



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Office of Family Assistance

**U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training
Administration (ETA) Discovery Session:**

***How Can ETA Assist Our Grantees in Serving
Disconnected Youth Under WIOA?***

Tuesday, December 1, 2015

Summary Report

This technical assistance summary was prepared by ICF International for the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, contract number HHSP23320095636WC.

James Butler, Federal Project Officer



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

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Overview

At the request of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance (OFA), an OFA Training and Technical Assistance team representative, alongside the TANF Regional Program Manager from OFA Region III, attended the *How Can ETA Assist Our Grantees in Serving Disconnected Youth under WIOA?* Discovery Session, on December 1, 2015 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Hosted by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (ETA), Region 2, in partnership with Philadelphia Works, Inc., the meeting was the second session the Region has hosted on disconnected youth.

The meeting included over 50 in-person participants and 60 participants via webinar, comprised of a variety of professionals that serve youth, including state workforce leaders, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) representatives, and leaders from youth-serving workforce programs and nonprofit organizations within ETA Region 2. OFA's technical assistance representative attended the session to take notes and develop a summary report to inform OFA's future technical assistance efforts focused on collaboration between TANF and WIOA systems serving youth.

ETA designed the session to assist in identifying technical assistance needs among workforce programs in ETA Region 2. To accomplish this, the meeting included two parts. The first part encompassed two presentations and a panel discussion covering the following topics:

- *Studying Summer Jobs for Disadvantaged Youth*;
- *The Employment Situation of Youth, Veterans, and Persons with Disabilities* featuring Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data; and
- Youth perspectives on participation in various youth serving programs, presented through a facilitated panel discussion.

Part two focused on information sharing and gathering, during which participants split into focus groups to reflect on the earlier sessions and offer suggestions for future technical assistance delivery. The one-day session ended with focus group report outs and reflections.

Youth Work Readiness App Demonstration

- **Jake Blanch**, Federal Project Officer, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Region 2

Jake Blanch, Federal Project Officer from ETA Region 2, kicked off the meeting by providing a demonstration of three new work readiness apps: *Get Prepared!*[™], *Get Dressed!*[™], and *Get Hired!*[™]. Funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry and developed by youth, the [Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board \(WIB\)](#) released the apps in October 2015. They are available for free download on iTunes and Google.

The apps are user-directed and designed to help youth practice realistic decision-making skills related to time management and preparation for interviews. For example, the *Get Prepared!*[™] app tasks users to complete assignments to prepare for a job interview, while tracking time and stress to measure the users' overall level of preparation. The *Dress Yourself!*[™] app allows users to choose industries and locations and then put together an outfit for an interview within a specific job category. The app provides feedback on each outfit and tells the user if they would be hired or not hired, and why. The *Get Hired!*[™] app helps users prepare for job interviews with an

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interactive interview that allows users to provide verbal and gesture-based responses to questions. The app also provides ideal responses to each question, explains why these answers are ideal, and provides users with an overall score. Mr. Blanch concluded the presentation by encouraging participants to download, test, and share the apps with the youth they serve.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

- **Leo Miller**, *Regional Administrator, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Region 2*
- **Mark Edwards**, *President and CEO, Philadelphia Works, Inc.*
- **Tobby Willis**, *Federal Project Officer, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Region 2*

ETA Regional Administrator Leo Miller welcomed participants to the Discovery Session and explained that as part of the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), ETA's focus is on finding ways to improve youth services. The administration has had challenges with effectively serving youth in the past, and studies show that youth in ETA programs generally do not fare well. He stated, "Youth do not understand us and we do not understand them." Through this session and others, ETA hopes to bridge this gap.

Mark Edwards from [Philadelphia Works, Inc.](#), the organization that physically hosted the Discovery Session, offered welcoming remarks and stated that Philadelphia Works, Inc. serves as the WIB for the city of Philadelphia. The topic of serving disconnected youth is an important conversation and is something that workforce partners have done well in Philadelphia but can do better.

