

# Promising Practices in Work-Based Learning for Youth



By Thomas Showalter and Katie Spiker

## Introduction

The U.S. labor market is steadily recovering from the Great Recession. Overall unemployment is below 5 percent for the first time since 2007, and businesses are adding new workers to take advantage of emerging opportunities. This economic upturn, however, has not benefitted younger workers at the same rate as the overall workforce. Individuals between the ages of 20 and 24 have an unemployment rate of nearly double the national average and the jobless rate for individuals between the ages of 16 and 19 is nearly triple the national rate.<sup>1</sup> Overall, there are 5.5 million youth in the United States who are neither in school nor working and there are millions of others who are at risk of becoming disconnected from school or work.<sup>2</sup> Each year more than one million students drop out of high school, more than 200,000 enter the criminal justice system,<sup>3</sup> more than 200,000 become teen mothers,<sup>4</sup> and more than 26,000 young people age out of the foster system<sup>5</sup> – all strong predictors of a youth's future disconnection from school or work. And these numbers are worse for minority populations: while 14 percent of all youth are disconnected, rates of disconnection for Native American young people are an astonishing 27.8 percent. About 22 percent (21.6 percent) of black youth and about 16.3 percent of Latinos between ages of 16 and 24 are not in school or working.<sup>6</sup>

Disconnected and at-risk youth have more difficulty finding employment, earn less throughout their career, are more likely to be incarcerated, and are more likely to be young parents than their peers who are in school or working.<sup>7</sup> Youth unemployment also leads to lost income tax revenue, a greater burden on safety net programs, and increased expenses asso-

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1 <http://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpseea10.pdf>; <http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2016/unemployment-rate-unchanged-at-4-point-9-percent-in-july-2016.htm>

2 Kristen Lewis and Sarah Burd-Sharps, Measure of America, Narrowing In on Place and Race Youth Disconnection in America's Cities <http://ssrc-static.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/MOA-Zeroing-In-Final.pdf> (2016).

3 <http://static.nicic.gov/Library/025555.pdf>

4 <http://www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy/>

5 <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/JCYOI-AgingOutOfFosterCareinAmerica-Handout-2013.pdf>

6 Lewis (2016).

7 Clive R. Belfield, Henry M. Levin and Rachel Rosen, The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth [http://www.serve.gov/new-images/council/pdf/econ\\_value\\_opportunity\\_youth.pdf](http://www.serve.gov/new-images/council/pdf/econ_value_opportunity_youth.pdf) (2012).





ciated with higher crime levels,<sup>8</sup> an estimated annual cost to American taxpayers of \$93 billion.<sup>9</sup> Connecting these younger populations to high-quality employment and training opportunities is critical to ensure that the next generation of workers can access the same economic opportunities as generations before.<sup>10</sup>

For employers in need of a skilled and trained workforce, and in particular those seeking to build a pipeline of new talent to sustain economic competitiveness, these “opportunity youth” and other at-risk youth offer an untapped resource to fill skill gaps and meet short- and long-term business needs. Many businesses are uncertain about how best to engage with younger workers, though, and may have concerns about real or perceived risks associated with hiring disadvantaged youth. Strategies that allow businesses to expand their recruitment and hiring into younger populations offer benefits to both workers and businesses.

One emerging strategy for strengthening connections between at-risk youth and local businesses is to expand investments in youth work-based learning (WBL) programs, such as paid internships, on-the-job training (OJT) programs, appren-

ticeship, and other models. Work-based learning is generally defined as training that takes place within the context of a wage earning, long-term employment relationship between a business and a worker in which the learning worker has the opportunity to develop measurable skills through instruction at the work site and, where appropriate, in a school or training program. This measurable acquisition of skills should lead to incremental higher wages and potentially an industry recognized credential.

While long recognized as a best practice for adult workers, work-based learning has not always been a significant component of youth service strategies. Recent changes to the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) reflect growing interest in work-based learning as a youth model, requiring local workforce areas to expend at least 20 percent of their youth formula funds on work experience<sup>11</sup> and expanding the list of WBL strategies from the previous focus on summer jobs programs to include internships, apprenticeships, and other employer-based models.<sup>12</sup>

This paper examines four different youth work-based learning strategies, each targeting different youth populations and industry sectors, and identifies key elements of these programs’ success, challenges each has needed to address, and policy recommendations to address these challenges.

