



Policy Brief: Best Practices and Model Partnerships for Serving Out-of-School Youth under California's WIOA State Plan

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This is the third in a series of policy briefs intended to provide California's workforce development community with useful and current information on best practices and model partnerships that should be considered as the state's local and regional workforce development boards work to implement the policy objectives of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the California WIOA State Plan. As indicated in the State Plan, the California Workforce Development Board and its partners will provide guidance to encourage local recruitment efforts and coordination of service delivery between America's Job Centers of California, County Welfare Departments, Local Education Agencies, foster care and justice systems. The purpose of this brief is to highlight initiatives, best practices and coordination efforts in California and throughout the U.S. that have demonstrated success in improving training and employment outcomes for out-of-school youth with barriers to quality employment.

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Introduction

This policy brief is intended to provide information on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and its impact on funding for local and regional programs that serve young people who could be identified as out-of-school youth (OSY) eligible. Additionally, this brief provides a synopsis of the characteristics and societal impact of out-of-school youth and the challenges of serving this population. An overview of best practices gleaned from current research on OSY service strategies and descriptions of several model programs are included in this brief’s final two sections.

WIOA defines OSY as youth age 16 to 24 who are not attending school and face one or more additional barriers including those who are a school dropout, a runaway, homeless, subject to the juvenile or adult justice system, in or aged out of foster care, pregnant or parenting, low-income and either basic skills deficient or an English language learner, and/or an individual with a disability. This brief alternatively uses the term “disconnected youth” to refer to young people age 16 to 24 who are neither employed nor enrolled in school or professional training.¹

¹This definition of “disconnected youth” differs slightly from WIOA eligibility requirements that define whether an individual is an “out-of-school youth”; therefore, a small percentage of disconnected youth may not technically qualify as OSY under WIOA. The use of the term “disconnected youth” aligns with a significant portion of the existing literature on youth age 16-24 and therefore allows for a broader discussion on policies, practices, and challenges related to this group.

Serving Out-Of-School Youth under WIOA and the California State Plan

Signed into law on July 22, 2014, WIOA provides the first reform to the nation's public workforce system since 1998, superseding the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). With its passage, WIOA ushered in significant changes to federal requirements for serving OSY, perhaps the most significant of which is an increased emphasis on program spending. Under WIOA, Title I youth formula spending requirements for OSY have been increased to 75 percent of total youth program spending at a minimum which is an increase from the 30 percent spending requirement under WIA. Additionally, WIOA requires that at least 20 percent of local youth funds be spent on services related to work experience (e.g. wages, on-the-job training, pre-apprenticeship programs, and job search assistance).² In addition to enhanced program funding streams, WIOA expands the eligibility parameters for OSY. The age range for an eligible youth at the time of program enrollment has been expanded from 16 to 21 under WIA to 16 to 24, and eligible participants now include youth living in a high poverty area.³ WIOA also adds five new program elements to the list of eligible youth services⁴: financial literacy education, entrepreneurial skills training, services that provide labor market and employment information, preparation for and transition to post-secondary education, and contextualized education offered concurrently with occupation-specific training

The [California Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan](#) (the State Plan) provides a framework for serving the state's OSY population under WIOA through state-level partnerships between the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB), California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), California Department of Social Services (CDSS), California Department of Education (CDE), and California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO). The plan includes a youth partnership agreement that emphasizes the role of CWDB and its partners in increasing access to high quality workforce services for OSY through collaboration between America's Job Centers of California (AJCCs), County Welfare Departments, Local Education Agencies, foster care, and justice systems; and offers a framework for co-enrolling eligible youth in related state-funded programs such as Department of Rehabilitation and California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) programs with WIOA youth programs.

CWDB has also released [Regional and Local Planning Guidance](#) to assist the state's workforce community in the implementation of the goals and objectives outlined by the State Plan at the regional and local level. The Planning Guidance specifies requirements that local boards include in their plans a description and assessment of local youth workforce activities and a description of efforts made to engage local stakeholders and CBOs involved in serving local OSY populations.

² This number applies to funds for both in-school and out-of-school youth.

