

ILLINOIS WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA 8
NORTHERN COOK COUNTY
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT
YOUTH SERVICES PLAN

Executive Summary

The Workforce Board of Northern Cook County and the Youth Council, through numerous committed partners, is invested in preparing and maintaining a quality workforce, despite challenges with successfully transitioning the local youth population into the workforce. With economic growth and stability, and above average dropout rates, there are still many obstacles the region's youth population must overcome. In the current job market, stable employment in critical career fields with future growth potential requires varying levels of post-secondary education, advanced training, and at least a high school diploma or GED. While some youth comprehend these fluid aspects of the local labor market in relation to their journey toward a realistic career and self-sufficiency, many youth, especially those identified as “falling through the cracks” in the high schools, require special attention and opportunities in workforce awareness. This population includes low-income, deficient in basic skills, school dropouts, offenders, pregnant/parenting youth, homeless, runaways, and foster children.

The local workforce investment system will meet this challenge by embracing the goals of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) set forth by the Department of Labor:

- **Establish a local youth committee** that will advocate for youth within the overall workforce investment system.
- **Continue the Youth Council**
- **Develop and implement comprehensive services based on overall assessment** of the strategies and challenges experienced by the youth in the local workforce investment system.
- **Create access to the One-Stop system for youth**, to closely link the *local* labor market needs and consolidated youth services.
- **Monitor performance accountability.**

It will be the responsibility of the appointed youth council and local youth providers to bolster the collaborative partnerships and develop the comprehensive programs that will meet the youth's immediate needs, giving way to the youth concentrating on preparing him/herself for the workforce. It will be a community effort to prepare the youth for the workforce, to provide the right interventions at the right time in order to have an impact on the young person's life and his or her future success.

Local agencies, municipalities, and businesses must become invested in the preparation as well as local providers identified who have successfully worked with the targeted youth populations. It will be these providers and partners that have the resources to make available a comprehensive set of services to the youth. Services will focus on providing the most comprehensive mixture of training, education, support services, and work experience that will successfully transition the youth into a life long learning career path.

Services will be provided through innovative programs developed in partnership with local businesses, school districts, Education to Careers partners, Illinois Department of Employment Security, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, juvenile justice agencies, community colleges, local housing authorities, youth organizations, and additional partners with an interest in youth.

Background Information

Based on the Workforce Board of Northern Cook County *State of the Youth Report 2003*, demographic and profile reports of local area youth revealed the implications facing pockets of Northern Cook County youth and the youth-support system, such as schools, non-formal education opportunities, and communities as a whole:

- A lower percentage of entry-level age workers makes development of that age group all the more critical;
- Growing numbers of Hispanic and Asian residents may have language and cultural implications;
- Nearly one-quarter of Northern Cook youth come from single parent homes, increasing the need for adult mentors;
- Youth from affluent homes often fall into heavy debt as they try to recreate the life style they have known. Financial planning skills are needed; and
- Academic success at the secondary level usually just prepares youth for college. Adult work skill success doesn't necessarily match academic indicators.

I. Local Youth Needs Analysis and Assessment

A. Current and Projected Customer Needs

The Local Workforce Investment Area (LWIA) 08 serves the following northern Cook County Townships:

Barrington	Elk Grove	Evanston	Hanover
Maine	New Trier	Niles	Northfield
Palatine	Schaumburg	Wheeling	

Eight local school districts fall within the boundaries of LWIA 8:

- Evanston Township High School District 202
- Glenbrook High School District 225
- Illinois School District U-46 (Elgin High School)
- Maine Township High School District 207
- New Trier Township High School District 203
- Niles Township High School District 219
- Township High School District 211 (Palatine, Schaumburg)
- Township High School District 214 (Arlington Heights)

The unemployment rate in Cook County for 2004 was 6.6%, local area 8 as a whole was 4.8% percent; however communities such as Des Plaines are running at 7.3% as of March 2005. Within the local area, the high school dropout rate ranges from below 5% to 12% and a poverty rate of 1% to 8.4% in the diverse school districts served. The state of Illinois high school dropout rate dropped to an all time low of 4.0% for 2005. The low unemployment rate, overall above average dropout rate, and poverty rate below the state average of 10.9% lends itself to many challenges to the youth population as they prepare to enter the workforce.

Entrance into the workforce becomes more of a challenge when an individual possesses only a high school diploma, GED, or does not complete high school. In today's job market any type of employment with future growth potential and stability requires post-secondary education, whether it is vocational training or the pursuit of a four-year degree.