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8 Belfield (2012)

9 Bridgeland, John M., and Jessica A. Milano. 2012. “Opportunity Road: The Promise and Challenge of America’s Forgotten Youth.” Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises.

10 Nancy Hoffman, 2015, Let’s Get Real: Deeper Learning and the Power of the Workplace, Students at the Center: Deeper Learning Research Series, Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.jff.org/publications/lets-get-real>.

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11 WIOA §129(c)(4)

12 TEGL 08-15: [http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL\\_08-15\\_Acc.pdf](http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_08-15_Acc.pdf); TEGL 23-14: [http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL\\_23-14\\_Acc.pdf](http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_23-14_Acc.pdf)

# Why work-based learning

Well-designed work-based learning opportunities provide youth participants with occupational and work readiness training while also providing necessary income support for disconnected and at-risk individuals. Based on conversation with experts, work-based learning programs for youth should include the following elements:



## 1. Paid work-based learning opportunities, with wages provided either through employer, provider, or combination of the two

For many low-income youth, including those with children or other dependent family members, participation in education and training often must be balanced against the need to earn a paycheck. By combining paid work with academic instruction, work-based learning makes it easier for youth participants to support themselves and their families while gaining skills and credentials that translate into longer-term career advancement. Depending on the structure of the partnership, wages may be paid either directly by participating businesses, by an intermediary, or a combination of the two. As discussed below, different models offer different benefits to workers and to businesses.

## 2. Strong partnerships with business and other community stakeholders

Businesses benefit from work-based learning because training can be tailored both specifically to their needs and the needs of the participants, leading to increases in productivity and engagement from workers.<sup>13</sup> Work-based learning can also support a broader pipeline of workers by connecting businesses to a pool of underrepresented populations that they may otherwise have difficulty engaging.<sup>14</sup> In order to realize these benefits, however, business partners must be engaged in program design and curriculum development to ensure it meets their needs. Programs should expose youth to worksites early

to build participant engagement and interest in the job. To facilitate continued growth by future and current participants, the program should allow for critical feedback to the organization running the program and to the youth themselves.

In addition to business partners, strong work-based learning programs often rely on partnerships with other stakeholders, including community- and faith-based organizations, local workforce boards, and secondary and postsecondary education providers to deliver key educational or support services.

Many successful work-based learning programs are operated by an intermediary in order to facilitate these necessary partnerships. An entity playing the role of an intermediary would be responsible for bringing together stakeholders — businesses, workers, community colleges and high schools, community based organizations and local government — to facilitate the steps necessary to start and run a work-based learning program. This could include recruiting participants, developing training related instruction (TRI) curricula, serving as an employer of record and providing liability insurance when necessary. Just as the roles an intermediary may play in some states or local areas would be different than in other areas, so too could the type of organization that plays this role. In some areas or industries an industry association or local government may be best suited for the responsibilities; in others the community and technical college or other community based organization (CBO) may play this role. And as more areas establish sector or industry partnerships under WIOA, these bodies will have the capacity to serve as intermediaries to facilitate work-based learning as well. In any of these models, the intermediary is the core of the partnership between interested stakeholders and serves to aggregate skills demand across small- and medium-sized employers.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Lerman, Lauren Eyster, and Kate Chambers. The Benefits and Challenges of Registered Apprenticeship: The Sponsors' Perspective. Table 5.1: Sponsor Views of Potential Benefits of Registered Apprenticeship. [http://www.urban.org/research/publication/benefits-and-challenges-registered-apprenticeship-sponsors-perspective/view/full\\_report](http://www.urban.org/research/publication/benefits-and-challenges-registered-apprenticeship-sponsors-perspective/view/full_report) (2009).

