Program Area IV. - Priority A2:
Provide life skills, vocational/career guidance, pre/post-employment support and job placement for low-income youth.

Program Structure

- Program activities should be based on a culturally relevant comprehensive positive youth development strategy with a direct link to the program’s mission and goals.

- Programs should provide an individual focus and an age/stage appropriate approach acknowledging the distinct needs each youth and create opportunities that are age and stage appropriate.

- Programs should encourage and support youths’ continued engagement in school or reconnection to education or training

- Programs should provide opportunities for youth to take an active role in planning, implementing and assessing the program

- Program structure should support and build a group identity amongst the youth that encourages success and achievement by working toward similar goals,

- Programs should focus on identified neighborhoods or specific groups of youth

- Programs should provide at least six-months of follow-up services with their participants after the young person completes the program.

- Programs may consider targeting younger youth, ages 14-15 as the earlier a youth becomes involved in effective employment programs, the more promising the results.

- Programs may consider offering financial incentives for young people. For example incentives may include payments, allowances, welfare reductions and/or contributions to college funds.
**Staff Experience and Support**

- Program should seek stable staff with the skills and commitment to build sustained supportive relationships with youth and their families.
- Staff should receive training relevant to the responsibilities of their position.
- Staff should receive appropriate support to make their work experience positive and create a positive working environment.
- Staff should be knowledgeable and competent regarding the culture and socio-economic backgrounds of the youth and their families.
- Staff should support the mission, goals and evaluation plan for the program.

**Program Activities and Content**

- Program activities should focus on employability skills that are transferable core skills necessary for career success. These skills can be grouped into three core areas: career development (i.e. identifying occupational interests), job attainment (i.e. construct a resume), and job survival (i.e. demonstrate appropriate appearance). Effective programs focus on each of these areas to prepare its young people for employment.

- Program activities should take a holistic approach to workforce development. In addition to focusing on basic competencies and employability skills, programs also focus on developing the personal qualities (i.e. ability to work well with others, self-manage) and leadership skills of its participants. Personal career goals should also be considered when tailoring activities and services.

- Programs should also help youth understand the employability skills they have gained and learn how to effectively communicate these skills to potential employers. Programs could utilize skills portfolios to help young people document and communicate their

- In order to develop all of the aforementioned skills, youth employment programs typically offer some of the following services: vocational training, academic instruction, counseling, health education courses, career exploration and guidance, mentoring, community service experience, job readiness workshops, work experience and internships.

- Staff should build relationships with local businesses and public sector employers not only provide job opportunities, but may also help a program develop curriculum, allow them to borrow equipment, and serve as speakers.
Program Evaluation

- Program should have clear mission, goals, and both process and outcome objectives that ensure a coherent purposeful approach to all strategies and activities.

- Programs should document competencies that the youth have gained. Programs may utilize skills portfolios to help young people document and communicate their competencies. Portfolios may include items such as personal writing samples, resumes, cover letters, feedback from mock interviews, etc.

- Program should establish systems for continuous improvement that allow staff to make fact-based decisions in planning, managing and improving program strategies.

- Youth should have an opportunity to contribute to both the content and structure of the evaluation process.

- All levels of staff should be aware of and support the programs mission, goals, objectives and evaluation plan.

Outcomes
Outcomes for youth employment programs should primarily focus on attainment and retention of employment. However, relevant outcomes from the Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG) CORE COMPETENCIES included below may also be relevant.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT COMPETENCIES
For example:
Identify occupational interests, aptitudes and abilities
Relate interests, aptitudes and abilities to appropriate .
Identify desired lifestyle and relate to selected occupations
Develop a career path for a selected occupation.
Select an immediate job goal.
Describe the conditions and specifications of the job goal

JOB ATTAINMENT COMPETENCIES
For Example:
Construct a resume
Conduct a job search
Develop a letter of application.
Use the telephone to arrange an interview
Complete application forms
Complete employment tests.
Complete a job interview.

JOB SURVIVAL COMPETENCIES
For Example:
Demonstrate appropriate appearance
Identify expectations that employers have of employees
Identify problems of new employees
Demonstrate time management
Follow directions
 Appropriately resign from a job

Measurement Tools

The Compendium of Assessments and Research Tools
http://cart.rmcdenver.com/
CART has an easy search engine that allows the user to select areas of youth outcomes, and then provides you with an extensive list of tools available, including information on their reliability, availability and author contact information.

The Youth Outcomes Compendium
http://www.childtrends.org/what_works/clarkwww/compendium_intro.asp
Produced by Child Trends and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the Youth Outcomes Compendium serves as a youth outcomes and indicator resource for people working in the field of youth development.

Bibliography


Employment-Related Programs and Services for Youth. Ottawa, Canada: Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, 51-84.


