Youth Fair Chance
Technical Assistance Report

Toward a Community-Wide
Learning System

Submitted to:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Legislative Mandate

Legislation authorizing Youth Fair Chance (YFC) was enacted in Congress in 1993 and specified six broad objectives:

To saturate small neighborhood communities with services

To guarantee access to appropriate education, training, and supportive services to all youth residing in the target communities

To guarantee access to comprehensive services combined with outreach and recruitment efforts to increase participation of previously unserved or underserved youth

To integrate service delivery, including systems of common intake, assessment, and case management

To increase the rates of school completion, enrollment in advanced education and training, and employment

To determine the feasibility of offering these services nationwide

Subsequent legislative amendments expanded the upper age limit for participants from 21 years of age to 30 years of age. Included in this legislative amendment effort also was language which designated case management as the major vehicle for providing services to YFC participants. Additional DOL grant requirements ensured that YFC communities engaged in leveraging state, local and private resources to continue program services beyond the duration of the Federal grant.

In July 1994, 16 YFC sites nationwide were funded with an initial grant of approximately $3 million for 18 months; additional funding for 5 years was called for in the original enabling legislation. In 1995, a seventeenth site was added to the YFC initiative. After a second round of funding of approximately $1 million per site in June 1995, a change in congressional priorities eliminated continued funding for YFC. From a reasonable, though still ambitious, 5-year plan, communities were now forced to concentrate their efforts on trying to become self-sustaining in half that time.

Despite this accelerated timetable, all YFC sites accepted the challenge and initiated the system-building work with the intention of saturating each of 17 small areas with

comprehensive services that focused on education and employment serving all youth 14 to 30 years of age residing in the target district; setting up learning centers for out-of-school youth; improving teaching and learning strategies by working with local secondary schools on the school-to-work reforms; and engaging communities in program and system design and governance of the "community-wide initiative."

This report helps tell the story of what it takes to "give youth a fair chance."

Youth Fair Chance Design

The YFC initiative is an ambitious effort to improve the life opportunities of youth in high-poverty areas by providing a comprehensive array of youth services in a coordinated and concentrated strategy. By focusing resources on targeted, high-poverty neighborhoods; by encouraging comprehensive strategies that link education, employment, social services, juvenile justice, as well as recreation programs and other community-based activities; and by establishing new, community-based governance strategies, YFC is designed to have an impact on the community as a whole, not just a small number of participating youth.

As a national policy initiative, three elements of YFC stand out as particularly challenging and innovative. The first is the decision to pursue a *comprehensive, community-wide strategy* rather than supporting individual (and often unconnected) programs. Such a comprehensive initiative offers YFC communities an unusual opportunity to break free of the traditional categorical service delivery structure to explore new ways of organizing and delivering services in a community.

The second major innovation in YFC is the decision to pursue a *saturation strategy* in which all youth in a community are eligible for services. This is the first time that an employment and training program has had an opportunity to bypass income-eligibility requirements on a large scale in serving young people. YFC provides an opportunity for local programs to overcome many of the traditional barriers to collaboration with schools and other youth programs and develop a truly integrated approach to service. Not coincidentally, it also offers communities an opportunity to put programs into place without the stigmatization that often accompanies categorically defined services.

The third major innovation in YFC is the effort to *integrate the most recent research and policy developments on effective practice*. While the primary focus of YFC is on the effectiveness of ensuring access to comprehensive services, the initiative serves, at least in part, as a pilot effort on the implementation of policy on community-wide school-to-work transition strategies as well as a crucible for applying research lessons based on prior demonstration projects.

Technical Assistance Strategy

The first 2 years of YFC technical assistance focused on addressing three broad, but practical questions from the field:

What emerging *strategies of governance, community involvement, and management* offer the greatest opportunity for effective design and delivery of services for youth and their families?

What *programs and systems* best prepare youth to live healthy, productive lives?

How do these practices connect to the *school-to-work* system-building initiative for *all* youth?

A core technical assistance (TA) team of 12 professional staff from KRA Corporation (KRA), the prime contractor; The Center for Human Resources, Brandeis University; Abt Associates; The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), *and* a specially designated team of 5 from Department of Labor (DOL)/Employment and Training Administration (ETA) set out to help the sites initiate YFC and address these questions.

Our experience with YFC technical assistance reinforced the importance of on-site technical assistance providers who have *rapport* with the community and program staff, are *knowledgeable* about the factors influencing program design and operations, and are readily *accessible*. Our experience has also demonstrated the importance of involving grantees as active partners in their own capacity-building efforts. Technical assistance, then, is something done with (and not to) the recipients. Three principles guided our approach to technical assistance.

First, the basis of our work with the 17 YFC sites has been customer focused. Second, YFC has been a system-building initiative and, as such, requires ongoing contact with other public and private initiatives in each community-wide effort. Third, we gave strong emphasis to strategic planning and to establishing benchmarks in order to provide an objective feedback mechanism to ensure the sites that they were making progress.

Focus of Technical Assistance Activities

Over the past 30 months, the TA team has used a variety of delivery strategies to provide technical assistance to each site, including on-site visits, off-site communications, regional and national conferences and workshops, as well as numerous written materials and resources. In broad terms, the TA team helped sites accomplish five important milestones:

Clarify expectations and outcomes of YFC: As a guide in this undertaking, the TA team developed a conceptual framework to help each site understand how the pieces of the YFC system interrelated. The central concept of YFC revolves around (1) community-based systems-building supported by (2) community access and awareness, and (3) a serious commitment to resource development.

Work together in new ways: The TA team began the process of strategizing for community empowerment particularly in the areas of governance and accountability. Strategies to engage community leaders, residents, local institutions, multiple service providers, and employers were developed.

Define quality practice and system elements: In determining its own quality standards, YFC set for itself the dual requirements of establishing close connections with the national school-to-work initiative and serving out-of-school youth. This required extensive interface between youth serving agencies, local school systems, and the private sector.

Build staff capacity and public awareness: The scope and complexity of YFC represented a significant management challenge. The managers and project staff play a critical role in transitioning from the status quo to a new community-wide system. Released from their categorical constraints, the TA team helped address the professional development of YFC staff.

Develop key steps for building program components and progress indicators: As an aid to providing each YFC site with a framework for evaluating its own internal progress, the TA team developed a series of general benchmarks/progress indicators to help sites track their own progress in achieving both their internal objectives and the overall YFC objectives.

This report documents a clear call for technical assistance from all YFC directors, as well as a sense of value and appreciation for the array of technical assistance provided ranging from one-to-one guidance and facilitation to hands-on capacity-building to networking and executive coaching. Technical assistance as a strategy helps YFC communities help themselves to better serve the youth who live within them.

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> *. . . to provide all youth living in designated target areas with improved access to the types of supports and services necessary to help them acquire the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the world of work and to participate fully in society*—**YFC Program Announcement**

Preface

Legislation authorizing Youth Fair Chance (YFC) was enacted in Congress in 1993 as part of the 1992 amendments to the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). The legislation specifies six broad objectives for YFC:

C   To saturate small neighborhood communities with services

C   To guarantee access to appropriate education, training, and supportive services to all youth residing in the target communities

C   To guarantee access to comprehensive services combined with outreach and recruitment efforts to increase participation of previously unserved or underserved youth

C   To integrate service delivery, including systems of common intake, assessment, and case management

C   To increase the rates of school completion, enrollment in advanced education and training, and employment

C   To determine the feasibility of offering these services nationwide

Subsequent legislative amendments expanded the upper age limit for participants from 21 years of age to 30 years of age. Included in this legislative amendment effort also was language which designated case management as the major vehicle for providing services to YFC participants. Additional DOL grant requirements ensured that YFC communities engaged in leveraging state, local and private resources to continue program services beyond the duration of the Federal grant.

In July 1994, 16 YFC sites were funded nationwide for 18 months (Figure 1) with an initial grant of approximately $3 million; additional funding for 5 years was called for in the enabling legislation. In 1995, a seventeenth site was added to the YFC network. After a second

round of funding of approximately $1 million per site in June 1995, a change in congressional priorities by the 104th Congress eliminated further funding for YFC. This action significantly altered the implementation and operation plans in the 17 communities, which were based on a 5-year trajectory. From a reasonable, though still ambitious, 5-year plan, communities were now forced to concentrate their efforts on trying to become self-sustaining in about half that time.

