



Career and Postsecondary Development at YouthBuild

Preparing young people for post-secondary education or helping them develop a career strategy are priorities for all YouthBuild programs. Career development at YouthBuild is a process by which students are able to assess their existing skills, knowledge, abilities and interests; explore job/occupational opportunities; develop realistic career goals and plans; and prepare themselves to enter the job market. With limited time to prepare young people for college and work, YouthBuild programs must adopt approaches to career development that are purposeful, targeted toward specific placements, and relevant to local economic opportunities. YouthBuild programs must introduce students to the world of work and postsecondary education early, and keep them engaged in planning for their future throughout the program.

In the model illustrated above we outline three essential phases of Career Development at YouthBuild programs: Comprehension, Exploration, Preparation. We have identified

activities which should occur at each of these stages as well as key competencies and understandings which should be developed.

The first phase, **Career Comprehension**, begins at recruitment and Mental Toughness and continues through orientation. During this time, participants begin learning about career and post secondary options. Upon completion of this phase, students should understand the difference between a job and a career, they should comprehend the importance of education to achieving personal and career goals, they should be aware of deadlines for applying for post secondary education and they should have identified how their interests, skills, values, and personalities can shape their career choices. **Key Activities:** Discussion of the links between PSE credentials and earning power, Vocational/Interest/Skill Assessments, beginning the planning process for postsecondary and career pathways.

Career Exploration occurs during the first part of core programming. Career development activities at this phase include career searches in sectors that are experiencing high growth, post secondary exposure, early college placement testing, and financial aid planning. During this time, students gain understanding of the personal and transferrable skills that will be required of them in the workplace and begin to apply knowledge about their skills and interests to their career search. They also gain understanding of the local labor market and begin planning for post secondary education. **Key Activities:** Career Coaches guide students' career search in sectors that are experiencing local high growth, job shadowing, employer tours, college visits, early financial aid applications, early college placement tests, information provided about AmeriCorps Education awards, Individual Development Accounts, Stoneman Scholarships.

During the second part of core programming, students begin **Career Preparation**. In addition to continuing to develop key workplace competencies, students learn job-seeking and study skills, and develop their own career and postsecondary education plans. Effective career development planning demands measurable progress along academic, behavioral, and technical competencies. It is critical for both the staff and the young person to remain focused on meeting the benchmarks outlined in the development plan. It is also essential that ongoing assessment tools be integrated into the program to ensure that students are progressing along their plans. At this stage, as students complete the program, they move into career and postsecondary placements. **Key Activities:** Completion of a Career Portfolio (including resume, sample cover letters, sample job applications, references, etc...), activities which encourage the development of soft skills, career mentoring, internships, college placement testing.

As students transition into post secondary and work placements, follow-up involves continued access for graduates to resources and guidance, including support and assistance with job searching, interviewing, studying, and navigating financial aid applications.

To help young people successfully transition into a work environment with a clear career pathway, career information, guidance, and supportive services are needed. The model we have proposed provides a basic framework for the kinds of supports that YouthBuild programs can and should offer their students.