**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**YouthBuild Recruitment**

**Strategic Planning for Successful Recruitment & Mental Toughness**

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LAURA CASERTANO: And now I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today, Jeff Hunt, national YouthBuild liaison with the U.S. Department of Labor. Jeff?

JEFF HUNT: Thanks, Laura. Hey, everybody. Good afternoon, good morning, wherever you are in the country. We are excited to have you here with us today. I'm just going to get things rolling here.

First I want to introduce some of the voices that you'll be hearing from. First of all we've got Helen Witcher. She's the senior director for field services with YouthBuild USA. You'll also be hearing from Lindsay Bruce. She's a program manager down at YouthBuild Greenville in South Carolina. Also we have Crystal Pena, who's the program director from Quad YouthBuild down in Louisiana; and Mindy Rickabaugh from YouthBuild Johnstown. She's the coordinator of reintegration services, in Pennsylvania.

So in terms of our objectives today, what we're hoping to accomplish, we're going to help you to define your recruitment goals; looking at your program strength and mission. We're going to help you to define your audience; that is, matching your strength with a local context. We're going to develop a targeted campaign using data and individualizing strategies. We're going to work on your action strategy. And we're going to look at mental toughness and a culture that perpetuates recruitment.

So without further ado I'll be turning things over to Helen. Helen, take it away.

HELEN WITCHER: OK. Thank you so much, and again, good morning or good afternoon, everybody, depending on where you are.

So this is the recruitment time of year for most everybody, and we are constantly talking about recruitment. But do we always talk about recruitment being strategic? I think that that is one of the things we're going to talk about today, especially; how to make your recruitment strategic.

I think that we think so often about all the components of the YouthBuild model being very integrated together, and then sometimes recruitment is just this sort of disconnected piece off to the side, that is, "Let's think about getting the young people in the door so that we can put them in the program." And what we want to talk about today is how to do this in a very strategic way when you think about your recruitment plan and your mental toughness plan so that you are going to have great outcomes on the other side. So if we can just move to the recruitment, our first slide.

We need to define our recruitment goals. Do you know what your enrollment should be? Do you know if you've done this before? What's your history? How did you do with this last year? Did you get enough young people enrolled? And then, what kind of a timeline have you left yourself? It's really important that we've got enough time to do all these things.

So the first thing that not only directors and program managers need to do, it's pull the whole team together and make sure that we've got clear objectives that are in line with the program culture of the organization; that are in line with marketing; that are in line with the timeline; and that we're messaging – all of our staff are messaging a very similar message when we're out in the field. Let's move to the next slide.

OK. So we have some great tools in here that we're going to suggest are absolutely available t to you to use and can really make this strategic thinking process a little bit easier. The first of these is this student recruitment calculator. This is a series of numbers just a way to think about and help estimate the number of applicants that you're going to need to reach your enrollment targets.

So it's going to look at the current young people, those that you have historically recruited, where you've historically recruited them, and then what your projected enrollment should be.

So as we look through this list, determining a current subgroup enrollment is really important. So if you've got Construction Plus or if you have an internal mission, which is a term I've used a lot in the past where you look out and you say, there's lots of options and opportunities for young people to go into the trades; let's really recruit with an eye to placing young people in the trades.

Or we have a CNA program and we really want to make sure that we get enough interested young people in here, this is the time when you need to really break down these numbers and think about how many applicants are we going to need to fill X many slots, either in our overall YouthBuild program or in our Construction Plus program?

So then you're going to think about a projected rate based on your history. I know some YouthBuild programs where they've got 30 slots and they have 35 applications. That is not nearly enough. And sometimes it is a really hard piece of work to do, but look at your historic data. Look at how many you were able to take in as applicants last year. How many came to mental toughness and actually got there before they fell off ahead of that day? Think about the projected number that you want to get applications and prospects that you want to get.

So in the next slide we're going to talk a lot more about this, and we can move to that next slide. But the rule of thumb for YouthBuild has always been you want at least three times as many applications as the slots that you have available. That means that looking at this student recruitment funnel, it means that as move from the bottom up to the top of the funnel – which is listed as prospects – you want to really try to expand that number of young people that you are engaging their interest in the program.

So this is a really fabulous visual tool, and I would suggest that you take this and you cut out a picture of it and you hang it on your wall and that every staff person has go this on their wall as well. You know, recruitment is just not to happen during the timeframe that's the couple of months ahead of your next cohort.

Recruitment should be an absolute ongoing activity. And if and when we begin to attach some numbers to the levels of the funnel here, you're really going to see and have something quantifiable for your staff to work toward.

So if we start at the bottom of this funnel you're looking at young people retained in the program. And the next one up, you're looking at the young people you enroll in the program. So this is those numbers that are in your statement of work, and this is all of those that you want to retain throughout the entire program.

Folks might remember, might know, might have experienced that a lot of our attrition comes in those first couple of weeks of program time. Young people think this is a good fit. They really know that this is what they want to do. And then once that program opens and they're involved it turns out not to be the best fit.

So when we're thinking about enrollment and retention, we want to make sure that these young people have the best visible picture of what the program is going to be like so that they can make that kind of a decision up front and nothing is going to come as much of a surprise to them when the program gets underway and they say, oh, well, they said 8:00 but I didn't really think they meant 8:00.

So this funnel is our way of really grabbing young people and engaging them as we go along. So we've got retained at the bottom; we've got enrolled; we've got admits; we've got applicants and queries and prospects. And as a staff we need to be attaching numbers all the way up.

So we want to retain 30. We want to enroll 32 or 33 so we can give ourselves a little cushion. We want to admit the 32 or 33 but maybe have a wait list of three to five. And how many do we want to admit into mental toughness? So if I have 100 applications, maybe it's 60 that I want to bring into mental toughness.

Applicants – remember, three times as many applications as you have slots. And then queries and prospects need to really grow from that, and we're going to come back to that a little bit later. So we can move the slide on.

This next piece is action steps. These are action steps around the plan. We even want to have measurable steps at each stage. These action steps at each stage are really our touch points, and this is where we've got opportunities all the way along to be able to engage young people in the process.