Despite this accelerated timetable and the subsequent addition of more discrete objectives,[1] all YFC sites accepted the challenge and initiated the system-building work with the intention of saturating a small area[2] with comprehensive services that focused on education and employment serving **all** youth 14 to 30 years of age residing in the target area; setting up learning centers for out-of-school youth; improving teaching and learning strategies by working with local secondary schools on the school-to-work reforms; and engaging communities in program and system design and governance of the "community-wide initiative."

This report helps tell the story of what it takes to "give youth a fair chance" under less than ideal planning and implementation conditions. During the Third (and final) YFC Annual Conference, VOICES FOR CHANGE, the TA team turned the 3-day celebration over to the sites and their clients—the young people who receive services through YFC—to provide testimony on what has worked during the YFC initiative and to reflect on the direction that YFC should continue to pursue. Throughout this report, we have quoted many of these **Voices of Youth** in the hope of imparting a first-person perspective on how the YFC initiative has affected the youth it was created to benefit.

Recently characterized by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) as "a positive force,"[3] these 2½ years of Youth Fair Chance experiences provide an opportunity to deepen our understanding of how and why comprehensive community initiatives seem to work. This report focuses on the role of technical assistance and is intended to be a companion document to MPR's evaluation report. Though each report can stand alone, taken together they offer a broader perspective and a more inclusive picture of the promise and challenge of Youth Fair Chance.

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[1] These included, but were not limited to, the achievement of the following identifiable outcomes: increase in the high school completion rate or its equivalent; entrance into postsecondary institutions, apprenticeships or other advanced training programs; reduction in unemployment rate (job placement); reduction in welfare dependency; reduction in teenage pregnancy rate; and reduction in crime rate. In addition, the DOL Solicitation Grant Application (SGA) focused particularly on insuring that the requirements of the 1994 School-to-Work Opportunities Act were incorporated into the YFC plans.

[2] YFC sites were limited to those defined in the 1990 census as high-poverty areas with populations up to 25,000, or in some cases up to 50,000.

[3] See *A Positive Force: The First Two Years of Youth Fair Chance*, a national evaluation report prepared by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., December 1996.

I started gang-banging at the age of 13. I did over 10 years in the penitentiary system, and I did every type of drug there just about is to do. Basically, I was the type of person you don't want your children around, and I'm the one that you've seen on TV. I participated in just about every type of crime there was to participate in. But since I came to Youth Fair Chance, they have given me a second chance, you know, after second chances. And I appreciate that. They have given me hope when I have lost my hope.—**Jonathan Mackson, Youth Build/YFC Participant, Sr., Los Angeles, California**

The Youth Fair Chance initiative is an ambitious effort to improve the life opportunities of youth in high-poverty areas by providing a comprehensive array of youth services in a coordinated and concentrated strategy. By focusing resources on targeted, high-poverty neighborhoods; by encouraging comprehensive strategies that link education, employment, social services, juvenile justice, as well as recreation programs and other community-based activities; and by establishing new, community-based governance strategies, YFC is designed to have an impact on the community as a whole, not just a small number of participating youth.

As a national policy initiative, three elements of Youth Fair Chance stand out as particularly challenging and innovative. The first is the decision to pursue a *comprehensive, community-wide strategy* rather than supporting individual (and often unconnected) programs. Such a comprehensive initiative offers YFC communities an unusual opportunity to break free of the traditional categorical service delivery structure to explore new ways of organizing and delivering services in a community. This comprehensive approach is being pursued by virtually all the major Federal agencies, a fact that further increases the potential for interagency linkages and significant institutional change.[4]

The second major innovation in YFC is the decision to pursue a *saturation strategy* in which all youth in a community are eligible for services. This is the first time that employment and training programs have had an opportunity to bypass income-eligibility requirements on a large scale in serving young people. YFC provides an opportunity for local programs to overcome many

> Seattle has combined resources with city recreation to bring career development and library services to every recreation center. YFC has tried to addresses the issue of a comprehensive, community-wide strategy head-on through emphasis on long-term commitments of physical resources together with human investments of time and caring that emphasize adult-youth relationships. YFC has collaborated with other youth-serving organizations to ensure that a safety net of services supports the community.

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[4] Some of the parallel initiatives include the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Community, and Family Investment Center initiatives; Department of Justice's "Weed and Seed" and "Safefutures" programs; and the Department of Health and Human Services' "Healthy Start" initiative.

of the traditional barriers to collaboration with schools and other youth programs and develop a truly integrated approach to service. Not coincidentally, it also offers communities an opportunity to put programs into place without the stigmatization that often accompanies categorically defined services.

The third major innovation in YFC is the effort to *integrate the most recent research and policy developments on effective practice*. While the primary focus of YFC is on the effectiveness of ensuring access to comprehensive services, the initiative serves, at least in part, as a pilot effort on the implementation of community-wide school-to-work transition strategies as well. A growing body of applied research that offers lessons for effective practice and positive youth development provided the foundation on which YFC was built. As such, the YFC experience has implications not only for future YFC communities, but for communities involved in State and local programs under the School-to-Work Opportunities and Education 2000 Acts.

Part II.   Challenging and Innovative Elements

The first 2 years of YFC technical assistance focused on addressing three broad, but practical questions from the field:[5]

C   What emerging *strategies of governance, community involvement, and management* offer the greatest opportunity for effective design and delivery of services for youth and their families?

C   What *programs and systems* best prepare youth to live healthy, productive lives?

C   How do these practices connect to the *school-to-work* system-building initiative for *all* youth?

The content and intensity of TA activity, while driven by the priorities and needs of the 17 communities, was informed by recent trends in youth employment and training research. This research has led to numerous developments in effective practice, including the following four: comprehensive services, community-wide strategies, school-to-work transition, and, youth development. Each of these elements has been particularly challenging, and it quickly became apparent that *launching YFC would be a process of intense complexity*. (Prior research and other demonstration projects have shown that any one of these dimensions alone might take 7 to 10 years to fully implement.)

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[5] These broad questions marking the priority TA areas are consistent with the "key issues" identified in the evaluation report: "Three activities dominated the first two years of YFC. Programs had to (1) set up large collaboratives to fuse together an array of services, including community advisory boards to provide ideas and guidance, (2) deliver the services within community learning centers, and (3) set up school-to-work initiatives in participating schools." "*A Positive Force*," December 1996, p.9.

To provide a context for the YFC initiative generally, and the technical assistance strategy more specifically, each of these four developments will be considered in turn.

Comprehensive Services

There is growing recognition that the issue of employability development can only be addressed effectively through a comprehensive service strategy. Virtually every evaluation of supported work efforts, work experience programs, job search, and short-term preemployment initiatives points to the ineffectiveness of short-term, single-strategy interventions in preparing youth for long-term employability. Programs that have shown long-term impacts tend to be those that offer a "comprehensive" set of services, combining basic skills with work or training, or providing an extensive array of counseling and supportive services. The result is a growing awareness of the need to develop program strategies that combine multiple services and provide a sequence of services over time.[6]

The need for comprehensive program strategies and the design of their structure have been strengthened by research on the characteristics of at-risk youth. These studies have increasingly argued that substantial numbers of youth face multiple problems or barriers to education and employment. In the late 1980's for example, Gordon Berlin and Andrew Sum found a strong relationship between poor basic skills and a variety of youth problems, including teenage parenthood, school failure, poverty, unemployment, and arrest. Joy Dryfoos, in her study of adolescents at risk, estimated that more than 25 percent of 10-to-17-year-olds fell into a "high risk" category, having participated in some combination of risk behaviors, including school failure, drug use, unprotected sex, and juvenile delinquency.[7]

In both of these instances, the fundamental message has been the need to support a more comprehensive set of program strategies. Not surprisingly, some of the most astute observers of youth programs are the young participants themselves:

[6] A recent summary of the research on youth employment programs can be found in *Dilemmas in Youth Employment Programming; Findings from the Youth Research and Technical Assistance Project*. (Washington: D.C.: U. S. Department of Labor, 1992), a report prepared by Brandeis University and Public/Private Ventures for the Youth Research and Technical Assistance Project (YRTAP). Three "comprehensive" program strategies most commonly cited as producing measurable results are the Job Corps, the Jobstart demonstration, and the CET program in California. CET and Jobstart are models for the Community Learning Center in Youth Fair Chance.

