A Guide to Effective Department of Labor YouthBuild and American Job Center Partnerships

**Background:** The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires DOL YouthBuild grantees to be One-Stop system partners. Being a required partner under WIOA means that grantees must develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Local Workforce Development Board (WDB) to detail the partnership agreement, including how participants will be provided with access to the program, how the YouthBuild program will participate in the American Job Center network, and the inclusion of the Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) which provides the agreement for how YouthBuild grantees will pay for their required proportionate share of use of the American Job Center network and what those payments are supporting.

**Purpose of This Guide:** This guide will assist YouthBuild programs as they build and negotiate MOUs with Local WDB that manage the American Job Centers. Provided in this guide are overviews of the guidance and resources available to support the partnership, MOU development assistance reflecting a range of DOL YouthBuild and American Job Center partnerships, partnership development tips and best practices, and key negotiation strategies to reduce or resolve issues that may arise in the partnership.

**Guidance Overview and Resources**

Under WIOA, One-Stop centers (also known as American Job Centers or AJCs) are the cornerstone of the public workforce system. WIOA reinforces that strategic partnerships are necessary for the American Job Centers to provide all job seekers and workers with the high-quality career, training, and supportive services they need to obtain and maintain good jobs (TEGL 16–16). DOL YouthBuild grantees, as funded under WIOA Title I, are required partners of the One-Stop system. Each required partner has specific governance, operations, and service delivery roles within the AJC network. Specifically, DOL-funded YouthBuild grantees must (along with other required partners):

- Provide access to their programs or activities through the One-Stop delivery system, in addition to any other appropriate locations;
- Use a portion of DOL YouthBuild grant funds, to the extent consistent with WIOA and with Federal cost principles in 2 CFR parts 200 and 2900 *(requiring, among other things, that costs are allowable, reasonable, necessary, and allocable)*, to:
  - Provide applicable career services; and
  - Work collaboratively with the State and Local WDBs to establish and maintain the One-Stop delivery system. This includes jointly funding the One-Stop infrastructure through partner contributions that are based upon:
    - A reasonable cost allocation methodology by which infrastructure costs are charged to each partner based on proportionate use and relative benefit received;
    - Federal cost principles; and
    - Any local administrative cost requirements in WIOA (this is further described in § 678.700 of the WIOA Joint Final Rule).
  - Enter into an MOU with the Local WDB relating to the operation of the One-Stop delivery system that meets the requirements of § 678.500(b of the WIOA Joint Final Rule);
- Participate in the operation of the American Job Center network consistent with the terms of the MOU, requirements of authorizing laws, the Federal cost principles, and all other applicable legal requirements; and
- Provide representation on the State and Local WDBs as required and participate in Board committees as needed.
Partnership Development Strategies

Using the MOU to Strengthen Service Integration

Key Elements - As described in WIOA Sec. 121(c)(2) and 20 CFR 678.500(b), MOUs must include, at a minimum:

- Services to be provided,
- Agreement of funding the cost of services and the operating costs of the system,
- Methods of referring individuals between the One-Stop operators and partners for appropriate services and activities,
- Strategies to meet the needs of individuals with barriers to employment with specification of access vehicles and requirements,
- Identification of other contributors and required signatories,
- MOU duration and procedures for amendment, and
- Assurances that each MOU will be reviewed, and if substantial changes have occurred, renewed, not less than once every 3-year period.

Leveraging required One-Stop Partnerships:

- Negotiate support for job development/business services/employer engagement as part of partnership.
- Co-enroll DOL YouthBuild participants aged 18 and older into the WIOA Adult program for assessments, referrals, access to ITAs and other career training opportunities, as appropriate.
- Co-enroll DOL YouthBuild participants aged 16-24 into the WIOA Youth program for access to additional resources including financial literacy, entrepreneurship training, and work experience opportunities.
- Co-enrollment procedures in the adult or youth formula programs will vary based on local One-Stop systems processes. Determine streamlined processes between parties to ensure compliance and make sure that services received from each co-enrollment partner are the most logical and are based on a customer-driven approach that results in best meeting the individualized needs of participants.
- Share information related to partner services, especially as they relate to Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and other service programs.
- Ensure staff presence on the Local Workforce Development Board’s Standing Youth Committee or other relevant committees/advisory boards, where feasible.
From the Field: DOL YouthBuild Programs Share Partnership Strategies