<sup>14</sup> Lerman et. al (2009)

### 3. Positive youth development and continued support services

All young adults need role models, instruction on workplace culture, and guidance on communication, and other so-called soft skills needed for success in the workplace. For some youth, these functions are served by parents, other family members, teachers, or mentors. Unfortunately, most disconnected youth lack these connections to caring adults and youth service providers may struggle to provide these diverse resources to this population. Work-based learning — a model that already requires significant investments in wages, education, and necessary partnerships among a variety of stakeholders — may be more expensive to deliver to youth participants who also need support services for an extended period of time. This may often extend to transportation and child care services, even well after the time a participant begins the paid portion of a work-based learning program. To ensure success in employment, youth often need a longer on ramp of soft skill building than adult programs provide. As their career pathway offers new employment and education opportunities, youth may need continuous program management and supportive services to maintain connection to the workforce — even after being placed in a permanent job or graduating from a training program.<sup>15</sup>

Positive youth development and a spectrum of support services can also engage business partners to whom disconnected youth may seem a risky investment. A business may be more likely to invest in a work-based learning program when a CBO or intermediary commits to providing the kind of support services that make the youth more likely to continue employment with the business. Successful programs also provide similar services to businesses, too, to support the development of work plans for work-based learning participants, to train front line — particularly if inexperienced — managers with necessary management skills, and to facilitate continued feedback between the participant and the business to ensure the needs of both are being met.

### 4. Linkages to career pathways either through future employment opportunities or future education and training opportunities

While some work-based learning models are designed to lead directly to full-time employment, a partnership may also be designed to support transitions to further postsecondary education and training. Work-based learning can expose youth to different career opportunities, help them build work experience and a work history, increase understanding of the application of classroom learning on the jobsite, and connect them with adult mentors successfully working in their chosen industry. These activities that enable youth to develop goals and envision their participation along a pathway to achieving these goals are correlated with better educational and employment outcomes. For business partners, the benefits can include strong connections to community partners, management opportunities for current employees, and access to a pipeline of current or future workers. Work-based learning as an aspect of a career pathway can offer youth the opportunity to build confidence in their skills learned in the classroom and on the job, which also is associated with improved educational and employment achievement by youth.<sup>16</sup> In order to imbed a youth work-based learning program along a broader career pathway, however, multiple stakeholders must work together to ensure the youth successfully completes the program and has access to future employment and training opportunities.

It is important to note that while summer jobs programs are a common youth employment strategy in many communities, not all summer programs are designed provide access to skill building, credential attainment, mentorship opportunities and/or permanent employment, as outlined above. While summer jobs can be a valuable component in a broader youth employment strategy, this brief is specifically focused on longer-term interventions.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Under WIOA, state and local workforce development boards are responsible for developing strategies to support career pathways that serve, among other populations, WIOA youth. Under WIOA Youth programming, career pathways are required to be a component of both objective assessments and individual service strategy required for all youth participants. This increased focus is intended to create a focus on career pathways access and retention for youth participants. Supportive services along a career pathway are vital for youth and may be particularly important for youth in a work-based learning program who are juggling responsibilities of both working and learning.

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<sup>16</sup> Maureen E. Kelly, Lynn Y. Walsh-Blair, David L. Blustein, Janine Bempechat, Joanne Seltzer, "Achievement motivation among urban adolescents: Work hope, autonomy support, and achievement-related beliefs." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 77 (2010) 205-212.

<sup>17</sup> Martha Ross and Richard Kazis, Youth summer jobs programs: aligning ends and means (July 2016) <https://www.brookings.edu/research/youth-summer-jobs-programs-aligning-ends-and-means/>

# Practices in providing work-based learning opportunities to youth

The following case studies offer insight into how four organizations provide youth with meaningful work-based learning opportunities, using a variety of different work-based learning models.



The programs below include a paid internship program targeting out-of-school youth, a year-round jobs program for in-school youth at risk of becoming disconnected; a year-round jobs program and associated high school program for out-of-school youth, and a youth apprenticeship program. Though each program targets different populations and different industries, all of these models incorporate the wage earning, strong partnerships, focus on positive youth development and supportive services and attachment to career pathways critical to supporting a meaningful work-based learning program.

