How They Did It: Los Angeles YouthBuild Collaborative Succeeds with 100 Placements in Apprenticeship

February 2018

Introduction

From 2015 to 2016, YouthBuild programs in Los Angeles County placed 100 individuals in apprenticeships. This coordinated effort included placements for 47 YouthBuild graduates and 53 residents who lived in local low-income communities. In a fast-paced, demand-driven labor market, timely response is required to meet employer needs. Labor market demand will remain a major contributing factor in apprenticeship placements. As of 2015, there were approximately 310,000 workers employed in the construction industry across Southern California, with over 98,000 job openings expected over the next five years. Another important factor in placements is having a highly developed ecosystem that supports local hiring and provides the incentive to bring on workers from underrepresented groups to fulfill local hiring agreements. This is fertile ground for partnerships that support the transition of YouthBuild graduates from the program into the industry and strengthen the position of YouthBuild programs in the apprenticeship pipeline.

With this effort, YouthBuild sponsoring organizations demonstrated their value by helping apprenticeship sponsors meet local hiring targets during the limited lifespan of construction projects, even where this hiring extended beyond the YouthBuild participants. As detailed below, there was such a high and quick demand for qualified workers in construction in Los Angeles County. There were more positions available than there were YouthBuild graduates to fill them. The YouthBuild sponsoring organizations were able to strengthen their partnerships with these apprenticeship sponsors by creating a pipeline of apprentices not just from YouthBuild but from the broader community. Their efforts included recruiting, screening, orienting, and recommending YouthBuild graduates and community residents for opportunities. This helped the apprenticeship sponsors fulfill local hire requirements by hiring pre-screened, qualified, and work-ready apprentices. These efforts also demonstrated the value-add of the YouthBuild sponsoring organization, both as a training provider and as a local organization well-positioned in the community to understand the needs of its residents. This strategy allowed programs to strike a balance between providing opportunities for YouthBuild graduates and community residents who possessed the work maturity, interest, and motivation to pursue construction careers, and responding to the needs of employers who sponsor new apprentices.

The local YouthBuild grantees and affiliates of YouthBuild USA used two key strategies to connect YouthBuild graduates and community residents to these opportunities. The first strategy was used at the Los Angeles Regional Construction Academy, which is sponsored by the YouthBuild Charter School of California. For the second strategy, Antelope Valley YouthBuild established an Ironworkers Bootcamp co-located on the YouthBuild program campus. These arrangements have laid the foundation for sustaining high placement levels in apprenticeship in Los Angeles over time.

The partnerships and preparation provided to YouthBuild students, graduates, and community residents are described in this case study. We draw on the experience of YouthBuild staff and partners to determine lessons for similar efforts. We examine the following questions:

(1) What partnership arrangements facilitated placements into apprenticeship? How were these partnerships cultivated over time?

(2) In what ways did the Construction Academy and the Ironworkers Bootcamp help YouthBuild participants and community members with their apprenticeship placements? What does this suggest about how other YouthBuild grantees might position their efforts?

(3) What lessons are applicable for sustaining high placement levels among YouthBuild grantees in Los Angeles and other locations?

(4) Based on these lessons, what practices or actions could be taken to strengthen and sustain apprenticeship pathways overall?
Description of the Partnership Arrangements Leading to Placements

This section describes the partners, their roles, and the vehicles leading to outcomes for YouthBuild participants. “Vehicles” refers to the particular convening bodies, programs, or processes that facilitate the desired outcomes.

The Building Trades Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) was developed by the National Standing Committee on Apprenticeship and Training of North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU). MC3 is a 120-hour apprenticeship readiness curriculum that can be used by schools, community organizations, and labor-management organizations in partnership with a Local Building Trades Council.

The US Department of Labor (DOL) sponsored two national MC3 trainings for YouthBuild grantees in Los Angeles. They took place with the approval of NABTU and the Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council.

