

**TO: Youth Council**

**DATE: 9/08/04**

**FROM: Youth Council Staff**

**For Action**

**For Information**

**For Discussion**

**SUBJECT: High Concentrations of Youth Plan**

**PROPOSED MOTION(S): Information Only**

**DISCUSSION:** The attached plan was submitted to the California Workforce Investment Board in response to an Employment Development Department Directive Number WIAD04-1, dated July 21, 2004, and the subsequent California Workforce Investment Board letter, dated July 27, 2004, authorizing \$70,000 of additional WIA funding for Program Year 2003/04. The funds must be expended by June 30, 2005, and are awarded based on Merced County being recognized as one of the top ten LWIAs in California with a high concentration of eligible youth.

The plan is written to serve 35 additional out-of-school youth, with a focus on youth offenders, specifically those incarcerated in Juvenile Hall between the ages of 17 and 18. The program case manager will be stationed half-time at Juvenile Hall and half-time at Valley Community School. The program involves collaboration with Merced County Probation Department, Juvenile Hall, Valley Community School, the Merced County Office of Education out-of-school youth program, and Merced County Mental Health Services.

The plan must arrive in Sacramento NLT close of business September 1, 2004. Once the plan is approved the funds will be released. It is expected that this plan will be a part of the Out-of-School Program by October 1, 2004.

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

**High Concentrations of Youth Plan Proposal**

The Merced County Workforce Investment Board is submitting this plan for services in response to the Employment Development Department Directive Number WIAD04-1 dated July 21, 2004 and the subsequent California Workforce Investment Board letter dated July 27, 2004 authorizing \$70,000 of additional WIA funding for PY2003/04 based on Merced County's high concentration of eligible youth.

The plan is written to serve 35 additional out-of-school youth, with a focus on youth offenders, specifically those incarcerated in Juvenile Hall between the ages of 17 and 18. The following performance measures will be achieved:

WIA Performance Measure	2004/2005 Goal	Minimum Outcomes (based on 35 youth served)
Younger Youth Skill Attainment Rate	78.7%	28 youth
Younger Youth Diploma or Equivalent Rate	55%	20 youth
Younger Youth Retention Rate	53.8%	19 youth

**Projected Increase in the number of WIA eligible youth to be served:**

This plan will serve an additional 35 out-of-school youth in the WIA Out-of-School Youth program, known in Merced County as the EMPOWER program. The EMPOWER program provides comprehensive, long-term services that address the four major themes of the Workforce Investment Act: 1) improving education achievement, 2) preparation for and success in employment, 3) supportive services, and 4) services intended to develop the potential of youth as citizens and leaders. The EMPOWER program is currently serving 192 enrolled youth (as of July 31, 2004) with an existing contractual obligation to serve a total of 313 youth during the 2004-2005 program year. This plan will fund a position to serve an additional 35 out-of-school youth. Recruitment and enrollment efforts for these additional youth will be focused on youth offenders, specifically those incarcerated in Juvenile Hall, between the ages of 17 and 18.

**Services to be provided as described in the WIA, section 129 (c) (2):**

The EMPOWER program will provide an opportunity for eligible, committed young adults to receive a full array of services and supports that are most likely to result in increased skill attainment, high school completion or achievement of the GED, and retention as defined by the WIA.

Debbie Woody, EMPOWER Program Advisor, will recruit, enroll, and provide case management services to 35 youth. Ms. Woody will be stationed half-time at Juvenile Hall and half-time at Valley Community School, enabling her to serve youth both during their incarceration and after their return to high school. Ms. Woody will make available all the program components and program elements described in the following section. Program activities for each participant will vary depending on the needs of each participant as described in the Individual Service Strategy (ISS).

## **Program Design Components**

### **Outreach and Recruitment**

Outreach and recruitment will target youth offenders, specifically those incarcerated in Juvenile Hall, who are between the ages of 17 and 18. Debbie Woody will be stationed half-time at Juvenile Hall, will conduct ongoing outreach and recruitment, and will work closely with the Merced County Probation Department to identify and recruit youth most in need of, and appropriate for, program services. Ms. Woody will also provide outreach and recruitment to pending graduates of Valley Community School who are youth offenders to encourage enrollment upon graduation, if appropriate and eligible for WIA services. All youth who are recruited for program services will be referred to a program orientation prior to enrollment.