Persons who have not yet formed an attachment to the workforce are clearly less likely to have technical skills. Welfare recipients and other low-income individuals are much more likely to have dropped out of high school and face numerous barriers to employment. Common reasons for not forming a lasting attachment to the labor force include poor interpersonal skills, poor work habits, poor basic reading and math skills, lack of transportation, insufficient child care, criminal history and other barriers.

While data is not available on the levels of ownership of home computers or Internet access for Northern Cook County, it is very likely that the poor in the county have barriers to access, resulting in the same kind of divide that disadvantaged individuals face everywhere. The labor market in Northern Cook requires good math and computer skills. The State of the Workforce Report released in 2002 included 11th grade assessment scores for 2001 from a sample of Northern Cook school districts. Pass rates for math varied widely across the area, from 44% in one high school in District 46 to 92% in District 203.

High school students must be prepared for realistic careers that will allow them to be self-sufficient; this can be achieved by offering career development and/or exploration while the student is in the process of completing high school. Many youth facing this challenge do not have the choice, opportunity, or ability to pursue post-secondary education due to multiple barriers to employment, disabilities, or a need to contribute to the household income.

At times, low-income youth are required to contribute to the household income. This may in turn interfere with their focus on school, because they are more concerned with earning money so they can help their families survive financially. As recorded in the initial findings for the *State of the Youth Report 2005*, it is imperative for youth to have engaging families in order to gain long-term success.

In addition, youth who engage in long work hours that may interfere with homework, study, and sleep time tend to stay in entry-level type positions for the rest of their lives, because they don't develop skills necessary to better their careers. Similarly, the aforementioned initial findings report that there are cases in which the motivation to pursue a more lucrative source of employment may not exist, as youth often witness their parents working long hours for low pay. In addition, there are many professionals residing in northern Cook County who have similar career goals for their children. This becomes a new challenge when the goals and expectations set by these parents are a mismatch with the student's actual abilities.

Many times students that are deficient in basic skills fall behind in classes. They then are dubbed as “not college material”, and often live up to these expectations. These students need special attention and tutoring, to increase basic skills so they can graduate. Students in this predicament also need special guidance in finding a particular vocation that they excel in, so they can develop skills that are necessary in the workplace. Youth coming from households where English is not the primary language, struggle throughout school to “catch-up” to their counterparts, fall farther behind in basic skills, and get discouraged. These youth face multiple challenges as they try to find employment and begin to set a career path. Many will end up in low paying, entry-level jobs.

Similarly special attention should be made to high school dropouts. These individuals need to be identified and made aware that they can still obtain a GED. Furthermore, vocational training options should be emphasized in workshops or in one-on-one sessions with a guidance counselor. Motivation and self-esteem are key areas that need to be developed with high school dropouts.

Homeless, runaways, and foster children are a difficult population to identify because they are transient in nature. Alternative schools in our local area offer special programs to specifically meet their needs. Also, youth offenders need special vocational exploration workshops where they can gain information on trades. They should be given information on limitations that their offenses may have on job opportunities.

Youth who do not prepare themselves will be at a disadvantage in the labor market. As youth begin a job search they will quickly identify that they have obsolete skills that are no longer marketable in the changing labor force. In addition, wages will more than likely remain static for youth not pursuing additional education and training. Test results for high school students, shows a percentage of students remaining deficient in basic skills continue to increase. Youth will have difficulty moving beyond the most basic entry-level jobs without proficiency in basic skills, reading, and math.

Youth are not knowledgeable about the local labor market. Many lack the resources and/or guidance to learn what skills are needed to obtain and retain employment. Vocational exploration and job search assistance is not a set curriculum throughout all the area high schools and not a requirement for graduating seniors.

Other major barriers faced by the local area’s youth include transportation, familial roles, and the minimal support of schools, detailed in the initial findings for the *State of the Report 2005*. These barriers not only pose serious challenges to youth development, but to the delivery of youth-oriented services as well. Without a proper transportation network, youth service providers include line items for taxis in their budgets, or discontinue partnerships with other agencies to get participants from one point-of-service to another due to liability concerns. Service providers must overcome the difficulty of working with parents whose visions of their youth often do not reflect the actual abilities and interests of their sons and daughters. Additionally, the effort of school systems to provide services to at-risk often go un/under-tapped by the target populations due to a variety of challenges, from large student body enrollments, to federal legislative measures, and attrition rates. Upon completion of the *State of the Report 2005*, the Workforce

Board of Northern Cook County will have a more succinct image of the triumphs and challenges of the local area's youth, which will strengthen the service delivery system for youth development.