The Los Angeles YouthBuild Collaborative is an informal membership organization comprised of 19 YouthBuild programs in Los Angeles County. Local YouthBuild collaboratives are organized by area YouthBuild programs in partnership with YouthBuild USA with the goals of promoting program quality, implementing special program initiatives, and sustaining YouthBuild programs with local funding.

The YouthBuild Charter School of California (YCSC) is a public charter high school accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The school empowers young people ages 16 to 24 who have been pushed out of traditional high school to earn a high school diploma while engaging in social justice work and community action projects. Starting in three sites, YCSC has provided educational services to 19 YouthBuild programs. YCSC developed an MC3 instructor handbook that emphasizes project-based learning and authentic assessment of students to measure achievement of MC3 learning objectives. The handbook was developed by charter school teachers who consulted with representatives from local labor-management organizations and YouthBuild construction trainers. This initial development was funded by YouthBuild USA with a $25,000 pass-through grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Eventually, YCSC raised $1.4 million to fund the YouthBuild Construction Academy and established an implementation agreement with the Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council on behalf of the 19 YouthBuild sponsoring organizations serving as school sites across Los Angeles County. The agreement ensured YouthBuild students would have the opportunity to earn an MC3 industry-recognized credential for apprenticeship readiness through the Construction Academy.

The Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council licensed YCSC to deliver the MC3 through an implementation agreement. They brokered a local partnership with Antelope Valley YouthBuild and Ironworkers Local 433 in Palmdale, California. This was in response to local hire requirements by City of Palmdale officials to build a solar farm in the Mojave Desert. The Ironworkers located a pre-apprenticeship boot camp on the campus of Antelope Valley YouthBuild to prepare local community residents and YouthBuild graduates for placements with a contractor and direct entry into the Ironworkers apprenticeship. Some labor-management organizations on the Council participated on the YCSC Construction Industry Panel.

The Emerald Cities Collaborative (ECC) was founded by 15 different organizations, including YouthBuild USA, to develop energy, green infrastructure, and other sustainable development projects that contribute to the resilience of metropolitan regions and ensure an equity stake for low-income communities of color in the green economy. ECC’s Los Angeles Chapter advised YCSC on curriculum and provided contacts within the industry. They consulted with the

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2 YouthBuild Charter School of California website: [http://www.youthbuildcharter.org/](http://www.youthbuildcharter.org/)
County of Los Angeles to develop its local and disadvantaged worker participation requirements. ECC facilitated the inclusion of YouthBuild as a community service provider of qualified pre-apprenticeship construction training. Community service providers were identified as resource organizations for contractors who needed to recruit local and disadvantaged workers. The County of Los Angeles’ local and disadvantaged worker requirements established that local and disadvantaged workers perform a minimum number of craft worker hours in order to meet the requirements. Community service providers, including YouthBuild programs, were named in public contract specifications at Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Hospital; the Los Angeles Community College District; and Los Angeles County Department of Community Development building projects. Contacts with industry representatives and the application of contract specifications allowed for placements in apprenticeship by way of existing construction projects. ECC also sat on the YCSC Construction Advisory Panel.

Hathaway Dinwiddie provides general contracting and complete construction management services throughout California. They used YouthBuild as a talent source to meet local hire requirements on private construction projects. In 2015 and 2016, the firm needed talent for a University of Southern California Village project. They contacted YCSC to fill apprentice and helper positions with contractors working on the project, and they sat on the YCSC Construction Advisory Panel.

Los Angeles County Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) co-enrolls YouthBuild participants. The agency also documents measurable skill gains of YouthBuild participants, provides support services, and provides equipment such as helmets, safety gear, and work boots. They register students at local American Job Centers through trainings at local YouthBuild programs and they work with YouthBuild program and YCSC staff to secure support services for incoming YouthBuild apprentices. Services are funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The chair of the Los Angeles YouthBuild Collaborative recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize this arrangement with Department of Labor YouthBuild grantees and YouthBuild USA affiliate programs. The chair is the authorizing representative for this informal membership body.