- **Identify the “Value Added” Factor of the Partnership** - DOL YouthBuild grantee staff shared that they often bring an added value to the AJC because of their depth of experience working with out-of-school youth, which, in many areas, is a relatively new focus population for the Local WDBs, whose Youth Formula-funded programs under the Workforce Investment Act put more emphasis on serving in-school youth. AJs have a depth of experience with employer engagement and broad reach to diverse employers that can add value to a DOL YouthBuild grantee:
  - Working together to make out-of-school youth a priority is beneficial for both organizations. One grantee staff shared, “the development of the partnership was instrumental in sharing youth development expertise with departments at the AJC and in access to activities taking place there.”
  - Developing a comprehensive plan of services for participants can create a seamless experience. Partners that continuously assess and improve coordination of services between service providers have seen stronger outcomes, including increased youth engagement.

- **Collective Responsibility for Outcomes** - Integrate performance outcome reviews as an element of partnership management strategies. Looking at collective outcomes is a valuable tool for helping all parties to understand the big picture of shared interest in serving the same youth. This is even truer now that all WIOA-funded programs are using the same performance indicators, with the same context. Even prior to this step, the ability of YouthBuild programs to cite the areas where they have strong performance outcomes can be beneficial in showing a Local WDB that is reticent what YouthBuild programs can provide as a partner in terms of strong service delivery.

- **Grow Your Network** - Some grantee staff shared that one of the benefits of the partnership has been participating in regional partnership convenings that have expanded their network of service partners in addition to the AJC.

- **Systematic Communication and Regular Check-ins** – YouthBuild, the Local WDB, and the AJC(s) are doing timeline check-ins on a regular basis.

- **Identify the Win-Win in the Partnership** - DOL YouthBuild grantee staff reported that, with the AJC, they were able to strategically align activities across the program cycle that were mutually beneficial to both programs and created a more seamless experience for participants.

- **Both Parties are Working for the Same Goal** - If there have been adversarial relationships in the past, it is imperative that partners start the MOU process identifying the opportunities and challenges inherent in a seamless service delivery system in order to strengthen the partnership, leverage resources, and improve outcomes for participants.

- **Staffing Alignment** - Clarify staff roles, coordinate duties, and with regular check-ins strive to create a seamless experience for youth participants:
  - Coordination of staff and duties between job development and case management activities has been beneficial at all phases of the grant program cycle.
  - One grantee staff said, “the partnership has allowed us to balance workloads and helped us to develop a collective recruitment strategy.”
  - Another grantee shares a dedicated YouthBuild staff person from the AJC, paid for by YouthBuild. This has enabled true integration of recruitment, orientation, and co-enrollment activities during the program cycle.

- **Co-Enrollment Processes** - Streamlining the eligibility documentation has been beneficial. Some grantees discussed completing WIOA Youth or Adult program documentation in groups with YouthBuild participants, after which a One-Stop staff person comes to the YouthBuild program to verify participant eligibility in the WIOA Youth or Adult programs at the same time.
**Memorandum of Understanding Development**

MOUs specifically outline which parties are responsible for driving specific aspects of the work while describing the levels of support and resources needed to make the partnership efforts successful. Keep in mind that this MOU should reflect the unique needs and responsibilities of DOL YouthBuild grantees and the respective AJC(s). Much of the MOU may include standard legal sections, and in some states, the state(s)/local areas are developing standard MOU templates and/or infrastructure cost formulas for all partner programs.

For the purposes of this document, DOL YouthBuild grantees should work with their local areas to build in, through negotiation, specific activities and responsibilities outlining what the parties will provide to DOL YouthBuild participants. This guide includes an MOU core elements checklist that outlines specific activities to consider including in an MOU.