Tobby Willis, Federal Project Officer from ETA Region 2 and Discovery Session facilitator, walked participants through the agenda. The morning sessions focused on sharing information gathered, while the afternoon sessions focused on thinking through what to do to improve services to youth with that information. At the conclusion of the day, ETA will have a summary of comments, distilled from the afternoon focus groups, which will help them identify technical assistance priorities for spring 2016.

Studying Summer Jobs for Disadvantaged Youth

- **Sarah Heller, Ph.D.**, *Assistant Professor of Criminology, University of Pennsylvania*

During this session, Dr. Sarah Heller from the University of Pennsylvania shared findings from a recent study, *Summer Jobs Reduce Violence among Disadvantaged Youth*, focused on the summer youth employment program, One Summer Plus, in Chicago, Illinois. Dr. Heller opened the presentation with the quote, "Nothing stops a bullet like a job." While this is true in some cases, the theory is not clear cut. For example, even with a job, youth can still engage in violent behavior during the evenings or weekends, and, with a paycheck, youth have more money for criminogenic commodities.

Overall, there is little rigorous evidence on the impact of summer jobs. Many studies compare youth who show up for these programs to those who do not; however, there are likely other preexisting differences between these two groups. For example, the youth who show up might already be doing better or have more motivation than those who do not. Studies that take this approach have trouble separating the program impacts from these preexisting differences. The summer jobs study that Dr. Heller conducted took a lottery approach, where some

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youth were randomly selected by lottery to participate in the One Summer Plus program (treatment group) and others were not (control group). This ensured that the difference between the youth is the program itself, not other factors.

Dr. Heller provided background on the One Summer Plus program, which is administered by the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services and implemented by nonprofit partners. The program is eight weeks long and pays participants minimum wage. It also includes an adult mentor component, a one-day job readiness training, one meal per day, and bus passes. Some youth also participate in a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) component for two hours per day, and get paid for their time. Participants are recruited from the areas of Chicago with the highest rates of violence. Overall, 1,634 applied for the program; 364 were randomly selected to participate in the jobs program without CBT, and 364 participated in the jobs program with CBT, leaving a control group of 904. Participants were almost all African American and poor, from neighborhoods with high levels of unemployment, and very few had jobs prior to participation.

Overall, the study found that participation in the program decreases violence by 43 percent over 16 months (3.95 fewer violent-crime arrests per 100 youth). These results are promising, and most of the decline in violence took place after, not just during, program participation, which shows that the results last past the time of the intervention.

This study presents the first rigorous evidence linking summer jobs with a decline in crime; however, it shows no employment impacts due to the focus on violence outcomes. Additionally, the findings are specific to targeting youth still in school. The results likely would not be as promising for out-of-school youth.

Dr. Heller concluded the presentation with a discussion on the importance of rigorous evaluation. The results of the Chicago study made headlines and prompted new investment in summer jobs programs. For practitioners in the workforce field, she suggested thinking broadly about the effects of youth employment programs and incorporating outcome evaluation into these programs. The pay-off of evaluation can be great; Chicago became a national leader in youth employment in part because of the city's willingness to evaluate.

Questions and Answers:

- **Question:** Does the program solicit parental involvement outside of school?
 - This was not a major component of the program. Mentors do talk to and involve parents when appropriate with family-based interventions.
- **Question:** What works to support retention?
 - Anecdotally, mentors play a major role. The program has a youth to mentor ratio of 10 to one. The mentors are there to help and available 24 hours a day. They give the youth their cell phone numbers and help them navigate issues. Program flexibility also plays a role; supervisors work through issues with youth and can help find a better placement that fits their interests if needed. Retention rates are high in the One Summer Plus program; of the youth who started the program, 90 percent completed.
 - Comment (Philadelphia Youth Network, Inc.): A staff member from Philadelphia Youth Network responded that in Philadelphia, peer support through conflict resolution has been important. Staff use the expertise of young people. If an employer fires a youth, staff use that as a teachable moment; intervening when appropriate or, if the firing is warranted, allow it to go through to teach those youth a valuable lesson.