National organizations helped this process along in various ways. The National Building Trades Standing Committee on Apprenticeship, representing NABTU, developed the 120-hour MC3 for apprenticeship readiness. This created an opening for YCSC to engage the Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council. YouthBuild USA introduced the MC3 to YCSC and the Los Angeles YouthBuild Collaborative. YouthBuild USA worked in partnership with NABTU and the Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council to deliver MC3 training through YouthBuild USA’s technical assistance contract with the US Department of Labor. YouthBuild USA was on the board of the National Emerald Cities Collaborative. The National Emerald Cities President, Denise Fairchild, introduced Hathaway Dinwiddie to YouthBuild USA staff who, in turn, connected the Hathaway Dinwiddie office in Los Angeles to the Construction Academy staff. This sparked the local relationship.

The following chart lists the partners, the entity that held the relationship within the local YouthBuild system, the partnership vehicle, and the relevant outcomes from this partnership process.

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### Partnership Development Timeline

The process of developing this apprenticeship pathway has transpired over the course of several years. The following timeline tracks the local and national efforts that resulted in this pathway.

#### 2007: MC3 is developed by NABTU to promote apprenticeship readiness.

#### 2008: The Emerald Cities Collaborative (ECC) is founded.

#### 2009: DOL sponsors the first national MC3 training event for YouthBuild grantees.

#### 2010: The YouthBuild Charter School of California (YCSC) develops an instructor handbook that utilizes project-based learning and authentic assessment of students to measure achievement of MC3 learning objectives.

#### 2010–2014: The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors adopts a Local and Disadvantaged Worker Hiring policy for construction and renovation projects for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Hospital worth $285 million. YouthBuild is named as a resource for contractors working on these projects. The hospital’s predecessor, The Martin Luther King, Jr. Outpatient Center, originally opened in 1972 and ceased operations in 2007. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved several projects designed to revitalize the campus and establish a revitalized hospital as a center for excellence for healthcare in Los Angeles County. The hospital provides services for 12 million residents in South Los Angeles⁴. In 2014, the Los Angeles Community College District follows suit by naming YouthBuild in contract specifications for their $6.2 billion building program. The Department of Community Development adds YouthBuild into their contract language as a local and disadvantaged worker hiring partner as well. By the end of 2014, YouthBuild is listed as a resource for local hire labor procurement for Los Angeles County construction projects.

#### 2014–2017: Los Angeles Regional YouthBuild Construction Academy is established by the Los Angeles YouthBuild Collaborative. YouthBuild Collaborative programs contribute staff and money to launch the Academy. The

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first Academy is staffed by construction trainers from Antelope Valley YouthBuild, CCEO YouthBuild, LA CAUSA YouthBuild, and WINTER YouthBuild. The goal of the Academy is to ensure the workplace skills and readiness of YouthBuild graduates seeking to enter apprenticeships. Two graduates enter apprenticeship training with the Carpenters and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) unions.

2015: YCSC receives a Construction Pathways grant for $1.4 million from the California State Department of Education to support delivery of MC3 through the Construction Academy.

2015: MOU between Antelope Valley YouthBuild and Ironworkers Local 433 establishes the Ironworkers’ boot camp in Palmdale, California.

2015–2016 Academic Year: Sixteen YouthBuild school sites under YCSC place 47 graduates and 53 community members into apprenticeships sponsored by labor management organizations within the Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council.

2016: The President of the National Emerald Cities Collaborative, Denise Fairchild, introduces Theodora Oiye from Hathaway Dinwiddie to staff at YCSC.

The Results Over Time

As relationships evolved and the construction labor market began to heat up, placements increased. The chart below* shows a few placements from academic year 2013–14 through 2015–16. There was a dramatic increase in placements during 2015–16. Because the data are maintained by the Charter School, the statistics reference academic calendar years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year 2013-14</th>
<th>Academic Year 2014-15</th>
<th>Academic Year 2015-16</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Apprenticeship Placements through YouthBuild</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
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* Based on YouthBuild USA Data System and YouthBuild Charter School of California Data on Apprenticeship Placements.

