



Resources for
Youth Programming
and Policy

Resource Note

Improving State Coordination of Youth Workforce Development Services

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Overview

A qualified and educated workforce is critical to states' economic development in this era of national and global competition for jobs. To be competitive, states need to support efforts that help young people—the future labor force—attain the skills, knowledge, and aptitudes to become productive workers. Failure to help youth successfully transition to adulthood can lead to lifelong underemployment and unacceptably high social and economic costs to states.

Many states want to enhance the programs and systems that serve youth both to promote positive youth development and address issues facing vulnerable youth. State decisions shape the context within which workforce development programs operate. Consequently, state-led efforts to coordinate policies, programs, and funding relevant to youth workforce development, coupled with state-level support for collaboration and capacity-building, can contribute to enabling local programs and systems to provide comprehensive youth services. State officials are well positioned to look across youth-serving programs and systems and to take steps to improve the coordination of services and funding for youth.

This *Resource Note* highlights strategies and initiatives that state policymakers, program officials, and other leaders can use to improve the coordination and funding of youth workforce development programs. It also lists resources for further information on ways to coordinate youth workforce development services and, more broadly, youth programs. This publication is a companion to The Finance Project's report on *Finding Resources to Support Workforce Development Services for Youth*, which describes coordination strategies for local leaders along with financing strategies.¹ For more information, see The Finance Project's web page on youth workforce development at <http://financeproject.org/irc/win/youth.asp>.

¹ The report *Finding Resources to Support Workforce Development Services for Youth* is available at http://www.financeproject.org/publications/workforce_youth.pdf.



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Coordination Strategies

State leaders are taking steps to coordinate youth policies, programs, and resources, both within and across the different systems that serve youth. These efforts provide models and strategies for coordinating youth workforce development services among the programs and agencies that support such services, including labor, education, juvenile justice, and human services programs and agencies. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) also provides avenues for improving the coordination of youth workforce development services through activities such as the establishment of state-level youth councils and the use of unified state plans.

Create or join a state-level coordinating body. A state-level coordinating body such as a state youth council or committee can help align programs and resources at the state level as well as support local youth workforce development systems. State workforce investment boards and board committees provide mechanisms under the WIA framework to coordinate youth programs and resources. State WIBs are tasked with planning and carrying out statewide youth activities. They can create a youth subcommittee or youth council to oversee youth activities as well as forge partnerships with other state youth-serving agencies. Several states have established state youth councils to plan and coordinate youth activities and support local youth councils. For

The Workforce Investment Act

The Workforce Investment Act, enacted in 1998, aims to improve coordination among federally funded workforce development programs and create a more market-driven workforce system. WIA requires states and local areas to establish workforce investment boards (WIBs) to plan and oversee workforce development activities. One of the responsibilities of the state WIB is to develop the state WIA plan. Another is to continuously improve statewide activities under WIA, which includes developing linkages to foster the coordination of workforce activities. In addition, to promote coordination, WIA permits the submission of unified state plans that include other designated federal programs.

WIA authorizes three funding streams to states to support services for youth, adults, and dislocated workers. States are required to pass 85 percent of their adult and youth funds to local areas. The remainder is reserved for statewide activities, which can include incentive grants for regional or local coordination, capacity-building and technical assistance, and additional system-building. Although WIA's legislative authorization expired in 2003 and reauthorization is still pending, Congress continues to appropriate funds for these programs.

WIA Youth Program

At the heart of youth employment support is the WIA Youth Program. WIA consolidated year-round and summer youth programs into a single formula-funded program that supports services primarily for low-income youth who are between the ages of 14 and 21 and who face barriers to employment. WIA requires 10 program elements to be made available to eligible youth: academic enhancement, alternative secondary school services, summer employment opportunities, work experience, occupational skills training, leadership development, supportive services, adult mentoring, guidance and counseling, and follow-up services.

To foster a more comprehensive youth development system, WIA requires local WIBs to establish subgroups, called local youth councils, to coordinate and oversee WIA-funded youth activities. Youth council members include WIB members, such as educators and employers with an interest or expertise in youth policy, representatives of youth service and human services agencies, and current or former youth participants. Although youth councils are not required at the state level, state WIBs may establish a youth council or committee to help coordinate youth activities.

example, the state youth council in Colorado brings together representatives from different agencies, including housing, child welfare, social services, and higher education, to better coordinate youth activities funded under WIA with those funded by other youth-serving agencies.²

In addition, several states have established coordinating bodies such as children’s cabinets, legislative committees, and interagency councils to align various programs for children and youth. Coordinating activities include, for example, supporting information-sharing at the state and local levels, enhancing state planning efforts, and taking steps to align financial and technical assistance resources provided to communities. State-level coordinating bodies can also address barriers to program coordination, such as divergent policy goals, conflicting program regulations, and turf issues among agencies. These coordinating bodies could include agency leaders representing youth workforce development programs.

