**Exploring Rural YouthBuild Programs Podcast Series**

**Podcast #2 Transcript**

Welcome back!!! Today’s recording will continue with two (YB grantees: Northshore Community College (LA) & Olympic ESD 114 (WA). They will be discussing the strategic approaches each used to align with the YB program model with organizational and local needs and how that model fits into the rural setting.

This presentation is part of the Exploring Rural YouthBuild Programs podcast series. We will explore the dynamics YouthBuild programs experience during program planning, implementation, and program sustainability efforts in rural areas. Our focus will center on the common factors affecting service delivery in regards to: funding, staffing, geographic accessibility of services, training and employment, technological capacity, partnerships, and population.

I’m Ronald Vargas, and I’m Marjorie Fong of the U.S. Employment and Training Administration’s (ETA) Office of Special Initiatives and Demonstrations. Our guests, Ms. Danielle Keys, Program Director from Northshore and Mr. Jeff Allen, Director of Youth Services from Olympic ESD 114, will provide insight and details into their unique challenges and share some of their best practices surrounding strategic planning and program implementation in rural communities.

**Ron Vargas:**

Welcome back Danielle and Jeff. Let’s dive into our 2nd Podcast.

**Implementation: How were YB education and training programs implemented? How sustainable were these programs?**

**Danielle Keys:**

Academic education, occupational skills, and service leadership are implemented through project- based and problem-based learning strategies based on the needs of our community. Thus far, these programs have been both successful and sustainable

**Jeff Allen:**

We partner with the local school district and participants are enrolled in both the Bremerton Open Doors drop out reengagement program where they can prepare for their GED test and earn credit towards a HS diploma if desired. We also enroll them in the West Sound Technical Skill Center where they also earn credits for their construction training. This allows us a great facility for their construction training. Our construction trainer works directly with the school’s teacher to customize the curriculum for YB, including using the HBI-PACT materials for certification.

As a result of our partnership with the district, it makes it difficult to enroll participants over the age of 21. However, we are now developing a partnership with the local Goodwill for GED testing so we can serve young adults up to 24.

**Ron Vargas:**

**Can you share your participant engagement, strategies during active programming and the follow-up period?**

**Danielle Keys:**

During the 10 month cycle, students engage in HiSEt preparation, Industry Based Training, AmeriCorps service learning and Mentoring opportunities as well as Career Preparation and Development. Prior to Mental Toughness, the staff of Yb develops a detailed timeline and calendar of events outlining activities such a community service events, college tours and mentoring events and other enrichment activities to aid in strengthening these components.

 *Upon the completion of the 10 month program, All participants are offered an opportunity to receive 12-months “follow-up” services*. YBB actively engages and provides constant contact with the participants. The goal is to not only to call or share information on social media, but to also email and/or phone the participant(s) current job-related information that will be beneficial to their continued success. YBB has found that constant engagement with participants in the “follow-up” phase, is a huge asset to the program. D*ue to Covid-19, YBB has included a once a month virtual call, where staff provide referral support services in a group setting.*

**Jeff Allen:**

It is challenge for some participants, especially ones with high barriers like transportation and housing insecurity. We have had two participants in the past that were living in a homeless shelter operated by the county. One strategy that has helped to provide additional support is to co-enroll them in our WIOA youth program.

We also keep in touch with past participants and invite them to come to Mental Toughness and the active program period to meet and work with participants during community service projects.

**Marjorie Fong:**

**Can you share your placement strategies?**

**Danielle Keys:**

**Post Program educational and job placement** are coordinated by the Transition Coordinator and the AmeriCorps Asst. /Job Developer**. Participants transitioning to postsecondary education** are prepared for entrance examinations given ACCUPLACER/ASSET or ACT practice tests by Academic Instructor prior to taking entrance examinations.

**Services supporting participants transitioning to employment** are coordinated by the Transition Coordinator, AmeriCorps Asst. /Job Developer and the Counselor in concert with NTCC Dean of Career Services. The staff listed above works with our Local One Stop (Geaux Jobs), Business and Industry partners, Pre-apprenticeship and Apprenticeship programs to help participants identify workforce opportunities. The AmeriCorps Asst. /Job Developer assists participants with employment applications and interview preparation. Transportation supports are arranged, as necessary. Graduates and Employers are contacted monthly to discuss placement satisfaction.

**Jeff Allen:**

We work closely with our LWDC and WIOA youth program to connect participants to employment opportunities. But really the best strategy, at least for employment in the trades, is with our local building association, KBA. We have regular “guest speakers” from the construction companies represented by the association. They also provide job-shadow and internship opportunities and prioritize promoting our participants for placement.

**Marjorie Fong:**

**Let’s discuss what role do partners have in the outreach plan?**

**Danielle Keys:**

Partners are vital in getting the word out concerning recruitment however our greatest asset has been word of mouth through past and current students.

**Jeff Allen:**

Our local AJC and WIOA Youth program promotes outreach events for us. Additionally we are beginning to see more referrals from school counselors as the program gets more visibility.

**Ron Vargas:**

**Can you share your outreach, recruitment and enrollment strategies? How do you maximize those outreach and recruitment efforts? What role do partners have?**

**Danielle Keys:**

We utilize our partners to help increase awareness regarding program enrollment etc. However, our biggest recruiters for our program has been our students and graduates.

**Jeff Allen:**

I suspect that this is one of the biggest challenges for any program and we would like to be better. We use a variety of resources to recruit. This spring we held a number of “virtual” Facebook/zoom events as an outreach strategy. We had some success with this and it was useful to get the word out about the program. We also leverage social media pretty heavily. Frankly one of the most effective recruitment tools is word of mouth. Past participants, family members, school counselors, etc. sharing with potential participants about the program. As a young program, we are recognizing how important marketing the program and sharing our story to the community is.

**Ron Vargas:**

**How does your organization evaluate the effectiveness of outreach efforts?**

**Danielle Keys:**

Again, our data helps tell the story. For the past cycles, we have maintained a waiting list for

our program.

**Jeff Allen:**

Number of participants that show up for our orientations and then Mental Toughness.

**Marjorie Fong:**

**Can you share your case management strategies?**

**Danielle Keys:**

Case Management is a critical component of the program. Through Case mgmt. we help identify barriers that may hinder student success and also remedy those problems our students are currently facing. Our strategy with Case Mgmt. is to assess and address the needs of the whole student.

**Jeff Allen:**

We are beginning to align our program and case management with our learning of Hope Theory. Hope Theory comes from the realm of positive psychology. Hope is defined as “having a vision of a positive future and recognizing that you have power to make it a reality”. It’s three things, 1) GOAL: setting goals for a positive future 2) WAYPOWER, developing a pathway towards achieving that goal (and having a plan B if things don’t go according to plan 3) WILLPOWER, having the determination, grit, self-worth and agency to achieve your goals. These are skills that can be taught, and research has shown that people with high levels of hope are better able to overcome the effects of adverse childhood experiences. So we are focusing our case management around the development of these skills in our participants.

**Marjorie Fong:**

**Can you share your construction plus training strategies, if any?**

**Danielle Keys:**

Through or parent organization, Northshore Technical Community College, we offer CNA, NCCER and look forward to implementing Phlebotomy and Welding. Local Community Colleges are a great asset to YB programs.

**Jeff Allen:**

As a newer program, we haven’t made the move to include a Construction Plus element. However, our partnership with the skill center presents some opportunities in the future for healthcare and IT.

**Ron Vargas:**

**Thank you so much Danielle and Jeff for another great YouthBuild Podcast. Stay tune for more Podcast to come.**