³ Per the WIOA Final Regulations, the definition of a "high poverty area" was clarified to describe a Census tract or combination of Census tracts that reflect a poverty rate of at least 25 percent as set every 5 years using American Community Survey 5-Year data. See: [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: Department of Labor Only - Final Rule](#) (56167). Prior to the issuance of the Final Regulations California EDD had set the parameters of a high poverty area as "an area identified by the American Community Survey 5-Year Data to have a poverty rate of 30 percent and above"

⁴ For a full list of eligible services and other guidance on WIOA youth program transition including information on co-enrollment see DOL's [TEGL 8-15](#) and [TEGL 23-14](#).

Understanding Youth Disconnection

While young people in the 16 to 24 age group generally experience higher unemployment rates relative to older workers, primarily due to lower levels of skill matches to job openings and significantly higher job churn⁵, young workers were hit disproportionately hard by the Great Recession with national unemployment rates for those age 16 to 24 rising from 11.8 percent in 2007 to 19.6 percent in 2010 – the highest rate of unemployment ever recorded for this age group.⁶ The increase in youth unemployment in California was even greater, rising from 10.8 percent to 22.8 percent during the same period. A slow post-Recession recovery has brought both national (12.2 percent) and state (13.8 percent) rates closer to pre-Recession levels, but the residual effect on youth disconnection has been significant.⁷ From 2007 to 2010, the number of disconnected youth nationwide increased from about 5 million in 2007 to 5.8 million in 2010. As of 2015, that figure stood at over 5.5 million nationally, or 13.8 percent of the country's 16- to 24-year olds – roughly one in seven young adults.⁸ In California, 699,150 youth age 16 to 24 are disconnected from both school and work.⁹

Disconnected youth risk being permanently left behind their peers and are significantly more likely to experience lower lifetime earnings and marriage rates, higher unemployment and incarceration rates and are more likely to lack health insurance, report poor health status, and require drug and alcohol treatment.¹⁰ Youth disconnection also imposes significant long-run societal costs in terms of both direct costs to taxpayers (e.g. housing assistance, subsidized medical care, and incarceration) and indirect economic impacts, like costs to victims of crime attributable to disconnected individuals, and more generally, the macroeconomic impact of the lost economic potential of this large population. A 2012 study estimated the lifetime taxpayer burden of a 20-year old disconnected youth as \$215,580 in addition to a lifetime societal cost of \$596,640.¹¹

Rates of youth disconnection in the U.S. vary significantly between racial, ethnic, and geographic boundaries, with young people of color disproportionately affected. Disaggregating the youth population by race and ethnicity, disconnection rates¹² measure 27.8 percent for Native American, 21.6 percent for black, and 16.3 percent for Latino youth, compared to rates of 11.3 percent and 7.9 percent for white and Asian American youth, respectively. Young people living with a mental or physical disability are also three times more likely to become disconnected than youth without a

⁵ Davis et al., 2014

⁶ Understanding the Economy: Unemployment Among Young Workers, 2010

⁷ Lewis et al., 2013

⁸ Lewis et al., 2015

⁹ "Opportunity Index"

¹⁰ Belfield et al., 2012

¹¹ These estimates are for what the authors term an "under-attached opportunity youth" or an individual who has "some schooling and some work experience beyond 16, [but has] not progressed through college or secured a stable attachment to the labor market." The study uses the term "taxpayer burden" as a proxy for direct costs (e.g. lost tax payments and taxpayer-funded social support) and "social burden" as a proxy for indirect costs that are not direct government transfers (e.g. lost workforce productivity)

¹² Disconnection rate is calculated as a percent of disconnected youth within the total youth population of a particular racial/ethnic cohort (i.e. total # of disconnected 16- to 24-year olds in cohort / total # of all 16- to 24-year olds in cohort)

disability¹³.

Both nationally and in California, racial and ethnic disparities in disconnection rates are magnified by geography at both inter- and intraregional scales. The Boston, Massachusetts Metro Area, for example, boasts the lowest overall rate of youth disconnection among the nation's 25 largest metro areas with a rate of 9.2 percent and both white and black youth disconnection rates below the national average at 7.2 and 14.2 percent respectively but a Latino disconnection rate above the national average at 18.6 percent.¹⁴ California provides an illustrative example of interregional variability in disconnection rates as home to metro areas with the fourth and fifth lowest overall disconnection rates (San Diego at 12.2 percent and San Francisco at 12.3 percent) and the metro area with the highest overall disconnection rate (Riverside-San Bernardino at 18.8 percent). This variability among racial and ethnic characteristics and geographic distribution of disconnected youth presents an imperative for local workforce boards and their partners to develop a thorough understanding of the attributes of their local youth population and develop programs, services, and reengagement strategies tailored to the local context.

