

ENOUGH IS KNOWN FOR ACTION!

READY TO EMPLOY, EDUCATE, AND SUPPORT YOUTH

THE CENTER FOR YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES — Making Knowledge Productive for 30+ Years

Brandeis University



BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY BRIEFING — *A Photo-Text Summary*

Center for Youth and Communities and U.S. Department of Labor, ETA

Washington, DC

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Brandeis University

Walmart

the Sillerman Center
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To offer feedback on this publication or to order a copy, contact lanni@brandeis.edu. You may download a free copy (“Enough Is Known for Action!”) at <http://cyc.brandeis.edu/reports/index.html>.



Brandeis University

The Heller School for Social Policy and Management

January 2015

Dear Leaders-in-Action,

This briefing summary is a shout out to you. If you care about workforce development, youth development, education, and the current and future state of our economy, this publication is for you. It captures highlights from a recent Brandeis University briefing at the U.S. Department of Labor on a national summer youth employability initiative that proved it is possible to transform lives and systems toward better outcomes. The full briefing is available at <http://cyc.brandeis.edu/Employ-educate-support-youth/WebcastbyPanels.html>.

Catalyzed by a multimillion dollar Walmart Foundation investment and informed by more than 30 years of our evaluation research, the Center for Youth and Communities launched a summer youth employability initiative aimed at dramatically improving early work experiences for our nation's most vulnerable youth in 10 selected cities. Panels from six of the cities shared lessons and action plans that speak to both the supply and demand sides of the labor market equation. All were clear that (1) results-oriented, cross-sector partnerships – involving business, government, philanthropy, schools, and nonprofits – were necessary for effective and sustainable approaches, and (2) a combination of real work experience, education, and support for young people made all the difference for individual outcomes.

*Our theme, “Enough Is Known for Action: Ready to Employ, Educate, and Support Youth,” reflects both **urgency** arising from the crisis in youth unemployment and **frustration** that the virtual knowledge explosion about “what works and for whom” over past decades has not been put into policy or practice. As a nation, we have not closed the gap between what we know and what we do. Indeed, one of the most critical elements of preparation for adulthood – real work for real pay – has fallen out of practice, with rare exception, for the last dozen or more years.*

*During the life of the Center, we have both influenced **and** been influenced by the policies of six White House Administrations; we have witnessed unprecedented demographic shifts in the U.S. population and labor market demands and opportunities; and we have watched the infrastructure fraying with the continued failure of our public education and workforce development systems to keep up with these changes and adequately prepare our young people for college, work, and life.*

As a University-based, community-engaged enterprise, the Center and our network of partners have tackled and gained ground on many of the most critical workforce and education issues facing the nation. We built on lessons gleaned from our evaluations under the Youth Employment Demonstration Projects Act; the Job Training Partnership Act; School-to-Work Initiatives; and the Workforce Investment Act. Now, with the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), we have yet another chance to get it right – to build new models for partnerships that combine employment, education, and support. We have to.



Everyone in our line of work knows that the stop-gap measures we have had in place for workforce development and education have not worked well for our nation’s young people.

The “pipeline,” as we like to say, is broken.

You will see in this report why we say we are on the brink of a “perfect storm of opportunity.” We can either face the facts and act with courage, or go down in a crash of economic waves sure to make the next opportunity a heavier lift.

We hope you will engage with us to act on what we already know.

We know that resolving the crisis in youth unemployment, the concurrent challenges of jobs going unfilled, and other dilemmas crippling the economy requires the allocation of resources commensurate with the scale of the problem. Until such commitments are made, by government, philanthropy, business, and other investors working together in new ways, even the best of programs will continue to be “stop-gap.” We are intentional in sparking the political will and community capacity to move toward solutions. Help us stimulate movement. The U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration Youth Program has adopted our tagline, “Enough Is Known for Action,” for WIOA technical assistance. That’s a step in the right direction.

Let’s spread the word.

Yes, Enough Is Known for Action – but only if we make that knowledge productive as we continue to refine and build a storehouse of evidence-based practice in the years ahead.

Yours in action,

Susan P. Curnan
Director, Center for Youth and Communities
Professor, Social Policy and Management





This document captures highlights of the Brandeis-USDOL/ETA national briefing and action planning sessions in words and photos. A webcast of the entire briefing is available at <http://www.cyc.brandeis.edu/Employ-educate-support-youth/WebcastbyPanels.html>. Technical assistance toolkits and topical briefs are available from the Brandeis Center for Youth and Communities at <http://cyc.brandeis.edu/reports/index.html>.

An introduction highlights the briefing's goals and background as well as selected points made by the keynote speakers. The subsequent section summarizes the morning panel presentations, reflecting lessons learned in six cities that have "proven the possible" in terms of creating results-oriented partnerships that employ, educate, and support youth. Next comes a recap of the afternoon discussions - including a funders'/investors' roundtable, a reflection and action planning session, and a WIOA "readiness" conversation for practitioners and intermediaries. A final section briefly describes the Brandeis University/Walmart Foundation Summer Youth Employability Initiative from which many of the lessons were drawn. The participant list is also included.



INTRODUCTION

In November 2014, the Brandeis University Center for Youth and Communities and the U.S. Department of Labor/Employment and Training Administration (USDOL/ETA) co-convoked “Enough Is Known for Action! Ready to Employ, Educate, and Support Youth,” an invitational national briefing and action planning meeting in Washington, DC.