Develop a state policy framework for youth.

Multiple policies and programs for youth can make it difficult for both agencies and providers to coordinate their efforts. State leaders, however, are in a key position to improve the coherence of youth policies among programs and agencies. Several states are working to create a policy framework for youth that articulates common goals and principles, aligns programs and resources, and establishes desired results and outcomes across youth-serving systems. The collaborative process of developing this policy framework provides state-level leaders with opportunities to connect goals, programs, and outcomes within and across key areas of youth services, including education and workforce development. The *State Blueprint for Investing in Youth*, for example, articulates Louisiana’s vision for youth investments, guiding principles, strategies to create a comprehensive system, and anticipated outcomes and impacts. Numerous state-level partners, including those responsible for workforce development, collaborated to craft this policy framework.

Promoting Collaboration Between the Workforce Development and Education Systems

The California Workforce Investment Board established a special committee on lifelong learning to focus on a key workforce policy priority articulated in the state’s current two-year WIA plan—“collaborating to improve California’s educational system at all levels.” This policy priority recognizes the pivotal role that the education system performs in preparing youth and adults for the needs of a changing economy as well as the need for collaboration between the workforce development and education systems to improve programs and align resources for serving youth.

Chaired by the chancellor of the state’s community college system, the committee brings together business leaders and stakeholders of the education and workforce development systems. Its work, which focuses heavily on youth services, is guided by the goals of improving collaboration at the state and local levels among education, training, and workforce development programs and of aligning programs with business needs. The committee is crafting policy recommendations for the state workforce investment board, identifying and sharing promising practices, and developing guidance for the workforce system on collaboration and lifelong learning.

For more information, visit <http://www.calwia.org/committees/detail.cfm?id=4>.

² For more information, visit <http://dola.colorado.gov/wdc/youth.htm>.

Developing a Comprehensive Framework for Youth Development

The Arizona Statewide Youth Development Task Force, established in 2004 by executive order, is working to build a comprehensive framework for youth development that will support the positive development of youth and the successful transition from youth to adulthood. A critical part of this effort is developing a comprehensive policy plan that will provide strategies to build effective systems for the state's youth, promote viable policy and legislation, and increase public and private resources.

The task force is focusing on four key policy areas: education, youth workforce development, positive youth development, and youth voice and advocacy. Accordingly, it has created four policy work groups to develop recommendations for the policy plan. The work groups met regularly throughout 2005 to develop their recommendations. In 2006 task force staff and members are preparing the comprehensive policy plan, and they will begin to implement its recommendations.

Funding to support the activities of the task force comes from the state's WIA set-aside and from federal Positive Youth Development State and Local Collaboration Demonstration grant funds. The use of WIA funds has helped strengthen the focus on youth workforce development as a critical part of youth development. In addition, the state has a "shared vision for youth" team, which is led by the governor's office and composed of state policymakers and state agency representatives, to implement a collaborative approach to youth services.

For more information, visit <http://www.volunteerarizona.org/taskforce/main.htm>.

Strengthen state planning activities for youth.

State planning activities create opportunities to address coordination issues and involve stakeholders from multiple youth-serving programs and systems in planning activities. State-level coordinating bodies, for example, are likely to undertake planning activities that engage leaders from different youth-serving programs. WIA state planning also provides opportunities to improve coordination. The state plan required under WIA must detail the state's strategy for providing comprehensive services to eligible youth and describe coordination with other youth programs. WIA also allows states to submit unified plans that include several workforce development programs.

Along with strengthening state planning activities, state leaders can encourage greater coordination in local planning for youth. Oregon, for example, passed legislation in 1999 that calls for locally

driven planning for youth policy that promotes a comprehensive strategy for serving youth. County-based planning then informs the work of state agencies that direct programs for children, youth, and families.³

Integrate workforce development programs at the state level.