B. Identification of Key Youth Customer Segments

Based on previous youth participants served through WIA programs and information from the 1990 census, the following populations have been identified as key customers for the local workforce investment system:

- Deficient in basic skills, as defined in Section 101.4 of WIA “an individual (that) has English reading, writing or computing skill at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test;”
- School dropout, as defined in Section 101.39 of WIA “an individual who is no longer attending any school and who has not received a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent;”
- Offender, as defined in Section 101.27 (A)(B) of WIA “any adult or juvenile who is or has been subject to any stage of the criminal justice process, for whom services under this Act may be beneficial; or who requires assistance in overcoming artificial barriers to employment resulting from a record of arrest or conviction”;
- Recent immigrant, defined locally under JTPA as individuals who have immigrated to the US within the past three years, are eligible to work, have limited or no work history, and need to develop language and or vocational skills in order to retain employment;
- Children of welfare recipients, as defined in Section 101.25 (A) of WIA “an individual who receives, or is a member of a family that receives, cash payments under a Federal, State, or local income-based public assistance program;
- Pregnant or parenting youth;
- Minorities;
- Female; and
- Youth with disabilities as defined in Section 3 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

C. Policy and Programmatic Implications of the Local Needs Analysis

1. Resource Implications

Given the complete range of immediate needs of the local youth customer group, WIA funds allocated to the LWIA would not alone be sufficient to meet the needs. It will be the responsibility of the local workforce investment system to identify and coordinate all potential resources in the local area to meet the needs.

WIA funds will be contracted to effective providers that are identified through a competitive bidding process to develop and operate programs to address specific needs; offer employment related activities and program oversight. WIA funds will be made available to provide support services to youth, but only on an individual basis and to those assessed as most in need. The assessment of the individual's situation will take into account many different variables including an analysis of the entire household income to further determine a financial need. In addition, support services will be offered on a priority basis to youth requiring support to stay in school and complete a diploma, complete a GED, and meet what has been identified as an immediate need to the special population youth group.

2. Workforce Education and Training Implications

The workforce investment system will take a community approach in preparing youth for the workforce. The community needs to be made aware that it is not just the responsibility of the education institutions to prepare youth for the changes and challenges faced in the world of work. Local agencies, municipalities, and businesses must be involved in the preparation as well.

The workforce investment system will have to identify providers who have successfully worked with the targeted youth populations. It will be these providers that have the resources (not only financially) and expertise that will offer the most far reaching set of services to the youth.

In addition, many of the local corporations and employers must improve upon their level of involvement in these issues. Local employers must be recruited to emphasize employment skills apart from the technical skills, provide on the job skills; show students the association between academics and work; involve mentors in various program designs; and highlight the importance of school. Business must further identify for the youth, the parents, the communities and the educators what it means to meet the challenges of the changing workforce.

II. Local Strategic Vision and Goals

A. Local Vision

Youth Council Strategic Plan

Vision

The communities of north and northwest Cook County will have a broad, unified youth development system that equips each and every youth with the work values, career skills, and the commitment to lifelong learning necessary to enter satisfying and productive adult roles at home, in the community, and in the workplace.

Mission

- Serve each and every youth.
A “youth” is defined as an individual who does not possess the skills needed yet to assume adult roles, and those (either in or out of the school system) who have not yet made a successful transition to adulthood.
- Create an excellent youth development system that will approach learning holistically and ensure that all youth are fully equipped for adult roles.

The “youth development system” includes parents, youth, public and private education, training entities, juvenile justice, faith-based entities, youth groups, local government, employers, community-based organizations, and state and federal agencies whose primary focus is education, training, or other work-related services.

- Develop programs for lifelong learning and individualized career planning.

Youth should possess the foundational skills that will allow them to have an individualized career path. In today’s economy that includes the ability to be a lifelong learner.

- Listen to the voice of youth themselves.

Youth input is extremely important in developing a support system that will strengthen the growth and development of youth.

1. How will the local workforce development system be developed and utilized?

The local workforce system has developed partnerships among service providers, local and state agencies, high schools, community colleges, and businesses and employers. The Youth Council concentrates on the youth population as a collective and develops program activities within the broad overview presented by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). The development is a dynamic process that has evolved over time as a unique mixture of youth service providers and key youth customer groups have become more defined.

The activities and programs are pulled together, the resources are identified, and the mechanisms to meet the youth needs are further defined. The Youth Council has taken a vested interest in the development of effective youth programs and put forth the Business for the Development and Deployment of Emerging Workforce. The goals identified in this plan take into consideration the Youth Council’s mission as noted in the Strategic Plan, and the USDOL Employment and Training Administration’s New Strategic Vision for the Delivery of Youth Services, as noted in the TEGl 03-01. From the document’s publishing in January of 2005, the Youth Council has measured these goals against the objectives developed as part of an inclusive youth preparation plan for north and northwest Cook County titled “Youth Leading-Edge Futures”: a Business Plan Model Structured for the Youth Development System.

