YouthBuild
Program Components

**Counseling**
Individual and peer counseling
Group sessions
Case management
Referrals to outside agencies
Group recreation

**Education**
Academic skills
GED preparation
Vocational skills
Job/college readiness skills
Leadership development
Construction theory and terminology
Driver’s education
Cultural events
Follow-up education

**Leadership Development**
Decision making
Speaking
Group Facilitation
Negotiating
Community service
Retreats
Advocacy

**Construction Training**
Supervised construction training
Employer expectations
Job readiness skills
Vocational education training
Coordination with pre-apprenticeship programs

**Graduate Resources**
College admissions counseling
Pre-employment training
Career counseling
Integration into apprenticeship programs
Job search techniques
Job development
Job placement
Follow-up counseling/ support
Program Qualities (from *HUD Youthbuild Program Manual*, pgs 4-5)

Looking at basic components is one way to get an overview of the Youthbuild program. Another, equally valuable, way is to assess the qualities that are most likely to create a meaningful, integrated, and successful program. Many years of experience have demonstrated that, to succeed to the maximum extent, a program must work to reverse the past negative experiences of trainees.

The following positive qualities have proven to create a particularly successful program environment, if incorporated into all aspects of a Youthbuild program:

- profound respect for the intelligence of participants
- power for them over their immediate environment
- protection, as much as possible, from disaster, or at least the support necessary to survive it
- meaningful and important work
- real, patient caring for their development
- actual teaching of skills
- a firm and loving challenge to stop self-destructive behavior and change negative attitudes;
- family-like support and appreciation from peers and adults
- high standards and expectations
- inspiring and caring role models
- understanding of each participant’s proud and unique cultural background
- heightened awareness of the present day world and their important place in it
- a path to future opportunity
- opportunities for social activities
- real concern and action from the agency about changing the conditions that have affected them and the people they love.

The rest of this manual is an elaboration of the eight program components, presented in a way that we hope reflects these positive program qualities.

**Checklist of Essential Elements**

Youthbuild programs have found that there is a set of factors that together can help ensure program success. While these elements are not specifically required by HUD, an overview of these factors may be helpful as a checklist for Youthbuild managers, particularly when planning and starting up a new Youthbuild project.
Absolute agency commitment to the success of the project. Involvement of the highest level of management in projecting a vision and reaching objectives. Commitment of executive director and the board of directors.

A full-time director of the Youthbuild program who has the authority to hire and fire all program staff and who is capable of managing the complexity of this program, unifying a diverse staff, and inspiring the confidence of the young people.

Clear lines of accountability with at least three very competent full-time managers: one responsible for the construction, including on-site training and supervision; another for the academic education, counseling, job development, and leadership training activities; and a third person in charge overall.

Systematic mechanisms for staff supervision, coordination, accountability, and building staff cohesion. Clear job descriptions and expectations of staff. Decent salaries. Weekly staff meetings, weekly supervisory meetings, and coordinating meetings between the site and the classroom components. Time set aside for discussion and training on program philosophy and goals. Procedures for firing staff who do not produce or who cannot relate to the young people. If an agency does not have a mechanism for removing a weak staff member, the program becomes correspondingly weak. Weekly meetings of frontline staff specifically to review the progress of and coordinate services to each trainee.

Recruitment of a large pool of eligible young people and selection of the most serious from among them. Since considerable resources are being directed to helping the trainees, it is reasonable for you to select people who are most likely to show up every day.

A construction schedule carefully worked out, including cash flow projections, which the project can measure itself against at all times.

A system of monitoring retention, attendance, and construction progress, accompanied by rapid intervention when weaknesses appear. The project director and executive director should have up-to-date objective information about enrollment, attendance, and construction progress at their fingertips. This data will reflect the project’s success or difficulties. Difficulties should trigger corrective action.

A system of regular youth involvement in decision making. Responsiveness of the administration to problems raised and proposals offered by young people through a youth policy committee.

All program components tailored to the young people. Adults who care deeply about them, reaching out above and beyond the call of duty, good classroom teaching and relationships, good site supervision, sensitive and effective counseling, high standards for work performance and attendance, quick response to deviations from the standards; a responsive administration.
Unity and morale-building activities such as field trips, retreats, cultural events, sports, awards ceremonies, support groups, leadership opportunities, travel, exchanges with other programs.

Sound fiscal management, including methods of paying vendors that prevent being taken advantage of reports submitted on time to avoid cash flow problems, adequate controls.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
A Brief Summary

WHAT is Leadership Development?
Leadership development is the process of expanding the capacity of an individual to make things go right for his or her life, family, program, and community. The process includes:

- Personal transformation of negative habits and self-limiting behavior
- The learning of leadership skills and knowledge
- Opportunities to put these skills into practice, to exercise judgment, to have impact.

WHY emphasize Leadership Development?
- Taking increasing levels of responsibility promotes personal growth, and being challenged to become a leader can inspire the individual to overcome personal weaknesses.
- The program will be improved if governed with real input from young people.
- Leadership can engage young people intensely and deeply, liberating their best energies.
- Leadership helps young people make greater youth development gains.
- Program outcomes of attendance, retention, and accomplishment improves with Leadership Development
- Our communities and society need more ethical and effective leaders.

HOW might Leadership Development be done in a program setting?
A solid Leadership Development plan at a program might include the following:

- A clear definition of the process of leadership development, already agreed to and prominently displayed
- Leadership development goals and objectives built into the program
- A set of achievable leadership competencies
- Leadership development woven into all components of the program
- An Individual Leadership Development Plan for each young person
- Effective decision-making structures like a policy committee or advisory committee
- Young people assigned administrative responsibilities in all program areas

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- Widespread leadership opportunities
- Ongoing staff training and support in leadership development
- Leadership development assessment by staff and young people twice a year
- At least one staff person assigned to implementing a leadership development at the program
- Time set aside for leadership development in the program design
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
AT YOUTHBUILD ANYTOWN

A Vision Statement
John Bell

The following is a vision of what a well-developed, fully integrated leadership development component might look like. No YouthBuild program to date has achieved all the elements described in this vision, but everything described here has been used by some YouthBuild program somewhere. Not all of these aspects of leadership development can be achieved in the first year. Like a house, a solid leadership development program is built in stages. However, it is helpful to have a blueprint or vision to guide the stages of development.

The YouthBuild Anytown program is six months into its third cycle. Last cycle’s graduates helped the staff recruit and select the current participants. They selected people who seemed ready to make a positive change in their lives, who wanted to give back to the community, and who showed some leadership experience or potential.

During orientation, the new students were told that they were expected to be leaders in the program and in the community. To get into YouthBuild Anytown, each person had to agree in writing to register to vote, vote in every election during the program cycle, attend the meetings of at least three different community organizations, report back to the whole group about the community organizations, serve on a leadership committee in the YouthBuild program, and do three hours of community service per week in addition to housing construction. Each student took a pre-program leadership assessment survey to use as a benchmark against which to measure progress.

The staff and young people abide by a set of principles or core values that staff and youth from the first program cycle worked out together. The principles, as expressed in a daily pledge which the whole community recites each morning, are:

We, the members of YouthBuild Anytown, pledge that we are working together
• to improve and rebuild our community;
• to relate to each other in cooperative ways;
• to develop our potential as leaders;
• to educate and improve ourselves and help others along the way;
• to respect our peers, neighbors, and all life; and
• to be part of a great movement for justice, equality, and peace.
All this we will do with love and dignity.

From day one of the program, the young people learned that the first part of leadership is taking responsibility for oneself. The staff supported and challenged them to
be on time, attend every day, refuse to make excuses, be positive, deal with anger constructively, kick negative habits, do the schoolwork, take care of tools, speak to others respectfully, and develop other positive personal behaviors. Responsibility was taught as the foundation of good leadership.

A few months into the program, the policy committee was elected. The policy committee is a key governing center composed of eight elected young people, the director, and a staff representative. The policy committee meets weekly. Participants elected the most responsible of their peers for this job. The policy committee began with a weekend retreat where policy committee members trained to prepare themselves for increasing responsibilities such as understanding the overall organizational structure; learning the role of the policy committee; and learning how to form an agenda, chair a meeting, read a budget, interview a job candidate, make consensus decisions, and use good group process.

Because of this solid foundation, the policy committee was well respected by students and staff. It participated in disciplinary decisions, resolved conflict, hired staff, set program policies, and debated community issues. Two different non-policy-committee members sat in on each meeting as observers. In this way, all YouthBuild members had contact with the committee. The committee used a standard meeting process, and in the beginning each member got a chance to chair a meeting.

Now there is a permanent youth chair who sets the agenda with the director and leads each meeting. The director and staff person are careful not to dominate. During a meeting, one student takes minutes on a laptop, prints them out, and distributes them at the end of each meeting. Members post them in the classroom or on the worksite the next day after they give a verbal report and get feedback about the results of the meeting.

Leadership training and opportunities are not limited to those on the policy committee. Staff and youth participants discuss issues, set policies, and plan activities in monthly community meetings. Many young people have learned to lead small group discussions through these community meetings. Temporary committees form to take on special projects. A review committee handles discipline and grievances. All the participants and staff have been trained in mediation and conflict resolution and anyone can call for a mediation session with youth and staff mediators. There is also a Community Leadership Committee for those who want to get involved in community action or advocacy beyond the YouthBuild program. The Anytown Community Leadership Committee members have given presentations in local public schools about subjects like staying in school and avoiding drugs. They have also set up a tutoring program, coached Little League, and sponsored a citywide youth conference.

