

YOUTH COUNCIL RETREAT
November 17, 2001
Annex Building
Meeting Notes

A narrative of the local Youth Council's history was presented:

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 was signed into law on August 7, 1998. The **WIA's goal** is to increase the employment, retention and earnings of participants, and increase occupational skill attainment by participants, and, as a result improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the Nation. **Those served by the WIA** are adults, dislocated workers, and youth.

Key Principles of the WIA

- Streamlining Services
- Universal Access
- Strong Role for Local Boards & Private Sector
- Improved YOUTH Programs
- Empowering Individuals
- Increased Accountability
- State and local flexibility

The **Youth Council** is a sub-group of the WIA. Its **members consist of** local WIB members with expertise on youth issues (educators, employers, representatives of human service agencies), youth service agencies and former participants (juvenile justice, local law enforcement agencies), public housing authorities, parents of eligible youth seeking WIA assistance, former participants, and other individuals agreed to by the Board Chair and the elected officials.

The **duties of the Youth Council** are to develop portions of the local plan relating to eligible youth, recommend eligible providers through a competitive process, conduct oversight, and coordinate youth activities.

Under WIA, **those served by the Youth Council** are youth (ages 14-21), low income with barriers to employment: basic skills deficient; a school dropout; homeless, a runaway, or a foster child; pregnant or a parent; an offender, AND someone who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment. OR Out-of-School Youth (an eligible who is not in school at the time of enrollment): dropout, or has received a high school credential, but is basic skills deficient, or unemployed, or underemployed.

The **role of the Youth Council** is to strategically link/connect all youth delivery systems in a way that promotes a countywide vision of successful youth. Its mission statement is, "Build a community wide consensus that promotes and supports an integrated youth service delivery system that ensures any youth the support needed." Its vision is, "Today's Youth ... Tomorrow's Leaders".

Youth Council Historical Calendar:

June 1999	Interim Youth Council Established
October 1999	Youth Council formalized by WIB
December 1999	Youth Council ratified by Board of Supervisors (BOS)
May 2000	RFP for younger youth program let
June 2000	RFP for older youth program let
July 2000	Vision, Role & Mission Statement formalized
August 2000	WIB defines relationship with Youth Council
September 2000	Council goals 1 and 2 are formalized
September 2000	Younger youth program contract awarded
November 2000	Older youth program contract awarded
February 2001	Committee's structure and goals are established Council goals 1, 2, 3, and 4 are established
March 2001	Committees begin oral reports at Youth Council meetings
April 2001	Decision made to hold Youth Conference Marketing Committee begins Youth Resource Directory
May 2001	Youth Council Executive Committee is formed
July 2001	Dos Palos CISCO Academy supported monetarily
August 2001	Survey with schools taken
October 2001	Asset Mapping/Gap Analysis begun
November 2001	Youth Council Retreat

The **challenges** of the Youth council are to improve educational attainment, prepare young people for success in the labor market, support young people, and develop potential of youth as citizens and leaders.

The **blueprint for action for local officials** includes: empower the Youth Council; make the Youth Council a decision-making body; encourage Youth Councils to: map assets in each community, forge linkages among education, juvenile justice, workforce development, and other youth service programs, and organize networks of employers.

The **blueprint for action for school officials** includes: encourage flexible learning options, expand dropout prevention, establish high expectations, support the use of ADA as a funding base, extend School-to-Work partnerships to out-of-school youth, and connect with post secondary education system.

The **blueprint for action for employers** includes: join the local WIB and Youth Council, form networks of large and small employers, make jobs accessible for those willing to work, encourage intermediaries (job brokers) that will support employers and connect young people to jobs, and think of work as a developmental activity for youth.

The **blueprint for action for community-based partners** includes: take an active role in Youth Councils; outreach to kids; operate neighborhood centers; enlist cadre of caring adults; link youth to learning, skill building, and community services; link youth to needed support services; and ensure brokers connect youth to jobs with career potential.

The **blueprint for action (focusing on results)** includes:

For youth:

- Have skills improved?
- Are more youth in jobs, college, or the military?
- Are they on the path to high wage jobs?
- Are risk-taking behaviors reduced?

For the System:

- Is there a network of effective service providers?
- Are youth programs staffed by competent, skilled adults?