It's not saying to a group that are in an information seminar, "Let us tell you about YouthBuild; OK, it's wonderful of you to come; bye-bye, and if you want to fill out an application, here's our address." This is time to really get some mass number of flyers, mass number of activity going in the community so that you can encourage a lot of applications.

And then once you've got those applications, really begin to engage the participants. This is their opportunity to engage with staff; their opportunity to really begin to feel the culture of what your program might be; and to interact with staff. And we're going to reinforce at each step down the funnel.

OK. So we can move on one step, and as we do that we're going to move to a piece that Crystal's going to talk about in a little while that is really those recruiting techniques. We have a program in California where the staff are always out in the community and they use the very interesting recruitment tool that they call "face-to-face and belly-to-belly." It is a one-on-one but it is that staff person or that graduate going out into the community, and it is a very one-on-one conversation with people that they see – a young person sitting on a couch in the food bank; a young person standing on the street corner.

And so once they have really determined that that young person is within our age group and lives in that geographic area, then they begin to just bring the conversation in a one-to-one very focused conversation about, have you thought about; wouldn't this be a great idea; don't you want to come and hear? So these action steps are really important. Let's go ahead and move on.

All right. So next tool. Let's go back internally to our team a little bit. This is an activity calendar. So if you've got a staff team of four or five of you and a couple of graduates and you're all working in the same direction; you've got your numbers laid out against the funnel; you are looking at the different pathways and you're going out and recruiting, it still is very random and disconnected unless as a staff team we are all feeding into the same documents, we are looking at our progress collectively. And this activity calendar is a great way to do this.

I'm going to show it to you in the next slide, but it does work on incorporating both program and community activities so you can see that you've covered the geography that you serve. It creates measureable goals and benchmarks for meeting those numbers that we put onto the funnel. And it defines specific staff roles and responsibilities where that's necessary. So let's move on and take a look at this calendar.

All right. So here's an example of the calendar, and we're looking at a three-month recruitment cycle. Now, I know I said that recruitment needs to be ongoing, and for a lot of you your recruitment and your intake times could vary. Some people use open enrollment; some people are doing quarterly or trimester timeframes; but for right now let's just talk about this big beginning of the school year kind of recruitment.

So three months means that most of you should already be thinking and out gathering applications. But here again you can look. We've got activities in that first column; potential completment (sic) dates; who's assigned and what the goals are for those particular assignments. And we want to make sure that each stage has these reachable goals and that the staff responsibilities are really clear.

That gives us a chance to come back as a group and really look at that progress and how we're doing. And there's the troubleshooting piece of this that we're going to get into and talk a little bit later about as well. So what do you do when you're not reaching some of these goals? We'll get to that in just a few minutes.

So let's move ahead on to our next slide. All right. And you thought that collecting and tracking data was only for once you're started your cohorts – nay nay. Collecting and tracking data is actually just as important when you're in the recruitment process, and I had mentioned this at the very beginning. Being able to look back at how you did last year is really valuable in your ability to project and plan for this year.

How many school visits were made last year? How many young people submitted all the paperwork they needed to submit? How many young people were you able to gather applications from from a particular geographic area? And especially, how were you able to really reach and get applications from those hard-to-reach young people – the young women and people of different, very diverse ethnicity groups? So making sure that you are logging that data and keeping track of that from year to year is really important.

Using these data tools and reviewing regularly with your recruitment team so that you can go ahead and adjust and troubleshoot as necessary. OK. We'll move on to the next.

All right. So two more pieces here before you get that recruiting really well underway. Define your audience. Go back to the couple ways that you're going to need to define. If we want to recruit and we're a community college program, this is a great opportunity for young people in our program to get some credit while they're still in YouthBuild and then move right into a college program.

We're going to think about our recruiting a little bit differently. And we also want to make sure that we've defined that audience. So we're not necessarily saying, well, if this is the case, we're only going to take young people that are a tenth grade level. That may be part of it, if you want to think about the skill sets of the young people that you're inviting into the program, but it may also be questions in an information or an application that really say, have you ever applied to college before? What do you think about when going to college? Would you be the first one in your family to go to college? And really bring those things up as part of the process.

Also, taking a look and identifying your brand. So this is a reflection on your own YouthBuild community – your own YouthBuild program and your organization. What are you known for in the community? Are there particular needs that you are addressing or you're known for addressing? Who are you targeting, what we just talked about? And then what is your target audience looking for? So if I live in a community where Google has just established a big office, it would be a great thought to, A, bring them on as a partner, but also begin to think about what jobs they have to fill.

So this is that whole labor market piece. What are the needs in your area that need to be filled? How does your program provide support for that? How are you known, and how can you begin to massage that as you define your audience and move into your recruiting? A couple of ways at the bottom here that you can analyze your brand and look at this or some awareness surveys and other feedback that you collect from participants and families and just asking, and then the websites and social media.

All right. Let's go one slide further, strategically reaching your audience. So now, you've defined them. You have numbers attached to our funnels. So you know the kinds of goals that you are trying to meet. You've got a calendar of your activities laid out. You and your team are all on the same page around what you're doing, and everyone's been assigned some roles and responsibilities. You've defined this audience. Now, you want to reach this audience.

This is something that must be very tangible. You want to know them, think about their family members, and engage all of your recruitment strategies that we're going to talk about in just a moment. Everything needs to be culturally appropriate, and then you want to tailor things to the audience that are just best going to bring in the applications for that group that you're working with. Do you need to translate materials into languages? Do you need to think about those reading levels and the skill sets? How well does social media work in your area?

Are flyers an option? Are letters and are bringing on a few more recruitment partners an option? So this is an area too where, as we have started that top of that funnel, remember every time we move down from our prospects to our inquiries to our application this is opportunities for us to relationship build and engage the youth a little bit further every time we talk to them or every time we do a new activity and really get their buy in.

So at this point I'm going to turn this over to Crystal Pena, and Crystal's really going to talk us through some great recruitment options.

CRYSTAL PENA: All righty. Good afternoon. Thank you, Helen. My name is Crystal Pena, and kind of like Helen was just speaking about, once you have defined your audience with the participants who want to enroll, you have to figure out how you're going to get to them. You have to figure out what you're going to do in order to get them into your office.

