

Section IX. YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Union County Youth Population

Union County is a diverse county of 21 cities and towns with a population of approximately 553,000 residents. Recent statistics indicate that there are approximately 69,800 individuals between the ages of 15-24 countywide, of which 15.8% of those 18-24 years have the educational attainment of less than a high school degree. Focusing on Union County's two largest cities, Elizabeth and Plainfield, the educational attainment of less than a high school degree for ages 18-24 is an alarming 36.3% in Plainfield and 19% in Elizabeth. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).

Historically the County of Union's Youth Program Service Area has included youth programs in Elizabeth, Plainfield, Roselle, Rahway, Hillside, Linden, and Clark. Ensuring the Union County Youth Program service area aligns with the most in-need priority population is crucial to establishing positive long-term outcomes. The Elizabeth and Plainfield school districts are among the poorest districts in New Jersey. Both Districts are two of the 31 ABBOTT school districts in New Jersey. They are districts marked by high dropout rates, low rates of graduation, and much lower rates of entry into higher education. In 2014, the mean graduation rate for the city of Elizabeth was a low 73%.

75% Service to Out of School

The Union County Workforce Board understand the new responsibility to expand the level of services to out-of-school youth to a minimum of 75%. Our board intends to expand our reach to serving disadvantaged OS youth by taking advantage of six (6) significant six changes in WIOA legislation, as compared to WIA.

While the determination of whether a local area meets the 75 percent OSY expenditure requirement is made upon completion of expenditures of all funds in the specific program year's allotment, Union County will establish a procurement and service plan that targets higher levels of Out of School programming.

1. Contracts- All youth contracts will include performance benchmarks including minimum OSY enrollment levels.
2. Tracking- Monthly OSY encumbrance totals and enrollments (Contracted and ITA's) will be tracked and reported as part of the monthly performance report.
3. Calculations: The OSY expenditure rate for local area funds are calculated after subtracting funds that are not spent on direct services to youth, e.g., after subtracting administrative costs. For example, if Union County receives

\$1 million and spends \$100,000 (10 percent) on administrative costs, the remaining \$900,000 is subject to the minimum OSY expenditure rate of 75 percent. In this example, Union County would be required to spend at least \$675,000 (75 percent) of the \$900,000 on OSY.

Union has released RFP's to solicit providers to deliver comprehensive services to meet our 75% OS /20% WE WIOA requirements. Through consortia, all 14 elements are structured.

We are fully cognizant of the opportunities presented by WIOA.

- WIOA raises the out-of-school youth eligibility age from 16 to 21 to 16 to 24. These same youth could be serviced through the adult workforce system; specific developmental needs often go unmet. Raising the eligibility age will help us better target their programming for this population.
- Out-of-school youth in high-risk categories do not have to prove low-income status to receive services. This includes individuals who have dropped out of high school, have not attended school for at least one calendar quarter of the most recent school year, or are subject to the juvenile or adult justice systems.
- It also includes homeless individuals, runaways, current or former foster care youth, and individuals who or are pregnant or parenting. Youth who are not attending school, hold a secondary credential and are either basic skills deficient or an English language learner must be "low-income."
- Expands in-school youth eligibility to include low-income individuals ages 14 to 21 who are English language learners, as well as individuals with disabilities.
- Adds youth "living in a high-poverty area" to the low-income criterion for youth activities funding and services.

Specific Recruiting Activities for OSY

Re-engaging out-of-school youth will on take many forms, including:

1. Information sharing between schools;
2. Electronic media campaigns;
3. Hosting by school districts of expos and reengagement fairs;
4. Partnership with school districts in order to access youth who are currently not attending a school or who have dropped out;
5. Selection of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) participants who may be eligible for the WIOA youth program given the OSY age

- increased under WIOA, and local areas should partner with local TANF agencies in order reach the TANF population; and/or
- Potential partnerships with community organizations.