The goals, and their subsequent action plans, presented to the local area from the Youth Business are as follows:

Goal	Outcomes
Facilitation of strategy development and actions steps to develop and deploy the business plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of goals with Youth Council, and the development of a Task Force to coordinate efforts, gather pertinent information and communicate appropriately; • Development and implementation of a complete technical and administrative framework for collecting, storing, retrieving and managing related information needed to support sustainability of the area’s youth preparation initiative; • Implementation of technology-based assistive solutions where needed; • Determination of assistance needed in interpreting and integrating performance measures so as to support achievement of outcomes and encourage participation by additional providers; and • Branding “Youth Leading Edge Futures” with youth development system including: youth, parents, educators, school administration, employers, labor, economic development, and other stakeholders.

<p>Ensure that youth served in alternative education programs will receive a high quality education that adheres to the state standards developed in response to the No Child Left Behind Act</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection of school performance information and alternative school data through direct contact with alternative schools; • Identification and documentation of existing youth programs, education/employer partnerships, and best practices; • Classification of gaps in various youth services/programs to be developed; • Solicitation of commitment from key individuals connected with the alternative education field and facilitate ongoing project development in the local area; and • Document implementation strategies for e-learning and/or other applications.
<p>Focus on business demands, especially in high-growth industries and occupations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a referrals repository, linkages, and resources to track participant movement and goal realization; • Development of metrics, budget, and best practice recognition process that are aligned with the annual goals; and • Increased capacity of training and education programs in the local area by supporting the • Development of plan for dynamic industry-based career information strategies.
<p>Focus on neediest youth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating <i>State of the Youth Report</i>; • Identification of, and access to, employment web-based tools to support the capacity development of providers to better prepare youth; • Continual guidance of youth programs, while developing plans for establishing mentoring standards, protocol, measurement, and replication; • Implementation of work readiness certificate initiative; and • Continual solicitation of new providers to fill gaps.
<p>Focus on improved performance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of performance management support system as a means to design, advance, support, and sustain strong preparation model partnerships; • Identification of key success factors for workforce preparation of specific youth groups; • Implementation of Peer Monitoring Task Force; and • Assessment of technological infrastructures and needs throughout the youth development system.

2. Primary Workforce Development Goals

Youth Council Action Planning 2004-2005

In efforts to continue to align services with its vision and mission, the Youth Council engaged its members and the youth development system in identifying system-wide annual goals. This process began as a large group discussion, and continues to be refined. The strategies identified include:

- Assess career exploration, assessment, planning, coursework, and work-based learning opportunities (including service-learning projects) currently being offered to students by public and private high schools in the north Cook region (including alternative schools).
- Assess the current interface between secondary and postsecondary institutions regarding the career exploration, assessment, planning, coursework, and work-based learning opportunities.
- Assess services currently offered by community-based organizations.
- Determine how to help existing organizations and schools communicate better and become aware of one another's services, in order to not duplicate existing services to youth, and
- To guide youth to the appropriate services.
- Increase and improve service awareness:
 - To schools, administrators, community, employers, and residents;
 - Expand networking between and across the youth development system; and
 - Educate and connect community service groups and employers to the one-stops.
- Increase and improve employer partnerships:
 - Increase youth mentorship and internship programs;
 - Increase supportive services to the youth programs: mentoring, job coaching;
 - Identify minimum skills required of employers.
- Create parent advisory groups across the network; and
- Improve identification of targeted eligible youth.

III. Local System Infrastructure and Services

A. Procurement Procedures

The Youth Council of the Workforce Board of Northern Cook County identifies eligible providers of youth activities by awarding grants or contracts on a competitive basis. The youth council will be responsible for the procuring of bids, evaluating programs, and making recommendations to the local Workforce Board based on the criteria contained in the state plan. Oversight of the providers and the procurement procedures will be the responsibility of the Youth Council and The Workforce Board youth coordinator.

B. Non-income eligibility

Youth who do not meet the minimum income criteria and have one of the following barriers may be eligible according to Section 129(c) (5) of WIA. Individuals who do not meet the minimum income criteria may be considered eligible youth if they; meet one or more of the following:

- High school dropouts;
- Individuals with basic skills deficient;
- Individuals with educational attainment that is one or more grade levels below the grade level appropriate to the age of the individuals;
- Pregnant and parenting youth;
- Individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities;
- Homeless and runaway youth;
- Offenders; and
- Other youth who face serious barriers to employment as identified by the local board.