Beyond these formal leadership committees, there are leadership jobs on the worksite and in the classroom. Young people serve as hosts by escorting visitors through the building and explaining the program. Participants take turns assisting the receptionist, answering phones, and learning bookkeeping.
The whole program reflects YouthBuild’s concern for young leaders. There are prominent displays of quotes and pictures of leaders—from everyday leaders like the participants’ mothers to public leaders like Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks, Mahatma Gandhi, Colin Powell, Martin Luther King Jr., Sandra Day O’Connor, Millard Fuller, and Marian Wright Edelman. The YouthBuild definition of good leadership, “Good leadership is taking responsibility to make things go right for yourself, your family, the program, and the community.” is posted in the classroom and on the worksite: The classroom teacher uses a leadership curriculum that teaches basic skills while covering topics like the history of the community and its peoples, social change movements and their leaders, theories of change, public speaking, writing skills, and community organizing methods.

The program has developed leadership “competencies,” a specific set of practical skills and information that each participant is required to master by graduation such as keeping a weekly schedule calendar, setting a personal budget, listening well, taking good notes, leading small group discussions, explaining helpful group process techniques, using the phone system effectively, researching, and access local government.

Weekly leadership workshops are held every Friday morning. Some of these workshops teach a leadership competency. Others feature an outside speaker, community leader, or local public official. Still others get the YouthBuild members, staff, and young people to explore issues of cultural diversity in an ongoing effort to increase understanding and combat oppression. They have classes on current political and economic issues to sharpen their critical thinking skills and help them form useful analyses. These kinds of experiences give the participants a larger world view. Some YouthBuild young people write regular columns in the community newspaper on the world from a youth perspective.

YouthBuild Anytown ensures that the youth perspective extends beyond its own program boundaries. The director regularly takes participants and graduates to visit foundations and government agencies to assist with fundraising. Young people speak to the press and testify at city council meetings. Staff often take young people with them to their own community meetings. Several young people attend a YouthBuild national youth conference in Washington, D.C., attend leadership workshops, and meet youth from YouthBuild programs all over the country.

However, no program always runs smoothly. There are conflicts, flare-ups, contract violations, staff and student disrespect, negative behavior, and occasional terminations. Even outstanding leaders struggle with such issues as acting responsibly on the policy committee, resisting peer pressure to act out in the classroom, and feeling guilty about leaving behind friends from their previous street life. Personal crises sometimes cause a young person to slip backwards. However, the program has worked out ways to handle such stressful times.

Everyone is continually reminded of the principles as guiding ideas. The students take responsibility for handling common negative behavior among themselves. The review committee formally handles grievances or serious violations. The counselors teach
methods of anger management and conflict resolution. The program uses peer counseling and support groups to gradually increase trust levels, allow for caring and healing, build community, improve listening skills, and challenge negative behavior and attitudes. The program recognizes that further leadership development is often blocked by internalized attitudes and stored emotional pain collected over a lifetime. Personal development and leadership development go hand in hand. The staff expects participants to do both.

The key component of YouthBuild Anytown’s leadership program is the commitment of the director and staff. The director, with the backing of the board, sees the program as a training ground for solid citizens and community leaders. The director has hired and trained a staff who view young people as leaders helping to run the program rather than as clients needing services. (Over the past two years, she has also fired several staff who could not respect young people in practice.) The director has helped the staff build a vision for leadership development. There are ongoing, regular staff development trainings in leadership development. The program has determined desired outcomes of its leadership development component.

As a result, each staff member - whether through teaching, counseling, or training - sees himself or herself as a leadership developer. Each staff member sets leadership goals and objectives for which he or she is held responsible. Twice a year the staff does a formal written and verbal evaluation of the leadership program. In addition, the staff position of leadership developer is responsible for scheduling workshops, lining up speakers, planning leadership retreats, keeping track of leadership competencies, supporting the policy committee and other youth committees, and helping other staff keep leadership development high on their agendas.

As a result of this approach, most participants graduate with confidence in themselves and their ability to change their lives and create a positive future. They have a knowledge base and a tool kit of leadership skills. They have had a year of various leadership experiences. They have seen the connection between their own neighborhoods and the wider world.

Many graduates are now members of their children’s PTAs and other community organizations. Some serve on community boards and keep informed about politics and public issues. These graduates vote regularly. One graduate was hired by the YouthBuild program as an assistant construction trainer. Two graduates are on YouthBuild Anytown’s board. Another graduate plans to run for the local school committee. The majority of graduates are serving as role models for those around them because they are positive people who are responsible parents, steady job holders, and mentors for younger people.

Many graduates are in college. Some have become or aspire to become youth workers, AIDS counselors, or community leaders. Most stay active with the YouthBuild Anytown Alumni Club and graduate program, which provide job and personal counseling, further educational opportunities, positive social activities, and ongoing leadership roles. The community views YouthBuild Anytown as a real resource.
Employers are eager to hire graduates because of their good work skills and responsible attitudes. Consequently, local foundations, churches, agencies, businesses, and media consider YouthBuild Anytown a community treasure and give it support in many forms.
The Benefits of Leadership Development
(From the Leadership Development Handbook, Chapters 1, 4, 7, and 8)

Chapter 1: Vision, Definitions, and Key Elements:

Leadership development benefits the trainee, the program, and the community. Leadership development contributes to the growth of each young person by countering feelings of powerlessness, liberating positive energy, generating respect from others, and opening the door to wider possibilities for the future. Leadership development results in:

• Strengthened self-confidence. Successful experiences in leadership provide trainees with the self-confidence needed to move beyond the familiar and try new things.

• Increased skills. Leadership experiences provide young people with skills that can be applied in the work world, in the community and in a wide range of settings.

• Increased knowledge. Leadership experiences open doors to ideas and information that were previously closed to many Youthbuild participants.

Young adult leadership helps the program function better. Involving young people in the decision-making process leads to decisions that are better informed, decisions that make sense to the young people, and decisions that are ultimately better for the program. Leadership opportunities keep students interested and engaged in the program, thus keeping program attendance and retention rates high. Training young people to represent the program brings positive public attention and often results in more funding. Involving young people in community service can bring increased community support for the program.

Leadership development strengthens the community. As Youthbuild participants give back to their neighborhoods, they develop a deep commitment to community involvement and look for opportunities to stay involved after they graduate. Some become effective community advocates, board members of community organizations, or volunteers. Others may choose community-oriented careers, such as social workers, youth advocates, and staff of nonprofit community-based organizations. Others may go on to college to pursue careers as counselors and teachers. Still others may eventually become entrepreneurs and business leaders in the community. Regardless of the career path, leadership development during Youthbuild fosters and encourages long-term engagement with community issues and community service.

Prerequisites for Successful Leadership Development

To be successful, leadership development must be part of the overall vision of the program. Effective leadership development requires the full commitment and support of the organization’s board, director, and staff as well as a clear and explicit
implementation plan.

**Board Commitment**

The board of directors is responsible for the organization’s vision and mission. The board’s commitment to youth leadership development is central to the organization’s ultimate success in this work.

In addition, the board of directors is responsible for recruiting and hiring the agency director, who will be responsible for implementing the Youthbuild program, and ensuring that leadership development is a central focus of the program and the work of other staff.

The board can also provide access to a variety of leadership opportunities for the young people. Most importantly, the board can designate positions on the board of directors for Youthbuild graduates and then work with those graduates to further develop their leadership skills. Individual board members can also help identify leadership development opportunities for public speaking, community involvement, and internships.

**Executive Leadership Commitment**

Executive commitment to leadership development is critical to its ultimate success. If the Youthbuild program is located in a multi-service agency, the executive director of that agency will hire the Youthbuild director. The executive director must select someone who has vision and commitment to Youthbuild as a leadership development program and not just as a social service program. The executive director must also support the Youthbuild director’s day-to-day decisions about youth leadership development in the program.

The Youthbuild director has key responsibilities for implementing Youthbuild’s leadership development component with regard to staff philosophy and training, program design, youth involvement in decision making, and the provision of leadership opportunities. The Youthbuild director must be sure to hire staff who believe in the leadership capabilities of young people and can see that a key aspect of their jobs is leadership development.

**Staff Commitment**

To implement a leadership development component within a Youthbuild program, the Youthbuild director and staff must work together to design and implement a program that is built upon leadership structures, activities, opportunities, and trainings. All staff members must define and understand their roles in leadership development.
**A Leadership Development Plan**

Youthbuild programs are most successful in maintaining a strong leadership development component when they have an explicit plan developed by the entire staff in advance of the program and revised on an annual basis. The leadership development plan defines the structures, activities, trainings, and opportunities the program will use. The plan defines how leadership development will be woven into all aspects of the program, including:

- The classroom
- The construction site
- The counseling program
- The daily operations of the program, such as reception, communications, and maintenance
- Youth participation in governance and decision making at both the management and board levels
- Involvement in the community
- Trainings and workshops for staff and participants
- Opportunities after graduation

A strong leadership development plan includes staff goals and objectives for leadership, leadership curriculum and competencies, leadership committees and jobs, a leadership development attitude on the part of the staff, and plenty of opportunities both in the Youthbuild program and beyond for the participants to exercise leadership.

**The Elements of a Strong Leadership Development Component**

To create a solid Youthbuild leadership development component, the leadership development plan must address each of the following areas. Each of these areas is discussed in detail in Part III of this handbook.

1. **Leadership skills or competencies.** Each program needs to determine what leadership skills or competencies are most important for trainees to learn and which skills the program will teach. A sample list of competencies is included in Chapter Four. Workshops that teach these skills are included in Appendix C of the *Leadership Competencies Handbook*.