So the first thing you need to know is you need to determine your targeted demographics according to your statement of work. What does your statement of work say? Who are you going after? What population? Women? Minorities? What are you – what does your statement of work say, and then you have to figure out your plan of action to recruit these young people.

With recruitment we have to understand that we cannot stay in our offices. We have to bring it out because these young people are not known to come to us. They're just not very self-motivated. So we have to actually leave our offices and go find these people. We have to find this – these young people that are going to enroll in our program. So to begin with we need to utilize our YouthBuild alumni. They are a very, very strong source of recruitment. Young people know other young people that have not been to school and that would be a good fit for your program.

So we have to use our young people and our graduates, our successful graduates, and we have to bring them out and use them to help spread the word of YouthBuild. A good idea is always to get your young people, put them in one of your vans or your vehicles, and really just hit the streets cold-calling young people at different locations with using these previous graduates.

Year to year save your applicants that don't get in and actually go back to those applications and revisit those young people and see if maybe they're ready this year where they may have not been ready a previous year. Maybe they've grown up. Maybe they matured. Maybe they didn't finish the process for whatever reason, but that's a strong source of recruitment to go back and look at those previous applications and invite them back to try out again.

Most of – well, everyone – should have strong MOUs in place with different places like probation and parole, judges, DA's offices, drug court. Really utilize those. I'm not saying mandate an enrollment, but I'm saying really go use it as a source of referral. Go to those partnerships that you have. Really utilize them and ask them for potential referrals that would be a good fit for your program.

School systems. School systems are another very good source – place to go to recruit those young people who might be about to age out or just aren't making it in the regular school system. Really meet with those guidance counselors and ask them for them to send you the young people that may be a good fit for your program. And the guidance counselors really usually know their students. They know who's going to fit. They know who might be interested in your program in particular, whether it's just construction or construction plus. Those guidance counselors a lot of times will send you a very, very good fit of students.

Head Start programs. Head Start programs are excellent, excellent partner, especially for meeting that women population because these young people are getting their children enrolled in school. So they have good, reliable daycare, and then you can really hit up those programs to get these young women in your programs. I mean, you will also get some young men as well, but there's a big, strong woman population that's available if you go to these Head Starts.

Here in my local area the Head Starts allow me to come in and set up tables so I can give information and just really answer any questions one on one, and they'll usually give me a chance to talk to my – (inaudible) – just give a few minutes of a speech to tell them what YouthBuild is and what it's about and then set up in the back.

Also, your local social service programs, really make your presence known there. Put out flyers. Let them know where you are – who you are. Introduce yourself to the providers so that they can refer young people to you.

Community events. Community events are one of the best sources of recruitment that you can possibly do. A lot of – right now, with school starting back, I'm sure you have back-to-school bashes going on where they're giving out uniforms, supplies, etc. Really get out there and recruit. Set up a YouthBuild table. We went out this past week, and we passed out school supplies so that I could be a face out there in the community so they would know that we exist.

Really find out what those events are, maybe community breakfasts or different things, and set up tables so that they know that YouthBuild exists and what it is that you do. And people know other people, and they'll pass on your brochure. So go out with – and actually bring your applications with you so you can go ahead and get them to fill it out while they're there.

Community partners, I kind of talked about that a minute ago when I was talking about your MOUs and your partnerships, but really use those other partners like your local workforce and different businesses that have partnered with you and let them know, hey, I'm enrolling right now. I need – I'm trying to recruit right now. So please send me anyone. Let them know that we're recruiting and send them my way.

The local fairs and festivals, if you have those in your community, really set up a booth, even if it's on a Saturday or whatever. Set up a booth and be out there and let the young people see that you're recruiting. You're taking applications.

Online recruitment's so awesome right now. That's such a great thing that you can use, different Facebook pages, help wanted pages, Craigslist. But social media is a phenomenal source of recruitment. Everyone has those local buy, sell, trade pages or those local now hiring pages. Really go and put your flyers on there several times a day so it's at the top. Renew those posts daily. That's a strong source of recruitment.

Churches also good sources of recruitment with youth groups, if you could really get involved in those and let the – your local churches know you're recruiting. And just hitting neighborhoods, just going out to the neighborhoods and putting up flyers or talking to people where they're at, whether it's parks, basketball courts, skate parks, grocery stores, gas stations, laundromats, those type of things. Hang up your flyers and make your flyers very user-friendly.

YouthBuild USA years ago had a big earn and learn thing they were doing, and those are fabulous. They're eye-catching, and young people see these. So really make your recruitment materials eye-catching so that when you hang them up people see them. Maybe have pull off numbers so young people can pull the numbers and call for more information. Those are always very, very easy to do, and young people see those.

I said this a while ago, but I'm going to reiterate because it's so important that you have to leave your office and go to where the youth are. They're not going to come to you. Our – these young people that have dropped out of school and are needing YouthBuild need YouthBuild for a reason, and it's not because they're very self-motivated typically.

You have to go to these young people and tell them what YouthBuild is about. Get them in, and so part of that is you can't just sit and say, hey, we're recruiting. We're recruiting, and wait for young people. You actually have to go find them. Kind of like Helen talked about earlier, you have to set that plan. You have to have your whole team involved, and you have to go out and get them.

It's very important to keep track of where recruitment has had the biggest impact. Every year maybe put on your applications, where did you hear about us, so that young people can tell you what works. When I first started doing YouthBuild, I think I was recruiting at coffee shops. I learned very quickly coffee shops don't work. I guess people don't hang out at coffee shops. So we quit going to coffee shops. You have to see where your recruitment efforts have had a big impact. So really track that data. Don't just say, well, I think this works, I'll try this; I won't try this.

Really keep good numbers and compile the data and see where your efforts are working because you don't want to keep beating a dead horse, so to say. You want to actually go to where works so you're not necessarily having to reinvent the wheel from year to year. You want to build on previous years' recruitment efforts or previous cohort, I should say, recruitment efforts. You want to see what works, and then maybe you have a better idea for the next year.

Also, a key point is to get multiple methods of contact for the applicant. Our applicants, their numbers change so quickly that just because you have the application may not necessarily mean that that contact information is still going to be valid when you're actually doing your interviews or doing your mental toughness orientation. So you want multiple methods of contact, whether that be several phone numbers, a friend's phone number, a mom's phone number.