The Youth Council will continue to assess and identify additional barriers to employment and further define additional barriers. According to Section 129(c) (5) not more than five percent of participants can be assisted under section.

C. Description of Youth Activities

1. Key design components of the youth program in the local area in accordance with Section 129 (c) (1).

The youth activities will focus on providing a mixture of training, support services, and work experience while emphasizing the development of new innovative partnerships. Youth programs of the local area will be designed with the following key components in accordance with Section 129 (c) (1) of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA):

- Objective assessment
- Individual service strategy
- Preparation for additional services

Objective Assessment

Each participant will have an objective assessment, to include a review of basic skills, occupational skills for both traditional and non-traditional jobs, prior work experience, interests and aptitudes, support service needs, and the developmental needs of each participant. Previous assessment results may be used. Both youth and parents, where possible, will play an active role in the assessment process. The objective assessment will encompass oversight by The Workforce Board and, where determined as appropriate and where it does not pose a conflict of interest, the youth coordinators of the area One-Stops, to ensure the assessments have all the necessary information required in Section 129(c) (1) of WIA.

Individual Service Strategy

Providers will develop service strategies that will identify employment goals, including non-traditional employment, appropriate achievement objectives, and services for the participant. Service providers must view the development and implementation of the service strategy as one

of importance that reflects the overall outcome performance of the program. The service strategy of educational programs will follow the format of the school's Individual Education Plan (IEP). It may be determined appropriate to use a service strategy developed under another education or training program.

These strategies should be developed in conjunction with one another, delivering the same message to youth, not multiple non-congruent messages; and should meet the requirements of WIA. Youth, and where possible, the parents, will have an active role in being made aware of the steps, directions and the outcomes of the service strategy. Service strategies will be reviewed and where determined as appropriate, the youth coordinators of the area One-Stops will work to develop a strategy and delivery of service that encompasses other education and training opportunities that place the client in contact with the local area's network of youth service providers.

Preparation for Additional Services

Preparation for youth to move beyond secondary education, and high school diploma completion or GED attainment, must be included in each program funded by WIA; yet activities must go beyond these relationships with schools and educators. The Workforce Board and, where determined as appropriate and where it does not pose a conflict of interest, the youth coordinators of the area One-Stops will work with the youth providers to set a realistic career path for each youth that incorporate postsecondary education opportunities, linkages between academic and occupational learning, employment preparation, and effective links to the job market and employers.

Program providers will be responsible for the tutoring and career directions as related to the mixture of studies and basic skills in reading, writing, communication, mathematics and sciences to begin preparation for postsecondary education. In partnership with the youth service providers that focus on serving out-of-school youth within the local One-Stops, the providers will identify appropriate training programs and entrance requirements with the youth and incorporate this information into the service strategies and programs.

In collaboration with area high schools, youth providers and Education to Careers, several local businesses have programs introducing youth to the linkage between academics and occupational learning and employment opportunities. Mentoring, work-based learning, internships, and on the job training programs that have already been established must be identified. These programs set a broad employment base for the students as they learn to apply academics to the everyday work environment and job responsibilities. It would be conducive to work with these employers to assist in recruiting additional employers to provide similar programs.

Employer partnerships will be continued with the IETC, IDES, and The Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employer and Labor Services (OATELS), with the intent to establish a referral and information process, in consultation with youth, for the various youth customer-based programs. These referral and information mechanisms will seek to recruit local employers, to hire entry level individuals, and to create an employer connection for the youth. "Employ The Future"

(www.employthefuture.org) will be the tool employers and the local One-Stops will use to post positions geared for individuals 21 years and under; as well, it will introduce the youth to the IETC and the multiple resources available. Also, the One-Stops, in tandem with local area youth providers, will work with targeted industries to set up internship programs, thus giving youth an opportunity to explore employment opportunities at various industries.

Youth program elements, as required by Section 664.410 of the interim final regulations, will be carried out in the following strategies:

- **Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to secondary school completion, including dropout prevention strategies**

Local high schools offer additional assistance to youth via tutors in specially designed programs. These programs can be expanded to reach more students and continue to provide the assistance the students require. In addition, a more inviting format can be explored. Homework clubs could be developed by community based agencies. Employers hiring 2 or more youth can establish a homework club with mentors for the first half hour of work (unpaid) discussing issues of the day. Libraries and townships can pull together homework clubs in the areas where students can discuss and receive necessary instruction and tutoring. In addition, incentives can be given to students that participate.