The next two sections describe how YouthBuild programs responded to new opportunities driven by the labor market in Los Angeles County.
Right Time, Right Place: The Ironworkers Bootcamp

The Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council worked in Antelope Valley to secure work on a solar farm project in the Mojave Desert. Chris Hannan, the Council Representative, reached out to Rossie Johnson Cherry, Director of the Construction Academy and CEO of Antelope Valley YouthBuild, to discuss how to promote local hiring specifications. The City of Palmdale wanted to ensure the project would be a means of developing the local economy and that community residents would be employed on the project. “The Council wanted to increase access for local residents to apprenticeship,” Hannan explained.

The solar company that won the contract hired the Ironworkers to do the work. Unfortunately, there were no existing Ironworker training facilities in the Antelope Valley to train local apprentices. “The work site was a two-hour drive from the [Ironworker] training facility. Palmdale was a 40- to 50-minute drive,” Cherry explained. “[The] distance and time it took to travel from Palmdale to the Ironworker training center in La Palma made it impossible to expect apprentices living in Palmdale to make the trip every day.” The Ironworkers needed a location that was closer to the work site in order to support local hiring. To solve this problem, David Osborne, the organizer for Ironworkers Local 433, and Paul E. Martinez, the Ironworkers Apprenticeship Director, worked on an MOU specifying that YouthBuild Antelope Valley would be the location for an Ironworkers Bootcamp. The MOU allowed for utilization of Antelope Valley YouthBuild as a training space and made provisions for liability coverage, thus permitting welding in the parking lot on campus. The MOU also provided all candidates access to resources through WDACS. This included supportive services funded under WIOA. The MOU symbolized concrete evidence to the City of Palmdale that the local hire partnership was working.

YouthBuild Antelope Valley offered to conduct outreach for incoming apprentices. “One hundred and twenty people were needed within three months. YouthBuild offered to do outreach,” Cherry said. YouthBuild would take incoming apprentices—which included community residents and YouthBuild graduates—through the same application process they would use for incoming YouthBuild participants. YouthBuild screened all applicants for eligibility and provided an industry orientation. The orientation determined the leadership experience and motivation of incoming apprentices. YouthBuild staff examined knowledge of the building trades, union membership roles and responsibilities, the pros and cons of the industry, and the nature of the ironwork. Cherry said the Antelope Valley management team took responsibility for the outreach and screening processes. They used their existing community networks to pass out brochures about YouthBuild and the Ironworkers. “We used our normal outreach apparatus, including our Facebook page, and our alumni network (which provided outreach and a talent source),” Cherry stated. “Office staff set up a screening process and everyone received an interview to ensure they met the entry-level requirements. Our staff provided other referrals to people who did not meet the criteria.”

Every candidate was drug tested. Martinez brought drug-testing materials to Palmdale. Those who tested positive for drugs were screened out of the process. This was part of the process of bringing the Ironworkers apprenticeship training to Palmdale. Each candidate was interviewed by an Ironworker interview panel. Cherry was part of the panel. He stated, “It was surprising how they looked for and screened for motivation. They looked for barriers like a criminal record. They wanted candidates who were hungry and who had the physical abilities to meet the demands of the job—they had to be physically strong. The MC3 credential was also a plus. In the end, they wanted people who were young and hungry.”

Each person was ranked and placed into one of three bootcamp classes of 40 individuals each. The top-tier candidates were placed in the first bootcamp class. Lower-tier individuals were placed in later bootcamp classes. The bootcamps started early each day and lasted two weeks. Candidates were not permitted to miss a day. The
Ironworkers brought big equipment to the campus of Antelope Valley YouthBuild to train apprentices. If they passed the bootcamp, candidates had to make the two-hour drive to La Palma, California, to receive dispatch papers. These papers permitted the candidates to work on the construction site, marking their entry into apprenticeship training. “They went to La Palma on Friday and went to work on Monday,” Cherry explained.