## Paid internships for disconnected youth: Manufacturing Careers Internship Program (MCIP)

The MCIP program is a paid manufacturing internship program for youth between 18 and 24 run by Business and Career Services, Inc. (BCS) in Northeast Illinois. BCS started the first MCIP program with funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act<sup>18</sup> and has expanded to 10-12 operating locations in any given year, funded by WIOA funds and with private foundation support.<sup>19</sup> The first program was developed based on demand from local business for a sustainable pipeline of young talent, just after the worst of the recession. A set of small- and medium-sized manufacturers in northeastern Illinois identified a common need for skilled workers to fill anticipated openings once the economy recovered. Together, these partners prioritized youth — including at-risk young adults — as a valuable resource in expanding the pipeline

of future workers. These businesses recognized the value of working together on a cooperative solution and BCS worked with their established sector partnership to develop a strategy that could meet shared demands across partners. BCS served as an intermediary and, eventually, a training provider, developing the partnership's eight-week internship training model. This structure provided businesses with sufficient exposure to youth prior to full-time hiring to recognize the strengths this population brought to their workforce, and sufficient exposure to skills for the participants to enter full-time employment with the businesses at an expected level of productivity.

### Paid work-based learning opportunities

At MCIP youth participate in a four-week, boot camp session during which the participants receive a \$10 a day stipend and soft skill and job preparation training, tour between twelve and fourteen manufacturing employers' worksites, receive OSHA-10 and forklift credentials and are exposed to shop math. After the four-week boot camp, each participant enters an eight-week paid internship. Interns earn \$10 per hour and work full time with the program intended to replicate a real work experience. After completing the program, average starting wages for interns hired into permanent positions is \$12-14 per hour.

### Strong partnerships with business and other community stakeholders

One of the key issues for businesses in launching the MCIP program was supporting liability and workers compensation insurance for youth entering their worksite for the internship program. In response to this need, BCS serves as employer of record for the youth and pays for participants' liability insurance, workers compensation costs, provides safety equipment and pays interns wages during their eight-week internship. Businesses, in turn, provide on-the-job training to the participants and eventually hire the graduates as full-time employees. Business partners also invest about \$800 in

<sup>18</sup> American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Public Law 111-5 <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-111publ5/html/PLAW-111publ5.htm>

<sup>19</sup> BCS replicates consistent boot camp curriculum at each site and partners with local youth-serving organizations to deliver training associated with on-the-job training provided through a paid internship.

costs associated with hosting cohorts on tours and additional training time for the interns estimated to cost about \$700 per participant. Per cohort, BCS estimates that the field of businesses with which they are placed contribute about \$14,000 for a cohort of ten students.

As an intermediary working with multiple sites across the state, BCS is also able to replicate this business partnership with new companies at each location. Staff conducts outreach based on the assumption that each business needs at least three interactions with BCS staff to be fully bought in to the program. This first interaction is intended to introduce the business to the program, the second to address any concerns or hesitations the business has, and the third to begin to develop individualized internship plans that could help the business meet their hiring and employment goals.

### Positive youth development and continued support services

BCS works with employers to develop an internship plan prior to each intern starting with an employer. This is intended to document the intern's day-to-day responsibilities, overall goals for both the employer and the intern, a description of the employer's supervisory responsibilities and emergency contacts. BCS and local CBO partners meet with each intern for at least 3 formal site visits during the 8 week program and are in contact with the employer, the front line manager and the intern during the internship to ensure the goals of all involved are being met. Finally, the program provides support to participants for worksite attire (including boots and other materials), safety equipment, transportation vouchers to get to the worksite, and support for child care costs. The program provides stipends to students during their boot camp before they start earning wages, and has supported other needs as participants have experienced them such as funding for eye glasses, housing assistance, and even car repairs.

### Linkages to career pathways

Although employers can participate in the internship program without intending to hire the intern for a long-term position, 75 percent of interns are placed in a manufacturing job or continued education after completion. Nearly 95 percent of participants retain this job for at least 3 months and the retention rate for participants at 6 months is 85 percent. Business partners involved in the MCIP program credit the program's provision of important OSHA-10 and fork lift credentials, combined with workers' continued access to further training once employed by the businesses, with high retention rates for program graduates.

## Paid Internship for at-risk in-school youth: Urban Alliance

Urban Alliance is a national provider of youth programming with locations in Baltimore, Chicago, Northern Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The organization serves mostly 17- and 18-year-olds, with their flagship High School Internship Program (HSIP) targeting in-school youth who are on track to finish high school but may not have a postsecondary plan. In general, these youth have between a 2.0 and 3.0 GPA and fall in a population for whom college is an unlikely next step, but who have the connection to school at the end of their junior year to make graduating from high school a reality.