The WIB Center, United Way, Union County College, and Plainfield YMCA, along with both American Jobs Centers in Elizabeth and Plainfield will be the primary players in actively recruiting and referring Out-of-School youth for career services and training. Other partners include: Urban League of Union County, PROCEED, Inc. , Jefferson Park Ministries , Community Access Unlimited , Rahway Community Action Organization , Union County Court Appointed Special Advocates , Brand New Day Plainfield Action Services, NJ Chamber of Commerce.

The new Union County Incentives Policy (applicable only for work experience activities that are part of the work experience program) will be significant in meeting greater youth participation requirements. The 20% requirement will be met through three methods:

- Procurement– Youth RFP specifications will describe the 20% work experience requirement.
- Contract Language– All youth contracts will include benchmarks setting minimum work experience levels.
- Tracking– Monthly work experience YTD encumbrances and YTD total expenditures will be tracked and reported as part of the monthly performance report.

The following example illustrates how a local area might calculate its 20 percent work experience expenditure requirement:

Youth Formula Allocation (A)	Administration Costs (B)	Youth Program Expenditure (A-B)	20 Percent Work Experience Minimum Spending Requirement (A-B)*20%
\$2,000,000	\$180,000	\$1,820,000	\$364,000
The local area would be required to spend at least \$364,000 (\$1,820,000 x .20) on work experience for IS youth and OS youth.			

Incentives

Incentives 20 CFR § 681.640 states that “incentive payments to youth participants are permitted for recognition and achievement directly tied to training activities and work experiences. The local program must have written policies and

procedures in place governing the award of incentives and must ensure that such incentive payments are tied to the goals of the specific program; outlined in writing before the commencement of the program that may provide 10 incentive payments; align with the local program's organizational policies; and are in accordance with the requirements contained in 2 CFR part 200."

Youth Incentives will play a big part in attaining not only greater youth participation, but longer term retention and other positive outcomes as well. Incentives are available to young adults based upon their progress and/or achievement toward employment and education success as outlined in their Individual Service Strategy (ISS).

All youth registered in the Union County WIOA YEP are eligible to receive incentive awards, in accordance with the guidelines listed on the attached schedule of benefits.

The Union County Incentive Award Schedule provides the maximum amount allowed for the achievement of each successful outcome. Young adults may receive more than one incentive for the achievement of multiple outcomes and such incentives can also be awarded during the 12-month follow-up period. Maximum incentive amount per year is \$300. Follow-up incentives are not included in the maximum.

Other Incentives: Other incentives may be developed on an individual basis or in conjunction with a structured youth project. Such incentives must be approved by the Union County Workforce Development Board designee prior to implementation.

Case Managers will be responsible for documenting the attainment of incentives for each young adult and proper documentation to support the awarding of incentives scanned into the youth's record in the case management system.

Note: Under 2 CFR 200, Federal funds may not be spent on entertainment costs. Therefore, incentives may not include entertainment, such as movie or sporting event tickets or gift cards to movie theaters or other venues whose sole purpose is entertainment.

Payment Method: Incentives shall be paid to young adult in the form of gift cards/certificates matching the assigned incentive amount for each achievement or in the form of a check. When incentives in the form of gift cards/certificates are given, a receipt of such signed by the participant will be part of the case file.

All incentive payments shall be described and noted in the participant's ISS and/or case management file. This shall include the amount, type of payment method, and justification. Please note: Incentives are not to be dispersed as payroll, and, thus, income tax is not to be withheld. Attachment A must be completed for each incentive payment.

Annual Review: Service Providers will annually review and determine if their WIOA young adult budget allocation can support all planned incentives. Service Providers will issue formal guidance to staff on which incentives are affordable within annual budgets.