With the generous support of The Walmart Foundation, the USDOL/ETA leadership, and Brandeis University’s Heller School for Social Policy and Management, “Enough Is Known for Action” engaged more than 75 national leaders in DC, and more than 500 individuals through a webcast across the country, in discussing lessons from our research and experience. Invited participants included the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, and Health & Human Services representing the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, along with leaders in philanthropy, business, and practice. According to USDOL/ETA, the briefing set the stage for sound youth-centered investments under the new Workforce

ENOUGH IS KNOWN FOR ACTION! National Briefing Goals

- **Ignite action and urgency** about the crisis in youth unemployment and the value of linking real work for pay with education and support services.
- **Inspire and inform** interagency and cross-sector partnerships to employ, educate, and support youth across the nation.
- **Share lessons** from experience and research for “proving the possible” from the Brandeis Practitioner Network.



Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Keynote addresses by Susan P. Curnan, Brandeis University Professor and Director, Center for Youth and Communities, and Byron Zuidema, Deputy Assistant Secretary, USDOL/ETA made the case that “Enough Is Known for Action.”

As Curnan noted, the times are **alarming** for several reasons – high rates of unemployment, employment insecurity, and

child poverty, especially during and since the 2008 recession; persistent achievement gaps between more and less privileged groups; the lowest level of teen employment rates in 60 years; and distressingly low rates of on-time high school graduation and college success, especially for underserved youth and youth of color. More than six and a half million youth ages 16-24 are disconnected from both education and work. Many of the nation’s cities, especially those for which manufacturing was the economic driver, are in steep decline, characterized by the out-migration of the middle class, decaying infrastructures, and increased crime and violence. The remaining unstable neighborhoods are where many of the most vulnerable youth reside. A PowerPoint, “Waiting for the World to Change,” that expands on these points is available <http://cyc.brandeis.edu/pdfs/EnoughIsKnownforAction-folder/WaitingontheWorldtoChangeFINAL.pdf>



Curnan said that the times are also **encouraging**: “We are in the midst of a perfect storm of opportunity to do a better job employing, educating, and supporting youth.” These opportunities include the 2014 passage of WIOA; the dedication of the Federal Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs; support from the White House Domestic Policy Council; employers’ growing recognition of the need for more engagement and investment ensuring a better-prepared workforce; a sharp focus on impact investing and other innovation in philanthropy; advances in education and youth development practice, including more holistic child- and youth-centered approaches to healthy development; emerging results-oriented partnerships across the country; and management science research findings that argue for the application of systems thinking to complex, interrelated problems. All of these factors, combined with decades of work and learning in the youth employment field, make it clear that we know enough to tackle the crisis of youth unemployment head on.

“These are alarming and encouraging times.”

—Susan P. Curnan
Brandeis University Professor and Director
Center for Youth and Communities

Zuidema said that DOL/ETA’s goal is to build on existing leadership and innovation to align the workforce, education, and economic development systems and form public-private partnerships to help job seekers acquire needed skills and enter career pathways **and** to meet employers’ workforce needs. He called WIOA “an opportunity to change the way we serve youth” by creating a more comprehensive, customer-focused, accessible, and high-quality workforce development system; increasing use of robust data; establishing employers as workforce investment drivers; aligning systems to maximize the impact of federal investments in job training; and ensuring collaborations and aligning goals with essential partners (such as community colleges, economic development, social service agencies, and others).

“This partnership between DOL and Brandeis grew out of a sense of urgency – with six million youth out there looking to reconnect – to link real work experience with education and supports. We’re excited to share stories of programs and practices that are working and making a difference.”

—Byron Zuidema, Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor

Jennifer Troke, Division Chief, Division of Youth Services, Office of Workforce Investment, USDOL/ETA, who also spoke briefly before the panels, noted that young people without access to skilled jobs stand on one side of an opportunity divide while businesses stand on the other: not only are six million young Americans out of school, out of work, and without access to the economic mainstream, but more than four million jobs across the nation cannot be filled due to a lack of qualified candidates. She showed a short video from Grads of Life, a national Ad Council PSA campaign designed to encourage businesses of all sizes to look at opportunity youth as a source of skilled talent. The campaign asks employers to think differently about talent sourcing and hiring, and to take action by utilizing proven employment pathways like mentoring, internships, and school to work training and hiring. The PSA, case studies of best practices, how-to guides, and a directory to help employers find strong local partners can be found at www.GradsofLife.org.



WHY IS YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY IMPORTANT?

Employability –

Employability depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities [youth] possess, [and] the way they present those assets to employers.

–From a 1998 Research Brief, “Employability: developing a framework for policy analysis,” by J. Hillage and E. Pollard

The benefits of employing, educating, and supporting youth accrue to the youth themselves and their families; to the communities in which they live; and, as Muhtar Kent notes, to the economy. They also accrue, importantly, to employers: engagement with youth employment programs can help employers develop a “grow your own talent” pipeline, open up new markets, contribute to local economic development, and enhance community relations.

“Reducing the youth unemployment rate by one percent adds \$75 billion to the global economy.”

—Coca-Cola Chairman and CEO Muhtar Kent

Young people who have had meaningful work experience are more likely to stay in school, gain skills, enjoy better educational and health outcomes, and get good jobs as adults. They contribute to family budgets and their local economy. They are more likely to contribute to their communities and less likely to be involved in crime and violence, incarcerated, or dependent on public welfare programs. For vulnerable youth, a program organizing meaningful work experiences offers opportunities – often otherwise unavailable – to explore their abilities and interests, build skills, improve their self-confidence and sense of self-efficacy, connect to positive role models, and otherwise cope with the barriers they face to labor market entry.