**From the Field: DOL YouthBuild Programs Share MOU Development Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expectations and Scope of Services - Partners</strong></td>
<td>Partners need to ask: <em>What are the expectations of each other? What services do you offer to Out-of-School youth? Do we have any duplication of services and what will that mean for our partnership?</em></td>
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<td><strong>Formalize the Existing Partnership</strong> - Often, if this is an existing relationship, the partners have provided letters of support for grants and this can be a great starting base for the development of an MOU. Use this opportunity to review and refine the scope of services shared between partners.</td>
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<td><strong>Negotiate Even if a Standard MOU Is Presented</strong></td>
<td>If the AJC has a standard MOU for all required partners, review and refine the scope of the MOU to ensure the best fit for the YouthBuild/AJC relationship. Engage with Your FPO - FPOs can help to broker information; for example, helping a YouthBuild program get the correct point of contact at their local AJC. Some FPOs have shared sample templates and resources with grantees during the MOU development process. Having the FPO think with YouthBuild about navigating the partnership pathway is helpful.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Use TEGLS and Other Resources</strong></td>
<td>These resources are great for discerning the nature of the overall partnership and using it as leverage to ensure reasonable treatment as a partner during negotiations.</td>
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<td><strong>AJC Can Be a Bridge to Career Pathways</strong></td>
<td>The AJC can be very useful and a great resource to help students move into career pathways. Some YouthBuild staff shared that the AJCs have a lot of resources to help young people identify training opportunities. This is beneficial where it might be more difficult for a YouthBuild program to have access to enough opportunities to meet the interest and needs of the youth participants. AJCs can assist YouthBuild programs and participants to navigate those systems.</td>
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DOL Guidance to Resolve Issues

- Contact your FPO regarding issues with the MOU negotiation process that can't be resolved otherwise.
- For issues with the IFA and concerns regarding the funding amount being requested, TEGL 17-16 provides guidance on how these must be addressed, starting with the Local Funding Mechanism and, if agreement can't be reached, triggering of the State Funding Mechanism.
- Grantees should view the MOU as an iterative process in which successive modifications may be necessary over several years to iron out all sides' understanding and implementation of the partnership.
- It is also expected that, as ongoing system monitoring visits occur, issues with MOUs not rising to the intent of the law can be addressed through findings and corrective action but this is expected to take time to fully operationalize.

In the meantime, YouthBuild grantees should negotiate in good faith and plan strategically for the MOU process, thinking about how they can promote their value to the American Job Center network, what resources they can offer as a partner and toward the required IFA, and what they would like to receive in return. Below are some recommendations to strengthen the negotiation process:

- Identify the key people from all agencies that need to be involved in the MOU negotiation and development process.
- Enter negotiations with a strong, joint (cross-agency) mission and vision statement. This may help set the right tone and emphasize how vital this process is to the shared interests of the public workforce system.
- Be aware and beware of underlying strife or past challenges between agencies which may impact the implementation of the MOU. If possible, determine how you can help to resolve/minimize these past issues.
- Ensure there is a shared understanding between both agencies about roles, responsibilities, and outcomes that are expected with this partnership. Be specific and make sure it is clear in the final MOU that is developed.
- All agencies that are signing the MOU need to feel confident about the relationship, so establish a shared commitment to review the MOU and outcomes of the partnership at key intervals during the agreement period.
- Speak the language of the public workforce system. Tie the MOU components back to the goals and objectives of the area’s Regional or Local Plan, or perhaps even to the State’s Unified or Combined State Plan; make sure you are familiar with both the regional/local and the State plans and how they speak to partnership and workforce development.
- At its best, the partnership requirements should encourage States and local areas to initiate the MOU process in a thoughtful and realistic way, so that the MOU process builds on the strengths of individual programs. In a blog post by Michael Baker, Illinois Title I State Lead, Bypass the Impasse: 5 Steps for Successful MOU Negotiation, he advises there are five steps to successful MOU negotiations for a State or local area:
  o Step 1 – Start early, at the top, with all the WIOA Core Partners
  o Step 2 – Lay a solid, standardized foundation
  o Step 3 – Set interim milestones with deliverables for early warnings and to avoid procrastination
  o Step 4 – Be available and helpful
  o Step 5 – Field deployment if needed

Resource Spotlight: WIOA Wednesday - MOU Negotiations: The Partner Perspective - A Virtual Roundtable