By the end of the 2015–2016 academic year, the Ironworkers Bootcamp based at Antelope Valley YouthBuild was responsible for a total of 76 placements. This included 50 community residents and 26 YouthBuild graduates. “Since partnering with Antelope Valley YouthBuild, we have signed agreements with the water authority and the school district in Palmdale,” explained Chris Hannan. This has set the stage for similar partnering arrangements with other trades in the Antelope Valley.

**Preparing YouthBuild Graduates**

Work began in 2010 using an adaptation of the MC3. Phil Matero, CEO of YCSC explained, “We did not know about the MC3 until YouthBuild USA shared it with us. We wanted to adopt it when we found that this is what the building trades were using. YCSC pushed YouthBuild programs to use it since it was tied to the building trades and placements into apprenticeship. This wasn't true for other curricula local programs were using. The MC3 was a great way to provide students with a credential as part of a pathway.” The downside of the MC3 was that it did not have a way to assess learning.

Matero continued, “We created ways to organize, deliver, and assess achievement of learning objectives. This helped build our relationship with the building trades. We adapted the MC3 into three credit-bearing courses within our own overall curriculum.” A group of teachers—the Bridges Committee—developed project-based assessment protocols in which students were assessed on the quality of projects they completed. This was implemented by construction trainers and teachers. In spite of a unified curriculum, delivery of the curriculum was uneven. Some YouthBuild programs without US Department of Labor grants had limited funding to deliver a fully developed construction training curriculum with an academic focus.

The California State Department of Education grant that YCSC received in 2015 (see timeline) provided an opportunity to scale up the YouthBuild Construction Academy. Prior to the funding, the Academy was a small pilot initiated by four YouthBuild programs as a summer bridge program. It was designed to ensure work readiness and provide attainment of additional credentials. This would give graduates a leg up when they applied to apprenticeship programs.

With the state grant, the Academy hired staff to provide additional capacity building support to those programs without access to DOL grant dollars. This included building out spaces for vocational training and providing professional development for all construction trainers in the YCSC system. A regional coordinator for construction training was hired to take charge of the capacity-building work. A mentoring and outreach coordinator was hired to support YouthBuild graduates who were interested in pursuing construction careers through apprenticeship. The mentoring and outreach coordinator provided networking with employers and labor-management organizations and made sure graduates had the appropriate supportive services in place prior to entry. Both coordinators worked closely with the director of the Construction Academy. In addition to planning and oversight, the director’s role included convening a construction advisory panel on a quarterly basis. This panel advised YCSC on placement opportunities and ways to navigate and coordinate supportive services from American Job Centers. “Curriculum is great, but placements are number one,” Matero said. “They are life-changing and build a life for each person and their families. The [state] grant did not require placements. We added that. It's part of our vision and mission.”
Preparing students for placement included MC3 coursework and using the *Apprenticeship Resource Guide* created by the ECC to familiarize students with the trades and eligibility requirements. Students from multiple YouthBuild programs toured apprenticeship training facilities. In certain cases, students and graduates were placed on construction sites as interns to learn more about what kind of work the industry entailed. In addition to learning core skills in the MC3, students were exposed directly to the industry.

Placement in the Los Angeles County labor market was often a question of being responsive to the immediate needs of contractors working on construction projects. Often, contractors were under pressure to fulfill local hire requirements. Frank Alvarez, former Academy Mentoring and Outreach Coordinator, explained, “I got youth ready for construction work. This meant finding the right trade for each youth and walking them through the eligibility requirements and entry processes for each of the trades. It was also about what the contractors wanted. In the best case, a contractor gives us a zip code they need to hire from [according to local hire requirements]. I ask about their hiring process and identify [which graduate] fits best. I confirm they’re ready, willing, and able [to work].”

Alvarez provided graduates with an MC3 mock interview worksheet with five questions. He gave them small challenges to see if they would reliably come through. “I kept grilling them to make sure they were prepared,” he said. “The travel required is surprising to new applicants and apprentices. They need support on scheduling and getting information and documents ready [for interviews]. They have to pass tests and have all their information organized…. Sometimes you have 24 hours’ notice to hire. The turnaround is too quick for a single youth, so you need a pool of interested youth and a database to track them.”