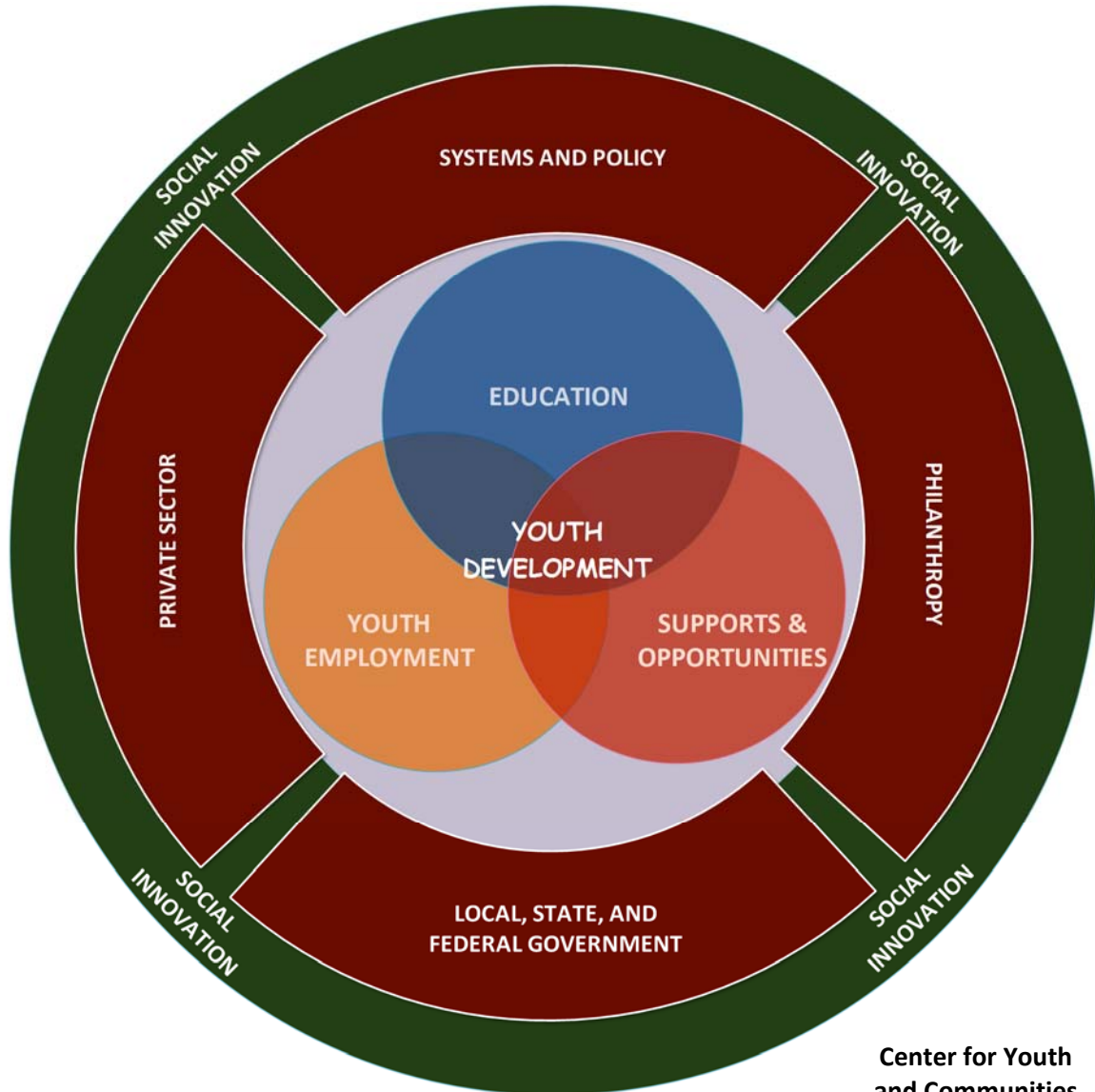
The costs of doing nothing are severe. Without assistance, vulnerable youth face lifetime employment struggles, poverty, dependence on public welfare programs, disengagement from society, encounters with the law, prison, and poor health. With inaction, society faces a generation of young adults who have never held a job, increased unemployment and welfare payments, lost wages and tax revenues, the high costs of incarceration, violence, and a massive shortage of entry-level and middle-skills workers.

With this crisis in youth unemployment, said Curnan, “We need to take the mess and make a mesh of things.” We need to “mesh” the areas of government, the private sector, philanthropy, and systems and policy to build new models and approaches that put youth at the center of employment, education, and support into a community-wide youth employability system. This community-wide system is a new kind of ecological model that keeps the youth at the center, and depicts the central, dynamic relationships among elements of the system needed for youth success.

This new model requires:

- youth-centered, results-oriented leadership teams that have technical, political, and visionary skills
- strategic impact investments to address youth at different levels of readiness and employers at different levels of readiness

BUILDING NEW MODELS AND APPROACHES FOR YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY



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2015

Curnan's PowerPoint, including an overview of the logic and findings of the SYEI, is available at <http://cyc.brandeis.edu/pdfs/EnoughisKnownforAction-folder/CurnanENOUGHISKNOOWNFORACTIONPPTsIntroAndFINAL.pdf>.

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PROVING THE POSSIBLE

Lessons from Research and Experience in Six Leading Communities

Four panels laid out how results-oriented, multi-sector partnerships are employing, educating, and supporting youth by leveraging resources in six cities. Panelists also addressed opportunities relevant to WIOA.

HARTFORD CT— COLLEGE AND CAREER PATHWAYS PARTNERSHIP

The partnership among the Hartford workforce development organization, Hartford Public Schools, and about 25 other community businesses, philanthropies, and nonprofits, illustrates effective practices for developing such partnerships and pathways. WIOA focuses on career pathways as a strategy for reconnecting out-of-school youth.



- Moderator: Della M. Hughes, Brandeis University Senior Fellow
- Jim Boucher, Director, Strategic Development, Capital Workforce Partners
- Deidre Tavera, Executive Director of Strategic Planning and Development, Hartford Public Schools

“Partnerships form to solve social problems and yet communities are littered with the debris of failed partnerships. We don’t take time to understand the full dimension of the problem and we fix the wrong thing and lose the trust of the people.”