Strategies for Serving Out-of-School Youth

The wide range of barriers faced by individuals within the OSY population poses a challenge to workforce and youth service professionals seeking to establish a comprehensive framework that positions the workforce system as an on ramp to the training, education, and supportive services needed to enter a career pathway. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to serving OSY, a number of nascent service models and research-supported strategies offer a path forward for workforce practitioners seeking to economize their resources and develop partnerships that lead to improved outcomes for OSY under WIOA. The existing literature on programs and service models aimed at reconnecting OSY to career pathways points to the importance of five system elements that contribute to improved outcomes for out-of-school youth: infrastructure for service alignment, diverse reengagement efforts, comprehensive supportive services and case management, bridges to career pathways, and paid work experience coupled with employer collaboration. A description of each of these strategies follows.

Infrastructure for Service Alignment

WIOA and the State Plan aim to position local workforce systems as an on ramp to a career pathway for OSY, replete with the education, training, and supportive services needed for Californians facing barriers to employment to achieve career success. To achieve this, local boards should cultivate service delivery systems that enable clients to access services from a single menu that obviates the need for a client to move between disconnected providers to receive the services needed to successfully enter and succeed in a career pathway. Because many OSY face barriers to employment and education, they may require services that range from childcare to basic skills

¹³ Lewis et al., 2015

¹⁴ Ibid.

training to job placement assistance – services typically offered through a network of state and local agencies, community-based organizations (CBOs), academic institutions, faith-based organizations (FBOs), and philanthropic institutions.

Improved alignment among providers presents a dual benefit to both providers and clients by making services more accessible to WIOA clients and making service delivery more efficient by braiding resources of local programs that serve OSY and reducing duplicative services among organizations. Local boards are uniquely positioned to address the challenge of establishing an integrated service delivery infrastructure by developing and strengthening partnerships with organizations that currently serve the OSY population. The Collective Impact model offers one promising framework for building an integrated service delivery system for OSY.¹⁵ The model includes five conditions that define systems capable of successfully solving complex social issues¹⁶:

1. **Common agenda:** a shared vision for change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon actions
2. **Shared measurement systems:** agreement on the ways success will be measured and reported
3. **Continuous communication:** consistent and open communication across collaborators structured to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and provide motivation
4. **Mutually reinforcing activities:** differentiated activities that leverage the capacities of participating organizations, coordinated through a mutually reinforcing action plan
5. **Backbone support organization:** an organization that leads the system and its collaborative efforts with staff dedicated to monitoring the system's performance; CBOs, local workforce boards, or non-profits can act in this capacity; in an interview with a backbone organization administrator conducted for this brief, it was recommended that backbone organizations offer a menu of potential involvement levels for prospective partners with options ranging from an organization simply being "kept in the loop" as a potential service provider in the future, to an organization providing capacity to aid in system-wide planning and service provision

This framework is being used as the basis for programs throughout the U.S. including [Alignment USA](#), with programs operating in 17 communities, and the [Back on Track initiative](#), with programs currently underway in 21 cities connecting OSY to career pathways.¹⁷

Diverse Approaches to Reengagement

Providing workforce services to OSY first requires that disconnected youth are engaged with a system that can reach them and help them get back on track toward a career pathway. Efforts to

¹⁵ For further information on implementing this model in a youth services context, FSG's 2012 report [Collective Impact for Opportunity Youth](#) provides a useful resource.