Make sure you get addresses, social media accounts, if they'll share that information with you. You just really want to get as many methods of contact so – because in a short period – span of time you can lose young people very quickly with their numbers changing. So you really want to make sure that you stay on top of getting good numbers for these young people.

So with that being said, I kind of want to turn this over to you guys and brainstorm with you on where do you recruit from. What strategies have you found most effective? I know this changes depending on what area you live in. So I kind of want to give you guys a chance to share some of your thoughts into the chat box on what strategies that you find most effective. Where do you recruit? So if you all want to take a – just a few minutes to share that information. I see some people typing. I hope I'm not talking to myself. Give you guys a few minutes.

OK. Xavier Jennings said public transportation, bus stations. Oh, that's a great one.

"Public transportation because we know our young people use that." That's really, really good.

"I do a lot of tabling events in schools. Have a hard time getting to the justice system." OK. Tabling events, I totally agree with Rebecca about the tabling events. Those are awesome to really let people see who YouthBuild is.

Workforce partnerships, that's a great one.

Peers currently enrolled. I've seen – Laura said peers currently enrolled. I've seen YouthBuild programs before do each one recruit one. I don't know if you've ever heard of that, but you give your young people flyers and little cards and they get to make it like a challenge to see who can bring in the most young people. That's something really good.

Smoke shops, that's a good one. Smoke shops. Probation and parole, we kind of talked about that earlier. Job fairs, that's another really good one. Set yourself up a booth at job fairs.

Rebecca said, "Bus stations won't allow us to pass out flyers. What would you suggest?" Are you maybe possibly allowed to hang up flyers at bus stop stations like – well, that's what you said they won't allow. I don't know. I'll have to brainstorm that one, but I don't have bus – public transportation near me. So I'm not really even sure about that one, but I will brainstorm and think about that one.

So lots of good, good suggestions that are coming up right here. Barber shops. I do see barber shops as a very great place to recruit. We do that as well. But with that being said, more and more good areas of recruitment are coming up as we are talk – as this is going. So just keep looking at those, but with that being said, I think my time is up and I need to pass it back over to Helen.

Helen Whitcher: Great. Thanks, Crystal. So yeah. Definitely lots of good ideas coming up. I'm going to add two that I am familiar with, and one of those is putting flyers on car windshields in parking lots. Sounds crazy, but it's good exercise steps, for one thing, and it really does get the flyers out into some of the shopping areas where you know your young people are. So some programs have definitely had success with that.

The other is, when we talked about the probation and the court department, this is a really connected way that I know a lot of you know about. But when you've got young people who have probation visits that they need to make, having that probation officer come out to the site is really giving them a regular look at what goes on in the program and is most likely going to make recruitment with the court system a whole lot easier when recruitment time rolls around because they already know you. They already know what you do, and they know that they can send young people there. So let's go ahead and move on, if we can, to our next slide.

So here I go. I'm taking us back to the funnel again, but let's go through some of these. Start at the top, and let's move down. And all of this really relates to the ideas that you put in the brainstorm and that Crystal talked about. So prospects is this first area. This – your goal here is reach the widest audience.

It's also going to help your YouthBuild become a household name because here is where you can really use mass e-mails, direct mailings, lots of flyering (sic) – I'm not sure that's a word, but we like it – out into the community. And this is your first round. So you're trying to reach as many people as possible. You want to make sure that your information is simple, but it is enough so that you'll be able to follow up with some of those young people later. And I really appreciate what Crystal said about getting multiple contacts.

So here some of the outreach and the relationship building is part of what you should be doing in an ongoing way throughout the program anyway but targeting populations, working with the Housing Authority to see if they can get flyers going out with rent notices, talking to the food bank to see if flyers can go into bags of groceries that go out the door, at the events, the community basketball, working with your workforce partners. So this is really the time to think about the large population that you can touch on. So you're gathering prospects. Let's move to the next.

OK. So coming down one step in that funnel, taking our prospects and let's – I'm sorry. Let's talk about troubleshooting with our prospects first. So noted on this earlier, what is – what are you – what can you do if you haven't been able to get the number of responses or move this to inquiries? And inquiries is really the young people being interested in the program and wanting to learn about it.

So what if you haven't been able to move the flyers that you've been handing out into actual interest coming in about the program? So going back to your staff team and having this conversation, making sure that your materials are aligned with the groups that you want to target, making sure that your message is simple and that it is culturally appropriate, making sure that it's a good communication or clear process that a young person needs to follow if they're interested, and then finally, reviewing your partner lists and your locations and making sure that you are aligned with the target audience.

So one of your questions here is, do I need to meet with my recruitment partners? In the broad scheme of YouthBuild we talk about the different kinds of partners that they are. You've got operation partners that help with big component pieces. You've got value-added partners that may bring financial literacy to the table, and then you should also have this group of recruitment partners, an association of churches or your local home builders association or different folks that will keep their ear out there and refer young people to you when recruitment time comes around and certainly not to neglect that youth respond best to youth. So here is the time that you want to really begin to use graduates or other young people in the community that are familiar with your program, if you're just starting out. OK. Let's move on one more.

All right. Now, going down one level in that funnel and talking about inquiries. So inquiries, the stage where the young people actually are turning the corner and saying, hey, this sounds interested. Let me hear a little bit more about what YouthBuild is. And from here on out the need for a trusting relationship to begin between young people and staff, young people and programs cannot be overstated. So this is where – even if there are barriers to this young person getting in, this is where the tone of the program begins, willingness to help, willingness to support, and that caring about each individual young person.

So this is where the real relationship begins from that first contact or inquiry that you get from the young person. Very often some of the trouble that we see in programs in moving from the recruitment process, a little bit disconnected, into the full program is when things are very, very consistent on one end or the other, consistent with recruitment, holding to a high bar with recruitment, and then moving into the actual program and everything being a little loosened or everything becoming a little bit harsher.

