

AGENDA ITEM 22

DATE: November 17, 2003 **RE:** December 5, 2003 Meeting

TO: San Diego Consortium Policy Board

FROM: Margie Rosas
Youth Opportunity Grant Manager

SUBJECT: SAN DIEGO YOUTH AT WORK (YOUTH OPPORTUNITY GRANT)

INFORMATIONAL ITEM ONLY – NO ACTION REQUIRED

The San Diego Youth @ Work initiative was developed in response to a Department of Labor (DOL) solicitation that sought to create Youth Opportunity (YO) sites in various locations across the country. In creating the YO sites, DOL was responding to the fact that youth living in inner city and rural areas face considerable barriers to succeeding in life. The goals of the YO initiative are to improve the educational and employment status of youth. To achieve this goal, Youth Opportunity Grants concentrate a large amount of resources in high poverty areas to bring about community-wide impacts on employment, high school diploma and college enrollment rates. The Youth @ Work program provides workforce services to youth ages 14-21 living in southeastern San Diego, Logan Heights and the surrounding Empowerment Community.

The Workforce Partnership is one of 36 locations designated as official YO sites when DOL awarded the Workforce Partnership a five-year grant for \$27,804,385. The grant is designed to provide diminishing funding allowing 100% funding (\$7,000,000) for two years and 75% funding (\$5,250,000) for years three and four and 50% funding (\$3,304,385) for the fifth year.

It is important to note that the Youth Opportunity Grant is a demonstration project authorized under WIA. Demonstration projects are grants awarded by the Secretary of Labor for the purpose of developing and implementing specific approaches to address employment and training needs. In essence, demonstration projects are the research and development components of employment training. In this case, the demonstration was aimed at a youth development model of intervention, recognizing that it takes multiple resources and partnerships to address the issues that disenfranchised young people face.

The Youth Opportunity (YO) Grants authorized in the 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA) offered a chance at making a significant attack on concentrated poverty and unemployment in this country. The WIA specifies that YO Grants are to be used “to increase the long-term employment of youth who live in empowerment zones, enterprise communities and high-poverty areas.” As a complement to the Job Corps, school-to-career, and formula funded year-long youth programs, YO Grants provided the Department of Labor with a means to saturate targeted high-poverty urban and rural communities with sufficient resources to cause a significant drop in youth unemployment and idleness in these communities. In turn, decreasing joblessness and idleness in high poverty neighborhoods has the potential to help communities and taxpayers in

several other ways by reducing crime, youth gangs, illegal drug use, and welfare dependency. YO Grants are viewed as research projects to inform WIA youth policy through the development of creative, innovative best practices that broadens the knowledge of policy makers and practitioners to more effectively serve at risk youth. The performance outcomes that are mandated by the DOL for the YO grant are aggressive.

Program To Date Status

YO is in the fourth year of operation and has experienced successes and challenges. The design of the project is dependent upon a collaborative of agencies that work together to serve youth and collectively produce the performance outcomes necessary for the grant measurements.

Performance standards established by the DOL include the following:

- **Enrollment Rate** – The number of youth enrolled (100%).
- **Participation Rate** – The percent of all active enrollees who participate in at least one youth development activity, such as community service, peer-to-peer group activities, etc., in a month (80%).
- **Completion Rate** – The percent of all active enrollees who have completed all pre-placement activities, such as work readiness, basic skills enhancements, general equivalency diploma (GED), etc., and are deemed ready for long-term placement (80%).
- **Placement Rate** – The number of enrollees who have completed all of their pre-placement activities and have entered long term placement into a job, education or skills training program (80%).

PERFORMANCE REVIEW: <u>July 1, 2000 through June 30, 2003</u>			
<i>Grant Performance Standard</i>			
KEY PERFORMANCE OUTCOME MEASURES:			
	<u>Grant Standard</u>	<u>Actual Performance</u>	<u>Performance against Standard</u>
1. Youth Enrolled Served (100% of planned goal)	1,867	2236	119% Above
2. Participation Rate (80% of youth enrolled)	80%	68% (916 youth)	Below
3. Completion Rate (80% of youth completing their first pre-placement activity)	80%	46% (1049 youth)	Below
4. Placement Rate (80% of youth participating in an activity)	80%	94% (554 youth)	Above
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment (315) • Long-term Education (222) • Vocational Skills Training (134) • Average Placement Wage 		\$8.82/hr	

Placements of youth have included employers such as the San Diego Historical Society, Scripps Memorial Hospital, San Diego Convention Center, Ralph's Supermarket, and San Diego Marriott Hotel and Marina. Attachment A provides historical financial data on the program.

DOL 3rd Year Assessment

On March 20 – 21, 2003, Sandra Waterhouse and Richard Morris, Federal Project Officers for the Youth@Work Grant, conducted the third year assessment of the Youth@Work program. A written response to the visit was received and is provided as Attachment B. The DOL assessment team indicated that the project has consistently met or exceeded the monthly placement goal of 31 out-of-school youth. However, program providers have struggled with the ability to actively engage the broader population of enrolled youth on a regular and ongoing basis. There has been slow movement of youth through the continuum of services from youth development or softer skills to pre-placement and placement or the core academic and employment preparation skills has been slow. Increasing the number of youth engaged in the harder core academic and employment skills development activities is this program year's focus.