This roundtable included Brigid McRaith, CEO of Mile High Youth Corps, a DOL YouthBuild grantee organization. The Roundtable assembled representatives from various programs and actual practitioners in the One-Stop community to share and discuss their experiences with the MOU negotiation process.
Core Elements of the DOL YouthBuild and Local Workforce Development Board Memorandum of Understanding

There are a variety of partnerships between DOL YouthBuild grantees and Local Workforce Development Boards. An analysis of a subset of existing MOUs was undertaken and a series of DOL YouthBuild grantee focus groups were conducted to identify key components of an MOU and their similarities across a variety of partnerships. It is important to note that no matter the type of partnership, the MOU and IFA are required. The following types of partnerships have been identified among YouthBuild programs:

- **Local Workforce Development Board is the parent organization for the YouthBuild Program** - This type of partnership will still require a formal MOU with IFA in order to meet the WIOA requirements of One-Stop system partnership. Review existing standard operating procedures and agreements, as these can be the foundation for developing the MOU.

- **Local Workforce Development Board is a subcontract of the DOL YouthBuild Grantee** - This type of partnership will require a review of the existing subcontract agreement in order to establish the required MOU and IFA. Use the existing agreement as the foundation and use this MOU development process as an opportunity to reassess the relationship, building on strengths, identifying solutions to existing challenges, and expanding the reach of the partnership.

- **Existing relationship between Local Workforce Development Board and DOL YouthBuild Grantee** - This type of partnership may have an existing MOU that can be adapted to meet the WIOA requirements of the AJC and DOL YouthBuild grants. Similar to other existing partnership mentioned previously, this is a great opportunity to assess and strengthen the partnership whether or not an MOU currently exists.

- **New relationship between Local Workforce Development Board and DOL YouthBuild Grantee** - This is a common situation in which it is very important to review the previous section regarding the negotiation process. Where no relationship exists, grantees may have to work harder to find their negotiation level and this will most likely be a process of trial and error. Be thoughtful in your ask, thinking strategically of one or two key things that can feel like success in the first iteration of the MOU and then build from there during renegotiation.

This section of the guide will dive deeper into the development of the MOU. It provides examples of core MOU elements by YouthBuild activities and AJC activities, along with a DOL YouthBuild grantee spotlight on Valencia College in Osceola FL.

### YouthBuild Activities

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<tr>
<th>Elements of an MOU</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Potential Challenges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreement to co-locate staff on reoccurring basis at AJC or provide training to relevant AJC staff</td>
<td>Core requirement of MOU and provides direct connection to potential participants and AJC staff to build relationships and network</td>
<td>Sharing of staff with AJC pulls away staff from YouthBuild program direct services. AJC staff may not have sufficient information or commitment to sharing information on the YouthBuild partner program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agreement to take referrals of qualifying youth ages 16-24</td>
<td>New recruitment stream</td>
<td>AJC may have limited connection to qualifying youth, especially where the WIOA Youth program is operated in a separate location.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-enroll youth ages 16-24 in the WIOA Youth program for access to additional resources including financial literacy, entrepreneurship training, and work experience opportunities, as feasible or appropriate.</td>
<td>Access to additional resources for youth. Supports integrated service delivery and a customer-centered approach to the needs of individual youth.</td>
<td>Lack of local funding. Turf issues. Fear of impacting WIOA negotiated performance targets.</td>
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</table>
Co-enroll youth ages 18-24 in the WIOA Adult program for assessments, referrals, access to Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), and other career training opportunities, as feasible or appropriate. | Access to additional resources for older youth for longer-term training needs and placement options | Lack of local funding  
Fear of impacting WIOA negotiated performance targets

Provide back-up documentation for initial co-enrollment | Necessary for co-enrollment | Additional paperwork

Share data/performance measures with AJC of co-enrolled youth | Necessary for co-enrollment  
Additional data for broader look at total workforce system | Additional data system  
Staffing for data entry

Identify YouthBuild participants who may be able to access additional services through the AJC as a target population of other required partners (i.e. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipient, Veteran) | Opens up additional resources for specific populations of YouthBuild students | Lack of verification documentation  
Disconnect between service delivery/lack of ability to co-enroll