¹⁶ Kania et al., 2011

¹⁷ For additional information and emerging lessons from these sites, see [Designing for Success](#) (Jobs for the Future, 2015)

reengage disconnected youth have historically fallen under the purview of local school districts, juvenile and adult justice systems, and foster care systems; however new and developing approaches, such as youth one-stop centers, suggest that workforce development systems can play an important role in reconnecting OSY.¹⁸

Collaboration among partner agencies (e.g. juvenile justice systems, schools districts, FBOs, CBOs, etc.) is critical to understanding where OSY are, the reasons they may have become disconnected, and which reengagement approaches are likely to be successful. The U.S. Department of Labor recommends local partners conduct a data analysis as a first step to a reengagement initiative in order to determine the number and characteristics of students who drop out or are at risk of dropping out of school.¹⁹ Following such an analysis, partners should work to compile an inventory of local initiatives focused on youth reengagement, determine the roles of relevant stakeholders, and develop a comprehensive reengagement plan based on a variety of context-appropriate strategies, examples of which include:

- **Reengagement centers:** a physical and/or mobile base of operations and that functions as a “mini one-stop” to offer a suite of services (e.g. assistance with driver’s license attainment, connections to supportive services, information about career pathway programs)
- **Canvassing:** volunteers visit parks, community centers, grocery stores and other public places where youth spend time, engage them in conversations and share straightforward, easy-to-read literature
- **Media campaigns:** web and/or radio campaigns optimized to reach youth and encourage OSY and their families to reconnect to education and training programs
- **Home visits:** volunteers from school districts or CBOs visit the homes of school dropouts, an approach shown to be particularly effective for youth with disabilities²⁰
- **Youth recruiters:** current youth program participants communicate their experience to potential recruits; recruitment can double as work experience for the youth recruiter to develop his or her communication skills
- **Reengagement fairs:** a standalone event or part of a larger community event in which OSY can receive information about support services and options for reconnecting to education and employment

Comprehensive Supportive Services and Case Management

Many OSY face barriers to reentering training and education programs, and supportive services (e.g. mental and physical health care, transportation, legal services, childcare, substance abuse treatment, housing stabilization, trauma-informed care²¹, etc.) can help ease the difficulty associated with reconnecting to work and education. Research supports this notion, with a number

¹⁸ Reconnecting Youth through Dropout Reengagement Centers, 2013

¹⁹ Rennie-Hill et al., 2014

²⁰ Wilkins, 2011

²¹ For additional information on trauma informed care as a component to serving disconnected youth see the National Center on Family Homelessness’ [Integrating and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Care Across Diverse Service Systems](#)

of studies showing service models that combine education and skills training with supportive services can improve career outcomes for OSY.²² At the state level, partnerships between CWDB, DOR, CDE, and CDSS will continue efforts to shape policy that further aligns workforce and social programs. At the local level, workforce boards should seek to form or strengthen existing partnerships with local service providers that offer the comprehensive support and case management disconnected young people need to reconnect to career pathways.

Programs in Tennessee and Washington D.C. provide noteworthy examples of the positive impact comprehensive support services can have on outcomes for OSY. The Latin American Youth Center's (LAYC) [Promoter Pathway Program](#) in Washington D.C. serves high-risk, disconnected youth through an intensive case management system with the goal of improving outcomes in academic achievement, employment, and healthy behaviors. The program targets youth age 16 to 24, who face significant barriers including homelessness, trauma, substance abuse, and court involvement. Youth clients are matched with a full-time LAYC staff member or "promoter" who serves as an intensive case manager and works to remove as many life barriers as possible, working alongside clients for an extended period of time – four to six years on average – as they complete support programs, training, and education. A recent evaluation of the program found that participants demonstrated markedly better outcomes compared to a control group in educational attainment, employment, reduced births, residential stability, and reduced risk-taking behaviors.²³

In Tennessee, Youth Village's [YVLifeSet program](#) focuses on youth who have left or aged out of the foster care or juvenile justice system. Over a six to twelve month period, youth clients work with a specialist who helps identify career goals and facilitates access to support services, skills training, and educational programs. The program's specialists meet with clients weekly in locations convenient for the client and are available at all times via 24/7 mobile phone access. The program demonstrated promising results with respect to participants' earnings, housing stability, economic well-being, and mental health compared to a control group over a one-year study period.²⁴

Reflected in WIOA's increased funding emphasis on OSY is the reality that this population requires comprehensive, time-intensive services. Local boards that form partnerships with programs and service organizations offering the types of comprehensive support described above stand to better enable the long-term success of their local youth populations.

