Recruiting, Serving, and Engaging Disconnected Youth in the WIOA Young Adult Program

Promising Practices In...

- Program Design
- Process Improvement
- Recruitment and First Dates
- Engagement and Program Retention
Four Initial Program Design Questions...

1. **What is Your Program Name and Who Are Your Customers?**
   
   Out-of-School Youth...Disconnected Youth...Opportunity Youth...Older Youth...Young Adults

2. **Do You Have a Youth Program of a Program Serving Youth?**
   
   Important Research Supporting a “Youth Program“:
   
   - Some Staff Are Better At Working with Youth
   - Alumni and Current Participants Motivate Participation
   - Peer Interaction: New Social Affiliations and Accountability
   - Witnessing Success of Peers Makes A Big Difference
3. Is Your Program Design Customer-Centered?

Designed by: Regulations...Your Preferences...Customer Preferences?

Engaging Young People in Program Design:

- Start with Customer...Then Not Get Busted
- Ask Each Young Person for Advice, All of the Time
- Have an Advisory Committee
- Seek On-Going Satisfaction Data
- Use Participation Data to Determine What Counts Most

4. Are You Developing a Youth Workforce System (and Not Just a One-Stop System)?
More Promising Practices: Youth Program Design

- **OSY Ages 16 to 24: Youth and Young Adults** (Big Age Span: Program Services and Strategies Vary)

- **Seek Speed, Concurrence, and Variety in Services** (Capture Youth Preferences for Continuous Engagement)

- **Emphasize and Provide Work Opportunities** (Use Jobs as Lure, Incentive, and Reward)

- **Provide Longer, Intensive, Comprehensive Services** (75% of Funds, Not 75% of Participants)

What Has Worked For You?

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The "Continuous Improvement" Youth Program Process Map

1. Generate an Inquiry
2. First Visit
3. Subsequent Pre-Enrollment Visit/s
4. Enroll (Eligible, Objective Assessment, 1 of the 14)
5. Serve and Continuously Engage
6. Positive Exit
7. Follow-Up Services
Data to Inform Improvement of the OSY Program Process

- Which Recruitment Methods Are Most Likely to Generate OSY Who Are Eligible, Enrolled, and Positively Exit?

- What Percentage of All Inquirers Convert to Enrollment?

- How Many Must Inquire for One to Successfully Exit?

- Where in the Process Are You Most Likely to Lose Them?

- How Many Visits Does It Take to Be Enrolled?

- What is Your Conversion Ratio from First to Second Visit?

- How Many Visits Before First Tangible Service?
Promising Practices: Recruiting WIOA Youth and Young Adults

- **Recruit in Pairs** (Always Ask: Who Else Do You Know?)

- **Develop a Peer Recruitment Team** (A Paid “Work Experience”)

- **Tap Robust Social Media** (Seek “Friends” and Have “Followers”)

- **Put Boots on the Ground: Go Where Youth Go** (Convenience Stores, Skate Parks, Tattoo Parlors, Malls)

- **Target “High Poverty” Areas** (Posters Still Work...for Youth, Parents, and Grandparents)
"Tests of Motivation" in the Enrollment Process...

Research: “Serving OSY under WIOA” (MDRC, 2015)

“Many programs screen for motivation, which often entails employing a multistep enrollment process that requires participants to travel to the program or engage with the staff on a number of occasions. If young people cannot follow through with all the steps, programs interpret this to mean that they are not motivated or ready for the program.”

“This approach runs counter to theories behind behavioral economics, which posit that humans’ cognitive resources are limited and can be overwhelmed.”

“Increasing hassle factors associated with enrolling in a program may overwhelm young people who are already facing many barriers, and their inability to follow through does not necessarily mean that they are not “ready” to change their lives.”
Turning First Dates into Second Dates!

- Do I leave more hopeful than when I arrived?
- Do I feel like I got something valuable?
- Do I think there is a good reason to come back?
- Do I want to see this person again?

**Anchoring Commitment for the Second Date:**

- Plan It
- Promote It
- Schedule It
- Say It
- Write It
- Personalize It
Strategies for Continuously Engaging Disconnected Youth and Young Adults

Program Entry Protocols...

§ 681.320: Becoming a Youth Program Participant...

1. Eligibility Determination;

2. Objective Assessment; **and**

3. Participation in Any of the 14 Program Elements.
Eligibility Determination:

- Streamlining Opportunities for Eligibility of OSY
- Breaking Up is Hard to do...WIA Lives!
- Still Awaiting Clarity on Documentation/Data Validation
- Multiple Barriers Count for Performance
- When Is the Burden on Program and Not the OSY?
Objective Assessment (Final Rule § 681.420):

“The **design framework services of local youth programs must:**

Provide for an objective assessment of each youth participant...and includes a **review of the academic and occupational skill levels, as well as the service needs and strengths**, of each youth for the purpose of identifying appropriate services and career pathways for participants and informing the individual service strategy”
Program Design Questions (1of 3)

Will You Continue to TABE All Youth Participants at Entry?

“Measurable Skills Gain” Performance Indicator is Different (and Broader) Than WIA’s “Literacy and Numeracy Gain”

What Does Objective Assessment Include... What is the Emphasis...What is the Sequence?