[7] See Gordon Berlin and Andrew Sum, *Toward a More Perfect Union: Basic Skills, Poor Families, and Our Economic Future* (New York: Ford Foundation, 1988); and Joy Dryfoos, *Adolescents At Risk* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). The research and trends in youth demographics is also summarized by Robert Lerman in " Youth in the Nineties," in *Dilemmas in Youth Employment Programming* (1992). Emerging data continue to suggest that many of the problem behaviors of concern here begin to manifest themselves during the early teen years. One of the questions facing Youth Fair Chance and other youth policy initiatives is whether these types of initiatives need to intervene at an earlier age to be effective.

*While youth need education and employability skills, recreational activities and a safe place to be are also important. Many times youth programs overlook the fact that while young people want to learn, they also want to have fun. Programs must not overlook the fact that learning can be fun and recreational activities are also learning opportunities. Youth learn valuable lessons, such as teamwork and responsibility. Recreation and other "fun" activities are yet another way for youth to stay with and connected to the program. And the center showed me that learning can be fun, I mean it doesn't have to be the rules and you sit for hours and look at these books—**Charlotte Bargo, YFC Participant, Barbourville, Kentucky***

Within the Department of Labor (DOL) and the foundation community, attention to our growing understanding of youth and their needs has resulted in a steady movement toward the support of longer-term, more comprehensive services strategies, ultimately leading toward an approach such as Youth Fair Chance.[8]

Community-Wide Strategies

The recognition of the multiple needs of young people and the movement toward comprehensive services have also led to a recognition that comprehensive solutions to youth issues require community-wide strategies that can draw together diverse resources and leverage significant institutional change. Beginning with the Boston Compact in 1982, which initiated a multipart, citywide approach to dropout prevention and youth employment, municipal, state and Federal governments and private funds have increasingly pursued community-wide approaches. These include the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *New Futures* initiative, the Rockefeller Foundation's *Community Planning and Action Project*, Ford Foundation's *Neighborhood and Family Initiative*; Brandeis's *Teenage Parent Self-Sufficiency Project*, P/PV's *Community Change for Youth Development*, New York's *Neighborhood-based Initiative*, and DOL's *Youth Opportunities Unlimited* initiative, among others. What these efforts share (as does YFC) is the goal of not only generating improved services, but of fostering a restructuring of the service delivery system at the local level. In that regard, the YFC agenda of community involvement, community-wide partnerships, and integrated, comprehensive services places it on the leading edge of a substantial national policy movement. As such, it presents an opportunity to compare the YFC experience with other community-wide efforts and to add to the store of knowledge about community-level systems change.

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[8] Since the late 1980's, DOL policy has moved steadily toward increased support for longer-term comprehensive programs for youth. That movement has been evident in the development of explicit youth policies supporting comprehensive services; changes in the JTPA performance standard to reduce the emphasis on short-term, low-cost programs; and in the report of the JTPA Advisory Committee and ultimately the JTPA Amendments of 1992. See Melchior, "Performance Standards and Performance Management," in *Dilemmas in Youth Employment Programming* (1992) for one discussion of the shift in DOL goals and standards.

The third major policy thread that has shaped the YFC initiative is the sharp national interest in strengthening the transition from school-to-work, particularly for noncollege-bound youth. In the past few years, two distinct sets of research and policy issues have merged to help place school-to-work transition near the top of the national employment and education policy agenda. The first is the recognition that within the United States, there is no formal process or mechanism for ensuring that noncollege-bound young people are prepared for or successfully make the transition from school to the workplace. Pointing out the costs to both youth and the economy, reports such as the National Center on Education and the Economy's *America's Choice* have helped create national school reform and school-to-work legislation supporting skill certification systems, apprenticeship-like training programs for high school aged youth, and tighter integration between academic and vocational training.

At the same time, a substantial body of research in education has focused attention on the need to build a better link between what is learned in the standard public school classroom and the skills needed for success in the workplace. Led by efforts such as the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) report, which identified "essential workplace skills" (see Appendix A), and by cognitive researchers such as Lauren Resnick who have argued for increased hands-on learning, educators and employment and training professionals have been working to create stronger links between classroom and work and to develop new methods of integrating work-based and school-based learning.[9]

In its emphasis on school-to-work transition and the development of strategies that combine school-based and work-based learning, YFC has made school-to-work transition one of its central elements. It has joined the leading edge in program as well as community strategies. **What is important for the technical assistance provider, however, is that the commitment to school-to-work presents an opportunity to assess its relevance and effectiveness in a high-poverty community.** To maximize the degree to which these low-income urban and rural communities are able to make the transition from traditional teaching to active, hands-on learning, and the degree to which schools and employment programs are able to link with employers in providing access to quality jobs is one of the most critical challenges addressed by the sites and the TA team.

> *If I were not in the program today, in this time of my life, I'd probably*
> *still be robbing my community, selling dope to your children, and*

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[9] U. S. Department of labor, Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), *What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Commission Report for America 2000*. (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Labor, 1991); Lauren Resnick, "Learning in School and Out," *Educational Researcher*, 16:13-20.

breaking into your houses. In coming to the program, I finished school,
I'm attending college to get a degree in business. I've did a complete
360 turnaround in my life thanks to this program—**Frederick Barnes,**
YFC Participant, Baltimore, Maryland

Youth Development

The final major trend influencing the YFC design is the growing emphasis on a "youth development" approach to the problems of young people in poor communities. Simply put, the youth development philosophy argues that youth programs need to recognize that youth progress through a sequence of developmental stages and that each stage presents particular challenges and suggests particular strategies for addressing them. Therefore, programs need to consider the developmental needs of young people as well as their need for specific skills.

One of the clear messages from the Youth Research and Technical Assistance Project conducted by Brandeis and Public/Private Ventures has been that employment and training programs, among others, need to provide opportunities for young people to grow socially and emotionally if they are to succeed in the adult world of work.[10] To do so means providing opportunities to test new roles, build relationships, and engage in positive, rewarding activities.

The second major message of the youth development movement is that communities need to move away from a "problem-centered" approach to youth and toward a "youth-centered" service strategy. One of the major practical implications of both messages has been a new emphasis on rebuilding community-based networks of youth services ranging from recreation programs to libraries, Boy and Girl Scouts, and youth leadership programs. In its emphasis on recreation, on building in-school services and the creation of after-school programs, and the links to complementary services, Youth Fair Chance has begun the process of shifting from a "purely" problem driven strategy to one in which targeted services are supported and surrounded by a variety of positive supports for youth.

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[10]The importance of youth development emerged as one of the principal findings of the Youth Research and Technical Assistance Project. These findings, which also include a focus on the *connection between work and cognitive skill development*, and the *intensity and duration of training* or "comprehensive services," and their policy implications are discussed in the project's policy paper, *A Policy for Youth Development, Training and Employment*, prepared for the Department of Labor by the Youth Research and Technical Assistance Project, Brandeis University and Public/Private Ventures (1991). Other outcomes of the YRTAP research are reported in the studies by Michelle Gambone, *Strengthening Programs for Youth: Promoting Adolescent Development in the JTPA System* (Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures, 1993), and Keith F. Allum, *Finding One's Way: Career Guidance for Disadvantaged Youth* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, 1994).

. . . not only do I receive education and job skills from Youth Fair Chance. I also get the love and support that I need to succeed in life. Sometimes when you don't get love and attention at home, you have to build your own support systems. And Youth Fair Chance is my support system. I participated in numerous activities, events, and trips. I get one-on-one counseling, not only about my goals, but also about serious personal and family issues—**Lakesha Harris, YFC Participant, Los Angeles, California**

Taken together, these particularly challenging policy and research themes set the context for the Youth Fair Chance initiative. In broad terms, YFC grew out of a determination by Congress and the Department of Labor to address issues associated with youth poverty by concentrating public sector resources in ways that were never undertaken before. By focusing resources on clearly defined high poverty areas and by supporting "leading edge" strategies that included a community-wide approach, an investment in service integration, youth development, and the implementation of school-to-work strategies on a relatively large scale, YFC's sponsors created significant new opportunities for youth living in low-income communities.