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- **Question:** What are youths' favorite components of the program?
 - Getting a paycheck, learning how to dress professionally, and mentorship.
- **Question:** Is there research on what does not work?
 - While this study showed significant results, it is important to note that it takes a lot of intensity and money to have positive outcomes. We know that it takes a bigger push than just summer jobs for the more disconnected, out-of-school youth. The lighter touch interventions do not work for those that need more support.
- **Question:** What types of employment does the program offer youth?
 - During the first year of the program, jobs were in the nonprofit and government sectors, and included placements such as outdoor/community improvement, political office work, and school maintenance. During year two, the program expanded to the private sector, so placements included retail, customer services and other office jobs, in addition to community opportunities such as summer camp counseling. The jobs do not require specific skills or training prior to placement and the program tries to match placements with the youths' interests.
- **Question:** Is there an opportunity to turn the summer jobs into full-time employment?
 - This has happened before, but it is not very common. The issue is funding, because the government funds the summer jobs and those costs would need to shift to the employer. Program data indicates that 67 percent of employers would hire the youth if they could. Over time, the program's goal is to maximize this.
- **Question:** Do you have any advice for youth service providers?
 - Service providers should involve researchers in what they do and evaluate their programs to answer important questions about their impacts.

The Employment Situation of Youth, Veterans, and Persons with Disabilities

- **Kara Markley**, *Supervisory Economist, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics*

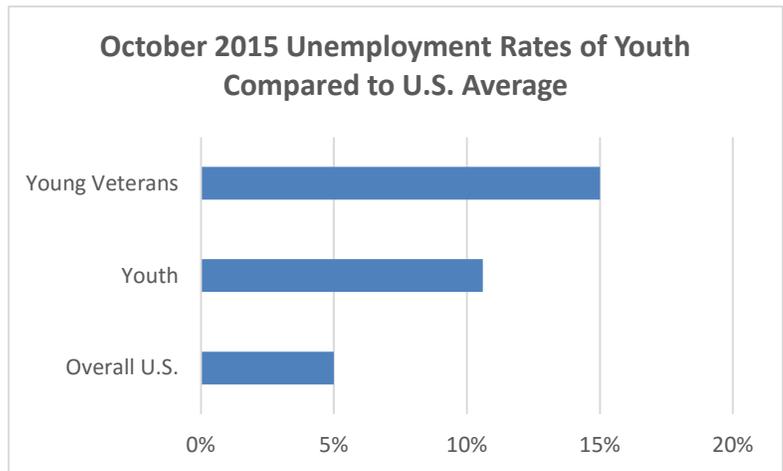
Kara Markley from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provided data on the current employment outlook for the nation's youth, and specifically, those who are veterans and those with disabilities. She began the presentation by providing a look at the U.S. economy at a glance. Overall, as of October 2015, the unemployment rate was five percent, the average hourly wage was \$25.20, and the U.S. added 271,000 jobs during the month. These numbers are positive overall; however, when looking at the employment situation of youth, veterans, and persons with disabilities, the same measures show a different story.

For youth (ages 16-24), the unemployment rate was 10.6 percent in October 2015, which is more than double the rate for the U.S. population as a whole. In total, 2.2 million youth are looking for work. When considering youth unemployment by educational attainment, overall, youth without a high school diploma have unemployment rates significantly higher than the 10.6 percent average, while those with some college or a bachelor's degree or higher have rates below the average. Gender also plays a role in employment outcomes; statistics show that across the U.S., males have higher rates of unemployment than females.

Considering veterans overall, 5.3 percent were unemployed in October 2015. While this is promising, the numbers are much less promising for young veterans. The unemployment rate for young veterans was 15 percent, which is three times the rate for veterans in general, and 5 percent higher than the rate for all youth.

