

## Youth@Work: Innovations in Seattle-King County

It's harder than ever for young adults in Seattle-King County—and across the country—to get jobs. Unemployment for youth 16-24 has doubled with the recession. In Washington state, more than 75,000 young adults (18-24) are neither working nor in school. In 2010, when Washington's unemployment rate was 10 percent for adults 25 to 64 years of age, the rate for young adults was more than 22 percent.

Almost a quarter of the state's young people are in Seattle-King County, translating into thousands of disconnected and unemployed youth. For example, of the 88,808 youth 16-19 in King County, 3,907 are not enrolled in school and did not graduate from high school. Of these, 1,789 are not in the labor force.

By contrast, our federal Workforce Investment Act formula funding will serve roughly 410 young people in all of 2011 (about 230 of which are summer-only experiences). The other major funder of youth work experiences, the City of Seattle, will serve about 360 more—almost all during this summer.

Despite the lack of federal funding, the WDC is leading and partnering in multiple efforts to increase work experience, career exploration and educational opportunities for the youth of our community. **Called Youth@Work, these initiatives will benefit an estimated 800 youth in the coming year.**

### INTERNSHIPS AND WORK EXPERIENCES

#### King County Earn & Learn Projects (In-School Youth)

- \$619,933 WIA in-school youth, \$122,665 leveraged
- Work experiences and experiential learning in projects and classes throughout King County.
- All include job readiness, soft skills and credit recovery.

#### King County Out-of-School Consortium

- \$1.39 million WIA out-of-school youth, \$1 million leveraged
- Consortium includes multiple sites and partners throughout the county
- Two interesting work/learning projects:

##### Skyway Synergy

- \$10,000 investment by King County to serve 25 out-of-school youth in Skyway area.
- Career exploration internships and experiential learning in culinary, automotive, healthcare, information technology, engineering, baking, auto-body repair, etc.
- Youth obtain CPR/ First Aid certification

##### Customer Service Training and Internships

- Partnership with Neighborhood House for 20 out-of-school youth
- Week-long work-readiness training, followed by six-week internships in customer service
- Internships provide exposure to multiple sectors

#### Seattle Youth Employment Program

- \$670,803 WIA in-school, \$314,224 WIA out-of-school
- Consortium includes multiple sites and partners throughout the city

- Notable city programs include:
  - Summer internships: Career-exposure work experiences in aerospace, entertainment and recreation, early childhood, green jobs, health science, and more (395 youth, 59 WIA)
  - Two Health Careers for Youth training cohorts
  - High School Students in Medicine—3-day program at Swedish Hospital including career exploration and hands-on lab projects. Seattle Science Foundation is a partner.
  - Career Workplace Exploration in the Skilled Trades—classroom learning, internships

#### **AmeriCorps – Pathways to Career Corps Pilot**

- 13 year-long, sector-focused service placements with education pathway
- Placements include paid monthly living expenses
- WIA youth will be given priority consideration—WIA youth partners assisted in developing placement sites
- Educational stipend of \$5,550 upon successful completion of a service year

#### **WDC and City of Seattle internship project**

- \$83,000 in WIA Youth funding
- New effort will coordinate and streamline the City of Seattle internship structure—add 100 internships, 50 for WIA-eligible youth and 50 for other disconnected youth.
- Create college articulation agreements that grant college credit for internships.

### **SECTOR-FOCUSED PROGRAMS**

#### **SoDo Inc.**

- Approximately \$290,000 from Pathways Out of Poverty (DOL competitive) and Governor’s 10% for two current cohorts. Originally created through ARRA funding in summer 2009.
- Three weeks of full-time classes at South Seattle Community College in a wide range of skills and occupations in the trades.
- Students explore careers, earn certificates and are introduced to apprenticeships.
- Each then is placed in a paid internship in a local business to learn on the job. Many students have been hired into permanent jobs after their internships.

#### **Health Careers for Youth**

Award-winning program has 3 cohorts underway (\$252,754 from larger Health and Human Services grant) and will add more in the next 4 years.

- High-school students begin with a mix of college classwork and clinical work experience
- Students continue by taking college classes while in high school through Running Start.
- Program includes paid internships and other hands-on clinical experience.
- Students graduate from high school with prerequisites completed (many with CNA certification) so they can quickly start their careers and move up.

#### **CyberCamp: Career Exploration in Interactive Media**

- One-week Cyber Camps throughout summer 2011 teach the basics of video game creation.
- 50 scholarships were set aside for WIA youth using \$115,000 in Governor’s 10%.
- Each participant goes home with a video game he or she created, and tools to create more.

## **EDUCATIONAL LINKS**

### **Skill Link**

- Funded by \$220,000 from the Gates Foundation as part of SkillUp Washington.
- Provides intensive ABE/ ESL/ GED curriculum, contextualized career exploration and educational and career pathway navigation as an “on-ramp to IBEST”
- Goal: Two 25-student cohorts of 18– to 24-year-olds with multiple barriers and low literacy.

### **DollarWi\$e—Financial Literacy**

- \$4,000 grant from U.S. Conference of Mayors/Bank of America to train youth case managers in financial tips and tools for teens
- Youth can submit their own videos on financial literacy for a chance to win an iPad2
- The WDC is leading DollarWi\$e efforts nationally; commitments secured from 11 other cities to incorporate financial literacy in summer youth programs.

## **SUCCESS STORY:**

### **IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY FOR YOUTH OFFENDERS**

From 2007 to 2011, the WDC led a community-wide partnership between youth providers, the Juvenile Court and employers to reconnect young offenders to educational and workforce success. In all, 462 youth offenders received employment, education and support services.

The project sustained the award-winning one-stop youth program YouthSource (winner of DOL’s 2008 Recognition of Excellence award) and replicated it in two additional locations—Multi-Service Center in Federal Way and YouthCare’s Orion Center in downtown Seattle. It provided a Juvenile Justice liaison at King County Superior Court to connect at-risk and court-involved youth to the program’s case managers.

Thanks to a large network of employer partners, 99% of the youth participants were placed in internships and other work experiences that gave them hands-on experience, career exploration and mentoring from adult role models. The participants also had an incredibly low rate of 11% recidivism—greatly exceeding the project’s goal of reducing recidivism to 35%. 49% of youth achieved an educational milestone in the program, including 118 who earned a high-school diploma or GED. 108 earned a training certificate.

## **CONCLUSION:**

### **RESOURCES NEEDED**

Although collaboration and leveraging are creating opportunities for 800 youth in Seattle-King County, it is important to note that this is only a tiny fraction of the total youth who, through economic disadvantage or other barriers, need assistance in choosing a career path and gaining education and experience to move up.

The Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County, with the 11 other local workforce areas in the state of Washington, urge funders to examine the many successful youth programs across the state and provide resources to sustain and expand them, instead of on pilot projects. Through our collective years of experience, solid partnerships with other systems and consistent evaluation, we have developed truly effective models for youth success. With funding, these programs can be quickly scaled up for a much greater impact on our young people, our families and our communities.