Bridges to Career Pathways

Nationally, 28.5% of all disconnected youth are high school dropouts.²⁵ Once disconnected from school, dropouts can face school credit deficiencies and/or age restrictions that make returning to school prohibitive or impossible. Among OSY who have graduated, many lack the basic skills needed to succeed in a traditional postsecondary education or career training program. Historically,

²² What Works In Job Training: A Synthesis of the Evidence, 2014

²³ Theodos et al., 2016

²⁴ Jacobs-Valentine et al., 2015

²⁵ Sims, 2015

High School Equivalency (HSE) and adult basic education (ABE) programs have served high school dropouts and individuals with basic skills deficiencies; however too few of those programs are well-linked to college or job training programs.²⁶ Two successful models, Integrated Basic Education Skills Training (I-BEST) and HSE Bridge programs, have been developed to better connect basic skills and occupational education to career pathways for skills-deficient individuals.

The I-BEST model consists of a structured series of courses that integrate basic skills and/or English-as-a-second-language (ESL) training with technical training in an in-demand occupation or industry sector. Students earn college credit for technical coursework, which ultimately leads to a professional credential or associate degree. Courses are taught jointly by a basic skills instructor and a career-technical education instructor, with supplemental instruction and case management to address life barriers to student success often available to students.²⁷ CCCC, in partnership with the [Career Ladders Project](#), has used this framework to design its Career Advancement Academies program which seeks to build capacity within the state's community colleges to serve underskilled young adults and prepare them for careers in locally in-demand middle-skill occupations²⁸. Local areas seeking to develop programs based on this framework should note the importance of adapting the model to meet the needs of the local youth population and the demands of the local labor market, requiring coordination among local partners representing education, health and social services, and private sector employers.

HSE Bridge programs are designed to meet two goals: build participants' academic skills in preparation for a High School Equivalency Test (HSET)²⁹ and develop skills in preparation for a transition to college or career training. Programs are designed with HSET preparatory materials tailored to a particular occupation or industry sector so students are introduced to key ideas about an occupational pathway while developing academic skills. Compared to traditional HSE prep, Bridge programs have demonstrated greater effectiveness compared to traditional HSE programs in terms of course completion rates, HSET pass rates, and college enrollment.³⁰ Programs based on the [Gateway to College](#) model have been implemented in seven community colleges throughout California and may serve as a guide to local areas seeking to design bridge programs of their own.³¹

Federal programs such as the Department of Labor's [YouthBuild](#) and [Job Corps](#) and the National Guard's [Youth Challenge](#) also provide integrated education and job training for disconnected youth within the framework of a community service model. These programs have presences throughout California and may be attractive partners due to their success improving participant outcomes

²⁶ Martin et al., 2013

²⁷ Columbia University's 2012 report [Contextualized College Transition Strategies for Adult Basic Skills Students: Learning from Washington State's I-BEST Program Model](#) offers the most recent and comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the I-BEST program.

²⁸ For more information on the design, methodology and emerging lessons from this program see: [Career Advancement Academies: Insights into Contextualized Teaching and Learning](#) (Equal Measure, 2016)

²⁹ California Department of Education provides information on [approved high school equivalency tests](#) in California on its website.

³⁰ Martin et al., 2013

³¹ Programs are currently in place at the following colleges: City College of San Francisco, Contra Costa College, Los Angeles City College, Laney College, Riverside City College, Santa Rosa Junior College, and Shasta College

related to HSE attainment³² and college attendance.³³ Similarly, the [California Conservation Corps \(CCC\)](#), with more than two dozen locations in the state, offers work-based learning opportunities and a high school program for participants without a high school diploma. The CCC has worked to develop [career pathways](#) for its participants, with the [Long Beach program](#) serving as a noteworthy example. Following a pre-work case management and personal development program, CCC Long Beach participants, through a partnership with the City of Long Beach, work as paid employees on public works projects, developing skills in careers such as waste management, drought abatement, and environmental stewardship.³⁴