Link with local AJC website and other social media accounts | Broader social media presence | Lack of social media access  
Lack of IT support

Participate on the Local Workforce Development Board, Standing Youth Committee or other relevant Board Committees as needed/necessary | Broader reach for both YouthBuild program and agency  
Ability to gain awareness and influence youth services focus and integration of YouthBuild into local public workforce system | Lack of staff time/prioritization for participation  
Lack of access/fair opportunity to participation (i.e. no ability to lobby for standing on the board or committee, political jockeying for position)

| **American Job Center Activities**

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide space on-site for YouthBuild staff or access to connecting technology to connect directly to YouthBuild staff</td>
<td>Core requirement of MOU and provides access to YouthBuild staff to build relationships and network</td>
<td>Lack of available space/cost of technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Refer appropriate youth ages 16-24 to YouthBuild program | Access to best practice program for local youth  
Provision of more intensive service delivery for most in-need youth | Lack of knowledge of AJC staff about YouthBuild  
Time required to train AJC staff on basic program requirements |
| Support and facilitate connection of YouthBuild staff to the WIOA Youth activities for co-enrollment | Ability to meet Title I Youth outcomes | Lack of local support from AJC partners  
Turf issues |
| Support and facilitate connection of YouthBuild staff to the WIOA Adult activities for co-enrollment | Furthering alignment of public workforce system  
Furthering alignment of public workforce system | Lack of support from AJC partners  
Turf Issues |
| Partner with YouthBuild program to schedule time for AJC staff to meet with youth on site for provision of services including but not limited to WIOA Title I | On-site opportunities for service delivery  
Additional resources/services for | Lack of time in schedule  
Lack of AJC staffing |
Youth/Adult intake documentation, career assessments, career counseling, etc. | youth
---|---
Provide local labor market data | Broader outreach
Ability to support needs of local employers and direct participant training toward most in-demand industries | Lack of AJC staffing to support effort
Provide work experiences/internship opportunities | New connections with employers
Ability to meet employer needs
Opportunity to increase youth skills | Lack of participating employers
Lack of sufficiently trained, work-ready youth
Provide career services, soft skills training, and job search assistance to YouthBuild participants | Supporting the needs of local youth without having to conduct outreach to connect with them | Lack of staff/funding resources
Relevant career services not clearly identified.

Solution Strategies to Address Potential Challenges

**Program Awareness** - In order to establish an effective referral process and to support integrated service delivery to participants among partners, it will be imperative for staff to understand what each American Job Center partner offers. As a part of the MOU development and implementation, consider integrating staff trainings across One-Stop partners, including YouthBuild and AJC partner staff, as well as other youth-serving system partners such as the WIOA Youth program provider, local Job Corps center partners, and others connected to the local AJC. This will allow all partners to learn what each program can offer and understand what services are included in the MOU across partners. Interagency cross-training can expand to sharing professional development opportunities, as well as access to a broader network of youth service providers.

**Documentation and Reporting** - Reporting and documentation are common challenges. Some YouthBuild staff shared that they have created common intake forms or scheduled specific times when the AJC partner staff comes to the YouthBuild program to conduct intake with participants to support a seamless service delivery model. Review intake and reporting requirements for each agency in order to identify common requirements and gaps. In addition, develop solutions for how to get the needed information and documentation to meet the reporting requirements of each agency and funding source.

**Limited Resources** - A partnership between YouthBuild and the local AJC is an opportunity to leverage services, create a seamless, integrated system of support for participants, and to minimize duplication or overlap of services. This requires intentional planning and creative resource sharing. Maximize the opportunity to collaborate in common service activities and consider partnering on additional funding opportunities. The IFA may be very important as a tool in this area. Some YouthBuild programs have paid for all or part of a staff position at the AJC. Doing so allows the YouthBuild program to have someone on the ground who knows what is happening at the AJC and will advocate for the YouthBuild program, finding connection points and ensuring that service delivery is strategic and non-duplicative between the partners. Some YouthBuild program staff shared ways they have received funding and connections to provide advanced training to participants during active programming and during the placement/follow-up period. One YouthBuild program reported that the local AJC linked participants to a local construction employer that provides NCCER Carpentry Level 2 and the AJC covered enrollment fees for the credential. If the participant successfully completed the course and received the credential, the participant would be placed with that employer.