2. **Leadership development within each program component.** To be successful, leadership development as a concept and as practice must be integrated into all aspects of the program. This includes making sure that a wide range of leadership opportunities exists on the construction site, in the education component, and in the counseling component of the program.
3. **Youth involvement in decision making and governance.** A critical expression of the program’s commitment to leadership development is the creation of a specific set of structures and activities that provide opportunities for participants to exercise leadership in the operation of the overall Youthbuild program.

4. **Leadership development training and workshops.** Throughout the program year, workshops and trainings can be offered to teach both staff and participants specific leadership skills and provide opportunities for students to practice leadership skills.

5. **Leadership development experiences and opportunities.** These can include a variety of hands-on experiences in which trainees discover the excitement of personal, program, and community leadership.

6. **Leadership opportunities after Youthbuild.** A strong leadership development plan will also include vehicles for graduates to stay involved in the community and the Youthbuild organization after they have completed the program.

7. **Measuring and tracking leadership skills.** Development of leadership skills should be measured just as the development of skills in education and construction are measured. Students need to know how well they are doing if they are to take this component of the program seriously.

**Common Problems and Pitfalls**

Leadership development is not an easy process to undertake. New Youthbuild programs often have difficulty implementing the leadership development component. The following are some of the common problems and pitfalls.

**Lack of clarity on goals and objectives.** Because leadership development takes many forms, clarity in the program’s leadership development goals and objectives is essential. Staff should have a unified understanding of the leadership development plan and understand their roles in ensuring its success. Because Youthbuild programs are so challenging to manage, many well-intentioned programs skip over this planning process, only to discover that their leadership development component has not met expectations.

**Insufficient staff development regarding leadership development.** Successful leadership development relies not only on planning, but also on the use of a range of strategies. Youthbuild programs often skip over staff training on leadership development because they do not have the time. However, leadership development depends on a unified staff approach that communicates the expectation that young adults are responsible, intelligent people who are capable of making wise decisions. This philosophy can be difficult to sustain in the face of irresponsible behavior and self-serving attitudes demonstrated by some program participants. Ongoing discussion and training in leadership development is essential to learning effective strategies for challenging these behaviors and attitudes while sustaining a leadership development philosophy and approach to youth transformation.
Lack of agency, director, or staff commitment to leadership development. A unified message from all areas of the organization is central to the success of a leadership development component. If the organization is struggling internally about its commitment to leadership development, the young people will sense it and will learn to distrust the stated commitment of the organization.

Lack of will or skill to share power and decision making with young people. Resolving staff concerns and fears about youth involvement in decision making is critical to creating a successful leadership development component. Some directors or staff members may be concerned that young people do not have enough experience to make wise decisions. Directors and staff may also fear that they will lose control of the program if they involve young people in decision making. Such fears may result in a leadership component in which staff resist sharing important decisions regarding the program. The trust of young people can rapidly disintegrate if they perceive that their involvement in decision making is “not for real”—and that they only have input into marginal issues.

Too much willingness to share power and decision making. On the other hand, some directors and staff initially turn over too much “power” to the young people and then get frustrated at the decisions that the young people make. In their enthusiasm for leadership development, these directors or staff may not play an active enough role in providing trainees with the guidance and tools needed to help them make good decisions. Without adequate guidance and training, young people can make decisions based on short term self-interest or immediate gratification rather than on the long term interest of all the trainees and the overall program. This long-term, broader view should be cultivated through ongoing dialogue with emerging young leaders.

Lack of adult support for youth. An effective leadership development program does not leave young people to make decisions on their own. It recognizes that young people lack experience in certain arenas and tries to create a partnership between young people and adults based on mutual trust and respect. In this context, adults can share their experience while providing an opportunity for young people to contribute their own insights to the decision-making process. For staff, leadership development is a balancing act. Being too rigid or being too lenient can cause a leadership development component to fall apart, providing an excuse for a program to give up on leadership development. Strong leadership development programs evolve over time, through trial and error, engaging both staff and students in evaluating results and trying new approaches.

Disrespectful attitudes. Staff frustration at the disrespectful behavior of some students is an inherent part of the job at Youthbuild. However, when staff frustration is communicated by returning trainee disrespect, the program’s impact can be undermined. For a leadership development component to be successful, the organization must hold itself to a consistent standard of respect for young people that is independent of trainee behaviors; the organization must continually and respectfully challenge young people to become their best possible selves. Organizations that do not hold themselves
and all staff to this higher standard will have difficulty implementing a leadership development program.

**Creating a Leadership Development Plan**

**Sample Leadership Development Program—Month by Month:**
The following suggested timetable for leadership-related activities and events was designed for a 12-month program. Each program is different and will ultimately determine its own schedule of activities. Some of the activities will be explained later in the handbook.

**Six Months to One Week Prior to Start-Up**
- Staff hired, with input from young people
- Staff training in leadership development begins
- Young people are recruited and selected with the leadership aspect made clear
- Staff is trained in how to facilitate their role in the youth orientation

**Youth Orientation**
- Participants are introduced to the basic ideas of leadership
- The various leadership committees are introduced
- Leadership development requirements are explained
- Participants begin reciting a daily pledge or philosophy each morning*  

(* indicates that the activity begins here but is continued hereafter)

**Month One**
- Daily pledge*
- Staff sets a positive atmosphere*
- Validations and appreciations are established as regular practices*
- Leadership development on the worksite begins*
- Leadership development in the classroom begins*
- Leadership competencies are introduced*
- Support groups begin to meet regularly*
- A temporary advisory committee is selected to serve until a policy committee is elected
• Students are prepared for the policy committee election
• The first community meeting is held toward the end of the month

Month Two
• Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, and support groups*
• Each participant makes individual leadership goals
• First leadership retreat is held four to six weeks after start-up
• Policy committee is elected at the retreat
• First training and meeting of policy committee happens within a week, and then the committee meets weekly*
• Extra community service responsibilities begin*
• Staff begin attending national HUD Youthbuild trainings*
• Program begins to explore cultural identity, gender, and mutual respect issues*

Month Three
• Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, policy committee, community service, cultural issues*
• A staff day is held to review progress in leadership development
• Regular monthly youth leadership training workshops are underway*
• The first batch of leadership competencies are achieved and recognized with awards
• Program begins to provide community leadership opportunities*
• Community leadership committee is formed and begins meeting*
• Formal training in group process skills begins

Month Four
• Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, policy committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and community leadership committee*
• Peer counseling begins to train young people to assist each other with problems
• Community leadership committee is active in the community and meets regularly to plan or reflect on its work.

Month Five
• Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, policy committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and community leadership committee*

Month Six
• Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, policy committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and community leadership committee*
• Second staff day held to review leadership development work
• Public awards and recognition for achievement of leadership competencies

Month Seven
• Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, policy committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and community leadership committee*
• Several youth attend national Youthbuild Leadership Training in Washington, D.C.

Month Eight
• Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, policy committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and community leadership committee*
• Second youth-staff retreat is held

Month Nine
• Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, policy committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and community leadership committee*
• Third staff day is held to review leadership development work
• Public awards and recognition are given for achievement of leadership competencies
• Higher education applications begin

Month Ten
• Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, policy committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and community leadership committee*
• Job readiness leadership competency is emphasized

Month Eleven
• Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, policy committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and community leadership committee*
• Leadership opportunities after graduation are charted

Month Twelve
• Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, policy committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and community leadership committee*
• Final leadership development assessment is done for individuals and for the group
• Leadership awards given at graduation
• Certificates of achievement of the leadership competencies are awarded at graduation

After Graduation
• Young people can continue to be active in the community leadership committee
• Several graduates might serve on the agency’s board of directors
• Several graduates might become Youthbuild interns and staff
• Young people can become part of the Youthbuild graduate program or alumni club
• Staff reviews and evaluates the leadership development work done during the year, and makes recommendations for the future. The actual sequence will vary from program to program depending on local priorities, personalities, crises, and resources.
# Part II. Resources:

## Item 1: Leadership Development Checklist for Directors

This checklist can be used by staff to do a leadership development inventory, assessment, or planning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Element</th>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophical Commitment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Board has voted that leadership development is part of its commitment, and that it will support leadership development in the Youthbuild program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youthbuild grads or other young people serve on the board.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A clear definition of leadership development and the basic elements of the Youthbuild leadership development program have been defined in writing by the Youthbuild program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Staffing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership development is part of the Youthbuild director’s job description and annual goals and objectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The program has a leadership development staff person or a leadership development team responsible for the leadership development component</td>
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<td>Specific staff are responsible for leadership development workshops and trainings.</td>
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<td>Specific staff are responsible for leadership development experiences and opportunities.</td>
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<td>Specific staff are responsible for supporting youth involvement in decision making and governance.</td>
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<td>All staff have been trained in leadership development.</td>
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<td><strong>Leadership Development in Each Component</strong></td>
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<td>There is a leadership development plan for the construction site.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff are evaluated on their implementation of their leadership development goals.</td>
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Leadership competencies have been defined.

A process for teaching and measuring leadership competencies exists.

Other

**Leadership Development Workshops and Trainings**

Leadership development is a key part of orientation.

A leadership retreat has been scheduled and planned.

A plan and schedule for ongoing leadership development activities exists.

Specific staff are assigned to deliver these activities.

Other

**Leadership Experiences and Opportunities**

A plan and schedule for ongoing leadership experiences and opportunities exists.

Specific staff are assigned to deliver these activities.

Young people are involved in program fundraising.

Young people speak to media and represent Youthbuild in public events.

Young people attend meetings at three community organizations and report back to the program.

Young people are registered to vote and vote in all elections during the program year.

**Leadership Development in Each Component**

There is a leadership development plan for the construction site.