The focus of these programs will be to assist the youth in obtaining their High School diploma or GED. These programs may also include a career assessment and counseling component, where career exploration and development will be discussed. In order to achieve these goals, linkages with existing programs, like Education to Careers and high school districts, that have tutoring programs established would be necessary.

- **Alternative secondary school offerings**

The local area high schools and continuing education programs have all-inclusive night schools and GED programs. The Workforce Board and the Youth Council where determined as appropriate and where it does not lend itself to a conflict of interest, the youth coordinators identified in the approved business plans of the area One-Stops will work with youth providers to cultivate partnerships to better serve the youth. In addition, it may be possible to facilitate existing alternative schools in the local area to operate year round. Selected youth providers will work to provide effective links to employment, vocational training, mentoring, and support services for youth enrolled in alternative schools. As youth continue to participate in alternative school opportunities, employment services can be provided through the local IETC to assist the youth in finding and retaining appropriate employment.

- **Summer employment opportunities directly linked to academic and occupational learning**

Summer employment opportunities will be made available to all youth enrolled in the program. Summer work experience is designed so that youth are involved in an academic program equivalent to their hours in a work program. This strategy worked in partnership with the local high schools to identify students requiring summer school and subsequently matching the youth to a public sector employer. Funding both academics

and employment encouraged greater participation from targeted youth.

The local Education to Careers program continues to fund a summer camp program with several local businesses directly linking academics to occupational learning. This program design will be reviewed and hopefully expanded to reach more of the target population and the recruitment of additional businesses. This design can benefit the junior and senior level student to understand and prepare for post-secondary training and employment. Furthermore, it would give the student an opportunity to explore career choices in the work place. The program will expose the youth to a diversity of work-sites and avenues they may find interest in for future career opportunities.

Local high schools have created summer employment programs with several private sector work-sites. Students with special needs earn an income and at the same time a job coach is available to provide additional assistance when needed. The job coach is also responsible for creating the academic and occupational schedules for this program.

The Illinois Department of Employment Security can also be a useful link in creating summer job opportunities for youth. They receive job orders for summer employment from private sector employers, which may be useful for youth involved in other programs like Education to Careers, which only operates during the school year. The Business and Employer Services Teams (BEST) throughout the local workforce system continue to add a focus on youth employment opportunities by creating relationships with area employers that are dedicated to hiring youth. Job orders are maintained on a web based database that is accessible by youth.

- **Paid and unpaid work experiences, including internships and job shadowing**

The Workforce Board views work experience as an important part in introducing youth to employment opportunities and developing a career path. All work-experience programs should be developed as part of an overall curriculum including an academic component, vocational exploration, and leadership/social skill development.

 - Funding for paid work experience will be available for both private and public sector employment. Youth 14 to 16 years of age and youth 16 years and older who have never worked and/or have a substantial disability to employment will be targeted to participate in these programs. These work experiences will focus on basic employment skills, and for those with disabilities, it will be required that the employer provide extensive supervision. Experience has shown that there is a greater likelihood for success when youth have summer work experience at community-based agencies, libraries, city halls, and park districts.
 - Unpaid work experience will be set up with employers who have appropriately supervised work-sites with jobs emphasizing more of the technical skills that have a long term career focus. Businesses should assess their positions and identify appropriate jobs for youth where there is a career focus. An internship at a car dealer for instance can cover a broad base of job duties: sales, office, finance, maintenance,

mechanics, and car bodywork.

- This may also include the Tech Prep program developed by Education to Careers. In this program students take classes in a particular vocation, while still in high school, and then upon graduation are given community college credit for the classes.
- Created as a means to provide affordable technological support to the Arlington Heights One-Stop, the NeTekCenter internship program provides wide-ranging benefits to a host of community stakeholders. Easily replicated, it provides an innovative solution for small business tech support needs and a solid model for the development of the emerging IT workforce. The NeTekCenter internship model embodies the spirit of partnership in a true win-win-win manner. Harper College wins by having additional training opportunities for their students, the One-Stop wins by receiving high quality, low cost technology support in a timely manner and the interns win by the increased value in their credentials through the hands on expertise that they develop, along with gaining college credit. A highly replicable and valued program, the internship model for One-Stop tech support has yielded significant and far-reaching results.

- **Occupational skill training**

High school youth can begin their occupational skill training through the tech-prep programs offered by the Education to Careers Partnership in our area. Within this program, high school youth are not only exposed to occupations of their choice, but earn college credit as well. These credits are allowed to transfer to the local community college.