**Turf Issues** - In local communities, required partnership does not mean both parties are willing partners. It will be important for each party to develop an MOU that is fair and reasonable and to remain focused on the needs of AJC participants. Remember that the intent of WIOA is to support the alignment of workforce investment, education, and economic development systems in support of a comprehensive, accessible, and high-quality workforce development system locally, regionally, and nationally.
Program Spotlight: Valencia Community College/YouthBuild Osceola

Valencia Community College is the sponsoring organization for YouthBuild Osceola in Osceola, FL. Staff members Lashon Henderson, Grant Administration and Development Manager, and Michelle Sanchez, YouthBuild Project Director, share how and why their relationship with their local American Job Center (AJC), CareerSource Central Florida, remains active and supportive.

Valencia Community College’s approach to the partnership with CareerSource Central Florida:

- **Partnership management** - Valencia Community College has a myriad of partnerships and a key to their partnership management is requiring clear expectations of terms, roles, and responsibilities outlined in the scopes of work. For example, because the pre- and post-award processes of a grant-funded program are different, having the expectations clearly defined becomes crucial.

- **History of the partnership** - YouthBuild Osceola began a relationship with their local AJC with a Transitional Age Community Treatment (TACT) grant in 2013, and has been awarded two additional grants since then. The TACT program is designed to provide inter-disciplinary support for youth residing within the community and transitioning from out-of-home placements such as residential treatment, juvenile correctional facilities, and/or foster care. The goal of the program is to reduce the behavioral symptoms and increase the youth’s effort and progress toward stability and independence.

- **Leveraging resources** - The local AJC funds a significant percentage of the Advanced Manufacturing training offered at Valencia Community College. The AJC has also been helpful with recruitment and funding via the WIOA Youth program through which 100 percent of advanced certificates in Continuing Education are funded.

- **Job Developer position is essential** - The YouthBuild program’s partnership with the local AJC resulted in the inclusion of a full-time Job Developer into the written agreement. The expectations and scopes of work of the Job Developer were clearly identified and ensured the consistency and continuity of the Job Developer role for the YouthBuild program throughout the agreement period. The Job Developer is hired and funded by the AJC, and only works with YouthBuild Osceola’s program. He or she reports directly to the YouthBuild Program Director for his/her YouthBuild scope of work, and effectively leverages the resources available at the AJC for YouthBuild participants’ placement, readiness, and follow-up support.

- **Job Developer works with Case Manager** - The Job Developer and YouthBuild Project Director collaborate with the Case Manager to develop a cohesive career pathway plan for each youth participant. This collaboration ensures that participant files meet WIOA standards and include credentials, paystubs, and four quarters of follow-up data.

- **Leveraging AJC resources to establish work-based learning opportunities** - During the active programming period, participants are connected with paid work experience from the AJC and Valencia Community College’s database of local employers. The AJC will pay $10-$12 per hour for up to three months for participants to get hands-on experience. This money comes from WIOA funds. The range of work experience for a YouthBuild participant includes plumbing, daycare, auto mechanical, construction (through Habitat for Humanity), culinary, adoption services (social services career path), and medical assistance, with every effort made to prepare youth to enter into the pre-apprenticeship and/or apprenticeship level(s). If a participant needs additional academics and/or training before entering at those levels, he/she will still have the opportunity for entry-level work experience.

**Key takeaways for the Partnership of YouthBuild Osceola and CareerSource of Central Florida**

1. The relationship is built on their previous partnership history with similar successful youth programming,
2. The agreement ensured a specific scope of services that included a full-time Job Developer, and
3. A multi-level career pathway approach was created that involved training and coordination between both agencies.

**Conclusion**

This guide provides an overview of guidance, resources, and effective partnership and MOU development strategies. Remember that the MOU development process is iterative and each agency needs to negotiate in good faith. DOL YouthBuild programs offer tremendous value to the American Job Center network. It is important to be strategic as both agencies identify the scopes of service in the agreement to ensure YouthBuild participants have access to the full range of services and supports within the system.