### **Orientation**

The EMPOWER Orientation serves several purposes, including 1) to inform youth of the full array of program services available, 2) to engage youth regarding the expectations for youth participation and commitment, 3) to actively demonstrate to youth the strength of our collaborative program organization. Orientations are conducted in cohorts and will be facilitated by Ms. Woody, who will be assisted by rotational teams of program case managers. This approach ensures that youth of all cultures, races, and ethnicities are provided with complete information and understanding of the program's services and expectations, and demonstrates the collaborative and organizational strength of the program. At the completion of the orientation session, participants will be formally assigned to Ms. Woody for Advisor (Case Manager) services.

### **Intake and WIA Eligibility Determination (Initial Assessment)**

The Advisor will review initial assessment for each potential participant for WIA eligibility and the appropriateness of enrollment into the program. Initial assessment will also be addressed in the orientation session. Upon completion of the orientation session, youth who are initially determined to be WIA eligible and appropriate for the program will be assigned to a program Advisor. Youth will be provided a "Roadmap" to program enrollment, with instructions to complete a series of reasonable activities prior to attending Workshop I, which occurs one week after the orientation session. "Roadmap" activities include completion of a vocational assessment, completion of the ISS document, and completion of the TABE test. Ms. Woody will provide youth with the information, resources, and support necessary to complete these activities.

### **Information, Referral, and Resource**

Youth determined to be ineligible for WIA services and/or not appropriate for program services will be referred to other community services. The referral will be documented and a member of the case management team will conduct follow-up to determine if the referral was utilized or if another referral may be needed.

## **Enrollment**

Enrollment will be available for out-of-school youth between the ages of 17 and 18 who are incarcerated in Juvenile Hall and meet the WIA low-income eligibility requirements.

MCOE will enroll and serve 35 youth between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005. This number is in addition to the 313 youth served under the current, existing WIA out-of-school contract.

## **Objective Assessment and ISS**

Objective Assessment and the development of each participant's individual Service Strategy (ISS) is an ongoing process accomplished through a series of activities designed to provide youth with knowledge of their skills, interests, aptitudes, needs, and goals. The series of activities include vocational assessment, completion of the TABE, completion of the ISS document, and participation in the EMPOWER Workshop I, one week after orientation. EMPOWER Workshop I is conducted in cohorts of the same participants who attended the orientation session one week earlier. EMPOWER Workshop I is designed to provide participants with additional opportunities to explore their interests and aptitudes, including Multiple Intelligences Theory, and to lay the foundation for success in the program by providing hands-on activities to develop and explore teamwork and problem-solving skills, discuss and debate ethics in the workplace, and identify areas for personal growth, all of which are included in the ISS.

At the completion of Workshop I, participants are scheduled for an individual meeting with their Advisor during which eligibility is finalized and a course of action is determined. The Advisor will evaluate, analyze, and discuss with participants the results of all formal and informal assessments. Using that data, the Advisor will work closely with participants to complete the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) and develop the planned course of action.

Utilizing the TABE, the vocational assessment, the ISS, and the informal assessments from EMPOWER Workshop I will ensure that the following WIA components are reviewed and considered in the course of action for each participant:

1. basic skills
2. occupational skills
3. prior work experience
4. employability
5. interests
6. aptitudes
7. supportive services needed
8. developmental needs

## **Connection with Youth Development Activities**

The EMPOWER program design is reflective of the Search Institute's Developmental Assets Model for youth development. The external asset of support is provided by the Advisor and by the caring program climate. Every EMPOWER workshop and activity is formally evaluated by participants, with specific feedback requested on how welcomed and comfortable the participant

felt during the session. The external asset of empowerment is reflected in the program name, and in the strength of community partnership, collaboration, and organizational strength demonstrated during program workshops and activities. The external asset of boundaries and expectations is provided by the program structure, culture, and high expectations. During the orientation session, youth are informed of the program structure, sequence of services, performance measures, and expectations; participants reach consensus on their cohort's expectations for successful participation behaviors. The external asset of constructive use of time is addressed by the program structure, ongoing availability of program workshops and activities, a sequence of services that is logical and comprehensive, and the availability, upon release, of a youth computer lab and resource center that is centrally located in Merced.

## **Case Management**

Each participant will be assigned an Advisor during the program orientation. The Advisor will work with the participant to complete the eligibility process, develop the ISS, and coordinate referrals to services necessary to accomplish the activities established in the ISS. The case manager will be responsible to monitor participant progress at least monthly and provide documentation through appropriate diary narratives.

## **PROGRAM ELEMENTS**

### **Drop-out Prevention Activities (Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction)**

Participants who are basic skills deficient and/or lack a high school diploma will be referred to Valley Community School. The Advisor will work collaboratively with Valley Community School staff to ensure that participants receive coordinated support and interventions, including supportive services as necessary, to ensure progress toward improvement in basic skills, attainment of a high school diploma, or successful completion of the GED examination.