There is a leadership development plan for the education component.

There is a leadership development plan for the counseling component.

Staff are evaluated on their implementation of their leadership development goals.

Leadership competencies have been defined.

A process for teaching and measuring leadership competencies exists.

Other

**Youth Involvement in Decision Making**

A written description of the organization’s structure for youth involvement in decision making exists. It includes a section on composition, scope of responsibilities, structures, procedures, preparation, and training.

A plan exists for creating an interim youth advisory committee until a permanent policy committee is elected. A plan and schedule for organizing a policy committee exists.

Staff have been trained in the functions of a policy.
committee and how to organize one; or policy committee meets regularly with director. policy committee participates in hiring.

Systematic training is provided for policy committee. Feedback and reporting mechanisms between Policy Committee and program members exist.

**Leadership Development after Graduation**

- Staff have been assigned to work with graduates.
- A follow-up program has been designed.
- Graduates serve on agency board of directors.
- Graduates have formed an alumni club.
- Graduates participate in community leadership committee.
- Graduates are hired as Youthbuild interns or staff.
- Graduates represent Youthbuild on other boards.
Leadership Development in Each Program Component

Overview

The most effective way to teach leadership skills and promote leadership development of participants is to incorporate it into every component of the program. Not only do the young adults get extensive leadership opportunities through these daily experiences, but the program operates more effectively when the trainees take on the responsibility of working side by side with the staff to make the program run well.

The following chapter offers a variety of ways in which Youthbuild programs have incorporated leadership development into their construction sites, classrooms, and counseling components.

Leadership Development on the Construction Site

The construction site provides tremendous opportunities to teach students to take responsibility for themselves, for those around them, and for the project as a whole. This means giving students opportunities to “take responsibility” and not just “take directions.” For example: some Youthbuild programs rotate crew chiefs every week, giving all students an opportunity to lead the crew. In one program, after all students had taken a turn acting as crew chief once, the students elected a permanent crew chief. Below are ten ways to incorporate leadership development into the construction site.

1. Give all the trainees an overview of the entire construction process and timetable, teach them how to read the plan, and explain what will happen to the building when it’s finished.

2. Create official jobs for trainees to serve in leadership roles, such as:

   • Crew chiefs who help coordinate the work of a crew of trainees (under professional supervision) and ensure that the work area is cleaned up at the end of the day
   • A steward who is responsible for taking attendance, calling breaks, calling clean up, maintaining the cooler, and doing store runs with staff
   • A first-aid and safety coordinator who monitors worksite safety
and reports problems or violations, maintains the first aid kit, prepares for and helps run safety meetings, and may serve on a safety committee of the organization
• A photographer who documents the work in progress
• A tool manager who signs out tools to students and conducts tool inventory
3. Take a trainee to construction meetings or contract negotiations.
4. Take a trainee to city hall when permits are being obtained or offer other opportunities to learn how “the system” works.
5. Involve trainees in planning, including purchasing materials or scheduling and have them explain the process to other trainees.
6. Have trainees help run morning or afternoon meetings on the worksite.
7. Ask trainees to come up with a solution to a particular problem on the site (such as meeting a deadline, keeping the site cleaner, improving attendance, or improving teamwork).
8. Have trainees give tours to visitors who come to the site.
9. Have trainees work on estimating and doing take-offs on parts of the project. This can double as a math assignment.
10. Ask trainees to evaluate the construction staff, the training process, and each other.

Voices of Youthbuild Graduates
Leadership on the Construction Site

“I received the job of crew chief. I was trusted and well-liked because I was willing to work right along with them, and not just shout orders.”

“The construction site was very useful in leadership. It shows how to keep a job by being responsible. It gives you a satisfied feeling, knowing that you have put in a hard day’s work.”

Leadership Development in the Classroom

Some programs include their programwide leadership training workshops as part of their weekly classroom schedule. But whether or not leadership workshops are offered as a regular class, the classroom provides many opportunities to integrate leadership skills into regular academic learning. The classroom can foster leadership development in the way it is structured, in the skills that it develops, and in the content of the material that is taught.
Leadership Development as Part of the Classroom Structure

No matter what the student’s specific objectives (such as a GED, diploma, or job), a fundamental goal of a Youthbuild program is to help participants learn to take responsibility for their own learning and their own lives. If students can learn self-discipline within an academic setting, they can achieve their goals and continue to learn and broaden their horizons after they leave.

But self-discipline is a learned behavior. The classroom can foster the development of this vital life skill by establishing systems in which students have to exhibit responsibility. For example:

• Involve students in making decisions regarding classroom activities
• Establish systems in which students are responsible for finishing their own work and correcting their work before moving on to the next topic
• Provide opportunities for trainees to work as teams on small group projects
• Provide opportunities for students to help one another to learn. Show them, through exercises and planned activities, that they can actually rely on each other for help
• Ask students to help create a climate of discipline and trust by being quiet, paying attention, and listening
• Create rotating leadership jobs in the classroom
• Have students participate in evaluating the teacher and each other. All of these processes within the classroom will help students become less “teacher-dependent” and more invested in the work for its own sake.

Leadership Skill Development in the Classroom

There are many opportunities to develop leadership skills through academic classroom activities. Many of the skills described below will simultaneously help students prepare for the GED exam by improving their reading, writing, and analytical skills. For example, students can be asked to:

• Research a topic of community concern, either at the library or through oral history research (i.e., interviews) and write a brief paper on their results.
• Read a brief essay or news article on a controversial public policy issue and present their opinions to the group.
• Write about their opinions on a public policy issue.
• Make a presentation in front of the class or the program, at a community meeting or at a press event, and to offer feedback to one another.
• Participate in a formal debate.
• Read and analyze a newspaper article for information, or to learn the skill of distinguishing fact from opinion.
• Take notes on a presentation given by a teacher or by another student.
• Write a letter to the editor, a letter to a Congressman, or an opinion piece for a newspaper; these pieces can be written by individuals or by a group.

Voices of Youthbuild Graduates
Leadership in the Classroom

“In the classroom, I learned it was important to be responsible for what you do.”

“I learned a lot of different points of view in the classroom. We were not just learning about math or English. They were preparing us to live and work in the real world.”

“In the classroom, I understood that leadership has a lot to do with patience. It is based on one’s ability to strive for better things.”

“We got an opportunity to know our family tree. We also had tutoring and one trainee had to help the next trainee.”

Leadership Content within the Academic Curriculum

In addition to skills, the academic program can consciously integrate content about community issues and public policy into its academic curriculum.

Examples:
• Visits from (or to) government officials and community leaders on public policy issues
• Studying how a law is passed at the city, state, or federal level
• Analyzing a community problem or a community organization
• Studying the history and culture of ethnic and racial groups that reflect the student body, and helping young people develop increased knowledge, pride, self-awareness, historical perspective, and sense of belonging to a great tradition
• Reading about (or meeting) important public leaders, past and present, who can serve as role models of outstanding leadership
• Many of the leadership competencies can be formally taught in the classroom (See Appendix C for a set of suggested lesson plans)
Leadership Development in the Counseling Component

Developing leadership skills is an integral part of the counseling process. Learning to be consistently responsible for one’s own life is a necessary prerequisite to providing leadership for others and taking responsibility for their wellbeing.

Personal skills that are critical leadership skills include:

- Ability to demonstrate consistency and responsibility on a daily basis
- Ability to advocate effectively for oneself
- Ability to resolve conflicts effectively
- Ability to communicate about issues of cultural identity in a positive manner
- Ability to listen and communicate effectively
- Clarity of personal values

As students work to overcome a variety of personal obstacles and problems, they will strive to replace negative behaviors by developing these and related skills. The counseling staff can identify these or other personal leadership skills to students. They can focus on these skills as constructive alternatives to negative behavior through one-on-one discussions, workshops and discussion groups, and can draw links between these skills and effective leadership. They can encourage students to try out these new skills within the context of the larger program, and can offer recognition when students learn to change their behavior. One of the most profound transformations that a Youthbuild program will witness is when a student who had a tendency toward uncontrolled anger learns to advocate effectively for himself or resolve a problem constructively. This is a critical leadership skill. Specific leadership development activities within the counseling component include:

- Training some of the young people to lead a discussion group
- Teaching students to do peer counseling
- Teaching students mediation and conflict-resolution skills
- Making an individual leadership development plan or life-skills plan with each young person

Voices of Youthbuild Graduates

Leadership Development through Counseling

“My counselor expressed to me that whatever I have strong feelings about are the things that I should go out and try to achieve. Reach my goals.”
“Our counselors showed us that they were able to succeed. Many of them came from the same background. They taught us not to focus on the things you can’t do. Focus on the things you can do.”
Implementing Youth Participation in Governance

Overview
Once the concept of youth participation in governance has been introduced to participants during orientation, it is important to follow up on its implementation as quickly as possible. Some Youthbuild programs have found it useful to form an advisory committee at the end of orientation or early in the first month to serve as a temporary group with whom the director consults until a policy committee or other permanent body is elected. There are many decisions to be made and problems to be solved during the first four to six weeks. Such an advisory committee would not have the same level of decision-making responsibility as a policy committee but would give advice and input to the director. If the director acts on the recommendations, it sends a clear signal to the participants that the program is serious about including them in governance. Many Youthbuild programs hold the policy committee elections four to six weeks after orientation ends. This allows time for trainees to get to know one another and to find out who is responsible and who might make a good representative.

Elections
A policy committee election needs to be carefully planned so that students seriously consider who would make the most effective representatives. The experience of other Youthbuild sites has shown that when the program takes time to discuss the leadership qualities that would be effective on a policy committee, the election is less likely to become a popularity contest and more likely to result in a quality committee. A model for a step-by-step process for planning and implementing a policy committee election is described in the Youthbuild Policy Committee Handbook in Appendix B.