—Della M. Hughes, Center for Youth and Communities

“Our approach, shaped by Brandeis’ facilitation and Walmart Foundation support, shifted the way we talked and worked with one another. It was transformative. We identified a shared mission and then looked at how we each contributed to the mission. We looked at ways that we could use high leverage strategies to really move the work forward. We stopped saying ‘This is your work and that is my work.’ We started talking about ‘our work’ and that was transformational.”

—Deidre Tavera, Hartford Public Schools



“We started with internships because it was achievable and we could build on existing strengths and partnerships. Now we have decided to have one big table under the umbrella of ‘career readiness’ with a focus on youth.”

“As the partnership grew, we were learning how to be new kinds of leaders – adaptive, results-oriented leaders.”

—Jim Boucher, Capital Workforce Partners

The Hartford presentation may be found within the cities PowerPoints at <http://cyc.brandeis.edu/pdfs/EnoughisKnownforAction-folder/SixCitiesENOUGHISKNOWNFORACTIONPPTsFINAL.pdf>.

CHICAGO IL AND NEW YORK NY — EMPLOYING, EDUCATING, AND SUPPORTING YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND/OR TRAUMA HISTORIES

Youth programs in Chicago and New York City provide lessons in serving youth with disabilities and/or trauma histories, including using data to test and improve approaches. WIOA focuses on providing youth with disabilities integrated employment opportunities.

- Moderator: Dr. Marji Erickson Warfield, Brandeis University Senior Scientist
- Evelyn Diaz, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS)
- Alan Cheng, Associate Commissioner/CFO, NYC Department of Youth and Community Development



“The population of youth with disabilities is expanding, yet many are poised to enter adulthood with few opportunities to support themselves and contribute to their communities through employment. This stands in stark contrast to their desire to work, their ability to work, and the increasing need of employers to fill jobs created by the aging of the general population.”

—Marji Erickson Warfield, Starr Center on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

“In 2011 the mayor charged cabinet members with thinking strategically about evidence-based ways to reduce violence using available resources. Summer jobs for youth were one priority; we also recognized that addressing trauma histories would be critical. We partnered with the schools, police, and the University of Chicago’s Crime Lab to design and implement a rigorously tested youth violence reduction program, paired with a jobs component, in high schools.”

—Evelyn Diaz, Chicago DFSS

“Youth with disabilities are very resilient, and their strengths can be tapped in the workplace.”

“Our biggest partners are the community-based organizations. In many cases they provide coaches, interpreters, and people who accompany groups of young people with disabilities to the work sites. That’s been a tremendous benefit because the young person has a connection with a caring adult and this adult knows the specific needs of the young person.”

—Alan Cheng, NYC Department of Youth and Community Development

The Chicago and New York City presentations may be found within the cities PowerPoints at <http://cyc.brandeis.edu/pdfs/EnoughisKnownforAction-folder/SixCitiesENOUGHISKNOOWNFORACTIONPPTsFINAL.pdf>.

PHILADELPHIA PA AND PHOENIX AZ — SUMMERS MATTER: HOW SUMMER JOBS PROGRAMS CAN EMPLOY, EDUCATE, AND SUPPORT YOUTH

Innovative partnerships in Philadelphia and Phoenix demonstrate how summer jobs can link real work for pay with education and support. WIOA focuses on providing youth with meaningful work experience.



- Moderator: Dr. Susan Lanspery, Brandeis University Scientist
- Stephanie Gambone, Executive Vice President, Philadelphia Youth Network
- Sharlet Barnett, CEO, Arizona Call-A-Teen Youth Resources (ACYR)

“This panel features two very different cities and organizations. Yet they are very similar in important ways – in their commitment to employing, educating, and supporting youth; their innovative approaches to meaningful work for young people; their recognition of the importance of focusing on the young person; and their emphasis on results-oriented, mutually beneficial partnerships.”

—Susan Lanspery, Center for Youth and Communities

“The Philadelphia Youth Network’s role as managing partner is to create opportunities for youth by coordinating partnerships and providing infrastructure, including managing provider contracts and an online job application process, and paying the young workers. Employers pay for wages and for infrastructure so PYN can get dollars into the young people’s hands quickly while providing quality support.”

—Stephanie Gambone, Philadelphia Youth Network



“We needed to create a youth employability culture in the community and come together under a common mission. Over time, and with experience, [our providers and partners] began to shift their thinking from each organization’s individual mission to what is best for the young person – including meaningful work – and for the community.”

—Sharlet Barnett, ACYR

The Philadelphia and Phoenix presentations may be found within the cities PowerPoints at <http://cyc.brandeis.edu/pdfs/EnoughisKnownforAction-folder/SixCitiesENOUGHISKNOOWNFORACTIONPPTsFINAL.pdf>.

DETROIT MI — DETROIT YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CONSORTIUM (DYEC): PRIVATE SECTOR AND PHILANTHROPY PARTNERSHIPS

Committed private sector and philanthropic partnerships strengthen the DYEC, City Connect (the managing nonprofit), and related efforts in Detroit. WIOA focuses on engaging employers and workforce development partners.

"We have the power to change a lot of situations, but some large-scale economic and political changes are beyond our control. That has certainly been the case in Detroit. Yet these leaders have managed through that, which is amazing."

—Susan P. Curnan, Center for Youth and Communities

- Moderator: Susan P. Curnan, Brandeis University Professor and Director, Center for Youth and Communities
- Tiffany Douglas, Market Manager Michigan, Bank of America
- Ed Egnatios, Program Officer, W.K. Kellogg Foundation

"We saw a tremendous opportunity to invest in young people and give them a sense that they have a chance to build a family and career and have a good life in Detroit."

—Tiffany Douglas, Bank of America

"What matters is money with adaptive leaders and vision. We were able to make a quantum leap in partnership with strategic investment – the Brandeis role and the Walmart funding were 'catalytic.'"