WIOA Youth General Incentives (exampled below)

HSE Attendance – 100% attendance per month and show level gain (may receive more than one)	\$25.00
Increase TABE assessment score by educational functioning level (max 2x)	\$25.00
Soft Skills – Obtain Certificate	\$25.00
Employment portfolio, Complete Resume, Cover letter, Professional references sheet	\$50.00

WIOA Youth Credential Incentives

<p>Credential attainment incentive (during participation or within 12 months follow-up)</p> <p>(High school diploma, High school equivalency diploma; must also become employed, enrolled in training or post-secondary)</p> <p>A payment of \$100 will be paid to an individual who enters the program without a high school diploma or HSE, and who earns a high school diploma or HSE (either receives the HSE or attains HSE status) as part of their participation in the program.</p> <p>Proof of attainment shall include a copy of the high school diploma, HSE (or letter of attainment), or verification of same by issuing agency.</p> <p>A payment of \$100 will be paid to individuals who receive occupational certification (as defined by Union County as part of their participation in the program. Only one occupational certification may be paid per individual youth, as defined in the Individual Service Strategy (ISS). Proof of attainment shall include a scanned copy of the certificate or verification of the same by issuing agency.</p>	\$100.00
Credential attainment incentive (limited to ONE incentive during participation or during 12 months follow-up): Post-secondary credential, Occupational Skills License or Certificate	

WIOA Youth Placement/Follow-Up

Incentive award for placement in employment and education is only available to youth who were not in employment or post-secondary education at the time of application.									
<p>Youth who maintain continuous unsubsidized employment (minimum 20 hours per week) or in post-secondary education (minimum six credit hours or ½ time equivalency) for a period of at least 90 days after exit and remain in employment/education in the:</p>	<table> <tr> <td>1st Qtr after exit:</td> <td>\$25.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2nd Qtr after exit:</td> <td>\$25.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3rd Qtr after exit:</td> <td>\$25.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4th Qtr after exit:</td> <td>\$25.00</td> </tr> </table>	1st Qtr after exit:	\$25.00	2nd Qtr after exit:	\$25.00	3rd Qtr after exit:	\$25.00	4th Qtr after exit:	\$25.00
1st Qtr after exit:	\$25.00								
2nd Qtr after exit:	\$25.00								
3rd Qtr after exit:	\$25.00								
4th Qtr after exit:	\$25.00								
Must provide proof within the quarter to receive the incentive.									

YOUTH PROGRAMS

City Of Elizabeth

The City of Elizabeth provided a Business Collaboration Program for youth ages 16-21. While developing strong partnerships with local employers, Elizabeth provided its students with paid work experience. Elizabeth also developed a partnership with the Workforce Business Innovation Center through the Jersey Gardens Mall to develop additional employment opportunities and to conduct occupation skills training. Strong employer engagement leads to many students receiving permanent employment.

Plainfield Board Of Education

Program primary focus is preparing youth for employment through work-based learning. Plainfield partnered with local businesses to provide various employability skills and basic skills workshops. Paid work experience with job shadowing was provided with work sites across Plainfield Public Schools. Career exposure to Custodial work and Clerical Administration was provided.

Roselle First

The City of Roselle, with a 78.5% graduation rate in 2014, has the second lowest graduation rate in Union County. Roselle First, through the Borough of Roselle, provided In-School and Out-of-School youth with work-ready classroom training, internships, and paid work experiences.

Rahway Community Action Organization

Rahway Community Action Organization targeted Rahway School District with the third-lowest graduation rate in the County, at 85.7% in 2014. Rahway's in-school youth program consisted of an Entrepreneurship Academy providing students with a classroom work component in the Culinary, Childcare, and Business Administration areas. Community entrepreneurs were brought in to speak with students to provide real-world experiences. All students participated in volunteer work and employment skills training.

Urban League of Union County

Program primary focus is preparing youth for employment with paid work experiences. Integrated work experiences were provided for students at Family and Children Services, Housing Authority, Superior Court, One Stop, and Urban League. Students attended workshops in time and money management, as well as various employment skills. Students volunteered within the community and were provided the opportunity to attend college fairs to learn about various opportunities in higher education.

Clark Board Of Education

Program is designed to assist students with disabilities in becoming familiar with the world of work with careers in landscaping, maintenance, childcare, and clerical work. Students participated in one hour a week of job readiness skills in addition to their work experience. Students are mentored throughout the school year and provided additional workshops and ongoing tutoring. This experience will become incorporated into the students' total transition from school to work.