✓ Basic Skills and Occupational Skills
✓ Prior Work Experience and Employability
✓ Interests and Aptitudes
✓ Supportive Service Needs
✓ Developmental Needs
Research on Youth Objective Assessment:

- Include Social/Psychological Assessments (Not Just Basic Skills)
- Strength-Based Assessments Motivate
- Self-Efficacy: “Belief in Their Own Ability to be Successful”

Individual Service Strategy (Final Rule § 681.420):

“Develop, and update as needed, an ISS based on the needs of each youth participant that is directly linked to one or more indicators of performance...identifies career pathways that include education and employment goals, that considers career planning and the results of the objective assessment and prescribes achievement objectives and services for the participant”
Program Design Questions (2 of 3)

- Is the ISS a Compliance and/or a Motivational Tool?
- Who “Owns” (and Has Responsibility) for the ISS?
- What are the Cheerleading and Celebration Milestones?
### Program Entry Protocols...Participation in Any of the 14 Elements

1. Tutoring  
2. Adult mentoring  
3. Alternative secondary school  
4. Follow-up services  
5. Paid and unpaid work experiences  
6. Guidance and counseling  
7. Occupational skill training  
8. Financial literacy education  
9. Education/Workforce preparation  
10. Entrepreneurial skills training  
11. Leadership development  
12. LMI  
13. Supportive services  
14. Prep/transition postsecondary
The Work Experience Priority: At Least 20% of Funds

Final Rule § 681.600: What Are Work Experiences

“...planned, structured learning experience that takes place in a workplace for a limited period of time.

Work experience may be paid or unpaid, as appropriate. An intern-ship or work experience may be arranged within the private for-profit sector, the non-profit sector, or the public sector.

Labor standards apply in any work experience setting where an employee/employer relationship, as defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act, exists.”
Work experiences must include academic and occupational education. The educational component may occur concurrently or sequentially with the work experience. Further academic and occupational education may occur inside or outside the work site.”

Final Rule § 681.600: Types of Youth Work Experiences:

- Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year
- Pre-apprenticeship programs
- Internships and job shadowing
- On-the-job training opportunities (as defined in WIOA)
NAWDP Survey On Types of Work Experience Offered:

- Year-Round Employment (69%)
- Internships (57%)
- OJT (56%)
- Summer Jobs (51%)
- Job Shadowing (35%)
- Pre-Apprenticeship (24%)

Research: Participation in Quality Work Experiences is the Single Most Important Program Factor in Program Retention
Research: “Serving OSY Under WIOA” (MDRC, 2015)

“Recent evaluations suggest **quality of the work experience may also matter**. Low-wage work not connected to a career pathway or that **young people perceive to have no value** may not be as effective as work experience that gives them a sense of future advancement or satisfaction of providing a needed service to community.”

YouthBuild...working on construction projects in the community offers young people the experience of **producing something of tangible value**, often for the first time in their lives, and is a motivating experience for young people **even if they do not pursue a career in construction**.”

**Promising Practice: Arapahoe/Douglas Works: Earn It:**

**Apply and Be Selected**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Design Questions (3 of 3)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Who is Responsible for Engaging Employers to Provide The Work Experience Opportunities?</td>
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<td>➢ Must a Participant Apply, Be Interviewed, and Be Selected by the Employer for Paid or Unpaid Work Experience?</td>
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<td>➢ Do Participants Know Why They Are Participating in Work Experience and Know What They Are to Learn?</td>
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<td>➢ When and How Often Do You Meet with Participants to Debrief the Work Experience and What Do You Discuss?</td>
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§ 681.640: Are Incentive Payments to Youth Participants permitted?

“Yes, incentive payments to youth participants for recognition and achievement directly tied to training activities and work experiences. The local program must have written policies and procedures in place governing the awarding of incentives and must ensure that such incentive payments are:

(a) Tied to the goals of the specific program;

(b) Outlined in writing before the commencement of the program that may provide incentive payments;

(c) Align with the local program’s organizational policies; and

(d) Accord with the requirements contained in 2 CFR 200.”
Continuous Engagement...Incentives!

Research on Incentives:

- Frequency More Important Than Size
- Tangible More Important Than Small Cash
- Choosing from Reward Options Motivates

Program Design Questions:

✓ What Reward, When?
✓ Achievement Benchmarks (Points Earned/Activities Completed)
✓ Are Supportive Services an Incentive?
When They Screw-Up and Don’t Show Up...

Research: “Serving OSY under WIOA” (MDRC, 2015)

“Programs also have to find a balance between allowing vulnerable young adults some flexibility in regard to program requirements (like attendance) to accommodate the challenges in their lives and setting high expectations for performance.

Young people often purposefully act out or break rules in the first few months of a program to exert autonomy and control over their lives, which they have previously lacked.

Youth service providers have to think of strategies to achieve a balance between the authority of the staff and the rules of the organization, on the one hand, and the will of the participants to do as they wish, on the other.”
Strategies for Continuously Engaging Disconnected Youth and Young Adults

Expect Cycling In...Cycling Out...Cycling Out...

Life is Complicated...Motivation Varies over Time

Resiliency...a Key Life (and Work) Skill

The Ability to Bounce Back from Adversity and Mistakes

Programs Must Work to Develop the “Habit of Engagement”

“You Are Always Welcome Back”
What Do You Do When the Customer Doesn’t Show?

- Search and attempt rescue: immediately!
- Don’t assume not want: Not a “test of motivation”
- Don’t embarrass — show empathy
- Re-initiate service process quickly
Take-Aways! Best Bets! Next Steps!

(Notes Page)