To highlight the experience of disabled persons, Ms. Markley used 2012 data from a Supplemental Disability Survey that BLS administered alongside the Current Population Survey. In 2012, 28.3 million people in the U.S. had a disability, and 45.4 percent were over 65 years old, which means that the majority of disabled persons are of working age. Only 15.1 percent of those with a disability over the age of 25 had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 33.4 percent with no disability. There is only a 20.9 percent labor force participation rate for those people with a disability (compared to 64 percent of the general population), meaning that only one in five were looking

Figure 1: Unemployment Rates



for work or had a job. The study provided insight into barriers to employment for persons with disabilities, the largest of which was lack of education or training. Others included lack of transportation, lack of job counseling, and potential loss of government benefits. Looking at career assistance programs, the survey showed that only 12 percent of employed disabled persons received assistance from these programs, while 28 percent of unemployed disabled persons did. This statistic speaks to limited effectiveness of these programs, since most who received assistance were not working. While this data is not broken down by age to show the experience of disabled youth specifically, it highlights the employment struggles that many in this group likely face.

Voices of Experience: Facilitated Youth Panel

During this session, a group of 12 youth provided insight into their experiences with youth-serving programs. A peer who also participated in youth programming moderated the panel discussion. Specific questions and the youths' responses to each question are below.

Question: What were you doing at the time you decided to enroll in your program?

- I had just graduated from a technical institute. A friend informed me of the program at [YouthBuild](#). I took the program as an opportunity to freshen up on the skills I had just learned.
- I had just entered foster care. I learned about the program at a conference.
- I was kicked out of the school district and was at a crossroads. I felt like a zombie walking the streets with no education. I was looking for opportunities but age was a factor. I was over-age for some programs. Then I heard about Connection Training Services (CTS) YouthBuild.
- I was at a teen conference during one of my first months in foster care. I enjoyed seeing the leadership skills of other youth there. I wanted to be a leader, so I joined my state advisory board.

Question: What motivated you to enroll in your program?

- [Job Corps](#) had multiple opportunities and they pay for college. The program gives you a chance to start a career, not just a job. I did not want to sit around and be lazy. Only having a high school diploma is not enough for me.
- I have a child. I did not want him to look at me as if I was not good enough. I did not want him to go down the wrong path or pick up bad habits from me. Failure is not an option for me.

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- I pursued my General Equivalency Degree (GED) because of apathy in the public school district. I had teachers who did not care, and I found myself consistently disengaged in school. I got my GED because it was a fast track option and allowed me to work at my own pace.
- I started Job Corps because I did not want my daughter to look at me as not doing anything. I lost both of my parents and fell into a depression. Once I had my daughter, I decided it was time to get up and do something. I always wanted to be a nurse and heard about Job Corps.
- YouthBuild gave me the opportunity to hone the skills I recently learned at technical school. Technical school was helpful, but I felt I needed more to prepare to enter the workforce.
- At the teen conference I attended, the teens acted like family. That family setting helped motivate me to get my high school diploma and move forward.
- In foster care, I did not have a good support system. The opportunity allowed me to gain support among my peers by being on the [Youth Advisory Board](#). My involvement in the board opened up many opportunities, including internships and a trip to the White House.
- I was feeling empty. When you are not a part of something, you feel that. I wanted to show leadership, and I was wondering what I was doing with my time. When you are not a part of something and have too much time on your hands, the negative thoughts come, and you ask yourself questions: what am I doing? Am I doing anything positive, making an example? This motivated me to get back to school through this opportunity.

Question: If you have friends in similar situations, what is keeping them from enrolling? What would motivate them?

- In foster care, support is lacking. Many of my peers do not have the support system they need. One thing that can motivate them is that support, having someone there to inspire them and push them. My sponsor gives me that support and confidence. Support is everything.
- The bureaucracy and overall presentation of some programs stops many disconnected youth. When white men in suits are surrounding you and telling you what is good for you, it is hard to take heed to their words. They are not from our environment. Allowing youth to be themselves and feel integrated is important.
- Sometimes it is not about support. Some have support and just do not want to do it. I have friends that struggle and I support them but they just do not want to do it. How can I push them? They seem to lack motivation.
- A lot of it has to do with perceptions from society. It is not that they do not want to do it, but they do not want others to perceive them as finishing high school late, being in foster care, getting a GED instead of a high school diploma, etc. There is a stigma. When I enrolled in the Army and said I was in foster care, everyone stared at me and said, "I'm sorry." Why? Getting that type of attention and perceptions from others is difficult. We let friends, social media, and others brand us. Society tells you that you should have a degree by a specific time; there is no focus on having a GED. If I go on social media, I see a rapper or artist with all these brands and all these things. This is what the people we look up to are doing. They do not tell us stay in school and get an education. They do not focus on that.
- A lot to do with pride and greed. Some people cannot adapt to their surroundings and do not know how to handle situations outside of their comfort zones.
- It is easy for young people to say this is what society wants, so I do not want that. However, if you sat down and planned your life, you see that what society wants is usually what is better. We need to separate ourselves from being against society and start focusing on what we want, such as finishing college.