YOUTH PROGRAMS CONSORTIUM

The United Way of Greater Union County WIA/WIOA Youth Employment & Training Consortium offers a myriad of services to youth aged 16 – 24. The Consortium offers, through its affiliated agencies and network of community-based organizations, access to the 14 youth program elements based on the needs of the youth. Furthermore, the Youth Employment & Training Consortium shall coordinate efforts with the American Job Centers of Union County so as to ensure clients have access to the Service Opportunity Matrix (**Attachment M**). Additionally, see the Consortium Plan of Services below.

Monitoring of Obligations and Expenditures will be closely monitored monthly and reported to the Board Director as well as the Workforce Development Board.

The majority of youth-targeted for services are residents of communities with high levels of poverty and lower educational success rates. These include Elizabeth, Hillside, Linden, Plainfield, Roselle, and Rahway. This program will seek to reduce the

barriers to employment and encourage participation in pro-social activities. Negative social issues often accompany high poverty areas, such as substance abuse, violence, gangs, and crime. Living and going to school in areas devastated by poverty often determine the life trajectory of many youths unless they receive interventions that mitigate these risk factors. The 14 required WIOA youth program elements offered through the Youth Employment & Training Consortium, will have a significant impact on this target population.

Youth Employment & Training Consortium Partners Include:

- United Way of Greater Union County (lead agency)
- Urban League of Union County
- PROCEED, Inc.
- Jefferson Park Ministries
- Community Access Unlimited
- Rahway Community Action Organization
- Union County Court Appointed Special Advocates
- Brand New Day
- Plainfield Action Services
- NJ Chamber of Commerce

Outreach and recruitment will vary based on the organization. The program design emphasizes the recruitment of organizations into the Youth Employment & Training Consortium that serve youth across the county and that target specific populations, such as offenders and youth involved with the foster care system. These organizations and their staff have already established trust with their community and are most likely to be successful at recruiting youth within their range of influence. Word of mouth and peer recommendations are also powerful tools. Parents involved in other services with Youth Employment & Training Consortium agencies will also be engaged to recruit their eligible children into the program.

Recruitment will also take place where targeted youth can be found. For those youth in school, a concerted effort will be made in May and early June to reach youth prior to the end of the school year by presenting information within their schools and also encouraging them to share it with older siblings who may no longer be enrolled in school. Out-of-school youth are more difficult to reach and recruitment efforts, primarily in the form of flyers that advertise the program and open houses sponsored by members of the Youth Employment & Training Consortium, will focus on locations where they or their family members congregate. This would include public parks, eateries, houses of worship, and community centers. For Out-of-School Youth, the Youth Employment & Training Consortium will

establish ongoing communications with boards of education that will help identify “at risk” students and recent dropouts.

The program seeks to prevent economically disadvantaged youth with one or more additional risk factors from leaving school, help improve their academic performance, re-engage those that have left school, encourage job training and connections to opportunities for higher education, and enable them to gain the skills needed to reach career goals. In addition, the program will offer activities that support program goals, such as mentoring, counseling, and life skills training.

A very important support component of the United Way's Youth Employment & Training Consortium shall be its integration with the Family Success Centers' Core Services for youth and families; which places priority on affording youth, and their families, adult education and employment, life skills, housing, parent education, social and emotional health competency, community relationship and engagement, and advocacy skills **(Attachment N)**.

Services to Youth with Disabilities

This organization is a partner in the WIOA Youth Employment & Training Consortium and primarily works with youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities and youth aging out of involvement with the NJ Division of Child Protection & Permanency. Based in Elizabeth, Community Access Unlimited helps people with housing, life skills training, vocational skills, tutoring, employment, health maintenance, money management, socialization, education, crisis intervention, civic activities, behavioral support, transportation assistance, and community support. Through the Youth Employment & Training Consortium, Community Access Unlimited provides 10 of the essential elements, and partners with other organizations to offer occupational skills training, counseling, entrepreneurial training, labor market education, and preparation for post-secondary education and training.

Consortium of Youth Service Providers Funded Under WIOA

The Union County Workforce Development Board of Directors has approved the consortium-based framework for service delivery for all out-of-school youth career development programs, requiring a minimum of three service providers per consortium. Further, service providers must have the capacity to provide all 14 program elements.