Urban Alliance has successfully replicated their programs across multiple regions in the country and is continuing to expand on this growth with at least one new location planned in the coming year. The program offers an important model for working with community colleges, serving at-risk yet still in-school youth, and in innovative assessment practices that lead to wage increases and ensure participant growth and engagement across the year-long program.

### Paid work-based learning opportunities

HSIP places interns with a variety of employers — banks, hospitals, government agencies — for a year-long paid internship program. Prior to the internship program, usually during the fall of the participant's senior year in high school, Urban Alliance provides 4-6 weeks of unpaid "pre-work" during which the selected interns are exposed to soft skill and employability training and assessments that help prepare them for their internship and provide a baseline for benchmarked progression throughout the program. An intern begins the year-long internship earning minimum wage and can receive increases up to twice during their internship. These increases are based on evaluation of a participant's soft skill development, such as timeliness, from the time of the pre-work sessions through the paid internship and on the students' engagement in and dedication to the program. On average, interns earn about \$6,250 over their year in the program.

### Strong partnerships with business and other community stakeholders

As part of the HSIP model, youth can work up to 600 hours in the program. During this time, UA staff provide supervisors of the HSIP participant with mentor training at the start of each cohort, weekly emails with best practices for ensuring success of the supervisor and HSIP participant, three site visits to provide guidance and feedback to both the participant



and manager, and on-call program coordinators who help develop the individual internship work plan and goals with the manager. Business partners benefit from the opportunities for lower-level employees to gain direct management experience, in addition to the work provided by the interns themselves.

### **Positive youth development and continued support services**

During the program, participants work with an Urban Alliance case manager and a job site supervisor to provide support for the youth participating in the program, ensuring youth are on track to graduate high school and meeting worksite expectations. The program also works with participants to develop a personal budget for their expenses, including budgeting transportation costs.

After the intense case management and positive youth development provided during pre-work, participants continue to spend one full day each week in continuing training classes, usually held at a local college. These sessions include training in financial literacy, public speaking, resume development, and planning for life after high school, whether this is postsecondary education or the workforce.

### **Linkages to career pathways**

A primary goal of the HSIP program is to maintain youth attachment to school and work after high school along a broad career pathway. Nearly 80 percent of program alumni

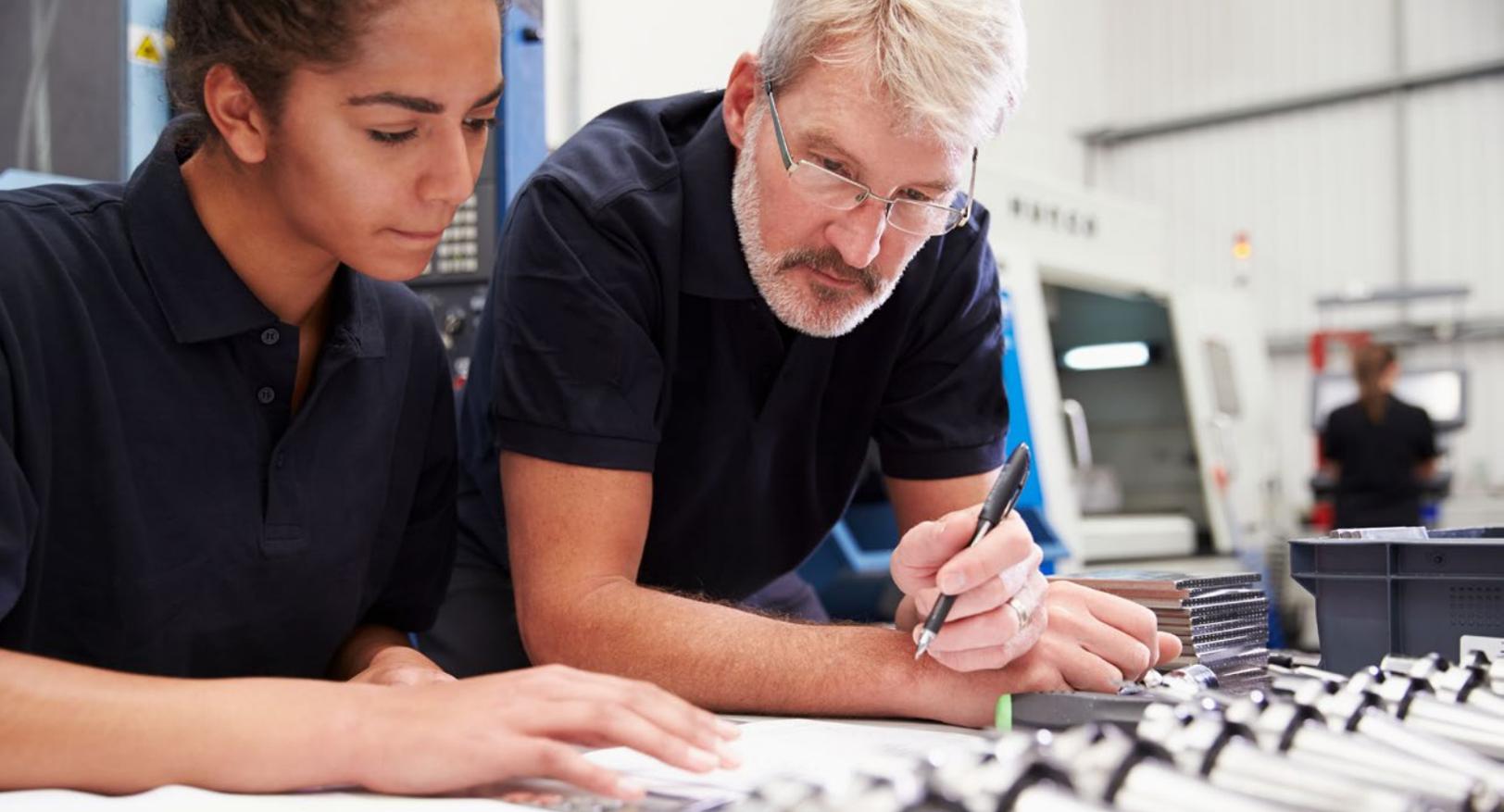
are connected to either work or postsecondary education one year post program. At their Northern Virginia location, Urban Alliance partners with Northern Virginia Community College to provide dual enrollment credit for participants in the UA program, creating a more seamless entry point into postsecondary education after the completion of the program.