Part III.   A National Technical Assistance Plan for Moving From Vision to Practice: Content, Type, Level, and Intensity

Using the four effective practices discussed above as organizing principles, the core technical assistance (TA) team of 12 professional staff from KRA Corporation (KRA), the prime contractor; The Center for Human Resources, Brandeis University; Abt Associates; The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), *and* a specially designated team of 5 from DOL/Employment and Training Administration (ETA) set out to help the sites initiate YFC. The remainder of this report presents a first-hand account of the implementation process from the YFC technical assistance team's perspective.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that in a break from tradition, the DOL team played an active TA role on the YFC initiative, especially with problem resolution activities that would have been inappropriate for the TA contract team to handle such as monitoring and corrective actions. All of us together, acting as resource tools from outside the YFC communities, were aware that we could offer certain necessary expertise to those sites which were ready. But, we were also aware that we could not provide ready-made solutions to all of the many problems and issues sites would face. Ultimately, the success with YFC depends on the fact that most of the wisdom and knowledge resides in the community—our job has been to find it, free it, support it, and build on it. To do that, we established trusting, respectful relationships with local community leaders and were prepared to deliver what they needed when they needed it.

Guiding Principles

Our experience with YFC technical assistance has reinforced for us the need for on-site technical assistance providers who have *rapport* with the community and program staff, are *knowledgeable* about the factors influencing program design and operations, and are readily *accessible*. Our experience has also demonstrated the importance of involving grantees as active partners in their own capacity-building efforts. Technical assistance, then, is something done with (and not to) the recipients. Taking this into account, three principles guided our approach to technical assistance.

First, the basis of our work with the 17 YFC sites has been customer focused. The TA team has provided customized TA in order to effectively integrate best practices and build a substantial infrastructure to sustain the YFC system beyond its initial funding cycle.

Second, YFC has been a system-building initiative and, as such, has required on-going contact with other public and private initiatives in each community-wide effort. In this role, TA staff became problem solvers and information brokers. It has been the responsibility of TA staff to assist each site in making the connection between YFC and other national initiatives, including Goals 2000, school-to-work transition, and community service.

Third, the TA team gave a good deal of emphasis to strategic thinking and to establishing benchmarks for measuring the progress being made to ensure that implementation and TA stayed on track.

Design Overview

The plan to which the TA team has adhered was designed to maximize the team's ability to deliver high-quality, useful assistance to help sites achieve their objectives. The plan addresses several areas of need:

C Planning and program implementation support that will be provided through site-specific TA

C Management information system (MIS) design, implementation, and reporting assistance that will be provided through MIS TA

C Guidance for systemwide training assistance and strategic program review

Acting as full partners in YFC development, TA team members performed many roles: knowledge broker, group facilitator, presenter, trainer, sounding board, change agent, trouble shooter, problem solver. Each site was assigned a TA site specialist whose responsibility it was to

do all of this, or to find local and national experts who could provide what a site required. TA was made available to the YFC sites in a variety of delivery strategies:

C **On-site**—TA staff were on-site with grantee personnel to work on predetermined issues such as developing community partnerships, structuring local advisory boards, and developing school-to-work strategies that can overcome local barriers.

C **Off-site**—To address common requests for assistance or when it appeared sites were dealing with similar issues, the TA team arranged workshops or conferences that representatives from all sites attended.

C **Telephone**—YFC sites were in regular contact with their assigned TA Site Specialist who worked with them over the telephone to effect problem resolution, review written materials, provide substantive input, and generally act as a sounding board to respond to daily issues that arose. Telephone assistance was the most commonly used source of TA.

C **Written Resources**—The YFC TA team drew from a substantial and relevant library of written materials and other resources that were adapted to grantee needs.

Content and Delivery of Technical Assistance

During the past 30 months, the TA team has provided many different kinds of technical assistance to each site. The following discussion provides an overview of the major areas of TA that the team delivered while assisting the sites in moving from vision to practice. In the course of this discussion, we try to address the dual questions of what we did that the sites value most and how we went about making a difference.

In general, cross-site terms, the TA team helped sites accomplish five things:

C Clarify expectations and outcomes of YFC

C Work together in new ways

C Define quality practice and system elements

C Build staff capacity and public awareness

C Develop key steps for building program component and progress indicators

Clarification of Expectations and Outcomes of YFC

> *The leadership and technical assistance provided has been a critical component of the successful implementation of Youth Fair Chance.* [The site specialists'] *insight, professionalism and task-oriented approach has guided the YFC staff and Community Leadership Council from an*

*'uncertain' and 'tenuous' body to one with structure, defined purpose,
and an on-going strategic plan*—**Jeffrey Hattori, Executive Director,
Seattle-King County Youth Fair Chance**

What Did We Do? To assist each YFC community in this complex undertaking, we developed a conceptual framework to facilitate each site's understanding of how the pieces of the YFC system interconnect. The central concept of YFC revolves around (1) community-based system building supported by (2) community access and awareness, and (3) a serious commitment to resource development. Figure 2 provides a conceptual model that depicts the three intersecting domains of YFC activity. Appendix B provides a detailed discussion of the model and its underlying thinking.

The intersecting areas of the three domains demark the critical features and challenges of the YFC agenda. **Intersection A** focuses on the importance of resource development keeping pace with program and system changes. **Intersection B** reflects the locus for community recruitment campaigns, needs assessments, employer involvement, curriculum development, workplace learning arrangements, and employability certification. **Intersection C** suggests the need for grassroots advocacy for resources devoted to services of value to the community and for institutional changes regarding decisionmaking. The common central (darkened) area in which all domains converge can be viewed as the YFC niche.

How Did We Do It? Using the conceptual model as a starting point for the development of the site-by-site progress indicators, the TA team visited sites on a regular basis to facilitate meetings with YFC staff. The first YFC Project Directors Conference was hosted by the TA team in Houston, Texas in February 1995. During that meeting, the TA team worked to achieve three milestones:

C Set the foundation for regular peer-to-peer exchange that would give the project directors insight into developments at other YFC locations and reveal the peer resource capacity inherent in a multisite project like YFC

C Emphasize the importance of using data for effective program management

C Create a blueprint for moving YFC from vision to practice

The TA team designed group activities that would serve as an initial effort in developing progress indicators for the domains described above. A more detailed discussion on how the TA team and the sites together developed these indicators is provided later in this report in the section titled "Key Steps for Developing Program Components and Progress Indicators." These exercises offered the participants a method for conducting critical self-assessment of site activity, capacity, and comprehensiveness so they could develop clear and specific statements of goals and objectives. The results of these exercises revealed to the TA team the necessity of engaging in a

continuous process with each site to develop consensus on where they were initially, and where they wanted to end up. The TA team acted on the premise that for a community to appreciate the value of the structure and services of the YFC effort, meaningful change, as defined by the community, must occur. This became the foundation for all of the TA activities over the life of the entire initiative.

Working Together in New Ways

> *Our technical assistance site specialist facilitated our first strategic planning session with the Community Advisory Council and the administrative staff to help develop strategies, goals, and specific objectives for staff, council, and contractors. This planning session also served to enhance the training of new administrative staff. Relationships between the Department of Labor staff, Advisory Council, the Private Industry Council, and contractors were discussed and clarified through the site specialist's TA. Never at any time was there hesitation when assistance was requested or necessary*—**Joseph W. Wysinger, Executive Director, Indianapolis Youth Fair Chance**

What Did We Do? Early in the YFC system-building effort, the TA team began the process of strategizing for community empowerment, particularly in the areas of governance and accountability.

Engaging the Community. The TA team knew from years of experience and extensive research that communities will not (and cannot) cooperate if governance systems serving youth are not homegrown by local leaders with whom community residents identify. This lesson resonated time and again throughout the TA team's experience with YFC. We found that for programs to succeed, people who reside in, operate businesses in, or otherwise have strong ties to the community must be genuinely involved.

Within the 17 YFC-designated communities, the initiative was usually greeted by a skeptical public that perceived it as being just another government program. Phrases like "fat chance," "false chance," and "last chance" were not uncommon in local conversations about YFC. There was little if any belief that a "**fair chance**" was the genuine goal of the effort. It has taken much work to build the trust of the communities involved and to turn this perception around. In all sites, community boards volunteer their time to attend meetings, mentor youth, and campaign for community improvements. Community groups gained confidence with every small success, and this may be YFC's most important legacy for effecting lasting system change.   For this reason, it is in the area of community board development and community leadership empowerment that the TA team has concentrated its most significant TA investment.

Working with community residents, the TA team assisted the sites in structuring well-organized community boards that are assuming activist roles to improve their neighborhoods. In cases where local governance boards were dominated by interests that were broader than the target neighborhood (e.g., the school district rather than the neighborhood school), community ownership developed more slowly and, in some instances, not at all.