So that's where this – the need to really be consistent and trustworthy and promptly address needs. It's no different in recruitment than it is in the program. No different in the program than it is in the recruitment process. So making sure that you are reaching back out and promptly returning every inquiry that comes your way so you're capturing and engaging that young person as quickly as you can.

Troubleshooting here at the bottom again, what if you've not got enough inquiries? Think about the other means of communication, having captured several ways of getting ahold of them. If you know of somewhere they're connected to – so, for example, if they responded because they got a flyer in a bag where they picked up some groceries, follow back up with the community food bank and try and track backwards to really get that young person back in. E-mail or social media and then really ensuring that staff is following up promptly. This is an all hands on deck recruitment. This is the way it needs to be.

Across the country it varies from year to year. There's always going to be something that causes a glitch in an otherwise perfect recruitment process. It could be that laws change and not as many young people are dropping out of the school system. The school system is making efforts to keep them. But it doesn't mean that there are not young people out on the street that are our young people, and we just need to find them. So let's move on.

All right. Next level down on that funnel, admits. So admits to the information session, admits to mental toughness. So you've probably seen a little bit of attrition between that huge range of prospects that you got, how many you were able to turn into inquiries and actual applications, and then this next section down is the price of admission. So they need to be able to complete that application. They need to be aware of the communication and the expectations and the commitments of the program.

So this is that point before mental toughness, but it is not simply saying, yeah. It sounds great. You kind of passed our interview process. Why don't you just come on to mental toughness? That's the next step. That's very simplified. All this should be with involved staff working to get the buy in of these young people and up front of mental toughness, really trying to assure that they have a complete understanding, a really clear understanding of the expectations of the program, of what they're getting themselves into because as we go through mental toughness and we get down to that selection process, we all know that selection is one of the keys to the success of our program.

We want to have the best population of young people that are a good fit for the program by the time we get to the end of mental toughness so that we can select that group that's going to have the best opportunity to be successful in this cohort. And it starts ahead of that mental toughness. So very, very important time frame right here in the recruitment process. Let's jump ahead one more.

Oh, let's not jump ahead one more. Let me go ahead and turn this over to Lindsay Bruce. So Lindsay with YouthBuild in Greenville has really experienced kind of the ups and downs of a recruitment process, and she's going to talk about that.

LINDSAY BRUCE: Thank you, Helen. Good afternoon. As Helen said, my name is Lindsay, and I work with the YouthBuild Greenville program in South Carolina. And our program is our first grant, and we have really struggled with recruitment.

We have found that recruitment and retention often go hand in hand, but we realized we needed to do something to get our numbers up because in mid-February we were at about 22 participants and we needed to be at 60 by the end of June. So we had a big task on our hands, but how we kind of tried to turn it around was we utilized the rolling enrollment, which was not the easiest, but it definitely worked. It helped pick our numbers up by just bringing participants in as they came to us.

We were lucky enough that we were able to hire a consultant from Atlanta who came in and helped us with recruitment ideas and program design. We did several community events. We had a community day that was on a Saturday, and we were able to have some – one of our local radio stations on site to promote it and have music. We also were able to have food and information about our program. We really believe that helped.

We saw a huge interest, and it definitely helped spread the word of our program within the community because we felt that that was one of our biggest challenges is is that a lot of people just didn't even know who we were. So by having this community day it allowed the word to get out to the community but also grandparents stopped by that were like, oh, we have grandchildren sitting on the couch. So that really helped to get the word out.

We also did a breakfast for some of the local pastors just to kind of spread the word that way, and they would go back and tell their congregation. And then we also hit the street. We went to community centers and food banks and places like that. So that definitely started showing some interest, and we started seeing our numbers incline.

We also were lucky enough that we were able to kind of change the face of our facility. We were able to bring in basketball goals and beanbags and a television that allowed the participants to kind of feel more at home, a place that they wanted to be. We've actually had some participants that are here when they don't have to be because this is a place that makes them feel more comfortable than their own home.

We also decorated the facility with pictures of our students on Habitat for Humanity worksites as well as in our construction area, and then we came up with a wall that's called our wall of fame. And it displays their picture along with – as they receive their accomplishments, whether it be their GED, their HBI PACT certificate, or both. And then we also have offered incentives to current participants that would refer other youth to the program, and those incentives would help. We'd offer, for example, so much once they had been here for two months, after they had shown their commitment. So they received an incentive for that.

And so we were able to make the 60 by the end of June, which was pretty awesome. So our enrollment increased from 37 percent to 100 percent in just the five months. It was a lot of tough work but it was exciting and it is really such awe-inspiring to see these participants at our facility and they are now spreading the word. So hopefully moving forward we will be able to have our enrollment stay pretty good. That's what I have, and I'm going to send it back to you, Ms. Helen.

Helen Whitcher: Thanks so much. And that's a great job, Lindsay, because it is – that was a really fast time frame to be able to turn 37 percent to 100 percent around. So great job, and we can certainly learn from what Greenville did.

All right. Let's move one more slide. We're still in recruitment but we're getting into mental toughness and I hope at this point folks are really understanding and acknowledging the level of coordination and commitment that needs to go into recruitment because it is going to set you up for a successful program or for a less than successful program. And every year with that historical knowledge of how it went the year before, you're going to be able to improve on this, and the barriers and the challenges that you hit will be easier to overcome as the years go by.

So as we move into the mental toughness, which we are so lucky to have Mindy to talk about that a little in a few more slides, what – there needs to be a culture of retention that gets included in the recruitment strategies and especially as you move into mental toughness. So if folks were not muted, I would be asking that question, what is culture? But program culture is anything and everything that you do in your program. It's what makes it unique. It's what Lindsay mentioned as their wall of fame.

So it's all of those activities, and this has got to start with recruitment and with mental toughness. If you were billing the program as something so serious and just so much work, obviously, these young people aren't going to get excited and aren't going to be interested in being engaged, even if, when you pose the question what would you like to do and they say, I want to get my GED or I want my diploma, there's not even at that moment of saying that the understanding of how hard it's going to be. But we need to really bill this and make sure that there's a lot of good, rich program culture in the program and that they're seeing that they're coming into this.