—Ed Egnatios, W.K. Kellogg Foundation



"We learned that it's not just young people who need readiness training – it's crucial for employers, too. They didn't know how to tap into young people's talent or change the way they did business. We needed both data and anecdotes to get employer buy-in."

—Tiffany Douglas, Bank of America

"Youth employment is about economic justice and racial equity, and being the best we can be as a country."

—Ed Egnatios, W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The Detroit presentation may be found within the cities PowerPoints at <http://cyc.brandeis.edu/pdfs/EnoughisKnownforAction-folder/SixCitiesENOUGHISKNOWNFORACTIONPPTsFINAL.pdf>.

CLOSING REMARKS

Byron Zuidema (USDOL/ETA) and Lul Tesfai (USDOE) closed the morning meeting with praise for the partnerships and Brandeis leadership, and sent participants to the afternoon sessions with energy to engage in reflection and action planning. Zuidema noted that the collaboration WIOA requires represents massive culture change for many states and local areas. While acknowledging that this will be challenging, he stressed that the impact on workers and job seekers will be tremendous; moreover, the legislation offers a chance to breathe new life into existing partnerships or build new ones, and really push the boundaries of customer-centered service. He added that one of the meeting goals was to inspire participants to action and that one of USDOL/ETA's key WIOA-related messages has been, "Don't wait for us. You **do** know enough to act. You **can** create a shared vision within your communities and among yourselves. No amount of federal legislation can do that for you. That's the hard, on-the-ground work of being community leaders!"

Tesfai thanked the participants for their work to improve young people's educational, occupational, and life outcomes and to bring all stakeholders – employers, educational systems, workforce development systems, and community-based organizations - to the table. She assured participants that USDOE recognizes the importance that WIOA places on activities that lead to secondary school diplomas, links between academics and occupational training, and work-based contextual learning through internships, employment, apprenticeship opportunities, and job shadowing. She also called on participants to provide input to help federal agencies realize WIOA's transformative potential and make sure that it is translated into practice.

"Early attachment to work is important. It's not just about keeping kids busy and out of trouble. The socialization process that takes place in the work environment is as important as what happens in the family or in school. Collectively we want to build this bridge between learning and earning, and the lifelong pursuit of knowledge and meaningful work."

—Byron Zuidema, Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor



"WIOA has the potential to scale up the practices discussed by panelists, including career pathways, public-private partnerships, access for youth with disabilities, and work-based contextual learning opportunities."

—Lul Tesfai, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education, US Department of Education

SUMMARY OF PANELISTS' KEY POINTS	
Results-oriented partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Common vision, shared goals, clear theory of action, and collective commitment to quality practices to employ, educate, and support youth. ▪ Ownership built on shared information, influence, and financial stake. ▪ Action plans, metrics, and evaluation.
Adaptive leadership and learning cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adaptive leaders at multiple levels who cultivate the resourcefulness and flexibility needed to succeed in complex and variable circumstances. ▪ A learning culture: shared commitment to reflecting on and learning from experience and data. ▪ Mutuality and reciprocity: partners' collective work benefits all partners and those they are trying to help (e.g., schools want to increase student success; employers want more educated/skilled workers; young people want a future). ▪ Patience – building strong partnerships takes time!
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policy should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encourage results-oriented partnerships customized for the local context (one size does not fit all). ○ Recognize and support the time/facilitation needed to build partnerships. ○ Recognize and allow costs associated with supporting vulnerable youth. ○ Encourage year-round youth employability programs with summer as one element. ▪ WIOA's career pathways emphasis reflects experience in the field that such an emphasis helps young people to take their work experience more seriously and get more out of it. ▪ Workforce development policy should tie youth employment to economic growth and competitiveness – investing in youth, in a “talent pipeline,” instead of recruiting talent from elsewhere.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A broad base of partners, deliberately selected to create the systems approach necessary, enhances sustainability and helps the community to be “ready” for funding and programmatic opportunities. ▪ Diverse funding sources help a partnership stay alive.
Lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Critical elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify where partners have a shared mission and similar, overlapping, or aligned needs. ○ Engage employers. ○ Provide “readiness” training for both employers and youth. ○ Develop intentional, tailored approaches to employability programs for vulnerable youth. ○ Provide meaningful work experience, ideally including project-based learning, to help participants see the program through and develop a higher level of skills. ○ Engage local champions – mayors (very important) and other elected officials, school superintendents, workforce development leaders, and others – who make a big positive difference in efforts to employ, educate, and support youth. ▪ Outside facilitators can play a key role in strengthening partnerships and building capacity. ▪ Partnerships with researchers can contribute to learning from experience and to “making the case” for the local efforts. ▪ High school credit recovery and college credits for summer youth employability programs provide an important benefit for participants. ▪ Summer employment and early attachment to work contribute to positive transitions to adulthood. Asking potential partners and/or champions to think about their first job is an effective way to help them understand the importance of employability efforts.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding for elements associated with effectiveness – particularly partnership building and supports such as mentors, coaches, social and emotional learning groups, and case management – is hard to obtain. Too often funding is limited to funding wages/slots. ▪ Youth with the greatest barriers – such as trauma history, disability, court involvement, foster care, and low literacy and numeracy levels – need more time and support to develop the competencies they need “employable.”



“Working with opportunity youth is more costly than working with other youth. They need more supports and more time. Funders need to understand that.”

— Ernest Dorsey, Baltimore MOED

“Everyone in the business world knows that you learn to work by working.”

—Tiffany Douglas, Bank of America

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FUNDERS'/INVESTORS' ROUNDTABLE

What are the reasons for and benefits of investing in employing, educating, and supporting youth? What does the youth field need to understand about what funders are looking for?