We should not underestimate the tremendous challenge that giving voice to the community represents both on the part of local residents—who often are not fluent in government legislation, regulation, and its accompanying process and jargon—and on the part of those in traditional positions of power outside the community—who have a different set of responsibilities. In order to build trust, the TA site specialists worked with the boards and YFC staff to develop benchmarks and reports to the community are written in a common language easily understood by all the partners.

Working with Institutions. The issues of governance and accountability have been in search of a satisfactory solution since the mid-60's. The TA team focused heavily on how to promote a sense of ownership and clarity of responsibility throughout the intergovernmental network, from the Federal through the state to the local and point-of-program-delivery levels in neighborhoods.

Although the YFC grants were administered in large part to the Private Industry Councils (PICs), YFC was specifically **not** a categorical program. The Service Delivery Areas (SDAs) operated as fiscal or administrative agents, but the successful planning and implementation of YFC relied heavily on involving a wide range of community (neighborhood) organizations. (Community, for purposes of YFC, is defined as neighborhoods within larger areas that meet census tract poverty and population guidelines.) The difficulty of this effort was reflected in the make-up of the resource boards established by each community. Membership varies from site to site, but in general includes community residents, youth, employers, and representatives of local organizations such as human service agencies and community-based organizations.

*YFC provides the opportunity to develop leadership skills. We make real decisions, as far as our center is concerned, we have a youth advisory board which I am now the president of, and we were able to tell them how we wanted to build and design. I'm also part of the management, team. It means I sit down with the adults and actually hear what's going on, to ensure that we get what we want—**Ryan Jones, YFC Participant, New Haven, Connecticut***

In rural Knox County, Kentucky, the Community Resource Board initially consisted of county agencies that competed with one another for YFC resources in hopes to expand their own services to youth. As a result, youth, residents, and business owners saw YFC as just another government program. After the Community Resource Board reorganized to eliminate agency representatives from participation as voting members, room was created for parents, business owners, and youth to assume a genuine leadership role in program development. Initially shy in the exercise of their new power, these board members evolved into community activists demanding education reform that sustains the YFC STW programs for their high school.

The boards play multiple roles, including facilitating capacity-building; developing linkages between YFC and potential institutional partners and supporters, bringing additional resources into the target area to support services, developing a

high level of community awareness and involvement, and serving as a springboard for permanent institutionalization of YFC.

Charged with the responsibility to assist jurisdictions in the design of community-wide systems, YFC is still finding answers for the most effective ways to simultaneously improve structures at both the neighborhood level and within the larger, related geographic area.

Engaging Multiple Services Providers. Historically, youth service providers, school systems, and other youth-serving agencies have not worked well together, or even coexisted peacefully. Indeed, they often have been compelled by circumstances to vie competitively for the same diminishing pot of resources. YFC has demonstrated that for real change to take place, the old paradigm of categorical resource allocation must be bypassed in favor of a model that distributes resources through a collaborative effort. The allocation process in YFC is driven by common goals and based on commonly agreed upon benchmarks of progress and outcomes.

> In Los Angeles, the Ketchum-Downtown YMCA and the Pacific Asian Consortium in Employment (PACE) are members of the YFC Partnership. The YMCA runs sports and social programs for youth. PACE provides counseling, workshops, and access to outside resources for anger management, substance abuse, gang involvement and other significant problems. Working together, PACE enrolls at-risk youth into the YMCA programs, and the YMCA refers troubled youth to PACE for help. Without each other, PACE would have no access to recreation activities and the YMCA would have no access to counseling and other support services.

Gaining endorsements and support from key policymaking bodies is only one part of the equation. Staff of multiple agencies responsible for frontline services as well as planning and monitoring must also be engaged. No one agency or institution is able to address all youth service need, but multiple agencies working together have a good chance of success. Collaboration between social service agencies and the private sector is necessary. To ensure that the needs of **all** youth can continue to be met with limited community resources, a much higher level of interagency collaboration must occur. More and more, thoughtful observers of these initiatives are calling for the development of a process that will mesh regulations and services into a seamless system.

YFC has made modest progress in this direction. The progress appears to vary by governmental function. For example, in many communities, one of the most successful areas of collaboration is with agencies responsible for recreation services.

Relationships with PICs or Workforce Development Boards and SDA staff in many communities centered around administrative and oversight management issues. For example, in some communities, SDA staff were concerned that audit exceptions to YFC might occur, given the broader flexibility of YFC over JTPA. Lastly, questions on how the grant recipient should share decisionmaking authority with the neighborhood community board has created ongoing

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tensions that have become major barriers to effective implementation of YFC in some communities.

How Did We Do It? Again, creating an environment in which the YFC community could seek to empower itself has been the overarching goal of the TA team. Most of our success was achieved incrementally by each site specialist working with his or her assigned community to facilitate community resource board development, conduct leadership development training, provide train-the-trainer on-site workshops, problem solving, and helping to write collaborative agreements.

The initial on-site effort was to catalogue the availability of planning and orientation resources in order to begin strategizing for the development of the YFC system. The shared resources compilation involved an on-site, three-part series of strategy meetings on: Working With Staff and Community Leaders to Create a Council; Team Building Among Staff and Partners for Implementing YFC Services; and Expectation of Collaboration and Partnership Over Time.

The type of continuous information and skills transfer TA activity is typified by the 1995 conference in Atlanta on **Developing a Community-Wide Learning System.** This conference was designed to provide site teams with new information and materials needed to begin or advance their work in program and system-building. Therefore, the agenda included workshops on:

C   Developing Community-wide Partnerships and Inter-Institutional Systems

C   Systems-Level Management: Options for Managing Community-Wide Partnerships

C   Managing Change: The Personal and Professional Challenge for Change Agents

The Atlanta conference was viewed by many participants as a turning point in their understanding. It was in Atlanta that the concepts of community empowerment, systemic change, and school-to-work finally began to coalesce for most of the staff present. It is important to note the timeframe here. This conference took place in April 1995, 10 months after the YFC grants were awarded. It was only at this point, after a strong kick-off conference in Maryland in July 1994, extensive TA site visits during the first 9 months of grant operation, a project directors meeting, and numerous conversations with DOL/ETA staff, that the sites were finally **beginning** to understand the complexity and potential of YFC. Congressional and DOL expectations that sites would be "quick off the dime" to implement their plan within 6 months of grant startup took little account of the real time it takes for change to occur.

The TA team followed up the Atlanta conference with additional on-site community board training in February and March 1996, and regional training institutes in New Orleans and Chicago. These Institutes focused on **Making the Transition: Community Leadership and Ownership of Youth Fair Chance.** The purpose of this 3-day institute was to help each YFC community identify specific steps necessary to create or solidify the operation of an indigenous community leadership board with the skills, leadership, and authority to determine and manage YFC services in their neighborhoods. The sessions were practical and interactive, with the goal of moving from vision to development of a blueprint for action around the following topics:

C   Defining Roles and Responsibilities of Staff and Board Members

C   Establishing Incremental Steps to Transfer Ownership to the Community

C   Determining Extent of Community Authority

C   Knowing Who Is/Should Be Represented by the Board

C   Exploring Strategies for Expanding and Sustaining Action

C   Creating a Self-Assessment Guide for Community Action

Even with the constant TA focus on community board and leadership development, YFC sites continue today to request TA in this area. The process for sustaining community involvement and training leaders needs consistent and steady facilitation and assistance over a long period of time.

Defining Quality Practice and System Elements

> *Youth Fair Chance is an ambitious effort. We didn't really know to what extent. But we have learned through technical assistance what we must do to build the community-wide learning system so often described. Knowing that we have the support in terms of quality technical assistance has meant encouragement to forge ahead and try new things without fear of failure*—**Edna Perry, Executive Director, Memphis Youth Fair Chance**

What Did We Do?   As we indicated above, the second major area of focus for the TA team was programs and systems. Specifically, we wanted the sites to concentrate on how to connect the school-to-work system-building initiative not only to all youth, but to the concept of creating a learning laboratory out of the entire daily experience of the YFC communities.

School-To-Work. Relationships with local education institutions and school districts have posed the most difficult systemwide development challenges for the YFC sites and for the TA team. Few communities have generated a common vision for local schools, and fewer still

have given any thought to creating a seamless learning environment for youth who are no longer able to receive their education within the traditional "first chance" system. With little agreement on common goals and benchmarks of success, it is no surprise many YFC sites have found it a real challenge to effect systemwide school-to-work reform.

