

TO: Youth Council

DATE: 08/11/04

FROM: Youth Council Staff

For Action

For Information

For Discussion

SUBJECT: Youth Council Facts/Accomplishments Paper (Draft)

PROPOSED MOTION(S): Approve the attached Youth Council Facts/Accomplishments Paper

DISCUSSION: The Youth Council's Role is to Strategically link/connect all youth delivery systems in a way that promotes a countywide vision of successful youth. During the Youth Council's July 14, 2004 meeting, members requested that a Youth Council Fact/Accomplishment Paper be developed to use as introductory material to other youth groups and agencies.

ATTACHMENT(S): Draft Youth Council Facts/Accomplishments Paper

Merced County Youth Council

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998, further defined by the 20 Code of Federal Regulations Part 652 and Parts 660 through 671, established Workforce Investment Areas throughout the United States. Local Workforce Investment Boards were created to focus on strategic planning, policy development and oversight of their local workforce investment systems. Youth programs are an integral part of the Act, and local Youth Councils were mandated as a subcommittee of the Workforce Investment Boards.

The Act dictates improved youth programs, linked closely to local labor market needs and community youth programs and services, and with strong connections between academic and occupational learning. Youth programs include activities that promote youth development and citizenship, such as leadership development through community service opportunities; adult mentoring and follow-up; and targeted opportunities for youth living in high poverty areas.

To deliver these services Youth Councils were created. In Merced, the first Youth Council meetings began in 1999. The makeup of the Youth Council included members of the newly formed Workforce Investment Board of Merced County; individuals from service agencies such as juvenile justice and local law enforcement agencies; individuals who represented local public housing authorities; parents of eligible youth to be served by the Act; former participants in prior workforce development programs; and individuals from organizations with experience relating to youth activities.

The Merced County Youth Council was charged with the following responsibilities:

- a. Coordinate youth activities within the County.**
- b. Developing the youth portion of the strategic plan for workforce development within Merced County.**
- c. Recommending eligible youth service providers to administer services for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) eligible youth, subject to the approval of the local Board.**
- d. Conducting oversight of selected programs to serve WIA enrolled youth, subject to the approval of the local Board.**
- e. Carrying out other duties, as authorized by the Chair of the local Board, such as establishing linkages with educational agencies and other youth entities.**

By July 1, 2000, and now funded by the US Department of Labor (DOL) with \$2,501,693, the Youth Council had begun the tasks of defining youth programs, writing a Request for Proposal defining the programs to be served, selecting the youth program providers, and then providing oversight for the programs. Merced County WIA youth programs serve youth 14-21 years of age. Since the program's

inception, 2,244 youth have been served with that number continuing to grow. The WIA contracts with ARBOR Inc.; Jobs for California Graduates, Merced County, Inc.; and Merced County Office of Education have brought over \$8.5 million into the Merced County economy. The programs have raised the attainment rates for high school diplomas and GED certificates for the population of Merced County's "at risk" youth. Of special significance to the 2200+ enrolled youth is the fact that over \$3.5 million has been paid directly to youth engaged in year round work experience programs.

The Merced County Youth Council views its role as the agency to "strategically link/connect all youth delivery systems in a way that promotes a countywide vision of successful youth". To help accomplish this, the Youth Council has embraced the State Youth Council's "All Youth – One System" concept.

The accomplishments of the Youth Council have been impressive. They were fiscally instrumental in the establishment of a CISCO Academy for the Dos Palos-Oro Loma Unified School District. When Los Banos needed help in establishing a CISCO/Electronics Laboratory to serve Los Banos High School and Merced College students, the Youth Council responded. Additionally, Youth Council members visited the County high schools to survey youth concerning their social, educational and economic needs. That information resulted in a Countywide Needs Assessment Survey and Gap Analysis/Asset Map being created in January 2002. The documents were presented to the County Board of Supervisors and the City Councils of Merced, Atwater, Los Banos, Dos Palos and Gustine. On a more personal note, the Youth Council produced a Youth Resource Directory, aimed at providing a ready resource for youth in immediate need of food, clothing, housing, protection, counseling, transportation, medical attention, and recreation. It was distributed to over 3,000 at-risk youth, and is now in its second printing.

The Council has been active concerning community awareness. They sponsored two youth to attend the League of California Cities Annual Conference, September 2002, in San Diego. They sponsored over 500 WIA enrolled youth to attend the Perry/Yokely Youth Symposium in Merced to hear Coach Herman Boone, the individual the Disney movie, Clash of the Titans, was based on. More recently, nine present and former Youth Council members were key players in the development of the Merced County Children's Action Plan.

This year, DOL funds of over \$2.6 million are being infused into Merced County with the Youth Council providing fiscal and program oversight. The Youth Council continues to support the personal development of the County's youth, while helping to create a system that will assure success for each individual as they mature and enter the workforce.