- Hosted by Margaret McKenna, Interim Director, Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy & Past President, Walmart Foundation and Lesley University



The argument for investing in employing, educating, and supporting youth is straightforward. Healthy communities are those with low numbers of youth who are out of school and unemployed. Communities that are struggling need support from a coalition of funders – national and local foundations, corporate funders, and governmental entities – that are willing to take the long view and work collaboratively with community-based agencies and employers to understand where their resources can be most effective.

“The biggest predictor of community health is the number of out of work, out of school youth”

(in referring to the Opportunity Youth report).

—Patricia Cromwell, A. E. Casey Foundation

At the same time, funders need to be convinced that their investments will produce results, whether it’s improved youth outcomes or evidence that their investments save money over the long term.

Public and private funders interested in employing, educating, and supporting youth need to adopt a comprehensive approach to their investments by supporting:

- Infrastructure – the behind the scenes work is as important as direct service.
- Intermediaries – assistance from committed, knowledgeable “outsiders” helps partnerships set shared goals and learn continuously from their programs, the field, and each other.
- Evaluation – keeps partnerships strong, growing, and effective and generates data for improving programs and getting the message out.
- Capacity building – most partnerships need help with operationalizing intention and commitment.

“We need to put together a coalition of university presidents, CEOs of engaged corporate foundations and others in highly visible leadership roles to convince corporate funders of the value of investing in local youth.”

—Margaret McKenna, The Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Reflections and Action Planning: Program, Policy, and Evaluation

Interactive discussion introduced by Susan P. Curnan, and facilitated by Senior Program Associate Chris Kingsley and Senior Fellows Dr. Cathy Burack and Alan Melchior, Center for Youth and Communities, Heller School, Brandeis University



Curnan kicked off the afternoon session, Voices from the Field Action Planning, by charging participants to view our collective work as a big public idea by paraphrasing Robert Reich, former Secretary of Labor.

“The core responsibility of those who deal in public policy (in government, philanthropy, business)...is not simply to discover as objectively as possible what people want for themselves and then to determine and implement the best means of satisfying these wants. It is also to provide the public with alternative visions of what is desirable and possible, and to stimulate deliberation about them, provoke a re-examination of premises and values, and thus to broaden the range of potential responses and deepen society’s understanding of them.”

—Robert Reich, former Secretary of Labor, *The Power of Public Ideas*

The PowerPoint Curnan used for this session is available at <http://cyc.brandeis.edu/Employ-educate-support-youth/EnoughisKnownforAction.html>.

The action planning sessions resulted in reams of ideas, inspired by the following discussion questions:

Questions for Program and Policy

- What has this briefing suggested about **opportunities** and **challenges** for your organization or partnership?
- What will you **do** about these opportunities and challenges? How will you do it?
- What can we do together that we cannot do alone?

Questions for Evaluation

- What key questions do we need to answer to (1) build a stronger evidence base for the youth employment and education agenda and (2) improve our program practice?
- How can we build the capacity of local partnerships to collect and use data more effectively?
- What specific steps can we take to work together in this effort?

Following are highlights of suggested action steps from these rich and lively discussions.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM ACTION PLANNING SESSIONS

(With comments from participant groups)

“We need to manage expectations about outcomes. Summer jobs programs can’t revolutionize educational systems. If decades of educational reform can’t accomplish that, how are we going to do it in six weeks?”

Foster collaborations and partnerships that get results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase opportunities for collective problem solving in communities and across regions and states. ▪ Using a “career pathways” framework, bring together stakeholders – workforce, education (secondary, postsecondary, and adult), supportive services – to identify shared goals and work toward mutually beneficial partnerships. ▪ Seek technical assistance for developing partnerships, designing and implementing evaluations, and carrying out day-to-day tasks (e.g., payroll infrastructure, debit cards, training, effective practices), as well as how to reach the most disconnected youth. ▪ Use a logic model/theory of change process and product as a unifying vehicle and platform for educating partners, bringing partners together, evaluating progress, etc.
Engage funders/ investors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with partners to identify and strategize about funding. ▪ Develop funder affinity groups. ▪ Engage committed funders in leadership roles. ▪ Ensure that investors understand the realities of young people’s lives and the true program costs – especially for the supports that hard-to-reach youth need. ▪ Show investors the return on investment, including the cost of doing nothing. ▪ Emphasize the need for evaluation funding and for funding for technical assistance.

“We need a national public relations campaign about the youth employment crisis. Let’s get champion mayors talking to other mayors and champion employers talking to other employers. Let’s make sure federal and state policymakers understand and work with us.”

Make the case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use numbers and stories to show program impact. ▪ Get local champions to explain the importance of employing, educating, and supporting youth. ▪ Convince funders and elected officials that better jobs, not more jobs, is the point: meaningful work and sufficient support lead to better outcomes. ▪ Show what and how youth can contribute to the workplace, and how competency-based approaches enhance their personal capacity. ▪ Use research and anecdotes to persuade employers that they’re investing in the future workforce – developing their own talent pipeline; increasing economic competitiveness; creating new taxpayers; getting people off aid; and cutting costs for public aid and incarceration. Show that program goals align with their business goals. ▪ Demonstrate the need for and impact of additional supports for youth with greater barriers (foster care youth, youth with disabilities, youth with trauma histories, court-involved youth, etc.). ▪ Emphasize the cost of doing nothing.
Get the message out effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use as many avenues as possible – mainstream media, social media, viral videos, and others. ▪ Bring current youth participants or alumni forward as spokespeople and message producers. ▪ Ask champions to develop recruitment messages for others in the same roles – such as mayors to mayors, funders to funders, employers to employers, and mentors/coaches to mentors/coaches. ▪ Seek pro bono marketing and public relations expertise. ▪ Produce public service campaigns stressing both individual and community/economic development impacts of programs that employ, educate, and support youth. ▪ For consistent messaging, develop a shared understanding of your mission, the economic development rationale, and key concepts such as “work readiness” and “career pathways.”