So as you think about the visuals that you do, as you think about the mental toughness and designing it, think about your program culture. Very intentional. Make it fun. Make it meaningful. Reinforce strengths. Challenge these young people. Help them – again, I go back to clarity and helping them to understand their own vision of success and how the program's going to help them get there. Keep expectations high, and then reinforce the culture again and again. Let's move on.

OK. And this is holistic. So this program, one of the things we always say is when the young people get to the end of the program, we want them to feel like they're a part of a family. And so most programs see this. They often see that when young people get to the end of the program, they're doing all those disruptive kinds of things that could keep them in the program because this is the family and they don't – they necessarily don't want to leave it.

But right up front in our recruitment it's very different. These are our young people that have never been able to follow through or finish or have success at anything or be appreciated for anything they've done. So being able here to really reinforce the culture and the mental toughness and the holistic nature of the person is really an important thing to do.

And this is also the time that we want to create links for them, and I have been engaged in – all summer in doing some form of recruitment conversation, and so I will fall back on what just last week we talked about at the region six peer to peer, which is making those linkages for the young people. So just as recruitment is not disconnected and mental toughness is not disconnected, you want to think all the way to the end of your program in follow up and work backwards to those mass flyers that are going out to cultivate prospects and think about the linkages that you want to make for these young people.

So if they are thinking to themselves, OK, don't really trust this group yet, not doing anything with my life, want to get a GED; I may as well just try to go in and be part of this – then how are we going to grab and engage them once they come into mental toughness?

And that is the real authentic place where they're going to learn about what the day-to-day life in YouthBuild is. So really being very intentional about working backwards and for the placements that you're looking at and for what you want your outcomes to be, working that so that that starts in mental toughness. Next slide.

And I'm not going to go too much into depth with that. I don't want to take away anything from what Mindy's going to talk about, but here are just some of the example activities in mental toughness, pretty much ones we're all really familiar with and know. And the one major thing I would say about this is that the activities can always vary, and they're going to be very different program to program. But the message and the culture and the expectations need to stay consistent, consistent from recruitment through mental toughness through program. OK. And our next slide.

So there is a TEGL, and the guidance for us around mental toughness and time frames and what costs can go to the grant during this phase of programming is in TEGL 14-09. And so this is all – I think we have it so that you can download it in the resources. It is also online on the community of practice, and you should very – again, very intentionally with the whole group of staff make sure that you are totally familiar with this.

But it also does lend itself to saying part of – as we go back and think about that recruitment calendar, don't neglect the things like where can I get some in-kind donations from the community for things such as food or breakfasts or maybe additional bus tokens or other things that are going to be really critical to making this a very meaningful and rich mental toughness process. And with this I am going to turn it over to Mindy Rickabaugh, and she's going to really take us through mental toughness a little more.

MINDY RICKABAUGH: Thanks, Helen. Again, my name is Mindy Rickabaugh and I am the coordinator reintegration services here at Good Will of the Southern Alleghenies and I oversee YouthBuild Johnstown as part of my responsibilities.

One of the things I want to talk about and that culture that Helen was talking about is your mental toughness expectations. When we talk about mental toughness, we developed a handbook just for mental toughness, and it is on the web links. You can click on it, and you can also click on it through the PowerPoint presentation.

And in that mental toughness handbook we have set very high expectations, and we set them from day one that the student steps into mental toughness. We also have the back, the train up. You have to set that expectation from the minute that you make contact with that student, which is at intake or when you are out recruiting them. In our mental toughness handbook, the foundational skills are very clearly spelled out, and you'll see that in the next couple slides.

And oftentimes, it's very frustrating for staff that there are a lot of unwritten rules of conduct that our students don't know, and we cannot assume that they know them. And oftentimes, our staff get frustrated with those unwritten rules, and for me, at my YouthBuild when the staff came to realize that, OK. These unwritten rules exist. I know them. I can't assume, it really took away that staff burnout or that frustration that they had working with students that don't understand those unwritten rules of conduct.

Another piece of that culture that Helen was talking about is that staff must always replicate a work environment. They have to mimic that work environment, and they must – in everything they day, every class, whether they're at community service or they're on the job site or they're in the classroom in GED, we want to mimic a work environment so that we are preparing our students for the work – work or postsecondary ed.

Recently, I had the opportunity to sit on a presentation where the presenter talked about whether or not colleges prepare our students and if employers feel the colleges and there was some gray area in between. And one of the things we do very well at YouthBuild is that we develop those people skills where some – a lot of our students have barriers, but if we develop those people skills, obviously, your performance measures will increase.

So in my mental toughness handbook here at YouthBuild Johnstown, we ask a very – we ask four very specific questions. But one of the things that we always – that – when we developed this workbook, we had students constantly asking, what do I need to do to make it through mental toughness? We make it highly – appear to be highly competitive and – not appear.

We do make it highly competitive, but we also want to make sure that the student understands what exactly it is they need to do to get into this program. And if they don't follow those particular rules or aren't doing what they need to do, they most likely are not going to make it through mental toughness. It is when we do individual meetings with each student at the conclusion of mental toughness to let them know whether or not they're in or out of the program.

We also complete a rubric on that particular student, but I can tell you that we have never had any surprises with students because I always refer back to these four questions and ask these questions. And if they can't answer yes or no – yes to these questions, then they do know that they're not going to make it into the YouthBuild program. And these are posted throughout our room, throughout our offices, on our job sites. So that is something always on the top of their brains.

The first question we ask, are you present physically? Do you attend every day? Is your body here? But then we also ask mentally, are you attentive and ready to work? Then we always ask, are you on time? Do you arrive to class on time? We really harp on the being on time. Do you return from lunch? Do you return from breaks? Do you finish the assigned tasks on time? And again, not to correction, but are you working to complete those particular tasks?

And are you respectful? This is a very interesting – I don't go into – I don't spend a lot of time in mental toughness, but one of the things that I do with the students is a student's definition of respect and the staff definition of respect are completely different. So I found this out when I – we did these rules, and we said, are you respectful? And then I came to realize that their definition is different than mine. So we had to have a common ground on what that meant, and the student had to understand what we meant. Do you listen to the instructor? Do you ask for help if you don't understand?