Additional skill training will be accessed through service providers that can provide introductory courses in various industries utilizing WIA funds. These training programs will be selected from the Statewide List of Certified WIA Training Providers. These funds will only be used for programs that train participants in high growth occupations. In addition, youth will be encouraged to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Additional skill training will be accessed through service providers that can provide introductory courses in various industries utilizing WIA funds. The industries must be of high growth in the local economy. A unique approach could be to provide short-term course work in several occupations to assist youth in making an educated career decision. Development of on-site programs with local area businesses and corporations may also provide occupational skills training for youth in these high growth areas.

Again, development of occupational skills training programs should be combined with academics and vocational skills exploration, such as apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeship programs are designed to start training youth for the future workforce. These programs focus on necessary skills for employment and career advancement, providing short-term intensive training in many industrial occupations. Apprenticeship information on many of the trades can be obtained from career advisors located at the One-Stops.

Applications for each apprenticeship programs vary; each of the trades has their own guidelines and prerequisites. In keeping with standard guidelines for eligibility for apprenticeship programs, our local area requires that you be:

- Graduates of accredited High School's or GED graduates
- Must be at least 18 years of age or older,
- Without a criminal back ground, and
- Math & Reading levels at least 8th grade or above.

Apprenticeship programs and other worksite specific experiences provide an opportunity to continue introducing youth clients to job coaches. The job coach serves to advance on-the-job training with succinct guidance on how to be successful in the workplace. With the assistance of the job coach, youth clients will have the benefit of an on-going performance review. These reviews are specific to the worksite, and are built on a system of positive reinforcement. This will keep youth interested in the work that they do; or, conversely, aid them in identifying the types of workplaces, work environments, and skills matches that give them a sense of worth and contribution.

- **Leadership development opportunities**

The Youth Council will be responsible for identifying the most appropriate community services and peer-centered activities that encourage responsibility and positive social behaviors. Youth need to know that they can definitely take a leadership role not only in the direction of their academics, but also on the job. The youth must be empowered with knowledge so they can move on in future employment positions.

Leadership development is best not taught in a classroom setting. Role-playing may be effective, but having employers on hand giving presentations on leadership activities may be more effective. Special group activities can be made available to students with these particular goals. Peer mentoring and citizenship training programs will be the best way for individuals to gain leadership experience. Leadership development is an important aspect of career development and needs to be included in curriculum planning in the high schools.

WIA funds will not be utilized for these programs specifically, but they may be incorporated into other aspects of programs, like the career exploration and development workshops. School districts may link with community-based organizations, like YMCA's, Lions or Jaycees, that already have programs focusing on leadership development established.

- **Supportive services**

As allowed in WIA, supportive services for youth may include referrals to and assistance with community services, childcare, work-related tools and attire, and transportation. These items will help youth in making a competitive move toward the goal of job and career goals, while providing the basics for survival. Transportation is an issue throughout

the service area; it poses a barrier for youth from getting to jobs. Public transportation is not always accessible. Many youth use taxicab services, which is not cost efficient. Financial assistance may be made available in a limited dollar amount or in the form of bus passes. The Youth Council will also work with the local transportation agencies to be creative in ways to transport youth.

Child-care referrals and information concerning childcare providers must be made available for youth that are in need of this service. For pregnant and parenting youth, instruction on selecting appropriate and cost-efficient childcare options, communicating with these providers, and balancing costs and fees will be offered. For youth that are in need of housing, food or clothing, the youth service providers will work closely with partners, including the townships, to identify and make referrals for housing assistance, and clothing and food pantries. The townships will also be utilized as resources for referrals for drug, alcohol, and domestic violence abuse counseling and treatment.

- **Adult mentoring for duration of at least twelve (12) months**

Mentoring components to area programs will assist in providing youth with positive adult role models, and one-on-one support and advocacy. A career mentor can work with high school students on career exploration and development. As well, mentors help to keep youth interested in and focused on their educational and occupational goals. Mentoring programs in the local area used a structure in which youth clients are matched with mentors/tutors based on compatible backgrounds and interests. The mentor programs will be developed in partnership with private sector employers. Additionally, they will offer youth the opportunity to have positive youth-adult experiences and interactions, and to develop relationships that potentially will have a long-term impact on their future life and career decisions.

Several corporations in Northern Cook County have established mentoring programs and on-the-job training programs with area high schools. Youth service providers may also set-up mentoring programs with the cooperation of local businesses and corporations that do not have mentoring programs already in place. In addition, it would be conducive to work with employers to assist in recruiting additional employers to provide similar programs. These programs set a broad employment base for the students as they learn to apply academics to the everyday work environment and job responsibilities. WIA funds are available to support mentoring programs throughout the local area.