Term of Office
Some Youthbuild programs have the policy committee elected for the entire year of the program. Other programs have found it useful to have terms of about five months with elections twice a year. This allows more students to have an opportunity to serve, and allows those students who need to focus on academic or personal issues to step down gracefully. Usually, students are allowed to run for both terms, and many sites have found it helpful to have some continuity among representatives for both terms.

The Role of the Director
The success of the policy committee depends on the director. The director needs to view the policy committee as a key leadership development opportunity for both the members and the program as a whole. The director needs to make a commitment to the key ingredients for success.
Key Ingredients for Successful Policy Committees

• **Hold regular meetings.** The director should meet with the policy committee weekly. He or she must schedule other things around the meetings and never cancel except for emergencies. The young people will feel respected if they know that the director is arranging his or her schedule to meet with them.

• **Do serious business.** The policy committee should discuss and decide on serious issues. The youth members will bring some of their own, gathered from their peers. But the director should bring to the meetings issues that the young people may not be aware of. The director should think carefully about which issues to bring when. Issues should be real and should include: personnel, programmatic, and community issues. Participating in hiring of staff is always felt to be the ultimate respect for young people.

• **Provide systematic training.** The director should see to it that the committee is trained early on the following: the role and responsibilities of policy committee members, how to run effective meetings, how to read a budget, how to interview candidates, decision-making processes, and other training related to the work of the committee. Up to half of each meeting for the first several months should be training. If the director is not the best trainer, he or she should find the best person to do the training. The more time the director spends training the young people in the beginning, the more effective the committee will be. The members will be able to handle increasingly complex issues as time goes on if they have a solid foundation.

• **Use good group process.** During the meetings, it is essential that the committee members learn and use elements of good group process (e.g., having a chairperson, a written agenda, maximizing and valuing each person’s input, appreciating each other, and handling controversial topics in ways that do not destroy group unity). The director should see that the committee members are trained in these skills and then insist that the group uses them consistently. Attention to group process will pay great dividends.

• **Build a positive group.** The director is the overall leader of the policy committee. As leader, his or her role is to pay attention to three things:

  1. Whether or not the group is on task  
  2. How group members are relating to one another  
  3. How each individual member is functioning

Sometimes one of these three will take precedence over the other two, but over time all three need attention. Appendix B of the *Policy Committee Handbook* includes sample trainings, more information on the role of the director, and details of implementing an effective committee.
Common Mistakes
Here are the most common mistakes made by directors and programs trying to implement a policy committee. Not surprisingly, they mirror many of the points made in the previous section.

- **Weak staff preparation.** If the staff have not had adequate training about the centrality of leadership development and the role of the policy committee and have not formulated a written description of a committee it supports, then the staff can undermine the committee in many ways: by not taking it seriously, not allowing committee members to report on the business of the committee during work hours, not making sure policy committee members get to the meetings, and not implementing the decisions of the committee.

- **Poor election process.** If the election is done casually or without proper presentation to and preparation of the young people, then those elected may turn out to be the ones who are flashy, popular, talkative, or colorful but not necessarily the best leaders. The quality and attitude of the members can make or break a policy committee.

- **Director is too passive.** Often the director misunderstands his or her role as “letting the young people do their thing.” Usually, the young people are not aware of and not used to making decisions about larger programmatic issues, and will focus only on smaller—though important—issues like lunch policy, pay, contract violations, and issues that more directly affect them. It is the role of the director to bring to the table some of the larger issues for the young people to focus on. (See Appendix B of the *Policy Committee Handbook* for a sampling of the kinds of issues faced by effective policy committees.)

- **Director is too dominant.** There are directors who are too active, talk all the time, run the meetings, or otherwise make the young people feel unimportant. The director must know when to be passive and when to be active. Directors who have implemented effective policy committees usually begin by being quite active, setting the tone and expectations, modeling meeting processes he or she wants the young people to learn, and doing a lot of up front training. Gradually the role of the director will be reduced as the group begins to function well.

- **Inadequate training.** Sometimes committees make decisions too soon, without a base of knowledge about the organization which sponsors Youthbuild, budget constraints, program procedures, how to make good decisions, how to run effective meetings, or how to build positive group relationships. Training is key.

- **Little important business.** If the committee gets bogged down in trivial issues, the young people and director alike can loose interest. The director is the person who makes the meetings count by bringing interesting and challenging issue to the meetings. This is accomplished through adequate preparation and training.
• **Poor group process.** Young people will not keep coming to meetings that are poorly organized, don’t accomplish anything, are chaotic or boring, and have no clear agenda. They will also lose interest if they are not learning anything.

• **Divisiveness among the group members.** People don’t like being in a group where conflict or disrespect is common, or when one person dominates the group without being checked. People are also opposed to situations where serious disagreements go unresolved.

**Youthbuild Policy Committees in Action**

As an example of effective Youthbuild Policy Committees, consider the activities of the Policy Committees of YouthBuild Portland, Portland, Maine and Casa Verde YouthBuild, Austin, Texas.

**YouthBuild Portland**

At the Youthbuild site in Portland, Maine, the policy committee includes six students elected by the members. The policy committee meets weekly to review program policies and discuss issues affecting youth in the community. The policy committee determines its own structure, identifies which members will fill committee positions, and creates policies for committee eligibility. It also creates a framework by which issues are brought to the entire group for consideration. One issue considered was the need to improve general respect and teamwork within the program. The policy committee members enacted a smoking policy that addressed the issues of underage smokers and construction site safety. It also developed a plan to raise money for an emergency loan fund for program members and for an end of the year trip. policy committee members also organized a holiday food basket collection for the needy.

**Casa Verde YouthBuild**

This policy committee meets every Wednesday between 11:30 am and 1:00 pm. The program buys lunch. There are four crews that each elect two policy committee members. In addition, two different Youthbuild participants who are not on the policy committee attend each week as observers, so that all the young people get to see it in operation. They have a youth chair and a written agenda. They begin each meeting by reading a few pages of the *Policy Committee Handbook* as a short weekly training piece. First they do old business, reporting on projects or assignments from last week. Then they move on to
new business. Half the issues brought up are by the young people (on behalf of people in
their crews) and half are brought up by the program director. The director and the other
staff person play good roles. Whenever a young person asks the director a question, he
turns it back to the group by saying: “What do you think we should do?”

He says: “We have such-an-such an issue, what do you think we should do?” He
listens, asks questions to get different opinions, and asks the group to make a decision.
The chair clearly has the respect and support of the group. They end each meeting with
appreciations of the group and the person on their left.

An impressive feature: There is a laptop computer on the table. One of the youth
members takes minutes as the meeting progresses. At the end of each meeting, they print
out the minutes and make copies for each member to post back at their sites or classroom.
The following morning there is a scheduled time for the policy committee members to
report on the meeting to their respective crews, and get input for the next meeting. A
policy committee member stated, “The policy committee is the best part of the program!
You really get to decide things here.”
**Leadership Development Worksheet**

1. List the goals of leadership development at your program.

   - ____________________________________________
   - ____________________________________________
   - ____________________________________________
   - ____________________________________________

2. What are three key attitudes that will best promote leadership development in your program?
   1. ____________________________________________
   2. ____________________________________________
   3. ____________________________________________

3. Who is or will be in charge of leadership development at your site?

   ____________________________________________

4. Who else is or will be involved in ensuring that leadership development work is happening?

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<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
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5. How do you or will you recruit and select youth who have a leadership attitude of “taking responsibility to see that things go right?”

   ____________________________________________

6. What leadership jobs are or will be available for young people in the program?

   On the job site? ____________________________________________
   In the classroom? ____________________________________________
   In the counseling component? ________________________________
   Programwide? ____________________________________________

7. How does or how will your program involve young people in decision making?

   ____________________________________________

8. What leadership skills or competencies do/will you expect young people to learn in your program?
9. What kinds of formal leadership training are or will be provided for:

The staff

The young people

10. How will the program provide opportunities for participants to be involved in community leadership?

11. What are or will be special features of the leadership development component?

Other:
The Basic Components of a Good Educational Program at YouthBuild

I. Organization and management of the program reflect the value of education in young people’s lives

- Vision and mission of the program are aligned, clarified, and reinforced daily and the significance of education is clearly understood and conveyed to the students
- Infrastructure is adequate and resources are allocated strategically to support the vision and mission
- Supervision and evaluation of teachers is conducted regularly with an eye towards their professional development and growth
- Positive program culture is valued by all and created intentionally through practices and rituals built into regular routines
- Data is collected, analyzed, and used to inform ongoing program improvement

II. Teaching and learning is student centered, relevant, and rigorous

- All students are assessed early and often to individualize their learning and to provide appropriate supports and challenges as needed
- Postsecondary credentials and career pathways are expected, encouraged, planned, and supported
- Reading and writing, and critical thinking skills are prioritized and taught across the curriculum
- Students are prepared in math skills and they are shown the relevance of this through real life skills of fiscal management, budgeting, business planning, etc.
- Technology is deeply integrated into the curriculum so students are able to master the skills required for work, college, and life success
- A competency-based portfolio model is used to teach students beyond the test and clear benchmarks are used to know when the students have acquired the necessary competencies.
- Teaching is seen as a craft that is practiced, polished, and supported. Teachers are given common planning time and adequate resources, are supervised and evaluated regularly, and their professional development is continuous and targeted
- Teachers use different forms of student data- formative and summative- to inform and improve their teaching practice

III. Youth development is an integral part of students’ learning and growth experiences

- Students’ social and emotional growth is given attention through comprehensive supports and appropriate challenges
- Every student has a positive, significant relationship with an adult at the program
- Leadership and navigation skills are an integral part of student learning
- Civic engagement creates a sense of relevance and adding to community asset is a source of pride for all
- Program components are integrated—counseling and construction support student’s academic learning and reinforce high expectations of all students
Introduction to the Counseling Component

Overview

Youthbuild programs seek to support the trainees in transforming their lives and acquiring the skills they need to succeed in work, school, family, and community involvement. The goal of the counseling component is to facilitate this transformation process by teaching trainees how to overcome obstacles to their success. These obstacles can be both internal and external. They may be:

- Personal, resulting from the ideas, attitudes, feelings, behavior, or lack of skills and information of the young people themselves
- Interpersonal, flowing from troubling relationships with family and friends
- System-related, connected to the justice, welfare, medical, mental health, educational, or other systems.