Plainfield YMCA Consortium

Plainfield YMCA has been a pillar in the Plainfield community since 1977 with over 30 years of experience specific to low-income youth, foster care placement, and enrichment programs. Partnering with Union County College, United Children, and Family Society, and HomeFirst Interfaith Housing and Family Services, the YMCA will provide services to over 40 Out-of-School Youth. Services will include GED and High School Equivalency, occupational training through classroom-based workshops and counseling services to help youth overcome various barriers. Plainfield will provide attention to youth retention by providing all participating youth with a monetary stipend and providing family YMCA memberships to additionally focus on healthy living. Plainfield YMCA will utilize non-federal in-kind resources by leveraging Job Placement services through Venture and Venture Human Skills Training Center.

Union County College Consortium

Union County College Center for Economic and Workforce Development has partnered with Literacy New Jersey and Prevention Links to provide Out-of-School youth with GED and High School Equivalency and Case Management counseling services. Union County College Center for Economic and Workforce Development will leverage most of their occupational training and job placement opportunities by utilizing various grant programs currently in place: TAACCCT-NJPREP Pharmacy Tech and Patient Care Tech training, Opportunity 4 Jersey Welding training, LINCS supply chain management, Health Professions Opportunity Grant, and the Workforce Innovation Business Center. Union County College will utilize a pilot program, "Pathways to Patient Care Technician" which will co-enroll WIOA Title II funding for Adult Basic Skills and GED with TAACCCT funding for Patient Care Technician training with an externship at a local hospital. Union County College Center for Economic and Workforce Development will provide service to a minimum of 50 Out-of-School Youth.

Youth Employment & Training Consortium

The Youth Employment & Training Consortium will assist out-of-school, economically disadvantaged, youth in Union County to:

- Attain a degree or certificate
- Secure employment
- Enroll in education or training programs
- Increase their earnings
- Achieve measurable skills gained toward securing a
- Credential or employment

To best meet the needs of diverse youth throughout the County, the United Way of Greater Union County has partnered with youth services agencies to recruit youth throughout the County, provide centralized training for Youth Employment & Training Consortium members and youth, provide access to GED preparation services, apprenticeship programs, occupational training, and other educational opportunities for youth, and provide coordination and programmatic and fiscal oversight for the entire Consortium. United Way of Greater Union County has partnered with five sub-recipients: Urban League of Union County, PROCEED, Community Access Unlimited, Plainfield action Services, and HomeFirst to provide services encompassing the fourteen required WIOA Youth Program Elements. The Consortium will also leverage resources through Plainfield Public Library, and other various agencies to assist in the implementation of each youth's Individual Service Strategy and creating seamless career pathways. It is anticipated that at least 120 youth will be recruited, 90 enrolled, and at least 65 will complete with positive outcomes associated with the 14 program elements as required by WIOA.

Simon Foundation Youth Career Academy

The Union County Workforce Development Board of Directors and the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders are engaged in discussions with the leadership of the Simon Youth Foundation, in an attempt to design-build a turn-key Youth Career Academy located within The Mills at Jersey Garden Mall, in Elizabeth, New Jersey. The Simon Property Group, L.P., owns the Mills at Jersey Garden Mall.

The Union County Workforce Development Board of Directors and the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders would coordinate all efforts to integrate the youth enrolled in the Simon Youth Foundation Academy with the appropriate supportive services so as to yield the fruit of success. Further, dual-enrollment at Union County College—along career pathways—for the students of the academy in option for development in collaboration with Union County College.

The objective of the partnership with the Simon Youth Foundation is to provide 20 to 40 out-of-school youth with the opportunity to enroll into an academic environment that has the foundational tenets that have made the Simon Youth Foundation success in addressing the dropout crisis in America. To that end, the Simon Youth Foundation would provide academic and student support in the Youth Career Academy.

Academic Support

- **Enhancement Grants** - Simon Youth Foundation provides each eligible Academy an annual enhancement grant of up to \$5,000 to enrich the student experience.
- **Kappa Delta Pi** - All Academy faculty members are given membership in

Kappa Delta Pi, the national education honor society.