Paid Work Experience and Employer Collaboration

Research on workforce strategies for OSY suggests that work experiences that offer young workers the opportunity to “earn and learn” can improve career outcomes for disconnected youth³⁵. That notion is underscored by new requirements set by WIOA which mandate a minimum 20 percent of local area youth funding be spent on work-based learning. For disconnected young people, work experience can serve a number of roles, from improving employability skills and building occupation-specific skills to establishing work history and professional connections.³⁶ Research also suggests work experience is correlated with greater success in the labor market, particularly for individuals with disabilities.³⁷

Pre-apprenticeship programs offer a particularly promising “earn and learn” framework for moving young workers into career pathways. These programs are designed to prepare workers for competitive registered apprenticeship programs, which typically require applicants to possess employability skills, competencies in reading and math, and occupational skills. While pre-apprenticeships are typically unpaid, those who complete a program and successfully gain acceptance into a registered apprenticeship follow a pathway model which begins at an entry-level wage with an established path for scheduled pay increases linked to skill attainment. In designing pre-apprenticeship programs, workforce professionals should focus on building and/or deepening partnerships with local businesses and industry organizations in order to establish relevant program curricula that will sufficiently prepare program participants to compete for registered apprenticeships.³⁸

In addition to pre-apprenticeship, other strategies for connecting OSY to work experience include paid internship, summer job programs, service projects (including the federal and CCC programs

³² Bridgeland et al., 2012

³³ Perez-Arce et al., 2012

³⁴ For more information on this program and similar work-based learning initiatives aimed at OSY, see: [Promising Practices in Work-Based Learning for Youth](#) (National Skills Coalition, 2016)

³⁵ Hossain et al., 2015

³⁶ Harrington et al., 2013

³⁷ Larson, 2011

³⁸ See: [Defining a Quality Pre-Apprenticeship Program and Related Tools and Resources](#) (U.S. Department of Labor Training and Employment Notice 13-12, 2012)

discussed above), youth entrepreneurship programs³⁹, and alternate staffing agencies.⁴⁰ Partnerships with the private sector are critical to the effectiveness of each of these strategies. In a study that focused on youth employment in Chicago and Louisville, employers were found to be more motivated to take concrete steps to integrate youth employment into hiring practices when workforce partners demonstrated an ability to understand the specific challenges facing their business and describe how workforce services could address their needs.

Model Programs and Initiatives

The final section of this policy brief highlights several youth programs that demonstrate the efficacy of the aforementioned strategies. These program models are provided as representative examples of emergent best practices that can serve to reinforce existing OSY service strategies or inform the development of new ones.

Philadelphia Youth Network's "WorkReady"

The Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN) is comprised of a network of public, private, and non-profit partners led by the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board and the Philadelphia Council for College and Career Success. PYN's [WorkReady](#) program brings together private sector employers, CBOs, advocacy groups, and labor unions which work to improve economic outcomes for youth throughout the Philadelphia region.⁴¹ Partners fund, develop and operate job programs for the city's youth, including a system of neighborhood-based reengagement centers called E³ Centers that provide one-stop access to HSE bridge classes, job readiness training, and subsidized internships for OSY and youth leaving the justice system. Participants are enrolled into WorkReady through E³ centers, applications submitted through PYN's website, and referrals from program partners. The program offers a [toolkit for employers](#) to develop youth employment opportunities, which include a collection of year-round and summer job programs designed to address skills gaps for vulnerable youth and improve career outcomes. The program provides training in 18 industries throughout 1,043 worksites, and a network of 67 providers offer administrative and supportive services. In 2015, WorkReady served 10,818 youth, 2,021 of which participated in year-round programs. Of those in year-round programs, 976 went on to post-secondary education or employment and an additional 601 attained HSE or industry-recognized credential.⁴²

Partners: City of Philadelphia, School District of Philadelphia, Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, United Way, Philadelphia Works, numerous private sector employers, numerous CBOs

³⁹ For more information related to youth entrepreneurship, see: Aspen Institute's [Youth Entrepreneurship Education in America: A Policymaker's Action Guide](#) and Corporation for Enterprise Development's [Youth Entrepreneurship Framework](#)