This is a big problem with folks in poverty, not always understanding what – not always understanding or being able to ask the questions or not feeling comfortable. Are you disruptive? This is a big one for us. Do you allow yourself to be influenced by negative behavior? A good attitude? Do you show a good attitude? You may be doing all the work, but are you positive, your body language showing a good attitude?

And do you walk out of class without permission, for example? Are you disruptive during class, and do you respect other students and staff? Again, the key here is I would suggest that you do a session with your students that you have them define what they see as respect because, again, their definition is different than ours.

And then the last question we ask is, are you appropriate? Again, there are a set of unwritten work rules that exist that our students don't understand, and they really fall into this category. Just because you're here physically, do you participate? Do you try? Do you have a negative attitude toward the activity that we're doing? Do you always voluntarily turn in your phone?

Our students are required to turn in their phone during mental toughness. This is a real hard – this is a problem for our students, and if they are doing it voluntarily, we're – that student's going to be OK. Swearing is a big issue. Do you keep from using language, terms of reference that could be considered inappropriate, offensive, or suggestive? This is one that we have to work on for mental toughness to the last day.

Once these questions – if the students on that Friday where we pull them in can answer yes to these questions or no, if appropriate, they know whether or not they're getting in and out because you have set that clear, clear expectation. And with that I am going to pass it back to Helen.

MS. WHITCHER: OK. Thanks, Mindy. So I think that folks should certainly be able to see that there is just as much preliminary work and thinking going into this whole recruitment and mental toughness process, and once you really get a good grasp on this and you set this, it will become a little easier and – year after year.

But what I saw in Mindy's presentation too is that before we can ask those questions of the young people, that whole – the whole staff team needs to have thought about, have asked about, and have come to some alignment around the answers to the questions.

So if I've got 100 young people that are going to come to mental toughness and I only have 30 spots, I think there's a case where I need to be much closer to are you here on time, are you back from break on time, and really taking a much harder line on that than I might if I only had 35 people in recruitment and had to make all kinds, or 35 people in mental toughness and had to make all kinds of exceptions.

So it goes back and says to us the number of prospects, of inquiries, and actual applications that we are able to get from young people in the community, the better our chances are of making sure that we really have that right cohort that goes through mental toughness and begins the program.

So of course we're going to go back to those strategies, and we're going to talk just for a moment more about culture in the program and really how it relates in mental toughness and selection and in moving on. I totally too appreciate what Mindy said about opportunities for the real world, really making your mental toughness the beginning of a reflection of what the real world is going to be. So we want our young people to feel welcome.

We want to create a culture built on that respect and leadership, be promptly answering concerns, demonstrating clear connections between them and their long-term goals, celebrating their choice, providing opportunities for decision making, and then creating a variety of leadership positions. If all of this is built into the mental toughness agenda, then this is a huge amount of information for your staff and you to be observing and taking in, looking at the buy-in from these young people, and really making a determination about their fit and giving them the opportunity to make that same sort of decision within the mental toughness time frame.

A lot of times too we get questions about, well, if I put activities in the mental toughness that relate to their long-term vision, their long-term vision could change five times. And absolutely it could, and having your job developer or your transition coordinator mindfully aware of that, they're really going to structure some of what they do in their own job with the knowledge that young people are going to change their minds down the road.

But at least we get then thinking in that direction when so often we've still got young people that don't necessarily believe they're going to outlive the YouthBuild program that you might accept them to. So trying to speak to them and encourage them around having and developing some long-term vision is a piece of gaining their engagement and moving them a step more into the program. Let's go ahead and move on to the next slide.

And I do want to just remind you again, you're thinking in a couple of different directions. You're thinking of your funnel, starting out wide, getting to your enrollees, and you're also starting thinking about their whole program journey from the follow up and placement at the end of the program backwards to what they tell you is their long-term vision and goal for themselves.

So all of the activities, all of the questions that Mindy suggested, all of those things need to be built into mental toughness so that it makes it a really valuable and real-world opportunity for them. And the other way to do that is through the leadership piece.

So our program is – YouthBuild is there to not only provide them with placements and achievements and the skills but to help them develop into leaders, even if that leadership is only in their own relationship with significant others, with being a leader in their family structure, but hopefully to really, ultimately being leaders in their community. And just as a reminder of the ways that we do that in the program, we also want to begin that process in the mental toughness and even the recruitment.

So providing them with opportunities for feedback and to show leadership can happen through a number of ways, getting their feedback from surveys, giving them a voice through reading the policies. If it's in mental toughness, your hand- – your student handbook is something that you want to go over several times in several different methodologies. You want them to be able to internalize a lot of what they're reading because inevitably you get the, oh, I never read that. I never saw that.

But if you're going over that in several different ways in your mental toughness time frame – maybe it's small group discussion. Maybe it's role play. Maybe it is doing a game of a worksheet. Anything that is reinforcing this in mental toughness is good and opening it up and giving them a voice in what they think about these policies and procedures. Doesn't mean you're going to change them right then and there, but it does mean that they've been able to voice that opinion.

Helping participants to represent vendors in the community, letting them know that that may be part of what they're doing, getting their opinions about all the recruitment materials you've just used, engaging them down the road in your next or ongoing recruitment efforts, and then making the clear connection with them around the strong outcomes and then their own long-term vision.

So again, engaging the young people, drawing them more and more into this, and the more that you talk about the leadership, the activities that they take part in in mental toughness, great opportunity for all of your staff to be looking out for who are the natural leaders that we see coming out of this mental toughness? Are they natural positive leaders, or are they natural negative leaders?

Do we see young people that are on the verge of that leadership? Do we see some that are just very shy and reticent and they're certainly going to have a lot further to go? But you're never going to know the answers to those things as you select who you want in your program unless you've put those opportunities into mental toughness.

All right. So we are going to move on to our summary slide, and as always with these webinars, we have condensed and talked about so much content and so much activity in such a short period of time. So let's just talk about what we did. We provided some tools which should be really valuable in terms of planning your recruitment strategy, even if you've already started.

It's not too late to go back and sit down as a team and implement these things that are going to make your recruitment a little bit more systematic, a little bit more with benchmarks and outcomes that you want to reach in terms of numbers, and then the ability to be very thoughtful about what you as a team are looking for in that mental toughness agenda that is put together.