- **Experts in Residence** - A network of teachers and administrators are available to help fellow educators navigate many difficult scenarios that arise.
- **Community Advocacy Councils** - Each Academy can maintain a council of local business and community leaders that serve as advocates for their program.
- **Annual Conference** - Simon Youth Foundation hosts a conference each year that allows our educators to come together to learn and share best practices.

Student Support

- **Scholarships** - Simon Youth Foundation awards more than \$1 million a year in scholarships. Graduates of its academies receive the foundation's largest awards. Students are eligible for two-year scholarships worth \$7,750 or four-year scholarships worth \$36,000. Each year, our top students nationally receive a "Best of the Best" scholarships valued at \$40,000.
- **Partnerships** - Simon Youth Foundation's national presence allows the foundation to connect its academy students to resources that might otherwise be unavailable. Partnerships with CVS Health, Fifth Third Bank, and Close Up can expose your students to additional job training, financial education, and civic leadership courses.
- **Simon Malls** - Attending school in a mall environment also provides benefits to students. Many of our students have worked with mall staff to find jobs or internship opportunities.

Additional partnership highlights connected to the Simon Youth Foundation include:

Simon Youth Foundation Fidelity

1. Physical space for the local academy in The Mills at Jersey Gardens Mall
2. Enhancement Grants - up to \$5,000 per academy
3. Scholarships
4. Annual Conference
5. Provide capital improvements per rotating scheduled maintained by Simon Youth Foundation
6. Media relations to support academy best practices
7. Support to engage and build a Community Advocacy Council
8. Participate in back to school/open house activities
9. Graduation support

Local Academy Fidelity

1. Operate the Academy in accordance with the Letter of Interest
2. Participation in all Academy conference calls
3. Submission of data collections in a timely manner
4. Facilitate the Senior Survey to be completed by students
5. Designate a Simon Youth Foundation liaison
6. Maintain building and school safety and security standards
7. Provide the appropriate on-site staff
8. Implement and maintain a college and career readiness strategy
9. Maintain and replace the appliances, furnishings, fixtures, and equipment used in connection with the operation of the Local Academy and the Premises in a first-class manner

The Union County Workforce Development Board and the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders would invest the required resources from out-of-school youth funds under WIOA and—were allowable and appropriate, under TANF—so as to ensure the funds are reaching the hardest-to-serve and most vulnerable population in Union County, out of school youth.

Youth Career Pathway Program

The Youth Career Pathway Program shall be created to run on concert within the same facility as the Simon Youth Foundation Career Academy, The Mills at Jersey Gardens Mall. The goal of this program is to function as the “Youth One Stop” for both in-school and out-of-school youth services. The program will function in non-traditional hours, from 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM, mirroring the hours of operation of the mall.

The Youth Career Pathway Program shall become the central location for WIOA and TANF youth service opportunities, wherein youth can receive referrals to other funded activities within the county, job readiness, soft skills, financial literacy, and a myriad of foundational career skills necessary for the world of work and post-secondary education.

The Union County Workforce Development Board of Director and the Board of Chosen Freeholders developed a pilot program for in-school-youth—in partnership with Elizabeth High School and the One-Stop Career Center of Union County—wherein the eligible in-school-youth were provided Information Technology, Job Readiness, Soft Skills classroom training, as well as a paid work experience to apply the skills being taught. Coordinating a countywide version of this pilot program shall be one of the strategic program opportunities of the Youth Career Pathway Program **(Attachment L)**.

Project Search

Project SEARCH is a one-year program that provides students with a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training. Students will spend a small part of their day in the classroom (on-site in the host business) receiving instruction, and the bulk of their day at assigned internships. The students will participate in at least two internship rotations in various departments during the school year.

As a requirement of the program, students must spend the summer before the school year learning how to travel to and from the host business independently. The students are not allowed to take a school bus from their home. Each student receives comprehensive travel training led by the New Jersey Travel Independence Program (NJTIP) at Rutgers.

The program places a special education teacher, paraprofessional, and job coach on-site daily to consult with department mentors and help students develop the various skills necessary to successfully perform their assigned duties.