HIGHLIGHTS FROM ACTION PLANNING SESSIONS (continued)

“A randomized control study is especially challenging with disconnected youth – it’s hard enough to get them to the program, but even harder to tell half of them that they don’t get the services they need because they’re in the control group.”

<p>Improve evaluation capacity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Foster a learning culture that values data collection, analysis, and sharing and sees evaluation as a way to not only prove impact but improve practice. ▪ Involve stakeholders, including youth, in developing and answering research questions. ▪ Seek technical assistance with developing evaluation strategies. ▪ Ask the right questions: Who is the audience for the data? What are we measuring and why – what is “success”? ▪ Look at impacts for particular youth populations. What approaches work best for whom? ▪ Assess outcomes not just for youth, but also for employers, supervisors, mentors/coaches, families, and communities. ▪ Examine the relationship between program inputs and outcomes – for example, do more coordinated efforts work better? What is the role of program length? Are we focusing on the “right” skills? ▪ Document long-term impacts for investors, policymakers, and practitioners by tracking selected youth outcomes longitudinally. ▪ Build or strengthen the infrastructure for sharing metrics and data. Encourage the dissemination of data-sharing agreements so programs don’t have to reinvent the wheel. ▪ Advocate for the use of common systems and/or software at the national level which would make sharing more feasible and productive. ▪ Understand different “levels of evidence” in evaluation and educate funders that randomized controlled trials are not the only way to demonstrate program impact.
<p>Develop and share resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create and share resources to recruit employers and train them to work effectively with youth employees. ▪ Craft policy and practice papers that different regions/communities can adapt. ▪ Develop and share case studies and toolkits on all aspects of “employ, educate, and support,” but especially on the most challenging aspects – e.g., reaching youth who are the most disconnected and/or face the greatest barriers and serving the needs of youth at all ages and employability stages. ▪ Share research and evaluation findings. ▪ Develop national maps of (1) youth employment partnerships/programs, highlighting key features and identifying levels of youth employment activity, and (2) funding for youth employment – WIOA and other public dollars, private resources, and how diverse funding streams are blended. ▪ Map resources to identify gaps in the system.
<p>Leverage WIOA to meet needs and strengthen programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build on WIOA’s emphasis on activities that lead to secondary school diplomas, links between academics and occupational training, and work-based contextual learning through summer internships, summer employment, apprenticeships, and job shadowing. ▪ Use the increase in the WIOA benefit age to 24 to align with other programs for youth. ▪ Use WIOA to reinforce your community’s commitment to serving youth with disabilities. ▪ Use WIOA’s emphasis on intentionality in supporting youth to strengthen connections and interagency coordination and improve the transition to adulthood by helping youth build skills over time. ▪ Take advantage of WIOA flexibility: for example, push for state-level flexibility and translate that into local flexibility; apply for waivers to help you tailor your program to fit your community’s needs. ▪ Use WIOA as a lever to develop a sustainable year-round education and work continuum. ▪ Take the opportunity to comment on WIOA regulations.

“Employers don’t magically know how to supervise youth effectively, but they can learn with our help.”



"Youth development without real work is a recipe for failure, and vice versa."

—Susan P. Curnan, Brandeis University

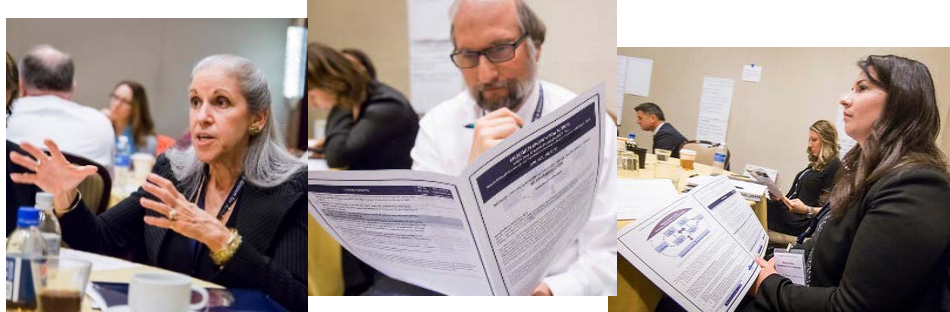
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THE HELLER SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

Brandeis University

PRACTITIONERS AND INTERMEDIARIES

WIOA Readiness to Employ, Educate, and Support Youth

Co-facilitated by Lori Strumpf, Owner, Strumpf Associates, and Christopher Kingsley, Senior Program Associate, Center for Youth and Communities, Heller School, Brandeis University



Results-oriented organizations and partnerships with effective organizational practices are essential to ensure quality, align systems, and leverage the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other resources to employ, educate, and support youth. Brandeis University and Strumpf Associates: Center for Strategic Change have created a robust self-assessment tool [sample tool \(.pdf\)](#) to help organizations or partnerships to evaluate their capacity to implement quality youth work programs using WIOA and other resources. The sample tool helps you think about your organization and partnerships and determine whether you meet WIOA standards and the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence.

SOME LAST WORDS ON ACTION STEPS

We have the momentum for a national movement that will help communities address “upstream” and operational challenges and sustain youth-centered efforts in employment, education, and support. But we can’t risk losing steam. Enough is known for action! As the briefing and this publication suggests, we need to:

- Recruit key champions, especially local and state elected officials, who can move things along.
- Focus on healthy, results-oriented partnerships, adaptive leadership, and learning cultures.
- Bring youth voice forward and strengthen youth leadership.
- Recognize that both infrastructure and direct service are important: connect the dots among local, state, and federal governments; nonprofits; philanthropy; the private sector; and systems and policy.
- Bring in intermediaries and technical assistance advisors to build capacity and strengthen partnerships.
- Develop and share resources and effective practices.
- Improve evaluation capacity: generate data for program improvement, effective messaging, and keeping partnerships strong.
- Make the case and get the message out effectively.
- Engage funders and investors.
- Learn from our own and others’ experiences.
- Keep talking!