So we've talked about how to calculate recruitment and numbers that you might need based on the enrollment in your statements of work. We have talked a lot about this student recruitment funnel and attaching numbers to it and how all of the different steps fit in, where your mass mailings and your widest net is going to occur all the way down to those young people that are enrolled and the audience that they are and the audience that you're recruiting from.

And we've talked about having a recruitment calendar so that you and your staff can stay on the same page and be constantly touching back and looking at the progress you've made and how far you need to go to reach those numbers that you're looking for. We have heard from three really excellent folks, Crystal, Lindsay, and Mindy, about how they are doing these activities in their programs and how it has worked and made them successful.

Even though we know that this is an ongoing process, it is an art not a science. It's going to take us years to get it down to a science, but with every year and being very deliberate in what we do, we can get much closer to really meeting and then exceeding those recruitment goals.

And a long time ago with YouthBuild USA and with the programs, there are two qualities we've always reverted back to when people say, well, how do you make a YouthBuild program successful? And a lot of that is in the team of people that you hire to be your staff team, whether they are partnered or whether they are hired from your grant or within. Whoever your staff team is and their ability to work together as a unit is going to help make your program really successful.

And the other piece of that, as I mentioned earlier, is the young people that you select into the program, and to get that group of great young people selected that are going to have the best opportunity, you see them as a good fit, they see themselves as a good fit, is only going to come when you've got that very wide top funnel that you can work down from.

So with that I'm going to move this to Jeff. It looks like we've got a little bit of time for some questions. So that's wonderful. I hope you will pose them to all of us.

MR. HUNT: All right. Thank you, Helen, and thank you to Crystal, Lindsay, and Mindy for those great presentations. Like Helen just said, now is your chance. Type into that same chat box where you typed in your suggestions earlier for recruitment locations, and we will try to get to some questions with the time that we have left here. Nobody's typing yet. Maybe a little shy this afternoon. Want to give you a little bit more time before we cut you off.

Well, maybe we don't have any questions this afternoon, and that's fine. We will be providing – oh, maybe a question coming in. I was going to say we will be providing contact information for our speakers, if a question comes to you later, but now is a great time because this way everybody will see your questions and your answers. All right. Multiple questions coming in.

OK. Anthony has a question for one of our presenters. He asked, "When you moved from 37 percent to 100 percent, how often did you check on progress towards this goal?"

MS. BRUCE: OK. This is Lindsay. Daily. Every person we enrolled, we were constantly in the know of where we were when – towards our goal of the 100 percent. Yes. I mean, we – it was something we constantly checked in on. So we were always in the know and knowing exactly because we had that goal of June 30th and we actually gave ourselves a real goal of June 15th to make sure we would meet it. So like I said, we checked in every day.

MR. HUNT: All right. So constant checks, ambitious goals. Those are the big take-aways there.

MS. BRUCE: Yes.

MR. HUNT: How about those of you – our presenters that posted to Craigslist? "Have you had success there? Were you able to connect folks that ended up coming to see you with those posts on Craigslist?"

MS. PENA: This is Crystal. Yes. Craigslist was very successful. You just have to keep repeatedly posting it over and over again.

MR. HUNT: All right. So that seems worth your time. Craigslist is free after all. So pretty good resource.

I think we got another question coming in. Maybe. All right. So it looks like another one for Lindsay. "When you went from 37 to 100 percent, how did you handle staffing issues? For example, our construction instructor can only have 12 in the classroom, and GED instructor can only have eight at a time. We can only send a few youth out at a time at work sites and community service. How did you manage a large number of students in the program at one time?"

MS. BRUCE: OK. Well, when we started the rolling enrollment in February, our – even though we had 22 that had been enrolled, they were not all actively on campus. We actually probably only had about four or five participants that were here daily. So we were lucky enough that we were able to take the new participants and break them into two groups.

So we were able to have half in construction while the other half were in GED. We don't have as stringent of a number of eight in GED at one time. I don't think we ever, though, had more than 10 at once in GED or more than 12 in the classroom. So it was just the luck of the draw, to be honest with you. We were concerned about it, but it just never happened.

MR. HUNT: All right. Thanks, Lindsay. We have another question about, "Have any of the presenters ever used video as a recruitment tool?" Might be taking that as a no.

MS. PENA: I mean, we've used videos that students have made and just put them on social media accounts, but actual professional videos, no.

MR. HUNT: OK. And Rebecca wants to know if you – if – Lindsay, if you have your recruitment strategy written down in any kind of formal way. Do you have something you could share?

MS. BRUCE: I don't have a formal way, but that is definitely something I can put together and give out. That's not an issue at all. I mean, I have something informal, just everything that we did and some of the outcomes that we received from it, but I wouldn't call it formal.

MR. HUNT: OK. Well, I think we have your contact information. So hopefully, people can reach out if they're interested in that.

MS. BRUCE: Please do.

MR. HUNT: Looks like we do have one other person who has YouTube videos for presentations. Yeah. With those of you that have these kind of one-on-one type questions, I will be displaying all of our presenters' contact information in just a minute, and they've been gracious enough to share that with everybody on the call today. So you will be able to contact them with these more one-on-one type discussions.

All right. I don't see anybody typing. So with that I think we'll shut down this open Q and A, but like I said, coming up in just a moment we will have the contact information. So want to move to the next slide for me?

There's a couple of links for you, the TEGL that was referenced earlier with sort of the official guidance from the Department of Labor, and then I believe it was Mindy's mental toughness workbook. I know I already saw somebody in the chat thanking her for that. So it's a great resource for you to download. I would encourage you to also download this PowerPoint since it includes the contact information and these links just so you have easy access to them before you log off today.

And as promised, here's my contact information here in D.C. as well as your contact information for Helen with YouthBuild USA, Crystal at Quad Area – Quad Youth, and on the next slide we've got Mindy and Lindsay. I think – do we have one more contact slide? No. That's it. That's our thank you slide.

So it's sincere. We do thank you for your time today, and an extra thanks for our presenters. I think we will be asking you to hang on if you got the time to respond to some survey questions, but that wraps up the main part of our presentation. And we hope everybody has a great day and a great rest of your week.

(END)