### **Alternative Secondary School Services**

Participants who have been unsuccessful in obtaining their GED/High School Diploma and are identified as possessing the aptitude for an educational credential will be referred to Valley Community School during incarceration. Upon release, participants will be referred to Valley Community School or Merced Adult School as appropriate. Participants with the aptitude for GED/High School Diploma will be expected to accomplish this objective prior to or concurrent with enrollment in other program components.

### **Paid and unpaid work experience (including internships and job shadowing)**

Work experience will be provided to participants through job shadow, community classroom placement, and/or paid work experience as appropriate and practical during incarceration, and/or upon release and completion of all probationary requirements. The Advisor will work closely with the program's job developer prior to placement in this component to ensure that the work experience opportunities provided support the goals of the participants' ISS.

## **Occupational Skills Training**

Participants whose ISS identifies occupational skills training as an appropriate program activity will be provided services during incarceration by the contractor and upon release by one of the following subcontractors: Merced College, Merced Adult School, by the contractor MCOE, or by other skills training providers listed in the ETPL. Placement in a training program will be in alignment with the career goals indicated in the participants' ISS. Participants referred for occupational skills training will be referred for potential co-enrollment for WIA services through the Merced County Department of Workforce Investment, and/or be assisted with application for financial aid through Merced College for semester-based programs. The Advisor will work collaboratively with all educational partners to ensure that participants receive coordinated support and interventions, including supportive services as necessary, to ensure progress toward successful completion of training.

## **Leadership Development Opportunities**

The Advisor will work with participants to identify leadership opportunities that match the participants' interests and aptitudes as identified in the ISS. The Advisor will encourage and monitor citizenship during incarceration, and provide linkages to community involvement upon release.

## **Supportive Services**

Supportive services necessary for each participant to achieve successful outcomes in the program will be identified during the development of the ISS. The Advisor will refer the participant to community services and/or provide direct services, as funding allows, through the program. In addition to the supportive services identified in the ISS, the Advisor will make every effort to identify other supportive service needs that may arise as the participant progresses through the program.

## **Adult Mentoring**

Each participant will be assigned to an Advisor who will assist the participant to complete his/her education, training, and other program activities. The Advisor will provide ongoing support and encourage accountability toward individual goals for each participant. The mentor relationship will be established during incarceration and will continue upon release. Mentor services will be documented by monthly diary entries.

## **Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling**

All participants will complete the TABE to determine academic skills, and a vocational assessment to determine learning styles, vocational interests, aptitudes, and temperaments.

EMPOWER Workshop I is designed to further inform participants of their unique talents and abilities, and to form a foundation for success in the program. Workshop I utilizes interactive,

hands-on activities to develop problem-solving skills, practice teamwork, accept change, develop communication skills, and explore Multiple Intelligences Theory. Participants learn of the educational and career opportunities that compliment their natural intelligences. Upon completion of Workshop I, the Advisor will work individually with participants to develop the ISS. Under the direction of the Advisor, participants will establish goals and develop an action plan for career exploration, education, training, skills development, and work experience.

EMPOWER Workshop II consists of a series of sessions that address employment readiness. Participants will develop an employability portfolio and practice interviewing techniques. Participants who complete Workshop II will have an opportunity to participate in the EMPOWER Zone, an interactive, community-involved event to demonstrate and strengthen participants' application and interviewing skills.

EMPOWER Workshop III provides participants with strategies for effective communication and teamwork to ensure job retention and satisfaction.

EMPOWER Workshop IV provides financial literacy training, including personal budgeting, contingency budgeting, banking, payroll deductions, and income tax issues.

EMPOWER Workshops I-IV are aligned with the Merced County ROP Working Professional course, which is approved by both the Merced County Office of Education Board of Trustees and the California Department of Education. Successful completion of the workshops will be recognized by a certificate of achievement.

Participants in need of counseling services for mental health issues, addiction, or other intensive services will be referred to community agencies as appropriate.

### **Follow-up Services**

Follow up services will be provided to participants for a minimum duration of 12 months after program exit. Participants who are exited will be contacted at least quarterly and will be notified and encouraged to attend program workshops, visit the EMPOWER Career Center for assistance with job search activities, and access the computer and PLATO lab for further skills development. Supportive services will be made available as appropriate. Re-enrollment will be available when appropriate.