### **Paid community service for disconnected youth: Conservation Corps of Long Beach (CCLB)**

The CCLB program is one of 13 local Conservation Corps across the state of California. CCLB serves mostly 18- to 25-year-olds who do not have a high school diploma, offering reengagement for this disconnected population through a charter high school and conservation focused employment program. The city of Long Beach has come to rely on the program both as a contractor on city projects and as a training pipeline for workers into city conservation based jobs.

### **Paid work-based learning opportunities**

CCLB requires youth to attend CCLB's charter high school and work during their participation in the program. During an average week, participants work about 28 hours in addition to their academic responsibilities, earning California minimum wage of \$10.00 per hour. Participants are CCLB employees and work on a variety of projects on which CCLB contracts with the city,



learning the skills necessary for careers in waste management, drought abatement, or environmental stewardship.

### **Strong partnerships with business and other community stakeholders**

CCLB's public sector partnership with the city offers youth the opportunity to build skills on publically funded projects, based on the needs of the city. During the current drought, for example, many of the contracts between CCLB and the city have facilitated youth development of drought abatement skills, such as working with local horticulture that can help prevent river erosion and minimize drought conditions on public land. CCLB has been able to parlay the skills participants have developed with the city's projects into contracts with a broader array of private nurseries growing the same horticulture. This model allows CCLB to build on their existing and historical relationship with the city and engage smaller, private business that may not have the capacity to partner with youth before they have established baseline skills through the city's contracts.

### **Positive youth development and continued support services**

CCLB participants without a high school diploma are required to attend the associated charter school. During their tenure at the school, students are evaluated each quarter, and at the time they achieve a high school diploma, to assess their soft skills, job skills, and goals for further participation in the

program. CCLB staff also work with teachers in the school and supervisors on the worksite to aggregate feedback on each participant and build a more constructive review each quarter. Staff also provides referrals to affordable housing, parenting support and childcare, transportation assistance, and continued engagement in job search activities after graduation from the program.

### **Linkages to career pathways**

The foundation of the CCLB program is access to a traditional high school diploma while earning wages through work experience. CCLB provides nearly 50 percent of graduates with postsecondary scholarships that cover much, if not all, of local community college costs. The program also works with participants and graduates to apply for colleges, jobs and AmeriCorps programs.

