on the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, Section 3-covered HUD-funded projects with Registered Apprenticeship sponsors and local YouthBuild programs. The joint letter can be read in its entirety at [https://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/pdf/HUDDOL_FinalJointLetter.pdf](https://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/pdf/HUDDOL_FinalJointLetter.pdf).

**For-Profit Developers**

For-profit developers may be interested in partnering with a YouthBuild program, but it is important to assess how much their motivation is anticipated cost-savings vs. a sincere desire to train young people. The pressures of for-profit affordable housing development are substantial, and the training goals can easily be overlooked due to the needs of the production schedule of a for-profit company. Additionally, because for-profit developers are interested in the bottom line of making a profit, they may not be willing to limit the sale of housing to the required low-income individuals with the required inclusion of a restrictive covenant.
Establishing a Clear Understanding with the Housing Partner

To avoid conflict with a housing partner down the line, the program director must have and sign a written agreement that defines the respective rules and responsibilities.

The following items should be included in a written agreement with the housing partner:

1. Acknowledgement of the requirement for a restrictive covenant to be placed on the deed at the time the certificate of occupancy is issued that requires the owner to restrict the sale and rental of homes built by YouthBuild programs to low-income individuals or families for a minimum of five years from the point of occupancy.

2. Scope of work or plans and specifications of work to be done by the YouthBuild program.

3. Total compensation, if any.

4. A timetable for completion that allows for sufficient time to finish the job.

5. A statement of understanding on how the Davis Bacon Act may apply per local Wage and Hour office regulations. For additional guidance, review TEGL 11-16, “YouthBuild Compliance with Davis-Bacon and Related Acts (DBRA)” found at https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?docn=6026.

6. A statement of who has liability for cost overruns and time delays.

7. A statement of who has responsibility for ordering/storing/replacing lost or stolen tools and materials.

8. Insurance to be provided by each party (property, liability, and workers compensation).


10. A formal procedure for communications between YouthBuild and the General Contractor.

11. A statement of which party is responsible for obtaining permits.

12. A payment schedule.

13. The warranties provided.


A sample Memorandum of Agreement between Subcontractor (YouthBuild) and General Contractor (Housing Partner) is in Appendix B.

Chapter 2 Resources in Appendix

APPENDIX B

- DOL YouthBuild Construction-Related TEGLs
- ETA-9143 Work Site Description Form
- Memorandum of Agreement between Subcontractor (YouthBuild) and General Contractor (Housing Partner)
- Selecting a Construction Project Checklist