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Question: Who else in your life helps you with your future plans?

- My wife.
- My brothers that I have made from the group home, my first foster mother, supportive adults at the Department of Social Services, and my biological granny. I have a small web of support to help push me along.
- The staff at YouthBuild. With their support, I am now pursuing a bachelor's degree in nursing. I never planned to go to college before.
- The staff; my teacher is wonderful. The staff has to be caring and become the people that you hang around. Hanging around with people with a negative influence would prohibit me from doing what I need to do.
- The staff; if it was not for my caseworker I do not know where I would be. It is a long road, and she has been like a mother figure to me.
- My peers on the Youth Advisory Board, my foster dad (I call him my dad), my social worker, and my independent living coordinator. There was a time I was going through some tough things and wanted to quit. Getting tough love from my dad and social worker pushed me through it. They treat me as if I am their son and are there for me.
- One of my cousins. She motivates me and is always there for me. I call her with everything.

Question: Tell us about your experience with your first interaction with the program.

- I was new and young and worried they would not like me. Instead, they welcomed me with open arms. I was nervous, but it was a great experience. I was not expecting strangers to become family but that is how it turned out to be.
- In YouthBuild, the transition into the program was fast and easy. I was not nervous because my friend prepared me. The people were all smiles. It was welcoming because of the smiles.
- It was confusing. I was speaking at the Youth Advisory Board meeting. Everyone paid attention when I was speaking, it was like I was the most important person in the room. I did not expect that.
- It was good. Usually people just blow me off because I have a complete attitude problem. Job Corps was different. People were understanding and helped me control my attitude.
- I was so motivated and ready to start. I started getting nervous about interviews and if they would like me. All I wanted to do was get started; I was so excited.
- I wanted to get a lot out of it, so waiting for the day to start was difficult.
- I had a lot of anxiety at first. You have to take four tests before you start. However, when you walk in, staff smile at you and help you study before the tests. They allowed me to breath. It was a learning experience; it taught me how to utilize my nervousness to conquer my goals. The staff, smiles, encouragement, and warmth really helped with the process.
- At YouthBuild, I had mixed feelings. I was nervous because it was very competitive to get in. Staff knew where we were coming from; it was as if they were speaking to everyone individually. That made me more comfortable and encouraged me to stand out.

Question: What made you enroll in your program?

- I have two other siblings in foster care. I am very family-oriented, and tend to ignore my needs and focus on my family. I learned that in order to help someone else, you need to help yourself first. I joined the Youth Advisory Board for support to help me on my journey and get my education so can help my family.
- I always wanted to be a nurse, which is why I enrolled.

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- I was motivated to join YouthBuild by boredom. A friend told me about the program. I joined to gain knowledge and to pass the time. My brother said, “You have eight hours to sleep, and eight to work. That leaves you eight hours to get in trouble.” If you fill those eight hours with positive things, you cannot get in trouble.
- When you have too much time on your hands, the negative thoughts start up. Time is everything. If you do not have time management skills, you will be lost.
- My daughter motivated me. I dropped out of school at 17 to work and take care of her. I got tired of minimum wage jobs and wanted more. I enrolled in YouthBuild to get my GED only, but I decided to keep going. I want to show my daughter that whatever life throws at you, you can handle it.
- When I was young, I struggled. I talked a lot. I learned that if I have a certificate, when I talk, people will listen. That is why I enrolled.