⁴⁰ An emerging workforce intermediary model that places low-skill, low-wage workers with limited supports into employment quickly while providing links to supportive services – providing an alternative to conventional for-profit temporary staffing agencies which typically lack capacity and motivation to assist workers with barriers. (See also: [Temporary Staffing for the Hard to Employ](#) (MDRC, 2015); [Brokering Up: The Role of Temporary Staffing in Overcoming Labor Market Barriers](#) (University of Massachusetts-Boston, 2009); and [Alternate Staffing Alliance](#)

⁴¹ See also: [WorkReady Defined](#) (2010)

⁴² [Philadelphia Youth Network 2014-2015 Annual Report](#)

Funding Sources: City of Philadelphia, WIOA, TANF, philanthropic organizations, private-sector employers

Los Angeles Reconnections Career Academy

With an OSY population in Los Angeles of approximately 97,000 including 14,000 homeless youth and 8,278 youth in foster care⁴³, a consortium of stakeholders led by the Los Angeles Economic Workforce Development Department (EWDD) undertook a large-scale effort to align youth programs in Los Angeles. The Los Angeles Reconnections Career Academy (LARCA) program was formed with goals to provide 1,200 OSY with supportive services and placement into employment or education programs, improve the efficiency of the workforce system's service delivery, and achieve greater returns on public investment.⁴⁴ The LARCA model is based on a three-part structure with EWDD and the Los Angeles Workforce Investment Board operating as the program's leaders, city-level partner organizations assisting in program design and implementation strategies, and local service providers facilitating direct services to youth.⁴⁵ Local agencies provided services that included case management, work readiness training, supportive services, life skills workshops, educational services, vocational training, and placement in post-secondary education or training.

The program employed several innovative implementation strategies. In partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), a number of the LAUSD's counselors co-located at [YouthSource Centers](#), youth-oriented one-stop centers operated by America's Job Center of California (AJCC), to assist in recruitment and guide participants' educational planning. Another partner, the L.A. Chamber of Commerce, designed a program curriculum for a work readiness certificate and operated a healthcare intermediary program with EWDD that provided pathways into healthcare careers.

An interim report on the program's results showed the streamlining of city youth services to have been successful, with 1,067 youth receiving services within two years of implementation.⁴⁶ Feedback from youth participants indicated that the program's education component, which focused on high school credential attainment leading into a career pathway⁴⁷, was successful in reengaging youth and making them feel more supported and stimulated than previous education experiences. Lastly, the LARCA program helped strengthen relationships among EWDD, program partners and local service providers, with those relationships providing a foundation for collaboration on future youth initiatives.⁴⁸

⁴³ Los Angeles Performance Partnership Pilot

⁴⁴ Workforce Innovation Fund Grantee Summary, 2013

⁴⁵ Another noteworthy aspect of the LARCA program has been its alignment of OSY funding streams, which has positioned the L.A. Workforce Board to maintain a WIOA-compliant OSY spending rate of over 80 percent.

⁴⁶ Geckeler et al., 2015

⁴⁷ EWDD emphasized pathways in health care, construction, and conservation/green technology. Some service providers also provided training in other fields, including automotive technology, child development, and culinary arts.

⁴⁸ The [Los Angeles Performance Partnership Pilot](#) offers one example of a subsequent EWDD-brokered OSY initiative that has emerged from the LARCA program.

Partners: Los Angeles Economic and Workforce Development Department, Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles Workforce Investment Board, LA Chamber of Commerce, LA Economic Development Corporation, LA Workforce Collaborative, Los Angeles Community College District, charter schools, private vocational training (work readiness and job placement), CBOs (assistance with childcare, housing, mental health issues, substance abuse, legal services, and transportation)

Funding Sources: Workforce Innovation Fund Grant; WIA; YouthBuild, leveraged existing partner resources