THE BRANDEIS SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY INITIATIVE (SYEI)

From 2011 to 2014 the Walmart Foundation invested \$13.5 million in real work for pay, connected to education and support, for youth who are among our nation’s most vulnerable – those at risk of long-term unemployment, in foster care, with disabilities, trauma histories, formerly incarcerated, and in violent, risky, high poverty environments. The SYEI:

- Employed, educated, and supported 8,500+ underserved young adults in ten cities, increasing their work readiness and connection to education.
- Developed or strengthened results-oriented partnerships in all sectors – mayor’s offices, employers, philanthropic organizations, community-based organizations, schools, and postsecondary institutions – and leveraged more than \$10 million in financial and other support.
- Used evaluation as a management and learning tool for continuous improvement.
- Shared lessons through the Brandeis Academy, SYEI Network, and learning exchanges.
- Developed and disseminated information about effective practices for program and system design.

The Center for Youth and Communities (CYC) at Brandeis University’s Heller School assessed and documented the 2011 grantees’ work, and in 2012 and 2013 served as the National Program Office for the initiative, working with youth employability

partnerships in a total of ten cities across the country. In addition to designing the RFP, logic model, and theory of change, and selecting and funding grantee partners, the Brandeis team assessed outcomes and lessons learned through site visits, surveys, focus groups, and local data analysis; monitored the sites' quality and operations; and created a grantee learning community with both online and in person learning exchanges.

In addition, the Foundation funded Brandeis to conduct activities that contribute to the youth workforce development field, including:

- Management and leadership academies (regional capacity building opportunities for strategic leadership teams preparing to launch or improve results-oriented partnerships to employ, educate, and support youth). A more detailed description of the Brandeis Academy may be found at <http://cyc.brandeis.edu/pdfs/BrandeisAcademyOverview2014.pdf>.
- Employer roundtables to collect demand side intelligence about what employers seek in entry level employees and to promote results-oriented partnerships with nonprofits and government workforce entities.
- Case studies of organizations that, while not among the funded sites, have promising practices and partnerships as well as leaders committed to high-quality youth employability programs.
- *Practical Advice Guides* – a compendium of guides for youth employment practitioners, mentors, supervisors and others. Drawing on CYC's longtime experience with youth employability work, the Guides offers guidance and examples for employing, educating and supporting youth in the following areas: Project-Based Work & Learning on the Job; Reflection on Employability Development; Youth Motivation; Developing Teamwork Skills; Developing Youth Presentation Portfolios; and Case Management (free download is available at <http://www.cyc.brandeis.edu/Employ-educate-support-youth/PracticalAdviceGuide.html>).
- The Enough Is Known for Action national briefing, Funders' and Investors' Roundtable, and Action Planning for Program, Policy, and Evaluation.

Lessons

Although a paid job is often called “the most effective social service program,” and young people **want** meaningful jobs,¹ vulnerable youth also need assistance to become employable. SYEI lessons learned include:

- Work must be meaningful (not busy work).
- Youth at all levels of employability must have opportunities to improve work readiness through learning, reflection with competent, caring adults, and competency-based assessments to track progress toward employability.
- Youth must be properly oriented and well supervised on the job.
- Youth must have access to needed supports, such as food, child care, and transportation.
- Youth must be prepared to articulate and demonstrate their readiness to employers.

Findings from Brandeis' 2012-2013 surveys of youth participants show the return on investment for summer jobs programs:

- Virtually all participants reported that they gained maturity and job-related skills and are now more employable.

¹ Waiting lists for summer jobs programs are 10 times larger than the available slots.

- More than half who had not planned to finish school or go on for more training or schooling changed their minds after the summer program.
- One third to one half earned competency-based work-readiness certificates, professional certifications, and/or academic credit for work experience during the summer.
- At least 20% went from a subsidized summer job to a long-term unsubsidized job.

In addition, major studies in two cities that were part of the 2011-2013 initiatives showed that summer jobs programs reduced violence (Chicago) and increased academic success (New York). All of the other participating cities had evidence of these outcomes as well, but not through formal studies.

For the Walmart cities, partnerships equal success. They created or strengthened partnerships and leveraged more than \$10 million worth of financial, political, and other support from local government, businesses, foundations, nonprofit service organizations, and educational systems or institutions. (This leveraging contributed to work readiness opportunities, services for participants,² and job creation.) Many partners developed a greater appreciation for the necessity of real work for pay as part of a work readiness strategy.



² These partnerships were important for all youth, but even more so for the most vulnerable, such as foster care youth, youth with a history of homelessness, court-involved youth, and youth with disabilities.

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Brandeis University

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES

Mission

Within the Heller School mission of “knowledge advancing social justice,” the Center’s goal is “to make knowledge productive.” Established at the Heller School in 1983, the Center for Youth and Communities works as a university-based, yet community-focused enterprise to improve the quality of **education, workforce development, and community systems**, and to foster **leadership and partnership development**, in order to prepare young people for college, work, and life. By combining scholarly research and practical experience with an emphasis on young people whose supports and opportunities have been few, the Center’s work is guided by three goals:

- Using science-based research to improve the quality and impact of youth programs and policies.
- Strengthening governance, leadership, and management in philanthropy, the nonprofit sector, education, socially responsible business, and communities.
- Developing and using outcome-based planning and evaluation methods to deepen public understanding, strengthen and prove the efficacy of particular programs, and shape policies.



This briefing summary was prepared by The Center for Youth and Communities, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the U.S. Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement of same by the U.S. Government.

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