While the union application process can take at least two to three months, the process driven by contractors is much faster. “Often, we had to reach out to our graduate pool—and even friends of graduates—to keep up with the demand,” Alvarez observed.

By the end of the 2015–2016 academic year, YCSC placed 24 individuals: 21 YouthBuild graduates and 3 community members.

**Conclusions, Lessons Learned, Promising Practices**

At the beginning of the paper, the following questions were posed:

1. What partnership arrangements facilitated placements into apprenticeship? How were these partnerships cultivated over time?

2. In what ways did the Construction Academy and the Ironworkers Bootcamp help YouthBuild participants and community members with their apprenticeship placements? What does this suggest about how other YouthBuild grantees might position their efforts?

3. What lessons are applicable for sustaining high placement levels among YouthBuild grantees in Los Angeles and other locations?

4. Based on these lessons, what practices or actions could be taken to strengthen and sustain apprenticeship pathways overall?

The answers to these questions are below.

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(1) Partnership Arrangements that Facilitate Placement

There are two key partnership factors that facilitated placement. Clearly, partnerships closely tied to employers led to immediate apprenticeship placement opportunities. This is not surprising since apprenticeship placement is often driven by employer demand. Yet local hire programming seemed to offer a critical pull factor for many employers. This was the case for the Ironworkers who established a bootcamp in partnership with Antelope Valley YouthBuild. They needed to locate their training closer to the work site where local residents, including YouthBuild graduates, would be in a better position to receive the necessary preparation, related technical instruction, and access to work. When YCSC embarked on placing graduates, the employer demand accounted for a faster turnaround of graduates from YouthBuild into apprenticeship. This also appeared to be driven by local hire requirements that incentivized contractors to find workers in specific zip codes. The YouthBuild partnerships, however, were cultivated over time. It took time to build sufficient trust and credibility in order to be seen as a talent source. In this way, the MC3 provided the basis for building trust initially. It is likely the construction industry panel will deepen YCSC’s ties to key players in the industry over time. The other element that assisted with placements was supportive services, where YCSC and Los Angeles County Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services played important roles. Frank Alvarez supported graduates by taking them through a process of completing small, challenging tasks and reviewing mock interview questions to make sure they were ready for interviews. In Antelope Valley, the local American Job Center provided concrete support for everyone in the Ironworkers Bootcamp by providing safety gear, helmets, and work boots.

(2) The Role of the Construction Academy and the Ironworkers Bootcamp: Implications for Positioning

The Construction Academy initially provided transitional support out of YouthBuild with short-term training and work readiness preparation, placing students into jobs that put them on a track to become apprentices. This was part of the initial purpose of the Academy during its pilot phase with four sites. The Academy’s focus expanded when YCSC received funding under its Construction Pathways grant. This included supporting local YouthBuild programs in developing their construction and academic training components, which led to a common approach to MC3 credential attainment. The Academy’s focus on placement grew with funding. Instead of placing a few graduates as they had in previous years, they set targets to place many more individuals. The ability to place came about through connections with industry. The vehicle for these relationships was the Construction Industry Panel, which brought together credible representatives of the employer community and the workforce development community to promote placements.

Under the WIOA DOL-Only Final Rule, Section 681.480 defines recognized pre-apprenticeship programs as implementing the following program strategies:

- Approved curriculum that aligns with employer needs
- Supportive services
- Meaningful hands-on training
- Opportunities to attain at least one industry-recognized credential
- Partnerships that assist in placement in apprenticeships

The Ironworkers Bootcamp is a strong example of a recognized pre-apprenticeship program because it includes not just partnerships to assist with placements but a direct partnership with an apprenticeship sponsor. This case study suggests that grantees should position themselves by creating ways to consistently relate to employers and apprenticeship sponsors and increase awareness of their needs. This can occur through an advisory structure such
as the Construction Industry Panel or via direct ties with an apprenticeship sponsor. These relationships may come with demand for grantees to fill labor market needs, especially when labor market demand is high. In these cases, YouthBuild can leverage its community relationships to expand the talent pool and use similar strategies used to recruit and screen students to fill available positions. Success in rising to this challenge can increase the credibility of YouthBuild sponsoring organizations.