Policy developments such as welfare reform and WIA, as well as increased recognition of the connections among education, workforce development, and economic development, have led several states to revisit how they administer employment and training programs. Some states have established formal and informal mechanisms such as interagency agreements and joint committees to coordinate programs and agency activities, while others have integrated relevant programs and departments under a single agency or umbrella organization. State officials in Michigan, for example, combined most career, workforce,

³ T. Ferber, E. Gaines, and C. Goodman, *Positive Youth Development: State Strategies* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of State Legislatures, October 2005), 8–9, at <http://www.forumfyi.org/Files//strengtheningyouthpolicy.pdf>.

and economic development programs under a newly formed agency, the Department of Labor and Economic Growth, in 2003.⁴ The integration of workforce development and related programs creates an opportunity to improve the coordination of programs for youth as well as those for adults. Likewise, the Workforce Innovation Act of 2000 consolidated state workforce programs in Florida under a single agency, the Agency for Workforce Innovation, to better serve employers and workers at all levels, from youth to incumbent workers.⁵

Use state resources to promote collaboration. State leaders can use fiscal resources over which

they have discretion to promote collaboration among youth workforce development and other programs. WIA allows states to retain 15 percent of formula funds for state and local purposes. These funds can be used to support partnership-building among youth-serving agencies and to support capacity-building activities at the state and local levels that foster collaboration. States could provide grants to support community-wide planning for youth services or incentive grants to encourage comprehensive system-building. State leaders can also use reserve funds to provide guidance and technical assistance to youth workforce development entities on developing

Using Youth Budgets to Promote Coordination

Youth budgets are an innovative mechanism for documenting and understanding a state's total investment in youth.⁶ Unlike program- or agency-specific budgets, youth budgets focus on young people served and on the types of services and supports funded across programs and agencies. This orientation facilitates analysis of the amount and allocation of spending on youth globally. State leaders are using youth budgets, in conjunction with other data tools such as need assessments and program evaluations, to help coordinate services and align investments for youth. Youth budgets support coordination efforts by mapping youth services and spending across programs and agencies.

The Kentucky Youth Policy Assessment, an expanded youth budget, provides state and local leaders with a single source of information on statewide resources, supports, and services available for youth ages 8 to 24.⁷ The assessment draws from data collected by Kentucky Child Now!, in conjunction with the Kentucky Youth Development Partnership, on the number, outcomes, budgets, and governance of youth development programs in the state. The Kentucky Youth Development Partnership, a public-private coalition of state and local youth-serving organizations, is using the assessment to help develop a coordinated approach to youth services that connects health, workforce, education, juvenile justice, and other systems. The findings and recommendations of the assessment led to the recent enactment of a state senate joint resolution that calls on the health and family services cabinet to establish the Kentucky Youth Development Coordinating Council to promote collaboration among state youth-serving agencies and programs. This coordinating council is now being implemented.

For guidance on developing a youth budget, see M. Flynn-Khan, T. Ferber, E. Gaines, and K. Pittman, *Adding It Up: A Guide to Developing A Children, Youth and Families Budget* (Washington, D.C.: The Forum for Youth Investment, Impact Strategies, Inc., June 2006), at <http://www.forumfyi.org/Files//cyfguide.pdf>.

⁴ R. Roy Biswas, J. Mills, and H. Prince, *Building Skills, Increasing Economic Vitality: A Handbook of Innovative State Policies* (Boston, Mass.: Jobs for the Future, January 2005), 10, at <http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Documents/buildingskills.pdf>.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶ Drawn from M. Flynn-Khan, T. Ferber, E. Gaines, and K. Pittman, *Adding It Up: A Rationale for Developing a Children, Youth and Families Budget* (Washington, D.C.: The Forum for Youth Investment, Impact Strategies, Inc., March 2006).

⁷ For more information, visit <http://www.kychildnow.org/development/policy.html>.

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comprehensive strategies for serving youth and on forging broad-based collaborations.

In addition to WIA funds, state leaders can explore opportunities to use other funding sources to promote more coordinated youth services. Officials in Pennsylvania, for example, used state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds to award competitive grants to local WIBs to serve both WIA and non-WIA youth. The grants encouraged local areas to design innovative approaches to serving all youth.⁸ The Louisiana Workforce Commission is using federal Positive Youth Development State and Local Collaboration Demonstration grant funds to help build a systems-based approach to workforce education and training.

Invest in intermediary organizations that help build youth-serving systems. In the fields of youth programming and workforce development, intermediary organizations are playing an increasingly important role in bringing partners, resources, and interests together⁹ and in connecting providers and employers. By investing in the activities of effective intermediaries, state workforce development leaders can leverage the capacity of these organizations to help build more coordinated workforce development systems for youth and adults. For example, the California Workforce Investment Board contracted with New Ways to Work, a national intermediary, and its partner, the California Workforce Association, to create the California Youth Council Institute (YCi) to assist local youth councils in developing comprehensive youth-serving systems. YCi

Improving the Coordination of Youth Policies and Programs

Louisiana takes a multifaceted approach to improving the coordination of youth policies and programs, including those focusing on youth employment and training. The Louisiana Workforce Commission, which serves as the state workforce investment board and is housed in the governor's office, has played a key role in coordination activities. The commission convened state-level youth-serving agencies to implement two major youth initiatives in which Louisiana participated—the National Governors Association's Youth Policy Network and the Family and Youth Services Bureau's (FYSB) State Youth Development Collaboration Projects. These initiatives provided state-level partners with resources and opportunities to advance coordination efforts, such as the development of the *State Blueprint for Investing in Youth*, a policy framework for positive youth development across various programs, including WIA youth services.¹⁰ State leaders also supported capacity-building through, for example, awarding FYSB grants to seven regional partnerships for strategic planning and coordination activities for youth services.