The role of the counseling component is to figure out what support, information, skills, or resources each trainee needs, and assist trainees in:

- Understanding themselves and their environment
- Facing and overcoming personal issues that get in their way
- Working out relationships with others
- Negotiating external systems

To plan and organize the counseling component, the program needs to establish clear goals for the component.

This chapter focuses on information that will influence the goals set for the component: understanding the needs presented by in-coming trainees, and understanding the process of youth transformation as it has been observed so far in Youthbuild programs. It also includes a summary of the key elements that might comprise a Youthbuild counseling component.

“Jesse had made up his mind that he didn’t want to stay in the street. He did well academically. He did well on the work site. His attendance was good. He had a good attitude with the crews. All in all, he was doing very well the first three
months. All of a sudden, because of his past activities, warrants started coming out for his arrest. He was picked up on a past sale of drugs charge.

“Jesse was given a hearing. The judge was set to give him 23 months. He had a court date set for the trial. At the appointed time, Youthbuild counselors went to court with him and presented a case for him. We told the court that we understood that Jesse had been involved with narcotics but he had proven over the months of the Youthbuild program that he was changing his life. We told the court that for the last 90 days, Jesse had not been absent from the program and that during this time, he had done well in school. We took his grades with us when we went to talk with the judge.

“We described his rejuvenation, that he had been able to stay away from drugs even while still living in a crack infested neighborhood. The judge accepted this and put him on probation. He will graduate tomorrow and in September will continue the program as an intern.”

The Process of Personal Transformation at a Youthbuild Site

One of the striking things about successful Youthbuild programs is how consistently trainees proclaim that they have completely changed their lives, turning from negative to positive, wanting to be constructive instead of destructive, being ready to “give back” and help their communities. Youthbuild students continually demonstrate how eager they are to seize the opportunity to change. In the words of one graduate, “I used to be a menace to my community. Now I am a minister to it.” This individual, incarcerated for violent assault prior to Youthbuild, is working as a medical assistant in a neighborhood clinic a year after graduating from Youthbuild. This personal transformation is a developmental process that happens for each student at a different pace, and in a different way, depending on the unique experiences of each student. However, some common elements to this process have been observed through research. They are useful to recognize and helpful in planning the counseling component.

Dr. Ronald Ferguson and Jason Snipes at the Kennedy School of Government conducted extensive interviews with 67 Youthbuild participants at five sites over a two-year period in an attempt to develop a framework that captures the transformation process of many Youthbuild participants. Through their research, Ferguson and Snipes identified a series of developmental stages that successful Youthbuild participants seem to move through during their time at Youthbuild. Their theoretical framework is built on Erik Erikson’s model of the development of identity over the human life cycle.

The research can be useful in the development of a counseling program, because it seeks to:
• Capture the ways that young people experience these developmental stages
• Identify the challenges that counselors face in attempting to help young people through them
• Highlight the key role that counselors and other staff can play in supporting the process of personal transformation

The research can also be useful in training the entire Youthbuild staff about their role in youth development, ensuring that the full staff is working together as a team in the most effective way to support the trainees.

Below is a summary of the five stages in this model of personal transformation at Youthbuild. In reality, of course, trainees do not move through these stages in a clear sequence, or all at the same time. However, it is useful to recognize the stages they may go through in the typical transformation process.

Stage 1: Trust vs. Mistrust

During the first few weeks of the program, the trainee is grappling with the issue of trust. A trainee must become sufficiently comfortable (trustful) in the program environment to decide to stay and to become actively engaged as a member of the Youthbuild community. During this period, beginning with trainee orientation, the program will need to consciously create an environment in which all trainees can develop that sense of trust and safety in the staff, in one another and in the program.

Stage 2: Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt

In this stage, the trainee struggles to achieve a balance between his own autonomy and the external control (i.e., rules and expectations) imposed by the program. The trainee will be continually assessing whether it is worth giving up some autonomy to become a part of this community called Youthbuild.

For trainees to move successfully through this phase, the staff and trainees will need to deepen the tentative feelings of trust they established at the outset of the program. Young people will begin testing the staff to discern which of their initial impressions are true. Staff have to prove that they deserve to be trusted on at least four levels.

• Can I trust you to have my best interests at heart?
• Can I trust you to be competent—to know what you’re talking about?
• Can I trust you to keep your promises to me? Will you have sufficient resources to perform your job?
• Can I trust you to treat me well? Will you be respectful, fair, and pleasant?

Right away, it is important that the program strike an appropriate balance between discipline and moral support. If disciplinary actions seem excessively harsh or arbitrary and unpredictable, trainees may surmise that staff members are on an “authority trip” or
“just here for the money,” and not genuinely interested in helping young people. On the other hand, if disciplinary practices are too lax, trainees will assume that the management is incompetent or uncaring and therefore ripe for exploitation. Young people who want to learn may become disillusioned and leave.

If this developmental stage is resolved successfully, trainees will stop trying simply to “get over” (i.e., to avoid the program’s authority through pretense) and will begin to trust the program, including the counselor.

**Stage 3: Initiative vs. Guilt**

Once the trainee trusts his new social environment and has decided to relinquish some of his autonomy to it, he needs to decide what to do in a forward looking way with the opportunity. The student asks, “What do I want from this opportunity? Am I selling out by wanting it?”

Frequently, loyalty to peers and family are the most significant threat to a trainee’s ability to set a new positive direction without feelings of guilt. Trainees may feel guilty because they believe they are abandoning their peers or family by seeking success in mainstream society, leaving others behind. One of the important roles that Youthbuild counselors play is helping trainees to pursue success without being handicapped by feelings of guilt and ambivalence. Often this means discussing ethics and values and helping them understand the legitimacy of options that others among their friends may dismiss.

**Stage 4: Industry vs. Inferiority**

When a trainee reaches this stage, he will demonstrate a new level of industriousness. A trainee will be struggling to figure out which goals are truly feasible for him. He will also be evaluating whether particular goals are both feasible and more attractive than available alternatives. He may question whether jobs will really be available for him. He may question whether discriminatory attitudes will keep him from getting good jobs. He may be willing to consider college as an option that he never considered before. One of the most important things that counselors can do at this stage is to support the development and maintenance of beliefs in the attractiveness and feasibility of a range of program goals. The counselor’s job at this stage is to communicate information about options, strategies, skills, and rewards. In addition, the counselor should be available to help deal with crises that would threaten the trainee’s progress by distracting him from his goals.

**Stage 5: Identity vs. Identity Confusion**

A trainee who lasts all the way through the program experiences many changes in his skills, habits, attitudes, aspirations, and social affiliations. This can foster tension between
old and new identities. The challenge for the young person at this stage is to achieve and sustain a coherent and positive synthesis of all aspects of his identity. Positive changes in identity may be among the most important results of the Youthbuild program. As the young people develop, it is important for staff to begin treating them according to who they are now, rather than who they were when they entered the program. Counselors and other staff members need to communicate their beliefs about who the trainee is becoming. They need to tell him what they think of him and how they think he has changed. In order to maintain progress during the program year, a trainee needs people both inside and outside the Youthbuild program to reflect back to him the most positive aspects of his changed identity. Counselors can increase the likelihood that progress will continue after Youthbuild. They can do such things as:

- Plan for ways that trainees can be supportive of one another after the program
- Prove to people, particularly to fathers and mothers, that trainees have performed well in the program
- Be sure that trainees have jobs or plans for continuing education after Youthbuild
- Provide opportunities for youth to talk about identity-related tensions
- Teach trainees the ways that particular behaviors can signal their new identities to others, even changing their reputation in the eyes of people who knew them before
- Help trainees develop ways to interpret and respond to unfriendly treatment in all of the various situations where such treatment is likely to occur, so that their responses will not damage their otherwise improving reputations

For a more thorough discussion, see “The Counselor’s Role in Helping Youth Through Developmental Tasks and Stages in Youthbuild,” by Ferguson and Snipes, included in the Appendix as Item one.
Hiring and Training the Counseling Staff

Recruiting and Hiring Counselors

Characteristics to Look for in the Counseling Staff

Youthbuild counselors have generally been individuals with substantial hands-on counseling experience who share some of the life experience of the students, have deep compassion and commitment, and very good judgment. Ideally, they have a bachelor’s degree and/or graduate training with some emphasis on counseling. In some cases programs have hired professional social workers who also share some of the background of the students or have had enough experience with similar students to make them credible communicators. The following are some of the characteristics to look for in selecting a counselor:

• Patient, honest, objective, warm, committed, reliable, and kind
• Excellent listening skills
• Genuinely likes young people
• Not every counselor needs to be charismatic, but it helps
• Perceptive, intuitive, attentive, with an ability to notice and respond to what is being communicated directly and indirectly
• Comfortable with display of feelings and able to allow and encourage flow of feelings when necessary
• Experienced in handling resistant youth
• Comfortable with youth of the racial and cultural backgrounds represented in the program and able to show respect for different racial and cultural traditions
• Willing to “go beyond the call of duty” due to deep commitment to helping every individual reach their potential

There is no conclusive evidence that the counselor being of the same race, ethnicity, or gender as the person being counseled is critical in a counseling relationship. The nature of a counseling relationship goes beyond appearance or similarities in experience. The willingness to expose one’s vulnerability is not based ultimately on likeness, but rather on the sense of trust and confidence that develops in a relationship between two individuals who have gotten to know each other. It is clear, however, that having a number of people on the staff from a similar background as the students will enable the students to see them as role models and know that they understand firsthand the types of feelings and experiences the trainees will be having in the course of the program. This increases the students’ sense of trust, the belief in the competence of the staff, and the actual ability of the staff to empathize and respond appropriately to situations presented. Since the counselor is the person relating most consistently on the personal level with the students, there is logic in trying to assure that the counselor has a similar background to the
majority of students. Individuals with backgrounds similar to the rest of the students should also be present on staff.