The primary objective is to teach students marketable and transferable skills to help them secure competitive employment at the completion of the one-year program -- either at the host business or another business in the community.

The partners involved in Project SEARCH include Union County Educational Services Commission (coordinating agency), the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the Union County Workforce Development Board, NJTIP at Rutgers, and the New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities. Project SEARCH has a braided funding model that ensures all partners are contributing either funds or services to help operate a successful program.

Students are selected by the program's advisory committee from a group of applicants recommended by school districts across Union County. Applications for the 2017-18 student cohort will be available beginning in November of 2016. Interested students or families should visit the program's website at www.projectsearch-unioncounty-nj.org for more information, and then speak with their home school district's special education office.

Statistics show that statewide, the employment rate for individuals with disabilities is less than 40 percent, while Project SEARCH boasts a 73% employment rate for its graduates. Project SEARCH was first developed in 1996 by the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. It is now operating in more than 400 locations across the United States and Canada, England, Scotland and Australia.

S-26.a Adopt the WIOA legislation's increased flexibility in eligibility, especially in serving youth considering that 14 diverse populations were recognized and designated under WIOA as face challenges and barriers in obtaining employment and living-wage jobs that lead to self-sufficiency and economic prosperity. (Aligned with Goal 4-Expanded Access)

Progress Update

One significant step that will aid in diversifying our youth service population is the newly launched initiative of "Affiliate Status" for AJC partners. The approach is to integrate the services under the AJC umbrella and reach out to hard-to-serve populations, especially that youth experiencing significant and multiple barriers are not aware of, and find it difficult to participate in, the "many" doors of the Workforce System Web. The Union County Workforce Development Board is beginning to design opportunities for select organizations to become "affiliate" American Job Centers.

This status will bridge AJC Center activities possibly with an organization that is more familiar to the youth—one to which they are already accustomed, e.g., the United Way, Big Brothers/Big Sisters.

"Affiliate" organizations, through a memorandum of understanding, will be able to begin PRE-Enrollment activities and receive POST-Core Service Monitoring of students after their core activity.

Services to Low Literacy Youth, Youth Associated with Juvenile Justice System are currently served by our Youth Partners: their abilities are assessed and they are provided with either direct services or referral to alternative programs. Low-literacy youth are provided with a tutor.

To the goal of establishing pathways that provide for a living wage for youth, as outlined in this plan modification, the Board will set specific goals and activities aimed at increasing participation in pre-apprenticeship to apprenticeship pathways for youth. Employer Activities such as Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship programs have EVIDENCE supporting a high rate of positive outcomes for both long-term skill gain and long-term employment retention.

S-26.b Look to co-enrollment to stretch funding while offering expanded diverse educational and occupational services. (Aligned with Goal 4-Expanded Access)

Progress Update

Full achievement of this goal has not yet been realized. Training has occurred on what IS permitted, and staff has discussed co-enrollment as a priority, especially as it relates to Title II Basic-Skill- or English-deficient clients co-enrolling with Title I training/services.

This strategy continues to be of high priority, further prompting training and goal-setting to be initiated.

S-26.c Provide local planning, policy guidance, followed by staff training, to OS Career Coaches in order to comply with necessary system adaptations required to expanded services using WIOA provisions for core programs. (Aligned with Goal 4- Expanded Access)

Progress Update

As mentioned in prior sections, the Workforce Development Board has authorized a series of workshops aimed at fulfilling initial steps in S-26c, Planning, Policy Guidance, and Staff Training. Workshops have occurred over the past two years. They were attended not only by AJC managers and front-line workers but also by Youth Consortium members including the United Way. Youth Program Career Coaches, along with Adult Program Career Coaches, sat side by side working through role-playing, group case management exercises and analyzing video scenarios on counseling strategies, motivational interviewing, developing effective Individual service strategies, placing clients on a career pathway to name a few.

Youth workers received training on WIOA and transitional priorities, including “75 OS/20 WE.” Union County has exceeded both requirements expending over 75% of funding to OS Youth and apportioning at least 20% of funding for work experience.