CCLB is in the process of conducting a long term analysis of graduate outcomes. In other programs across the state with similar models, 67 percent of graduates are either employed or in school (or both) within the first quarter of graduating the program, with 63 percent in either school or employed after the second quarter after participating in the program. Participant attachment to a career pathway increases to 75 percent at nine months after graduation, indicating the positive impact of continued engagement in job development activities with the Corps from which they graduated.

## Youth apprenticeship: Guilford Apprenticeship Partnership (GAP)

GAP is a partnership of sponsoring manufacturers administering a youth apprenticeship program in the Guilford County area of North Carolina. The program recruits high school juniors or seniors to participate in a 3-4 year apprenticeship program during the remainder of high school and continuing after graduation. Building on GAP members' experience with apprenticeship as a training model for adults in their workforce, the partners came together to form a youth apprenticeship program to expand their pipeline of incoming workers to a younger cohort. The businesses faced recruitment challenges in younger workers based on lack of awareness of advanced manufacturing careers, and the benefits of an apprenticeship program as a postsecondary pathway. To combat this challenge, partners decided to recruit high school students prior to their decision to attend a particular postsecondary program rather than waiting to recruit students with a high school diploma.

### Paid work-based learning opportunities

Business partners provide 3-4 years of on-the-job training including that delivered both to high school students and after graduation. As seniors in high school, students spend ½ day in school and a ½ day in hands-on, paid training at the partner company. Students are required to have unweighted 2.5 GPA, must have basic math courses — including algebra — and are encouraged to have taken relevant CTE courses before applying. Participants earn \$9 per hour wages for most of the first two years of the apprenticeship program, with increases after they progress in skills gains.

Prior to starting the apprenticeship program, participants enter a two-month pre-apprenticeship session with their chosen employer, during which they have in-depth exposure to the worksite and culture. Pre-apprentices also begin courses at the community college, where they are measured on their attendance and performance in the classroom to ensure aptitude for and interest in the apprenticeship program. During this time, the pre-apprentices are paid wages through a temporary employment agency and begin full-time employment with their host employer at the start of their full apprenticeship program.

### Strong partnerships with business and other community stakeholders

One major and common barrier for GAP businesses was local community colleges' requirement that courses have at least 12 participants in any given cohort. Because these partner businesses were small- and medium-sized manufacturing firms, none had the individual capacity to commit to that large of a

group of apprentices in an initial class. The businesses, working with their state Apprenticeship Council, were able to form a partnership to meet the 12 participant requirement jointly. After coming together, the partners spent 6 months deciding which occupations would be covered by the program and what the core components of the program would include.

The North Carolina Apprenticeship Council played a key role in the GAP program's initial success. As youth apprenticeship has become a model across the state, the Council created subcommittees of businesses in regions across the state, each with a team lead tasked with developing more apprenticeship and engaging other businesses in the area. This system helped facilitate GAP businesses' interaction with other apprenticeship programs across the state to share best practices and learn from their experiences and served as an initial convener of many of the GAP businesses. Continued replication of these models of youth apprenticeship is possible across the state, but NC employers and others across the country need public policies to help support workforce intermediaries that can ensure retention of the other 80 percent employers who were initially part of the partnership and weren't able to dedicate these resources necessary to continue working with the program.

### Positive youth development and continued support services

GAP business partners work with participants during the pre-apprenticeship program to identify transportation or other barriers to their full employment. After identifying any needed support services, business partners elicit help from other GAP partners, such as the Workforce Development Board, to provide linkages with transportation vouchers or child care resources. GAP businesses also work with applicants and participants to provide access to academic supports necessary to meet rigorous application criteria and success once engaging in classroom activities associated with their apprenticeship. Finally, because apprentices are full-time employees of the GAP business with which they work, each apprentice is eligible for benefits associated with this employment — access to wellness programs, paid leave, commuter benefits, and provided uniforms.

### Linkages to career pathways

Program participants will earn their Associate's Degree at the partner community college, along with their journey-level certification, at the completion of the apprenticeship program. Graduates will also continue their full-time employment with the GAP business with which they're employed, with wages estimated to increase to at least \$36,000 a year after the completion of the program.