Local Workforce Board and Youth Council members may provide the link to private sector employers and can also be instrumental in developing mentoring programs in their businesses.

- **Follow up services**

It will be the responsibility of the Youth Council to identify and establish the best means to provide extensive follow up services to the youth. As indicated in WIA, follow up services may include the leadership activities and supportive services detailed above, regular contact with the youth's employer (both pro-active and re-active to youth's performance), assistance

in securing better paying jobs and working toward career development, tracking youth's progress, adult mentoring, and connections with work-related support groups. In this structure, follow up will be necessary in ensuring that the youth has received the appropriate services to allow them to succeed in the workforce or in the educational system.

Follow-up will be conducted for no less than 12 months after the completion of participation. Adult mentors may be able to provide this service. These would be the same mentors that have worked with the youth throughout the program. Another approach may be to recruit local area youth groups where youth can enroll and maintain contact and maybe even some level of program activity with the groups. Also, it will be vital to maintain contact with the employer of the youth to determine how the youth is progressing and decide whether or not additional services are needed. It has been determined that follow up services be engaging and aid in the maintenance of the interest and connections that youth experience for the work environment.

- **Comprehensive guidance and counseling**

The focus will be on addressing reoccurring and new issues that effect youth and employment retention. This will be identified by the Youth Council and is a required element in the RFP's that are published.

Individual guidance and counseling are part of the school systems and will remain there with additional referrals to other agencies specializing in youth services. Guidance and counseling in regards to continued education and employment search and retention issues can be addressed through a referral to the appropriate entity – youth providers, agencies, and the local One-Stop system.

Programs themselves and referrals to other agencies will be the basis of this component of the Workforce Investment Act. One approach will be to identify key issues that youth must deal with and provide group support and guest speakers on these topics.

- **Individual Training Accounts**

WIA eligible youth who are assessed as suitable to pursue post-secondary education and training through a WIA funded ITA must select a program of training services that is directly linked to the employment opportunities in the local area. The individual who seeks training services, in consultation with the designated career advisor or case manager, must select an eligible program and training provider from the approved list. The list and guidance will be provided in a manner that maximizes consumer choice in the selection of the training provider and program.

Funding amount for ITAs will be at a maximum of set per year by the Workforce Board based on funding. ITA dollar limitations will include tuition, required books, published fees and supplies as outlined in the institution's course catalog and made available to the general public.

Identification of successful Providers

The Workforce Board will identify eligible providers of youth activities and award contracts on a competitive basis, based on the recommendations of the Workforce Board Youth Council. The Youth Council will focus on at least three key elements when awarding grants for youth activities.

- Previous experience: providers that have worked with youth specifically preparing them for the workforce.
- Willing to coordinate: providers looking to coordinate services and activities with other agencies and being creative in how the coordination will best benefit the youth.
- Ability to identify youth: providers that can identify the population to be served and have youth available for program enrollment.

The Workforce Board and local Youth Council will use the following criteria in identifying effective youth providers:

- Youth providers that are knowledgeable in the local labor market and have developed workforce preparation programs for youth.
- Youth providers that have corporate involvement, possibly on-site at the corporation or representatives involved in classroom training.
- Youth providers working with community resources in order to strengthen programs and activities.
- Not recommended: providers who have had limited or no workforce preparation services with youth.
- Not recommended: providers whose primary customers have been adults and would be applying the same/similar methodology to youth.

Mechanisms for coordinating youth programs

Youth programs in the Local Workforce Investment System will be coordinated based on the recommendations and overall guidance of the Youth Council. In order to facilitate communication between youth service providers, the Youth Council and the Workforce Board, a relationship of cooperation will be developed with the youth coordinators at the area One-Stops and the Workforce Board. The youth coordinators have been identified in the approved business plans of the area one-stops, and will assist in coordination of youth services amongst the network of youth service providers. This network will provide full services to their youth participants by streamlining the referral process. Through the expansion of the employthefuture.org initiative, the local workforce area will further improve its communication of year-round services for youth by establishing resource information and referral mechanisms within the site. Through grants awarded, providers will identify at least one of the following groups in offering services and establishing linkages with multiple youth programs:

Conclusion

It will be a community effort to prepare the youth for the workforce, to provide the right interventions at the right time in order to have an impact on the young person's life and his or her future success. A comprehensive set of youth services, based on state, local, and private partnerships and collaborative efforts, will focus on providing a kaleidoscope of training, education, support services, and work experiences that will successfully transition the youth into a life-long learning career path.