**Finding and Interviewing Counselors**

Schools of social work and counseling programs in community colleges and universities are good sources of potential candidates for counseling positions at Youthbuild programs. Advertisements and outreach through community newspapers and youth workers’ journals can bring good candidates.

The interview process should focus heavily on the candidates’ ability to listen, understand, and provide guidance. The candidate should not be invested in changing the young person in order to fulfill his own needs for success. Beware of the applicant who wants to preach to young people about the right way to do things, or the one who seems so identified with the students that he might collude with negative behavior or be almost desperate to “save” them. However, deep commitment to doing everything in their power to support the young people’s efforts to succeed in life is essential.

A hiring process that includes the director prescreening candidates and checking references in depth, and then inclusion of young people in final interviews of those candidates found acceptable by the director, will result in the selection of staff with a strong ability to relate to the young people. An interview of a candidate by trainees, with the director present, gives a different insight into the strengths and weaknesses of that candidate than does an interview by the director alone. Some start-up programs have established a youth advisory committee to help with hiring when no trainees have been selected yet.

The addition of a series of one or two role plays to that interview has proven very effective at illuminating the candidate’s skills and attitudes. The role plays should be typical situations—both group and individual—that a counselor might be expected to address in the normal course of a week at Youthbuild.

**Training and Supervising Counselors**

It is important in the hiring of counselors to look at the entire counseling unit. If the program is able to have a few people in the counseling unit, a well-trained professional as its supervisor with less-trained counseling staff is appropriate. On the other hand, if your funds are only sufficient to hire a single counselor, it is important to find someone who will not require a lot of supervision and has an appropriate mixture of both experience and education.
If a Youthbuild program has a small counseling staff, much of the supervisory responsibility will rest with the program manager.

7. Leadership Development Opportunities

Leadership development opportunities can be powerful tools in the personal transformation process because they allow trainees to step outside their old self-image and try on a new role that draws on talents and skills they might not know they have. It gives them a glimpse of who they might become and stimulates a change in identity.

Well-developed opportunities of several types are typically offered at Youthbuild programs: participation in governance of the program itself through a policy committee or advisory committee that meets regularly with the director, participation in visible community and human service in the neighborhood in addition to providing affordable housing, and participation in policy forums and other community gatherings designed to develop solutions for problems facing the community. These activities motivate students to change their own lives by showing that they can play a significant role in improving the lives of others.

Key Elements of a Strong Counseling Program

Once the context that supports it is created, the counseling program itself has three basic elements:
1. One-on-one counseling scheduled on a regular basis
2. Small group discussions, support groups, and counseling
3. Case management (internal and external)

1. One-on-one Counseling

One-on-one counseling is the backbone of the counseling program. The counselor will ideally meet with every student at least once every two weeks, usually during the school week. These sessions focus on short-term specific problems that have come up in the program or at home, or take a longer-term approach of working on goals and objectives of a life plan that the student and counselor define together. The exact focus of these discussions will be guided by the student’s stated needs and interests, and the counselor’s assessment of the student’s needs.

In communities where young people are facing serious personal obstacles including involvement with gangs, drugs, and violence, programs have found that a counselor to student ratio of about 1 to 15 is needed in order to meet every two weeks and fulfill all the related follow-up and other counseling needs of the students. Some programs choose to have one counselor for every 28 or 30 students. In this situation, the counselor will need to plan his time very carefully. Many counselors build in weekly visits to the construction site, just to informally check in with all trainees during the week. This
informal contact allows the counselor to learn if any emergencies have come up requiring a special individual appointment.

2. Small Groups

Group dynamics are a powerful force in a Youthbuild program. The relationships among students become a primary force in pushing them forward or pulling them back. The program can deliberately and thoughtfully use the power of groups to build a sense of “family,” a commitment to common goals, a sense of trust, and an atmosphere of safety away from the unpredictable forces on the street.

The counseling component uses groups in a variety of structured forms, each with a different purpose. Counseling groups are used to:

• Communicate information and discuss topics such as drugs and AIDS
• Teach specific skills, such as conflict resolution, managing money, and parenting
• Provide personal emotional support, including general support groups or specific male or female support groups
• Resolve day-to-day problems within the program and among participants

Youthbuild programs tend to offer various types of groups that meet from one to three times per week for those students who are at the school site. Some groups have outside presenters or facilitators. Some involve more than one staff member. Some are handled just by the counselor.

3. Case Management

Youthbuild trainees have a variety of personal needs, which can often be addressed through one coordinated plan. Case management is a method for coordinating the range of resources and services that an individual student may need.

The counseling program provides case management services in two ways:

• External to the Youthbuild Program. Through collaborative relationships with other agencies, the counseling component helps students gain access to legal, medical, housing, and social services that they need beyond what the Youthbuild program can provide. Coordinating these services is the role of the counselor, who needs to be well acquainted with the resources and able to advocate for their being responsive to the trainees’ needs. It should be understood that students don’t really like to be referred elsewhere, so when it is necessary the counselor will have to shepherd the process carefully.
Internal to the Youthbuild program. The counseling component serves as the central information and communication point for staff regarding the development of each student. The counselor ensures that staff share concerns regarding the students, and oversees one unified strategy within the staff for addressing those issues. This internal case management component can make the difference in the success or failure of young people in the program, because it ensures that students do not fall through the cracks. To do this, some programs have weekly or biweekly meetings, convened by the program manager, in which all counseling, education, and construction staff identify concerns and develop strategies regarding individual students. Other programs designate a case management team (including counselor, teacher and construction trainer) to coordinate the work with a sub-set of trainees. Some programs have also used a regular monthly survey of staff to describe the level of closeness of their relationships with trainees to ascertain whether any trainees were being overlooked. Whatever methods are selected, it is critical that the staff have ongoing, focused discussions on concerns regarding specific students.

Voices of Youthbuild Graduates

“The biggest influence on me was seeing my peers accomplish what they wanted and wanting that for myself. YouthBuild turned my life around.”
—Dustin Connors, graduate, YouthBuild Ft. Berthold.
Planning and Organizing a Youthbuild Graduate Resources Program

Overview

The purpose of a Youthbuild graduate resources program is to provide structure and opportunities for graduates of a Youthbuild program to continue to grow, learn, stay employed, pursue their goals, develop their leadership capabilities, influence their community, and enjoy the same kind of positive peer group relationships they had during the program. It creates a bridge for young people between the program and a fully responsible and productive life. It helps achieve HUD’s goal of developing leaders committed to community development. HUD Youthbuild grants allow programs to use funds to support a follow-up program for graduates after program completion. Almost all graduates need support in new settings, such as jobs or higher education, and all graduates need support in continuing their personal and leadership development. A graduate program that is broadly conceived and available to all graduates is more likely to sustain the progress achieved during the training period than one that focuses on a more limited range of follow-up services for graduates with difficulties.

Components of a Graduate Resources Program

A Youthbuild graduate resources program must provide many ways to involve graduates, depending on their needs and life situations. Many of these services and opportunities overlap with those provided during the full-time training phase and therefore should not be difficult to extend to graduates. The following components describe a fairly comprehensive approach:

Education

The program assists graduates in obtaining the GED and reaching other educational goals such as college or technical school. It also supports students who are attending postsecondary institutions. For GED completion, the graduate program can schedule and assist with ongoing evening classes, regular tutoring sessions, cooperative classes, and drop-in study sessions. Individual and group support can be extended at the local site for GED attainment; however, if those resources are not available, staff can identify and establish relationships with other organizations providing GED education in a manner consistent with graduate needs.

Higher education information, counseling, and guidance can also be provided. Community resources, college-based assistance for financial aid, and special academic preparation services can be found at schools that graduates want to attend, and cooperative arrangements can be established between those schools and the Youthbuild program. Therefore, when graduates decide to seek postsecondary education
opportunities, a support system will be available. For students already attending college, special tutoring or support groups are also appropriate.

**Job Placement and Career Counseling**
Youthbuild helps graduates obtain and keep jobs and choose careers if they are still unsure of what they want to do. This can include job support groups for dealing with the difficulties young people may have on the job, career counseling, counseling about how to keep a job or obtain a new job; maintaining a job listing and database, providing help with résumé writing and interviewing skills, goal setting for work and career, and job placement. Most of the above simply continue processes which were begun during the program.