Having acknowledged this, we can also say that almost all YFC communities have some type of education reform underway. Just as community residents showed evidence of mistrust regarding YFC, school districts, school administrators, and individual teachers looked with suspicion upon "one more project" that may or may not fit into the path already set for reforming their schools. One determinant of success was the ability to get the attention of the key leadership in the school system. Although this remains very difficult in a massive school system like that encompassing the Bronx in New York City, in a smaller system like Cochise County, Arizona, with the leadership of the superintendent behind the YFC effort, services for both in- and out-of-school youth have made substantial improvement.

> *I attend a program called Project SMART, the School of Manufacturing Automotive- Related Technology, and Max Hayes vocational high school, which is funded by the Youth Fair Chance grant. Before I heard of Project SMART or Youth Fair Chance, I was just a little kid cutting 6th grade anytime possible. . . Project Smart has made me love school and keep up my grades. Currently I have a 4.0 GPA, I am valedictorian of this coming senior year, and I have the highest test scores on the PSAT in my school. I've also received numerous awards in education and academics. Since Youth Fair Chance has become involved with Project SMART, it has helped 15 of my friends and I reach our goals of becoming engineers by providing us with college-level courses at the community college. Can you imagine what would happen if each of the sites had the money and the resources we had? It would give the population a quicker step into the computer generation*—**Janelle Jason, YFC Participant, Cleveland, Ohio**

There is evidence that in the 2 years of YFC experience, coordination efforts taking place at the national level have resulted in pay off at the local level. School-to-Work (STW) national priorities encouraged grantees to build the education-based component of their systems around the principles embedded in the Federal School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) for all in- and out-of-school youth. At least 10 of the 17 projects can take some credit for helping to facilitate education reform around STW principles by expediting their introduction into in-school programs. All of these efforts have been significantly aided by the technical assistance provided by site specialists and other experts who the TA team has called.

Under YFC, the principles laid out in STWOA were a core requirement for each site. As part of the national school-to-work movement, the sites recognized that meaningful learning can

take place outside of traditional classrooms and that the whole community offers an abundance of learning opportunities.

This emphasis on STW allows YFC to work with local educational institutions to change their focus, thus leveraging significant institutional change. For example, through YFC, the SCANS skills matrix has been introduced into high school curriculum in most of the 17 YFC states along with other pedagogical concepts like contextual learning, worksite learning and employer involvement.

> *Since I joined Memphis Youth Fair Chance, I have completed the course and received a certificate of mastery. I have also been selected to attend the Memphis Urban League Training Center, that obtains to my goal of becoming a computer engineering and technology. Through the whole Memphis Youth Fair Chance system, I've gained knowledge that has given me the power to become focused, self-confident, mature, job-attainment skills, job-readiness skills, personal survival skills, how to properly interview, how to communicate, and how to critique. Memphis Youth Fair Chance has been a great inspiration in my life, and the message is for you all to help us help ourselves. . .—***Lamona McKinley, YFC Participant, Memphis, Tennessee***

Cleveland YFC has a fully integrated STW strategy that involves students from middle school through the community college level. All educational and training programs are rooted in local industry skill standards that were developed by dozens of local employers and frontline employees. The industry skills standards incorporate all SCANS skills and correlate to the State of Ohio competency measures. The system includes assessment tools that are used at both schools and worksites.

These changes by no means constitute a complete evolution to STW within a school system; not all STW practices have been incorporated nor have all students been included at each site. However, schools are definitely starting to do business differently and in ways that they are committed to sustaining. Educational institutions in these cases have turned important corners in accomplishing a better way of teaching youth.

Comprehensive youth-serving systems must be capable of addressing the needs of **all** youth—which means those in traditional and alternative educational settings as well as those who have graduated, dropped out, or been expelled. Because YFC is accessible to all youth, it provides an opportunity to develop strategies for serving out-of-school youth (OSY) that have relevance for the emerging STW system, which continues to struggle with the challenge of reaching OSY.

Employer Linkages. The STW system-building effort places strong emphasis on engaging the employer community. YFC has had a marked impact on how businesses interact with schools and community institutions and agencies.

The necessity for involving employers in successful youth employment programs is not a new realization. What YFC has done is attempt to institutionalize the effort. Many YFC sites, for the first time, have come to think of employers as full partners and have invited them to participate in developing the vision and the specific goals and objectives of the overall effort.

Employers have taken a greater interest in working with schools in Seattle and Cochise County and community groups in Racine. Microsoft Corporation in Seattle has donated computers, technicians, mentors, and moral support for the out-of-school component. In Knox County, the Commercial Building Contractors Association is providing STW curriculum and work-based learning opportunities for both in- and out-of-school students.

Most communities have focused their employer efforts around four key roles: (1) assisting in the development of programs of study, (2) participating in the development and supervision of meaningful worksite experiences, (3) assisting in the development and utilization of work-focused assessment instruments and credentials, and (4) providing supporting services.

In YFC, employers are viewed as true partners in restructuring educational criteria and services. Their help has been sought not only in the donation of equipment, identification of work-based learning opportunities, and release time for employees to mentor and instruct, but also in framing the educational standards and goals in the design of STW. Our experience has taught us that employers are eager to become more intimately involved in the design and delivery of comprehensive youth interventions.

> *To be honest, there simply isn't enough business involvement in these initiatives, or enough sustained involvement. In my community, a lot of these programs seem designed to place young people in public sector or municipal jobs, especially during the summer. Perhaps there's a feeling that business will take advantage of these kids, but that's not the case. You should try us more! Our focus should be on providing real-life business experience and authentic work-based learning. Meanwhile, business groups are conducting studies on this topic, right here in Indianapolis, yet connecting them to actual community-wide activities is tough. Business needs to be asked directly to be involved, and they need to see more incentives to get and stay involved*—**Joan Durham, President, Curtis Publishing, Indianapolis**

Involving employers and convincing them that this is not "just another poverty program" remains a challenge for YFC and all other programs like it. And, for young people, if they cannot see the connection between what they are doing and their ability to gain employment at the end of their effort, the programs will fail.

How Did We Do It? From the beginning, the YFC TA team has been particularly concerned about two elements of the STW effort. The first is the lack of attention that the national STW effort has paid to reengaging youth who have dropped out of the "first chance" system, even though the legislation requires that equal consideration be given to **all** youth. The

second element involves the traditional paradigm that educators follow, which argues that learning takes place only in certain discrete environments (expanded now to include the workplace). Traditional educators seem to pay little attention to the reality that we learn from everything we do and that young people are particularly susceptible to learning from activities and environments where positive behavior is reinforced through ventures that do not seem to be "like school."

The TA team has spent much of its on-site time working with YFC staff to establish the community learning centers where both out-of-school and in-school youth can engage in recreational activities and other nontraditional skill-building learning activities that may pay off in a job or in enthusiasm for further education. In addition, we concentrated our Second Annual YFC Conference in July 1995 and a second round of regional training institutes in April and May exclusively on STW. The STW Urban and Rural Opportunities Grantees have been invited to all conferences and workshops due to the belief that we can benefit from each others' experiences.

The 1995 Second Annual Conference built on issues raised in Atlanta by J.D. Hoye, Director of the National School-To-Work Initiative, as well as other nationally recognized experts who addressed issues such as National Skills Standards and School-To-Work, How to Organize the Business Community, How to Get Corporate Commitment, and How to Organize Curriculum. At the Second Annual Conference, workshop topics included:

C   School-Based Learning and Connecting Activities

C   The Community Learning Center: Bringing It All Together for Out-of-School Youth

C   Youth Fair Chance Now! Experiences From the Field, highlighting the Cleveland Youth Fair Chance Program: **Creating a School-to-Work System for YFC**, and the Cochise County Youth Fair Chance Program: **Establishing Linkages Throughout the Community**

C   The Learning Universe: Linking In-School and Out-of-School Youth Components in the YFC System

C   How Do We Transform Systems to be Accountable to Their Constituencies?

In addition to the above presentations and interactive sessions, this conference also held peer-to-peer small group discussions on Leveraging Community Resources, Community Resource Centers, The Employer Connection, and Post-secondary Connections and Youth Apprenticeships.

Building on both the 1995 Atlanta and Second Annual Conferences, the TA team planned a series of regional training institutes called **Toward a Community-Wide Learning System.** Because the YFC sites faced different constraints, the site specialists decided to organize the institutes around the relative size of their populations and the approximate number of local employers. It was believed that this arrangement would help sites find more common experiences

and challenges. This institute was designed as an indepth and practical, hands-on follow-up to the two earlier conferences. The focus was very much on the system-building challenges related to the long-term viability of the STW movement. Participants left the institutes with checklists, models for school-community-business partnerships and protocols for engaging schools and employers in the YFC community learning system agenda.