Question: Was there anything that kept you from enrolling sooner?

- I did not know the program was there.
- I was looking into other programs and started to give up. The enrollment periods were long, and I lost patience. I kept being lazy. I stopped being lazy and that is why I am here.
- I stopped myself. Had I done the research when I left school, I would have enrolled much sooner.
- I was involved in too much. My social worker and dad told me I had to pause and finish things before I could join another program.
- There is a severe lack of marketing for nonprofit alternative education programs. Many times you hear about things you have to pay for. I did not want to pay to get my GED. I saw a sign on a building that said they provide these free services, and I decided to enroll. There are no ads or billboards. What stopped me is lack of exposure; it is all word of mouth. When living in a place where it is hard to speak because of lack of education, word of mouth dies fast.

Question: What was your experience like getting into program?

- My experience was easy. You go to orientation and learn what you need to do. You have to want it for yourself, but it was easy.
- YouthBuild was not hard, but long. We attended information sessions, and then participated in interviews. After that, they invite you to mental toughness training, which is eight days. There are many rules and if you break those rules you cannot come back. There was a huge line outside the building. When we went to the acceptance ceremony on the last day or orientation, we were all so nervous for each other and ourselves. When we were accepted, it felt like a huge weight was lifted from our shoulders.
- Joining the Youth Advisory Board was simple. I just needed to be in good standing with my social worker and independent living coordinator.

Question: What was paperwork like? Was it easy to get everything you needed?

- It was simple. We had to write a paragraph of what we would bring to the team and get a signature.
- For my program, we had to fill out simple paperwork and provide our vital documents.

Question: Do vital documents prevent any of your friends from participating?

- Yes, that is what prevents them.
- The program helped provide support to help them get their documents.

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Question: What did you expect to gain from the program and is anything missing?

- I got all the leadership skills I could dream of and beyond. I went to the White House and I have participated on panels like this one. I learned that you get out of the program what you put into it. You have to give more than 100 percent.
- I hoped to gain leadership, experience, and opportunities. I have had so many opportunities, such as a meeting with my Congressman, opportunities to speak at conferences, and internships.
- I expected to get a high school diploma, and I got so much more. I left with three certifications, a trip to Puerto Rico, a support system and family, professional development skills, and I am working on my bachelor's degree. I probably would not have been able to talk in front of all these people a year ago. I cannot believe I am doing it now.
- I got multiple certifications, which I expected. I was not expecting the support. I cannot believe the level of support from strangers. I did not expect to meet so many cool people in my neighborhood that I did not know. The staff was so supportive; they cared if I came, and called when I was late or missed a day.
- I got what I was expecting in terms of academics. Speaking for those I know who did not start or finish a program, I think the element of psychological support is key. The staff help give you confidence, but that only goes so far when there is an emotional barrier. There is a need for more therapy. It is a huge transition to go from the ghetto to wearing a nice suit in a nice building. There should be some funding there for mental health.
- I was not expecting to get the stipend to help with learning. That was exciting to say the least.

Question: What are some of the reasons you have been successful in your program? What does success look like for you?

- Supportive adults. The people at the Department of Social Services, former foster youth, my family. It is a mile-long list of why I have been successful.
- Self-determination. You have to want to be successful; without the want, I do not know. Also, opportunity. You need the opportunity to be successful such as an internship to gain experience. That is what made me successful.
- Success to me looks bright – having financial stability, seeing my kids go to college, etc. As a person, I want to grow and be mature, be in tune with society, and help people. In my career, I want a nice career that pays handsomely and fulfills me.
- Having the space to make mistakes has helped me. What is hard to conceptualize, when you come from the other perspective, is that oftentimes, we do not do something simply because we do not know it. The program expected mistakes. The program pulled me aside and let me know when I messed up. Having people understand that I am new to this, that these behaviors are not innate, was extremely valuable.
- To me, success means having financial stability and not struggling to feed my children. Waking up stress free in a career I love, loving what I do. That is success to me.

Question: What are some reasons your peers have been unsuccessful?