The Louisiana Workforce Commission is the grantee agency in the state for FYSB's current Positive Youth Development State and Local Collaboration Demonstration Projects. The project in Louisiana seeks to improve workforce education and training for youth in East Baton Rouge. In addition to these efforts, Louisiana was among the first states to craft a unified WIA state plan, and the current two-year plan is also a unified state plan.

For more information, visit <http://www.laworkforce.net/wfc/index.htm>.

⁸ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Workforce Investment Act: Youth Provisions Promote New Service Strategies, but Additional Guidance Would Enhance Program Development* (Washington, D.C., April 2002), 20, at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d02413.pdf>.

⁹ G. L. Partee, *Preparing Youth for Employment: Principles and Characteristics of Five Leading United States Youth Development Programs* (Washington, D.C.: American Youth Policy Forum, 2003), at <http://www.aypf.org/publications/PreparingYouthforEmployment.pdf>.

¹⁰ Louisiana's *State Blueprint for Investing in Youth* is available at <http://www.layouthnet.org/221200BlueprintJH.pdf>.

developed the All Youth–One System framework to guide system-building that has been adopted by the state WIB and a number of local youth councils. The state’s investment in YCi has helped youth councils improve the delivery of WIA services and advance service coordination and system-building while using WIA dollars to leverage other youth funding streams.

Considerations

- Coordination activities require a commitment of time and resources. State leaders may need to allocate or seek funding that can be used to support activities such as coordinating bodies and interagency planning. Creating buy-in among program administrators and high-level state officials can help make funds available for coordination activities. Taking steps to institutionalize coordination activities, such as by establishing coordinating bodies through legislation, can also help ensure funding and sustainability.
- Given the current interest in youth development at the state level and the growing range of activities that states are undertaking to foster effective youth policies and programs, state workforce development leaders can explore opportunities to join or build on existing efforts in their state in order to promote the coordination of youth workforce development services and related youth programs.
- To facilitate coordination activities, state leaders may want to look beyond categorical youth programs to focus on the types of supports and services that are needed to promote positive youth outcomes or on youth development principles that can foster thinking broadly about youth services. A comprehensive framework such as the All Youth–One System model can help spur coordination activities.
- Coordination activities can provide state leaders with opportunities to advance youth engagement and youth leadership development. State-level coordinating bodies, for example, could include youth and young adults as members who lend an important voice as current or former consumers of different youth services.

Helpful Resources

Organizations

The **Forum for Youth Investment** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that provides leaders with training, information, technical assistance, network support, and partnership opportunities to increase the quality and quantity of youth investment and youth involvement. The forum collaborates with state youth policy coordinators and, in partnership with the National Conference of State Legislatures, is helping state leaders strengthen and align their youth policies and programs. Visit <http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/index.cfm>.

The **National Conference of State Legislatures** tracks and provides information on youth policies and programs important to state legislators. It is also partnering with the Forum for Youth Investment on the Strengthening Youth Policy in the States initiative. Visit <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/youth.htm>.

The **National Governors Association Center for Best Practices** offers many resources on workforce development issues. In addition, the center is working with the National Conference of State Legislatures and the Forum for Youth Investment to provide state policymakers with the tools and supports they need to strengthen youth policies and programs in their state. Visit <http://www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.50a2ae5ff70b817ae8ebb856a11010a0/>.

New Ways to Work provides training, technical assistance, customized tools, and facilitated support to schools, employers, workforce entities, community collaboratives, and others interested in developing systems that better prepare young people for their future. The organization specializes in building comprehensive youth-serving systems, and it pioneered the All Youth–One System approach. Visit <http://www.newwaystowork.org/>.

The **U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Division of Youth Services** is primarily responsible for coordinating all youth-related workforce activities

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and providing leadership, policy direction, program administration, technical assistance and guidance, and support activities for youth programs authorized under WIA. In addition, the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, Justice, and Health and Human Services are partnering to improve coordination and collaboration among youth policies and programs at the national, state, and local levels. Visit http://www.doleta.gov/Youth_services/.

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