Topics addressed during these institutes included:

C   Youth Development Principles

C   Engaging Education and Training Providers

C   Identifying, Recruiting, and Obtaining Employer Involvement

C   Involving Youth in Governance and Decisionmaking

C   Community Strategic Planning

C   Using Skill Standards

Building Staff Capacity and Public Awareness

> *Without a doubt, an important element in the development and implementation of Youth Fair Chance. . .has been the technical assistance received on-site which has included excellent training in case management, school-to-work concepts, and proposal writing. This training was a successful tool for creating cohesiveness across organizational lines, fostering organizational cooperation, improving the skill and knowledge levels, especially for entry level employees, and setting the tone for creating systemic change. Each of the trainings were attended by employees from multiple agencies; and for most of these agencies, the high quality training offered through the YFC technical assistance component is financially out of their reach.—**Ann Giagni, Executive Director, Los Angeles Youth Fair Chance**

What Did We Do? Early on, the TA team recognized that the scope and complexity of the YFC initiative represented a significant management challenge if it was to be truly a community-wide effort. The manager and project staff play a critical role in transitioning from the status quo to a new system. Experience with both the YOU demonstration sites and the current YFC sites validates the truism that half of what happens in programs is directly attributable to the project director. Without question, the job of balancing quality and accountability in an environment of constant change is complex, requiring a mix of political, technical, managerial, and visionary skills, and a staff that has the expertise and self-assurance to carry out the mission objectives.

Released from their categorical constraints, YFC sites have spent their monies to increase the professional development of the YFC staff. For example, by making judicious use of the expertise of the TA team, sites have supported, and continue to support, the training and establishment of a strong network of case managers to be the vital link with each youth. The TA team has also worked with the sites to provide on-site workshops for teachers, curriculum development specialists, and school administrators to upgrade curriculum and instructional practices—which have been especially helpful for education and training services for the out-of-school youth.

How Did We Do It? During the past 30 months, the 17 YFC sites frequently have relied on on-site TA and facilitation to develop their case management component and to instruct classroom staff and worksite supervisors in the development and instruction of project-based integrated work and learning curricula. The TA team views case management as a vehicle not only for teaching clients how to access resources and services on their own, but also as a "fulcrum" around which both the in-school and out-of-school components of the YFC program can operate. This creates bridges for participants who are at-risk of dropping out and others who, for various reasons, may have needs that neither component alone can meet.

Case Management. The case management piece of the YFC initiative remains in the early stages of effective planning and implementation. System-level case management is under-developed and underemphasized. Although most YFC sites report that case managers can requisition services across institutional lines, we have seen little evidence of this. Between the publication date of this report and June 1997, the TA team will conduct a series of on-site workshops to create bilevel case management systems backed up by interagency agreements. This will ensure that a broad selection of services commonly needed by participants are available to case managers.

Integrating Work and Learning. Particularly during the second year of YFC, site specialists have made a concerted effort to work with teachers and curriculum developers on the application of basic skills, SCANS competencies, and occupational skills in the performance of specific tasks. These training sessions have taken place on-site, for the most part, because of the difficulty of gaining release time for teaching staff to attend workshops away from home. This capacity-building effort has focused on project-based planning and curriculum development. The site specialists have also made a major effort to link YFC sites with local practitioners who can continue to provide training in this functional area when the TA team is no longer available. YFC site specialists are also encouraging sites to work closely with their State STW coordinators to make sure that the YFC STW programs fit into states plans and can take advantage of both the resources and the expertise which the states will make available to local STW sites.

*Our knowledge and skills gained through Youth Fair Chance technical assistance will be a benefit to our community for generations to come—***Vada Phelps, Executive Director, Douglas Youth Fair Chance (Cochise County).**

What Did We Do?   There is more to building an ongoing program than just finding new sources of money, though ultimately money matters–greatly. For an effort to take root in any community, there are several key ingredients that must be included in the mix. These include providing a base for documenting results (progress indicators), creating a solid information systems for managing the program (MIS), and continuous attention to developing a sustainable base (fundraising).

Developing Progress Indicators. As an aid to providing each YFC site with a framework for evaluating its own internal progress, the YFC TA team, together with the sites, generated a set of progress indicators, based on actual experiences in the field, that illustrate desirable and generalizable performance goals. (See Appendix B).

The TA Team determined that to be useful, progress indicators need to be:

C   Concrete examples that demonstrate how program design principles are being implemented

C   Short-term outcomes that provide markers along the way to ensure that any necessary corrective action can be taken in time to achieve stated goals

This approach permits a comparison of quantifiable measures directly linked both to the DOL performance goals, and to the qualitative assessment of the design features developed by each site.

Managing for Performance and Sustainment. The traditional orientation toward MIS by program operators has been one of trepidation and apprehension. That is primarily due to a (mis)perception that MIS information is useful only so outside third parties can conduct monitoring, evaluation, or compliance activities that can understandably be viewed as intimidating from the site's perspective. But, in fact, MIS systems must be used as internal management tools to help YFC staff make informed decisions and programmatic improvements. Changing this entrenched mindset has been something the YFC sites have only recently begun to achieve.

A major impetus driving this change is the realization by sites that funders require information on which to base their grant-making decisions. For this very practical reason, sites are now becoming more amenable to implementing MIS systems that track program services and

outcomes. The YFC TA team has made itself available to help sites develop practical systems that can help them extract and present the information they need to document the good results they are achieving on behalf of disadvantaged youth.

Organizing for Growth: The Network Evolution. Early in 1996, the 17 YFC project directors concluded that the possibility of sustaining and growing local YFC site efforts could be enhanced if they banded together to leverage site resources and publicize site accomplishments. They believed this would increase the prospects of having YFC accomplishments recognized and funded in the future. The vision of the National YFC Network is quickly moving toward reality. The goal is to:

> *. . . create a national organization aimed at developing innovative and effective initiatives that are governed by local communities and that best prepare youth and young adults for future productive work. We seek to do that by sustaining and building upon the achievements of our Youth Fair Chance and Youth Opportunities Unlimited projects—**YFC Network Mission Statement***

It is apparent from the clear vision and strong momentum of this effort that staff associated with YFC have successfully empowered themselves to become active on their own behalf. They are no longer wholly dependent on Federal dollars or the direction of others to decide what is in their own best interest. The proof of success for this YFC effort is in the vote of support which the majority of YFC community resource boards have given the Network by agreeing to fund and support it in the amount of $15,000 per site. Obviously, in the eyes of the community the YFC initiative has moved beyond potential and already is helping to move young people toward more productive lives.

How Did We do It? The use of progress indicators as a means of benchmarking the achievements of individual sites goes back to the first meeting with the project directors in Houston, Texas, where the TA team illustrated how it would be possible and desirable to measure the success of the process at each YFC site. A series of focused discussions with each site identified strengths as well as areas for further growth and planned action. The use of progress indicators encourages self-evaluation and furnishes a record for how well the strategies employed by each site have helped to move the YFC initiative forward.

Together with the progress indicator tool, the site specialists have encouraged all sites to develop a fully operational management information system to support an internal evaluation and an ongoing program improvement process, as well as to support financial development efforts for sustainment of YFC. During the past 30 months, we have worked with the sites to:

C   Build capacity and capability of YFC staff and systems

C   Identify short- and long-term strategies for continuation of the programs after the end of YFC funding

C   Identify other local resources for sustainment (both financial and human)

Finally, with regard to the National Network, which is currently in its formative stages, the TA team responded to the lead taken by the sites themselves. The sites requested a facilitator and logistical support to ensure that the Network would be able to operate until a mechanism for additional funding was in place. To encourage this sustainment effort, the site specialists, with the concurrence of the DOL project officer, have extended their technical assistance to the Network until it becomes an independent incorporated body able to receive monies from other public and private funders.

Having discussed the major components of our technical assistance effort in terms of what was accomplished and how it was done, we would be remiss not to go back and address in greater detail some of the genuine difficulties the TA team confronted in trying to engage the YFC staff and communities. As we illustrated briefly in the section on Working Together in New Ways and in the section on Building Staff Capacity, it was the age old problem of resistance to the status quo that significantly slowed the process of implementation. The TA team encountered both institutional inertia and individual reluctance to change. These dual sources of resistance often created situations that the community participants themselves could not solve because they were either too close to the problem to see the solution, or lacked the experience to make change happen.