# Policy recommendations

As the case studies illustrate, a number of youth serving organizations are successfully providing work-based learning opportunities for youth. In order to facilitate the expansion of these best practices across the country, NSC and NYEC recommend the following policy changes that can better align the youth workforce development system with the needs of the youth in their communities.

## 1. Congress should increase funding for youth workforce development activities that facilitate WBL:

The primary barrier to successful youth workforce development and expanded access to work-based learning is scarcity of funding. WIOA requires a major shift of funds to out-of-school youth – 75 percent of youth formula funds must be spent on this population – but Congress has failed to appropriate even authorized funding levels since the law was passed. WIOA also makes important strides in recognizing the value of work-based learning and the importance in serving out-of-school youth, requiring 20 percent of youth formula funds to go toward work experience. However, additional legislation is needed to facilitate appropriate public investment to truly serve these populations. President Obama’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 budget proposal called for \$5.5 billion over four years in increasing capacity to provide summer jobs, subsidized for jobs for youth, and competitive grants to improve student retention and attachment to career pathways. Dedicated funding at this scale would support significant new capacity to expand work-based learning for youth and young adults.

## 2. The Administration should invest in intermediaries that facilitate expansion of work-based learning for youth:

In addition to financial resources required to start and run a work-based learning program, many businesses or workforce areas are unable to commit the staff time necessary to establish expertise required to start programs. As community and technical colleges play a growing role in training related instruction, the barriers within these institutions can prevent well intentioned programs from flourishing without a centralized intermediary pushing the programming forward with all involved stakeholders.

Congress should direct targeted, new funding to support the expansion of intermediary capacity to convene business and other stakeholders’ engagement on work-based learning programs. This funding could be increased appropriations to fund sector partnerships through WIOA, dedicated new funding to support partnerships between employers and community colleges as part of reauthorization of the Carl. D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, or direct funding to DOL to support these entities as part of a package of funding targeting the expansion of apprenticeship.

## 3. Congress should expand financial incentives to businesses participating in work-based learning:

Businesses that are willing to invest in short-term opportunities for youth may need additional incentives to invest in a full-time hire. In order to incentivize businesses to start and build out work-based learning programs, Congress should expand tax credits for businesses or organizations who hire out-of-school youth under the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.<sup>20</sup> Under the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, businesses who hire youth participating in a summer jobs program earn a tax credit of up to \$1,200 for hiring the youth.<sup>21</sup> As WIOA expanded the definition of work experience beyond simply summer jobs, this category of youth should likewise be expanded to make businesses eligible for the tax credit if they are hiring any WIOA enrolled youth into work-based learning programs.

20 <https://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/benefits.cfm>

21 A business is eligible for a tax credit of \$750 when the youth works at least 120 hours and of \$1200 when the youth works at least 400 hours in the year after beginning employment. <https://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/benefits.cfm>



In addition to tax credits, up front subsidies for businesses have been shown to improve employment outcomes for youth by lowering the business' perceived risk associated with hiring these workers.<sup>22</sup> Congress should pass legislation that would provide significant subsidies to sponsors who are growing or starting apprenticeship programs. Subsidies would cover costs associated with this growth and would lower the risk for businesses offering apprenticeship programs.

**4. Department of Labor should issue additional guidance for the workforce development system on working with employers hiring with out-of-school youth and at-risk youth:**

This guidance should both encourage the workforce development system to work with additional business partners and should provide technical resources, and associated funding for technical assistance and peer learning, for helping the workforce system to make the case for hiring and training out-of-school and at-risk youth. The guidance should include:

- Recommendations to implement best practices, such as creating strong intermediaries that can aggregate demand and establish training, engaging with sector partnerships, and ensuring work-based learning planning include purposeful alignment with career pathways;
- Template materials for conducting outreach to businesses, such as engaging businesses in job fairs, mock interviews, site visits, and work-based learning programming;
- Descriptions of a wide range of work based learning models, to increase understanding among the field of the diversity of successful work experience models currently in use.

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<sup>22</sup> The impact of youth employment incentives and wage subsidies: results of a trial run, <http://www.econ3x3.org/article/impact-youth-employment-incentives-and-wage-subsidies-results-trial-run>

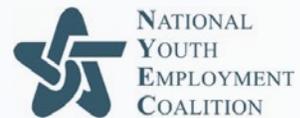


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