### **Summer Employment Opportunities**

Employment opportunities will be offered to participants year round and will not be limited to the summer months. Participants will be enrolled into paid work experience and/or OJT activities based on the sequence of services established in the ISS, and as appropriate and allowable based on court status. The job developer will work closely with the Advisor to develop work experience and/or OJT opportunities, and worksite training plans that align with the participants' ISS.

## **On-the-job Training Opportunities**

On-the-job Training opportunities (OJTs) will be available to participants upon release and successful completion of probationary requirements. The Job Developer will work with local employers to negotiate contractual agreements that utilize program funds to reimburse employers a portion of the salary costs associated with training. OJTs will provide participants the opportunity to learn skills in a setting where there is an expectation of continued, unsubsidized employment upon completion of the OJT period. OJT agreements will include a written Training Plan, developed by the employer and the Job Developer, which will identify the specific skills the participant will develop during the OJT period. The Job Developer and the participant's Advisor will work cooperatively to ensure that the participant, with the assistance of the employer, is progressing toward mastery of the Training Plan objectives and is maintaining the personal behaviors necessary for continued employment. The Advisor will ensure that appropriate supportive services, such as transportation and uniforms, are provided as needed.

## **Financial Literacy Skills Training**

EMPOWER Workshop IV provides financial literacy training, including personal budgeting, contingency budgeting, banking, payroll deductions, and income tax issues.

## **Connections and collaboration with local community resources and programs:**

This plan strengthens existing informal collaborative relationships between the out-of-school youth program and the following partners: Merced County Probation, Juvenile Hall, Valley Community School, and Merced County Mental Health Services. The plan will provide comprehensive services to youth offenders in an effort to encourage and positively recognize youths' successful completion of court and probationary requirements. Services provided at Juvenile Hall will provide motivation for positive behavior while incarcerated. Services provided upon release will assure that youth are enrolled at Valley Community School for high school completion and progressing in other activities outlined in the ISS. Referrals for mental health services will be coordinated with Merced County Probation, Juvenile Hall, Valley Community School, and the EMPOWER program Advisor.

## **Program Outcomes and related timelines:**

### **Work Statement**

#### **The Contractor MCOE will:**

1. Provide services for 35 WIA eligible 17-18 year-old out-of-school youth who are or have been court involved.
2. Be responsible for administrative and fiscal oversight of the program.

3. Provide services including the ten (10) WIA required comprehensive elements and the program design components outlined in this narrative.
4. Provide outreach and recruitment to enroll 35 new participants.
5. Determine eligibility for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) services for 17-18 year-old out-of-school youth and complete required WIA enrollment paperwork.
6. Provide each participant with a comprehensive orientation to the program.
7. Provide objective assessment as described in the plan narrative. Complete an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) for each participant.
8. Provide case management services for each participant, including appropriate contact at least once each month, with appropriate diary entry.
9. Provide workshops that address employment preparation, job search strategies, employment retention, and financial literacy skills.
10. Provide paid and unpaid work experience, including OJTs.
11. Provide supportive services when needed and as practical. Refer participants to appropriate community services.
12. Be responsible for payroll of participants and distribute participant paychecks.
13. Comply with laws and regulations pertaining to Workers' Compensation, federal and state labor laws, and Child Labor Laws for minor participants.
14. Ensure that all work site supervisors receive a program orientation before any participants are placed under their supervision.
15. Provide each participant an orientation to the worksite and/or training program prior to placement.
16. Provide each participant the safety equipment necessary to perform work under the contract.
17. Carry out all program activities in accordance with the Work Statement and Budget/Budget Narrative in this plan.
8. Attain the final Local Youth Performance Measures established for 14-18 year olds by the State. The performance indicators that must be attained by the contractor are:

Youth skill attainment rate	78.700%
Youth diploma or equivalent rate	55.00%
Younger Youth Retention rate	53.8.00%

19. Provide follow-up services to all participants a minimum duration of 12 months after program exit.
20. Provide a Customer Satisfaction Evaluation to measure the level of customer satisfaction with program services.

**Description as to how WIA funds are to be leveraged with other funding sources:**

WIA funds will be leveraged with funds from the contractor and from collaborating partners, including Merced County Probation, Juvenile Hall, Valley Community School, and Merced County Mental Health. Merced County Probation and Juvenile Hall will provide office and classroom space to the Advisor with no charge to the WIA contract. Valley Community School will provide office and classroom space to the Advisor, and vocational education and training to youth while incarcerated in Juvenile Hall, with no charge to the WIA contract. Education and training opportunities will be made available upon release utilizing the sub-contracts in the existing WIA out-of-school youth contract, with no charge to this program. Paid work experience opportunities will be provided through the existing WIA out-of-school youth contract with no charge to this contract.