- Some do not have the determination. Others do, but do not know about the programs. The programs are not promoted or marketed. These programs need to be broadcasted.
- It could come from lack of support. I fell by the wayside at times and had that net to catch me.
- I know some people that did not finish the program, and I asked them why. Some of it was stress – having a child, “baby mama drama,” lack of transportation, etc. In addition, their pride got in the way. They did not like people telling them what to do and they became defensive.

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- Those that did not finish are not mentally strong. They get stage fright, and cannot handle the attention and pressure. Everyone is different.
- Some struggle to persevere through challenges and crises. Imagine all the barriers many young adults like us face.

Question: What keeps you coming back each day to your program?

- Knowing that I am changing something and making a difference, not just for myself, but also for others. I am motivated to change and improve things in the world of foster care.
- Knowing that I am on the road to success. It adds to my testimony later in life, knowing that I can say, “I have been in your shoes.”
- Seeing the staff every day, it makes your day. If you do not come, you get texts. They might even show up at your front door. That support is amazing. I graduated last year but am still there once a week getting that support, getting advice on next steps, getting transit passes to get to school, etc.
- Getting advice on difficult situations and having references for employment.
- What keeps me coming back is the transitional services. I am currently attending college preparation classes. They help pay for it once you pass the program. In addition, opportunities like this one keep me involved. Realizing there are people who are still stuck and knowing that if I can take a little of what I have learned and give it back in a positive way, that keeps me coming back.
- There is nothing like giving back to the community that helped shape you. I like to pay it forward. I need to help them help the next person. There is no better feeling than success; when you reach success, you feel good. I like that I am reaching small goals and continuing on my path towards my long-term goals.

Question: What do you think you will need when you leave the program? Or, what does the next cohort need when they leave the program?

- A little push in the right direction. You can have all the information, but having that push the right way helps a lot and brings more opportunities.
- I will need the continued support. I age out of foster care on my birthday in a few months. Once that hits, the social worker is technically gone, but I do not want to look at it like that. I think I have developed strong relationships with those people to call on them when needed. Opportunities for alumni to stay engaged with the program overtime are also helpful.
- When I left the program, I told them they had better check on me. I am in college now, and when I need help or a push, they are always there to give it to me. They help me prioritize and manage my time. Having that continued support makes it a thousand times easier. The scholarships and grants to pay for school are also a huge help; I have no worries about debt from school.
- Finding a balance between leaving and being independent is important – having someone to support you without feeling as if you need that person to survive. They want me to be able to leave and grow.
- The transition for me was smooth. I keep coming back because the staff share good news, talk, engage, and laugh with me. I go back to get that from them and then I get back to striving.

Question: What is the best way to keep in contact with us youth and young adults?

- Social media; we live on our phones. Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are good ways to reach us. The Internet opens an opportunity to share information. Sometimes we do prefer “old school” connections like emails and letters. It depends on with whom you are dealing.
- I like to talk. I will text here and there, but just call me.

How Can ETA Assist Our Grantees in Serving Disconnected Youth Under WIOA?

Tuesday, December 1, 2015 | Discovery Session Summary Report

- The best way is how you have been doing it. Getting a letter in the mail feels more official. That is how a real job would function – not texting or sending a Facebook message.
- I prefer the phone; a person's voice says a lot. Letters and emails, I do not need that. I need the news right then and there. Just call me. I do not feel like reading emails. Emails are indirect, I would rather you just be direct.
- It varies across the spectrum. If a young person feels comfortable giving you social media handles, then programs can contact them that way. However, methods that are more professional are probably preferred first.

Question: What are employers looking for?