**Support Services**
Graduate resources should continue to address the personal and emotional issues of the young people. A variety of support services should be offered or referrals should be arranged, including but not limited to:

- Regular peer support groups for parents, fathers who take responsibility for their children, recovering addicts, aspiring entrepreneurs, mothers, or other subgroups
- Individual counseling on emotional issues
- Referrals to helpful outside agencies or people
- Mentorships
- Assistance in accessing legal, health, housing, mortgage loans, or other services
- Assistance in filing taxes

**Leadership Development**
Leadership opportunities enable graduates to continue “to take responsibility to make things go right for their lives, for their families, for the program, and for the community.” These opportunities are often the incentive for following through on other responsibilities. Opportunities might include doing local advocacy for Youthbuild or community issues, getting involved in community service, serving on a board of directors for Youthbuild or another community agency or serving on a mayoral advisory committee, joining a local political campaign, doing workshops which are then offered to schools and community groups, networking with other local young adult leadership organizations to build alliances and work on joint projects, being “ambassadors” to other youth organizations, and making media appearances. Through this type of activity, the graduates continue a level of civic engagement that strengthens their communities and themselves.

**Social Life**
A positive social environment helps young adults avoid the problems of a negative life style. Since their jobs are new, graduates are in lonely positions. They need to have regular events with familiar people who are going through similar experiences. Drug- and alcohol-free events can be planned. Bowling, dances, roller skating, beach parties,
barbecues, group attendance at concerts, talent shows, and fundraisers are just a few ideas, many of which are being done at local sites.

**Small Business Development**
The program can provide training, technical assistance, and seed money to graduates who desire to start their own businesses. This is a more ambitious and risky venture that requires its own planning and program development if business success is the goal. There are local resources in most cities and several national training organizations with local affiliates who can give guidance and training. The National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship, or NFTE, located in Washington DC is an excellent resource. (212-232-3333 or email: NFTE@msn.com) The Small Business Administration of the Department of Labor also provides information and assistance on small business development and has field offices in many cities. Check to see if there is a local office near you, and inquire about training services or guest speakers.

**Alumni Club**
The above activities are led by staff. An alumni club, much like a college alumni group, is organized and led by graduates, with a staff support person. The club decides its own activities, raises most of its own money itself, and often represents the Youthbuild program in the wider community. For example, the club might decide to focus on doing community service, sponsoring social activities as part of the graduate resources program, lending a hand in tutoring incoming Youthbuild students, or organizing a youth conference. These components work together to provide a context of support for the graduates. For example, if a graduate is involved in continuing GED preparation and is coming to some of the social events, it’s likely she will get interested in some of the leadership activities and participate in the alumni club. If young people are coming to a support group, they are more likely to set higher goals for themselves in work and education.

**A Vision of Graduate Resources**
What follows is a hypothetical vision of a well-developed Youthbuild graduate resources program. It assumes ideal conditions such as adequate funding, a connection to the first-year program, sufficient staffing, a variety of well-conceived and implemented components, commitment from the board, staff, and participants, and a strong connection with the local community. This vision also assumes that the program has been in operation for at least two years. No Youthbuild program has incorporated all of the elements below. It is intended to create a picture and illustrate what is possible. Your program may not achieve all this, but it is meant to give you some ideas.

**A Vision of Graduate Resources at “Youthbuild Anytown”**

“Youthbuild Anytown” has been in existence for two-and-a-half years. Currently, there are 35 participants and 54 graduates from the previous two cycles. Six months into the program, the trainees are preparing for what comes after graduation. They were told at the beginning of their orientation that their contact with Youthbuild does not need to end with graduation because there is a second phase of Youthbuild
specifically for graduates and that Youthbuild has a slogan, “Once in Youthbuild, always in Youthbuild.”

Of the 54 graduates, about 36 regularly participate in graduate activities. The program is deliberately designed to be flexible enough to accommodate graduates at their various levels of time and interest. Before they graduate, all participants are thoroughly and frequently briefed about the opportunities and services of the graduate resources program. After graduation, graduates receive regular mailings about graduate activities and personal phone calls to see how they are doing and to invite them to use the graduate resources program. Some graduates utilize the graduate education resources.

For example, some graduates who did not obtain the GED while in the program come back for regular prep classes. They help each other study and arrange to take the tests on the same day for mutual support. Other graduates have decided to go on to higher education and get help visiting local community colleges or universities and filling out the admissions and financial aid forms. Others have been in college for several months and need tutoring or encouragement. Older college students have been enlisted as volunteers to tutor the Youthbuild graduates. The education component has also built relationships with local trade schools eager to accept serious Youthbuild graduates and help them find financial aid if needed. Occasionally, a course is offered through the graduate resources program taught by a board member, staff, or community person. Graduates have been able to take classes in basic accounting, word processing, and parenting skills.

Since the most important need of most graduates is continued employment, the graduate program puts major emphasis on job resources. There is a job bank, which is a regularly updated list of jobs available. The bank also includes employers who have hired Youthbuild graduates in the past. The graduate program’s job developer is available to talk with graduates who lose jobs. In this case, the job developer helps graduates determine why and see if there are things they can do in the future to avoid a similar situation. Graduates can use computers to revise their résumés or write cover letters to prospective employers. Graduates can use the program’s computers to access Internet job listings. Concurrently, the job developer networks with a wide range of employers to secure commitments for job slots for Youthbuild graduates. The program may also offer training certification courses in lead abatement, asbestos removal, and toxic waste handling.

The graduate program has a small business incubation project. An experienced staff
person provides technical assistance, training, and support for graduates who want to start their own businesses. There is a revolving loan fund and a seed money grant pool to provide some start-up capital. So far this project has helped launch three successful businesses: a home day-care business, a floor polishing business, and a house painting company. Many graduates find the personal counseling and social services essential. A counselor is available to help a graduate through a crisis, act as a sympathetic listener, be an advocate with the welfare or justice system, or assist in finding better housing. The counselor is someone the graduates knew when they were participants, so trust and confidence has already been established.

Some graduates also maintain the support groups that began during the program cycle. There is a support group for young parents, a group for men, and a 12-step program for graduates recovering from substance abuse. These are mostly peer-led but the counselor adds professional skill by participating in these groups.

There is a graduate mentoring program that has two directions. First, 23 graduates volunteer to mentor and tutor elementary and middle-school aged students. It is very rewarding and is a source of pride for the graduates. Second, 31 graduates have mentors themselves, people in the community who volunteer to assist in graduates’ further development, including regular contact, coaching, opening doors of opportunity, and giving feedback and advice. Several of these are members of the National Association of Minority Contractors. The graduate resources program staff match people carefully and have periodic reviews of the mentoring relationships.

Since the majority of the graduates are working full-time or are in college, most of the Youthbuild graduate activities take place in the evenings or on weekends. After trying various staffing patterns over the past several years, Youthbuild Anytown determined that an adequate staff and budget were needed for the graduate resources program. This year, there is one full-time graduate resources program coordinator, a job developer, and the part-time services of a GED instructor and a counselor, who also work with current trainees in the program. In addition, there are two graduates hired as interns to help coordinate the graduate program and the alumni club. The budget is $105,000, including staff salaries, a small activities budget, and several thousand dollars available for revolving loans or for grants to support special projects of graduates. This level of funding was built into Youthbuild Anytown’s funding proposals early last year.

As in the program cycle, the graduate resources program has a policy committee consisting of officers and directors of the alumni club. They meet once a month with
the graduate resources program coordinator to hire any new graduate program staff, help resolve program difficulties, set new directions, and give the coordinator advice and feedback from the other graduates. Graduates are encouraged to keep developing themselves and their leadership. Innumerable leadership opportunities are made available to graduates through the follow-up program. Two graduates serve on Youthbuild Anytown’s board of directors. They are called upon to accompany the director on fundraising events, to be spokespersons for Youthbuild at community meetings, to talk to the media, and to recruit and select new participants.

They have been guest speakers in the program, tutors, and peer counselors. There is a graduate alumni club whose activities are graduate-led and are determined by the interests of the members. Youthbuild Anytown’s alumni club has decided to focus on three things: community involvement, a positive social life, and organizing a community youth conference to set a youth agenda for their community for the next ten years. For community involvement, the graduates collected food at Thanksgiving for the local homeless shelter. Three graduates who work at night volunteer in the neighborhood elementary school to help teach reading to second graders. The alumni club has organized monthly events: several drug and alcohol-free dances, a few barbecues, bowling parties, and a few ball games. It has also organized a Youthbuild basketball team and entered into the city league. The alumni club encourages graduates to socialize with each other to reinforce the positive choices they made during the program year. Such social activities have been an important anchor in the lives of many of the young people.

The alumni club has also organized a youth conference to get other young people and young adults together to define the problems they face in their community and to propose solutions. It took six months to make this happen. About a dozen alumni club members led the project. They called other agencies, spoke at school assemblies, got public service announcements on local radio shows, and spread the word on the street that the conference was happening. They invited the mayor, other public officials, and the media to attend and listen. They got the local cable access TV to tape the event. The conference drew over 200 people. It represented the beginning of a useful discussion of issues facing youth and directions for future actions. The Youthbuild alumni club received tremendous appreciation and thanks for initiating the conference. It provided an important leadership experience for the members.

Overall, the Youthbuild Anytown graduate resources program is a center of social activity, learning, and support. Graduates feel the sense of family that they felt while
enrolled in Youthbuild. “Once in Youthbuild, always in Youthbuild!” has become a reality. The graduate resources program even provides childcare and transportation for many of the activities to make it easier for graduates who are parents to participate. Graduates believe that Youthbuild Anytown is a home base where they can have continuing contact with staff who care about them, be around positive peers, and be inspired by the vision of Youthbuild in the community.