Youth Council members were asked:

Where do you see the Youth Council going in the next 2 years? Members were divided into four groups and asked to answer first individually, then to prioritize each answer as a group. These are all of the answers sorted into groups by all members:

- Becoming a “One Stop” center for youth
 - Broker information between youth and providers
 - Youth Council – a facilitator/broker to obtain youth money for the community and build partnerships
 - Coordinate to reduce duplication of efforts
 - Resource Directory distributed, marketed, and utilized
-
- A bigger commitment to youth involvement
 - Youth participation on Youth Council
 - Annual and local youth conference
-
- Focus on relationships in order to be the leader of the youth development model
 - Strategically placed to oversee and encourage new youth programs in county
 - Youth Council name recognition among youth and community
-
- Continue to develop youth leadership
 - Get more kids involved in leadership role
-
- Focused on building relationships
 - Mentorship programs
 - To be a holistic server of youth

After members answered the first question, they were asked:

What does a comprehensive, local youth system look like? Members were given a graphic handout outlining five (5) key elements that make up a comprehensive youth system and asked to compare and rate it to the local Youth Council *system*. They were asked to assign each key element item a number between 1 and 5 (5 being best) to rate the local youth system. The numbers after each item corresponds with the group's rating decision. The five (5) key elements are:

1. **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

All youth are engaging in their learning in the classroom

- a. High academic expectations are supported (2)
- b. Workplace experiences support academic learning (3)
- c. Connected alternative school options exist (3)
- d. Youth complete H.S. prepared for and understanding options (2)

2. **CAREER PREPARATION:**

All youth are learning in the workplace and community

- a. Career awareness and preparation is broad (2)
- b. Classroom learning supports career preparation (2)
- c. Sequenced WBL links to academic and occupational learning (3)
- d. Work experience tailored to meet individual needs (3)

3. **YOUTH LEADERSHIP**

Youth are visible and active in leadership roles

- a. Youth actively participate in shaping the system (4)
- b. Youth provide data for shaping policies (2)
- c. Youth are engaged as decision-makers (4)
- d. Leadership opportunities are leveraged and connected (3)

4. **YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT**

All youth are connected to caring adults and supported in their development

- a. Broad range of supports and activities are available (3)
- b. All activities (including classes and work) are intentionally connected (4)
- c. Youth and parents are fully aware of multiple options and access (1½)
- d. Sense of personal identity and community responsibility fostered (2)

5. **COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH**

Formal network provides the foundation for a coordinated system

- a. Community leadership is engaged (not rated)
- b. Partners have clear roles and responsibilities (1)
- c. Adequate resources are available (4)
- d. System is responsive to emerging needs (3)
- e. Operational infrastructure is in place (5)
- f. Community is aware of and supports a focus on youth issues (3)

Members were then asked:

Utilizing the aforementioned answers, what is the most important function of *this* Youth Council in building a comprehensive, local youth system?

Members were given a graphic handout outlining four (4) key functions and asked members to highlight areas that the Youth Council should be focusing on. They were asked to choose the most important key function in each group. The asterisks (**) after each item, corresponds with the group's decision on priority items. The four (4) functions are:

1. COORDINATE YOUTH SERVICES

Youth Councils must ensure effective implementation of WIA's 10 elements

They also:

- a. Map all services available to youth in the community
- b. Develop framework for youth services
- c. Define single year-round, comprehensive, coherent system
- d. Intentionally link youth-serving organizations (including schools)

2. ENSURE QUALITY AND IMPACT OF LOCAL EFFORTS

Youth Councils must assess, recommend, evaluate and hold providers accountable.

They also:

- a. Encourage youth involvement in decision-making
- b. Benchmark best practices (**)
- c. Set quality standards based on best practices (**)
- d. Motivate individuals, agencies and communities to improve quality of youth services

3. CONVENE LOCAL LEADERSHIP TO TAKE ACTION

Youth Councils must recruit and support appropriate members.

They also:

- a. Engage Council in decision-making and action
- b. Establish effective governance and committee structure
- c. Leverage youth-serving resources (**)
- d. Educate leadership on system and lessons learned (**)

4. PROMOTE POLICIES TO SUSTAIN EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Youth Councils must make formal recommendations to the local WIB.