- Degrees and diplomas. While those are important, there are also those people with just a high school diploma who got a job. What got them that job? Professionalism, dependability, and communication.
- Looking the part is important. I learned, "Do not dress for the job you got, dress for the job you want." Those are words to live by; you never know what you are walking into.
- Time management. If you waste time, you cannot get it back. Being prepared is important. Employers want résumés and references; they want to see the experiences and awards you have. Employers also appreciate when you come prepared by researching the job and the company in advance so you can surprise them with your knowledge.
- Employers want teachable people that show the desire to do a good job.
- Employers want to know that you want the job and you are ready to work. They do not want people wasting their time. The main thing is, do you want to work?
- It is about who knows you and what they know you for. Making connections with people that will be able to help you is very important.
- I want employers to take alternative education more seriously. When you have a GED, there is always an asterisk on your résumé that says you did not graduate. We need to be taken more seriously.
- As young people, we understand that employers are looking for us just as we are looking for them. They need to understand that we are assets, not liabilities. They need to understand that just because we took an alternative path, that does not mean we will be unsuccessful.

documentation process – thinking through what documents programs need and why they need it, and making that clear across the board – from programs, to partners, and to participants.

14 Program Elements

This group discussed the [14 youth program elements of WIOA](#), which ETA designed to support the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its equivalent, entry into postsecondary education, and career readiness for participants. Overall, the group shared that it is important to create space at the table for all community agencies, leadership, and youth, to ensure they have a voice. The group discussed a need for increased vetting of contractors and service providers, to ensure that services are high quality. Connectivity of resources is also crucial; all agencies that serve youth should connect via one central network, driven by youth. The agencies should know how to assist youth collectively, using a collective impact model. Asset mapping – to determine all resources in each area – could be a useful tool for this process.

Service Design

Like previous groups, this group focus on the importance of quality staff in service design and delivery. They discussed the importance of consistent eligibility and assessment processes across programs and across funding streams. The group also recommended that ETA consider focusing on providing strong support systems to youth, so that programs and staff are prepared to address needs that are life-impacting, such as violence and trauma. Employer engagement is also critical in service design, and employers should be part of the conversation to inform occupational skills training and provide context around labor market information. Finally, the group reported on a need for more effective resource coordination and partnership development. Programs should not provide services on an island; coordinated delivery will make each program's impact broader and more comprehensive. To conclude, the group stressed that each of these recommendations must be youth-driven.

Outreach and Recruitment

The Outreach and Recruitment team focused on the need for technical assistance on partnerships to help agencies connect, share resources, and improve referral processes. They shared that funding support will also be needed, to assist programs with activities such as developing cost-sharing models, budgeting for supportive services to address barriers (such as transportation), and sharing of information on free services available to assist programs with marketing to youth. In terms of best practices for outreach and recruitment, the team emphasized the need for trained staff that have the ability to connect with youth. Finally, the team suggested that ETA provide technical assistance on the new WIOA performance measures, to help programs balance meeting these measures with effectively recruiting and serving youth.

Transition and Follow-Up Services

The final group focused on transition and follow-up services. The group suggested that ETA focus on helping programs provide transition services from the start of the program, not only at the end, to effectively prepare youth for exit. By the time youth transition out of their program, they should be oriented to other programs and services available to them. To do this, there must be integration across programs, and training provided to staff so that they can seamlessly provide referrals to necessary services. The group discussed other transition strategies such as the importance of providing youth with recognition opportunities post-graduation, and pairing youth with caring adult staff to keep them engaged throughout the program and beyond.

Prioritizing Technical Assistance Needs

Following the report outs, participants worked together as a large group to identify areas of overlap and establish a list of key technical assistance areas on which ETA should focus during the spring of 2016. Below provides a listing of these priorities.

1. Quality staff and professional development.
 - a. The importance of relatable staff, trust, and caring adult relationships.
 - b. There is a need to define what “quality” means.
2. Effective resource coordination and partnership.
 - a. Connecting agencies together and providing immediate referrals to the appropriate services.
 - b. One-stop shopping.
 - c. Collective impact.
 - d. Asset mapping.
3. Outreach and recruitment.
 - a. Getting the word out to youth.
 - b. Marketing.
 - c. Peer-to-peer outreach.
 - d. Employer engagement.
4. Youth-driven programming.
 - a. Youth should be at the center of all programming and partnerships.
5. Planning
 - a. Planning for the end at the beginning of each youth’s engagement.
 - b. Budgeting for barriers.
 - c. Support system development.