The participation rate of enrollees will be closely monitored with an expectation that all youth are engaged in quality youth development and pre-placement activities. Staff has already begun implementing the recommendations resulting from the DOL assessment through the new program design. Through the provision of the program's principal service partners providing a full range of services, staff is hopeful that all required program goals would be reached. The DOL is greatly encouraged by the project re-design plans and will seek evidence of improved performance goals during a follow-up visit at the end of this year.

Year 4 Program Design Development

The San Diego Youth@Work Leadership Team, which is comprised of Youth@Work program partners' executive directors or leadership level individuals, has met regularly since March 2003 to assist with developing the fourth year Youth@Work program design. School-to-Career Youth Council representative, Lynn Sharpe-Underwood, has provided leadership and assisted with facilitating the process. The group made a commitment to assist the Partnership in an advisory role in guiding the project over the next two years. Although much progress and accomplishments were realized in the third year of the program, the Leadership Team agreed that:

- The current program design is too fragmented;
- The vision for a community-based collaborative approach to youth development has not been fully realized;
- Youth had become disengaged from the program;
- Referrals were still problematical;
- Benchmarks were not being met; and,
- The Workforce Partnership role as both grant manager and program manager was confusing.

Ultimately, all partners agreed that restructuring the Youth@Work program design was necessary. The restructuring focused on re-design of key program elements, such as bringing together recruitment and case management, more emphasis on placement, academics and work

based learning, as well as better coordination of referrals and communication between agencies. Program partners agreed that a broad array of services should be offered at multiple locations throughout the Youth@Work target-area community and that lead agencies be identified for each site. Through a request for concept paper process issued to all Youth@Work program partners three lead agencies have been selected – Metro United Methodist Urban Ministry, Home Start, Inc. and Episcopal Community Services.

Additional changes in the project include a shift in the role of the San Diego Workforce Partnership from that of program management and operations to grant management. The purpose for this change would be to give more accountability for the project to the program partners, as well as provide more opportunity for community ownership and sustainability.

YO! Skills Challenge

A highlight at the beginning of the fourth year of the grant was the YO! Skills Challenge. The U.S. Department of Labor sponsored a YO! Skills Challenge for the thirty-six Youth Opportunity sites July 30 to August 1, 2003 in Washington D.C. for youth participants. Six youth were selected from San Diego Youth@Work to attend the event. The selection process included the youth completing an essay on why they wanted to attend the conference and participating in a panel interview. The purpose of the conference was to provide youth an opportunity to compete in interactive contests in public speaking, academics, employment interviewing, college essay writing, current events and computer-based career planning, while staying in a university dorm to experience college life. Contest winners received awards and recognition by the Department of Labor the last day of the competition.

Other activities included workshops on high demand occupations for the 21st Century and career fairs. Youth and their chaperones stayed in dorms at the Catholic University and received college tours during the trip.

Summary of Progress Toward National Goals

As the YO initiative continues through the fourth year of the five year demonstration, the impacts that these grants have had on urban and rural communities remains varied. The Department of Labor is conducting a third party independent evaluation of the YO initiative. Decision Information Resources, Inc., is the evaluator for the YO Grant demonstrations. Base-line information was collected from the YO sites at program inception, and periodic site visits throughout the three years have been conducted to evaluate program implementation, performance outcomes, document best practices and challenges, assess progress toward sustainability, community-wide impacts, and local leadership involvement. To date, no reports have been issued by the Department of Labor on evaluation findings.

Nationally, YO sites have “turned a learning curve” and improved documentation of the work performed and skills attained. National data reported on the YO sites through September 30, 2003 include:

- 78,889 youth enrolled
- 20,574 youth placed in long-term education, training, or jobs
- 11,402 completed math and reading remediation
- 7,396 completed GED

Locally, much has been learned about the project and the documentation of these findings is ongoing through launching customer satisfaction surveys, contractor performance evaluations, and youth and community focus groups. Program accomplishments to date include the opening of the YO Spot and Oasis Youth, creating centers of activity in the communities. Prior to the opening of these centers last year, there were no multi-service youth centers operating in the community. Collaborations have been developed between the San Diego Police Department's Gang Prevention and Suppression and the Young Offender Demonstration program operated by Metro United Methodist Urban Ministry, a program partner and operator of the YO Spot Youth Center.

Finally, the YO Grant has provided a forum for youth workers, to "professionalize" the field of youth development practitioners. Through a partnership with the San Diego City College, a Human Services certification will be awarded to staff completing five courses or 15 units of college level work. The 15-unit program provides a comprehensive curriculum, combined with on-the-job internship experience. The earned college credits are transferable to San Diego State University and other four-year universities. An articulation agreement is also in process with the local branch of Springfield College for completion of a bachelor's degree in Community Youth Development.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Youth@Work Budget Analysis for Programs Years 1 to 3
- B. Department of Labor Correspondence – Year 3 Assessment Report
- C. Youth@Work Program Performance Year 03-04