(3) Lessons Learned

The talent pool may need to extend beyond YouthBuild graduates to fill local demand. Antelope Valley YouthBuild and YCSC tapped into a broad talent pool to meet the demands of employers who need to meet local hire mandates. This was important in increasing the credibility of the organizations to deliver potential apprentices who were screened and prepared for apprenticeship. Both Frank Alvarez at YCSC and the Antelope Valley staff adopted a mental toughness orientation approach to screening both graduates and community members for hire. This may be an important promising practice as this effort scales up.

YouthBuild plays a role in orienting potential apprentices to the labor market. Antelope Valley staff and YCSC played critically important roles in orienting individual applicants to the labor market. At Antelope Valley YouthBuild, this included an orientation program that introduced applicants to the nature of the work and to what membership in a union means. The Construction Academy provided students ongoing exposure to the industry requirements through the MC3 training, including tours of apprenticeship training facilities, testing incoming apprentices with mock interview questions, and making sure they were prepared with transportation, WIOA supportive services, and paperwork.

Capacity is important. Although there were clear benefits of graduate placements when YCSC responded to employer demand, it raises questions about the necessary capacities of the YouthBuild sponsoring organization if it is going to sustain this demand-driven approach. Having a reliable pool of potential apprentices to tap into will continue to be important. Having a database containing information about each YouthBuild graduate—including trade interests and zip codes—will be an important organizational capability. Tight coordination between the Ironworkers and Antelope Valley YouthBuild allowed for a more modulated and predictable approach to labor market demand. YouthBuild sponsoring organizations need to consider whether they have the staff capacity to recruit, screen, and place YouthBuild graduates and community residents. There are clear benefits for the organization if they can deliver talent in a way that is timely and helps contractors meet local hiring requirements. If sponsoring organizations do not have the staff capacity, partnerships with workforce development agencies or other organizations could enhance what programs already have in place.

(4) Promising Practices and Actions to Strengthen Apprenticeship Pathways

• Where appropriate, clustering YouthBuild programs under a unified approach to high-demand sectors can lead to positive results. Clustering programs under a collaborative model allowed an economy of scale that may not be possible for a single YouthBuild program. Limited funding is a challenge of YouthBuild programs. This might be addressed by diversifying funding sources to support clusters of YouthBuild programs with more ambitious placement targets, or through access to additional funding sources based on the economy of scale that a YouthBuild collaborative can achieve.

• One promising model includes having a training arm focused on credentialing and transition supports for YouthBuild grantees in one geographic location, such as the Construction Academy.
• Direct connections with apprenticeship sponsors who can present placement opportunities provide an excellent platform for placements. Strong YouthBuild programs with local name recognition can support co-location of demand-driven training which can, in turn, support high-volume placements.

• Grantees should create a database of graduates and maintain consistent contact with them, even those who are currently working. They should also maintain information on YouthBuild applicants from the local area who were not enrolled in the program but could be good fits for an apprenticeship opportunity as this is an additional potential labor pool. Access to these talent pools facilitates responsiveness to labor market demand.

• YouthBuild grantees that forge these apprenticeship pathways must have vehicles to sustain ongoing relationships with employers. The Construction Industry Panel and other advisory groups position YouthBuild in the labor market.

• YouthBuild grantees that establish deep partnerships should be prepared to orient potential apprentices to the labor market prior to placement. This ensures YouthBuild is recommending individuals who understand their role as apprentices and the industry they are entering. Mock interviews, orientation sessions, and ensuring candidates have proper documentation are all part of the orientation process.

• Supportive services available under WIOA provide critical resources for participants transitioning into apprenticeship pathways.

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