They also:

- a. Guide and develop broad youth policy
- b. Advocate for and with Youth Council
- c. Educate leadership and generate public awareness
- d. Catalyze shift from programs to one-system (**)

Members were given a graphic handout outlining the stages of building a comprehensive, local youth system. They were asked to place a marker on the area where they thought the Youth Council was currently at. The numbers after each item corresponds with how many members chose that particular stage. The stages are (completes a circle):

1. FORMATION (1)

- a. Low visibility of youth issues
- b. Lack of coordination among providers
- c. Council convened to meet WIA requirements
- d. WIA eligible youth are served
- e. Activities driven by funding
- f. Limited youth involvement
 - Define mission
 - Map resources
 - Identify practices
 - Recruit partners (1)

Breakthrough: Youth Council agrees to catalyze development of a comprehensive youth system. (1)

2. DESIGN (3)

- a. Youth involved in design process
- b. Clear goals, objectives and benchmarks
- c. Awareness of best practices and resources
- d. Governance and committee structure established
- e. Collaboration and clear roles among Council members and others
- f. Engaged and empowered working group
 - Create vision
 - Develop plan
 - Analyze data
 - Garner commitments

Breakthrough: Youth Council and partners commit to roles and responsibilities. (2)

3. INCUBATION (5)

- a. Activities aligned with vision
- b. Coordinated staff development
- c. Directed resources and aligned practices
- d. Coordinated evaluation and improvement strategies in place
- e. Regular progress and challenges shared in reports to Council and others
- f. Youth take on roles as leaders
 - Conduct pilot
 - Test systems
 - Train staff
 - Evaluate effectiveness

Breakthrough: Youth Council and partners agree to expand activities and practices. (1)

(continued)

4. GROWTH (1)

- a. Increased number of and range of partners
- b. Increased number and demographic of youth served
- c. Resources follow comprehensive strategic plan
- d. Planning for expansion to entire Workforce Investment Area
- e. Youth have defined leadership roles and responsibilities
- f. Impacts on youth served evident
- g. Expanded staff development
 - Refine strategies
 - Broaden scope
 - Expand partners
 - Communicate results
 - Develop system policies

Breakthrough: Youth Council and partners agree to sustain practice.

5. INTEGRATION

- a. Broad awareness and support
- b. Quality services available for all youth
- c. Embraced role for all partners
- d. Recurring resources aligned
- e. Spirit of inclusion within community
- f. Youth are visible and active in leadership roles
 - Document strategies
 - Sustain work
 - Leverage resources
 - Explore opportunities

Breakthrough: Youth Council and partners agree on next set of priorities.

Members were asked about their observations after reviewing the aforementioned information. **What do we know about the Youth Council?**

- Work is done in the Youth Council through committees
- Everyone seemed to be on line together with the goals
- Committee structure helped with goals
- Take longer to get where we want
- Youth Council and WIB cooperation – progressive here in Merced
- Strong staff support
- Unfortunately, the Youth Council is a “best kept secret”

Members discussed the functions of the Youth Council and were asked **where does the Youth Council need help?**

- Shift from programs to one system – identify all entities who say they do coordination of youth programs
- Youth serving resources education leadership on system – identify the gaps
- Benchmark best practices/quality standards
- Define a single comprehensive cohesive system – get all partners at the table to eliminate duplication and get school system involved.

The final function the retreat members performed was to assign priorities to specific elements of the **functions of a Youth Council in building a comprehensive, local youth system**. The following functions were listed as “top priorities”:

- Coordinate youth services
 - Define single year-round, comprehensive system
- Ensure quality and impact of local efforts
 - Benchmark best practices
 - Set quality standards based on best practices
- Promote policies to sustain effective practices
 - Catalyze shift from programs to one system
- Convene local leadership to take action
 - Leverage youth serving resources
 - Educate leadership on system and lessons learned

The retreat ended by quickly comparing the final functional priorities with the ideas generated by asking the question “where do you see the Youth Council going in the next 2 years?” It was gratifying to see that the functional priorities aligned with the retreat members’ forecast of where the Youth Council is headed.

The retreat members were then again informed that the Youth Council Executive Committee would be going to Sacramento in mid January to attempt this same exercise. After that, both sets of priorities will be melded into recommendation to modify the present Youth Council goals.