Baltimore's theCONNECT

Home to an estimated 18,000 disconnected youth⁴⁹, [theCONNECT](#) works to connect Baltimore's youth to pathways into post-secondary education and in-demand occupations identified by a recent study of Baltimore's regional labor market.⁵⁰ Led by backbone support from non-profit Ingoma Foundation and the John Hopkins School of Public Health, theCONNECT has sought to build partnerships among the city's youth service providers, define partner responsibilities, and develop a [matrix of service offerings](#). The development of this service delivery structure followed an analysis of U.S. Census data and a survey distributed to the system's partner agencies intended to quantify where the city's disconnected youth reside and the degree to which partners were serving target populations.⁵¹ Partner organizations then leveraged their existing relationships to request data from agencies engaged with disconnected youth including the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services and the Baltimore City Department of Social Services. The program's service providers work to reengage disconnected youth through neighborhood-based "Nav Centers" which act as one-stops for youth to access supportive services, communicate with former program participants, and connect to career pathway programs. Private-sector partners provide connections to members of the business community seeking opportunities to integrate youth employment including local participants in the [100,000 Opportunities Initiative](#). The program is also in the process of developing a [smart phone app](#) that will enable service providers to maintain contact and share information with youth clients and provide streamlined data sharing among partner organizations.

Partners: John Hopkins School of Public Health (backbone organization), Ingoma Foundation (backbone organization) Baltimore City Community College, Baltimore City Health Department, Baltimore Workforce Investment Board Youth Council, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Job Opportunities Task Force, Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, Maryland Department of Rehabilitative Services, Y of Central Baltimore (over 60 partners in total)

Funding Sources: *Aspen Institute Youth Incentive Fund, Baltimore Mayor's Office, My Brother's Keeper* (subgrant), leveraged existing partner resources

⁴⁹ *Connecting Baltimore's Opportunity Youth to Careers*, 2016

⁵⁰ That study: [Baltimore Regional Talent Development Pipeline Study](#)

⁵¹ Allen et al., 2014

Washington's Skill Link

The State of Washington's Skill Link initiative was a recently completed, three-year pilot program designed to prepare young adults age 18 to 25 who were basic skills deficient and faced additional life barriers for entrance into an I-BEST or other post-secondary education programs. The program's design sought to create a bridge to career pathways for traditionally hard-to-reach young people by streamlining access to social and workforce services offered through local workforce boards, community and technical colleges, and CBOs. In each of the program's six pilot sites, staff from partner CBOs recruited participants from correctional programs, federal programs such as SNAP and TANF, and a number of other sources, and upon student enrollment, served as case managers to develop individualized career/education plans and ensure barriers to student persistence were removed. Participant interviews conducted at the conclusion of the program suggest that involvement by these case managers improved students' stability in areas including life skills, transportation, marketable professional skills, and access to educational resources.⁵²

Skill Link partners collaborated on service strategies which included the use of life and academic assessments to inform student instruction and college transition planning; one-on-one coaching to improve motivation, resilience, and leadership skills; contextualized classroom instruction that introduced career information; and connections to education, career, and community support. Overall, 349 of 434 enrollees advanced through the program, of which 74 percent made basic skills gains in reading and/or math, and 50 percent advanced to I-BEST programs or other college credit courses.⁵³ All six pilot sites reported increased capacity to serve the initiative's target population, and four of the six have continued to use the Skill Link model.

Partners: Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (provided expertise on leveraging workforce resources); Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (provided instructional strategies and transitional guidance for student entry into I-BEST programs); Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (facilitated collaboration with local initiatives); CBOs (provided recruitment and case management), SkillUp Washington, United Way,

Funding Sources: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (\$1.8 million grant), WIA, TANF

⁵² Lessons Learned from the Three-Year Skill Link Pilot Project, 2015

⁵³ Ibid. (p. 16)

Additional Resources for Funding and Program Design

[Collective Impact for Opportunity Youth](#)

[Data Use for Continuous Improvement of Programs Serving Disconnected Youth](#)

[Defining a Quality Pre-Apprenticeship Program and Related Tools and Resources](#)

[Funding Resource Guide 2016: Expanding Access to Summer Learning, Jobs, and Meals for America's Young People](#)

[Pathways for Youth Employment: Federal Resources for Employers](#)

[Providing True Opportunity for Opportunity Youth: Promising Practices and Principles for Helping Youth Facing Barriers to Employment](#)

[Toolkit for Effective Front-line Services to Youth](#)

[A Quick-Start Toolkit: Building Registered Apprenticeship Programs](#)

[Using Workforce Funds to Support Apprenticeship](#)

[WIOA Quick Start Action Planner: Youth Services Strategies](#)

[Juvenile Justice Information Exchange Re-Entry Key Issues](#)

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