Given the political history and funding structure within the employment and training community, a set of fairly change-resistant ways of doing business has evolved. Organizations, seeking to maintain their individual position and relative advantage within the current structure, make decisions in order to improve or maximize their own standing. Of course, a fully integrated, seamless system requires organizations and the people within them to adapt to new ways of thinking and doing. Some of these tensions manifested themselves in the following ways:

C   **The relationship between the YFC neighborhood and the grant recipient** All YFC sites are subsets of larger communities with which they must interact politically on a daily basis. The political infighting over control of dollars between the grant recipients and the YFC site partners frequently overpowered efforts to address the planning, implementation and operational needs of the YFC initiative, and in some YFC communities forced the initiative to a grinding halt.

C   **The prevailing relationships among institutions and organizations within the YFC community.** Inside the YFC target areas themselves, recurring turf battles among neighborhood organizations subverted the systems-building efforts of the initiative. The lack of experience and willingness to subordinate their own short-term objectives to a larger vision of long-term cooperation and collaboration that would

ultimately benefit more youth frequently delayed organizations from finding common and mutually supportive ground.

C   **Selection of staff.** In recruiting and selecting staff for YFC positions, particularly that of project director, the fact that managers may have had limited experience in administering an initiative of YFC's scope and complexity was frequently overlooked. As a result, many YFC sites struggled through the critical planning period. Directors who lacked a future vision and strong managerial skills, experienced tremendous difficulty as they attempted to create a management structure which would pay attention to the fundamental operation processes—staffing, service delivery, management information systems, evaluation, future funding, and public relations—that would eventually support and sustain the YFC mission and its components.

These are only a few of the hurdles that the TA site specialists found they had to assist their sites in overcoming. As site specialists became more familiar with these issues, it became apparent that it was better for an outside facilitator to take the lead in helping to resolve and broker the situation simply because outsiders were not laden with the same emotional and political baggage that had created gridlock among the residents and institutions in the first place. Moreover, the TA specialists were trained facilitators.

It also became evident that although potential resources existed within each site to make YFC work, the proactive force of an external TA specialist was required to drive the YFC agenda forward and press the involved partners to take appropriate action. The following quote creates a sense of what the TA team was up against and what it was able accomplish within most YFC sites.

> *During our development stage it was unbelievable what some individuals wanted to do with the funds. For instance, many wanted to just get a piece of the pie with no strings attached to accountability or goals. Things were out of control, and the board was at the point where instead of making a wrong move, they wouldn't decide at all . . . . Technical assistance was called in immediately. Our brightest moment was after a 2-day retreat with our technical assistance [person]. No, the board did not like all they heard, but they were ready to move forward with a clear understanding of the YFC goals and objectives guiding their decisions. It was as if they had unveiled the truth and there was a new enthusiasm and dedication to this mission to help youth and young adults in our community to become more productive citizens—***Cecelia Edmonds, Executive Director, Racine Youth Fair Chance***

Some sites had more savvy and experience with the process of complex institutional change than others and were, therefore, able to move forward more quickly. All sites, however, raised developmental issues and continue to request external input and feedback to assist them in finding a realistic way to achieve their goals. In order to build an infrastructure for continuing this assistance after the federally funded TA is no longer available, the site specialists have been

working continuously with sites to identify local TA experts who will be able to produce the tough, unbiased perspective needed to help sustain successful change.

## Part IV.	Strategic Technical Assistance Investments: Setting the Stage for a New Way of Thinking and a New Way of Doing

Youth Fair Chance offered the employment and training field an opportunity to *change the paradigm* for job training and the delivery of supportive services for young people living in poverty. Working together with the DOL/ETA team as technical assistance providers, we have learned a lot about the magnitude and depth of change required to realize the goals of Youth Fair Chance.

The YFC grants—awarded to Private Industry Councils that had been operating for more than a decade under the JTPA paradigm—were based on a new and different set of values and a vision to help shape a new way of doing business. It is fair to say that the YFC policy direction described earlier in this report was ahead of practice. In other words, although there has been substantial progress on the legislative and policy front, most practitioners and policymakers would agree that the translation of policy into working, high-quality programs and systems remains a major challenge. YFC grant recipients proved no exception to the rule. Under JTPA, the investment in staff development was minimal, and much of it was focused on compliance rather than program design, improved service delivery structures, or governance strategies. Guidance for local policymakers, community leaders, educators, and program managers also has been limited under JTPA. The 1992 Amendments to JTPA provided general goals, but offered little in the way of clear standards for the development of quality programs and system design. All of this is to say that the job of moving from vision to practice requires a significant and steadfast investment in articulating, reinforcing, and supporting the values, beliefs, and research-based mindset underpinning the YFC initiative.

Figure 3 illustrates the scope and intensity of change inherent in this initiative. As mentioned above, during the first 30 months of YFC, the level of effort and the command of best practices knowledge required to move from the old JTPA paradigm to the new YFC model of a comprehensive community-wide initiative has been enormous for both the site-based partners and for the TA specialists. All of the TA activities (clarifying expectations and outcomes, working together in new ways, defining quality practice and system elements, building staff capacity and public awareness, and benchmarking progress and setting a framework for continuous improvement and sustainment) were strategically focused on furthering this paradigm shift.

Part V. Recommendations for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating Comprehensive Community-Wide Initiatives

Many of the hundreds of leaders and participants engaged in the YFC initiative worry that the deepening needs of high-poverty urban and rural America could ultimately swamp the fragile renaissance now underway in some of our poorest communities. Even if they don't, the dimensions and duration of the current initiative suggest the limits of what government alone can do for and with the nation's poorest communities.

In an effort to help ease the way for future initiatives, as well as for those involved with school-to-work system-building, empowerment/enterprise developments, and other community-wide initiatives, we offer the following recommendations:

A. Technical Assistance

There is a clear and unmistakable call for technical assistance from all YFC directors. There is also a sense of value and appreciation for an array of assistance ranging from one-to-one guidance and facilitation to direct capacity-building to networking and executive coaching, as illustrated by the following remarks from YFC sites:

> *"Many unexpected situations had plagued the initiative, resulting in a slow start in program implementation. . . The TA helped me set some specific directions toward developing a truly integrated approach to service."*

> *"The in-service training provided to our case management team helped set in place the mechanism for communication, cooperation, and participation in our system-building effort. Our site specialist pulled no punches. She hit us hard, but left us something on which to build. I appreciate her frankness, openness, and genuine concern to see us succeed. . ."*

> *"Technical assistance staff have acted as independent facilitators, which has been a big benefit to us and allowed us to broaden our view to see the trees as well as the forest. . . . We know that it is not only important to do things right, but to also do the right thing."*

Providing TA to comprehensive, community-wide initiatives is critical to their success. The individuals and groups who step forward to plan and implement YFC-like strategies face major challenges and will need all the help they can get from competent knowledge brokers, facilitators, trainers, troubleshooters, and strategists. Success with these initiatives requires a new and still emerging, professional competence that draws on many crosscutting disciplines.

These initiatives will continue to require the continued operation of the new Federal teaming technical assistance approach that has been implemented by the DOL staff during the past 30 months of YFC operation. This new effort by Federal employees to see themselves as partners with the communities they fund has a much stronger likelihood of success than the old JTPA adversarial model. This customer-driven model, which puts the improved well-being of young people and their families at the center of a youth initiative, creates a win-win situation for all concerned.

We believe strongly that a change in one technical assistance design element is critical to improving the success of the TA effort and, ultimately, the success of the YFC-type initiative. The technical assistance contract should be awarded 3 to 4 months prior to the awards made to the sites. This gives the TA contractor the necessary time to work with the DOL TA team staff, develop a common TA philosophy among their own staff, train TA staff, develop the first annual TA plan, and be prepared to provide meaningful technical assistance to all of the selected sites right from the kick-off conference. We anticipate that this will have the strongest positive impact in the following areas: improving site staff selection, developing more focused and realistic implementation plans, and laying the groundwork for establishing good working relationships with grant recipients.

B.   Evaluation

> *Anyone trying to improve the conditions under which high risk children grow up to adulthood must pay close attention to the changes needed in prevailing approaches to research and evaluation. . . Prevailing approaches to research and evaluation must be changed in ways that will help improve programs, while at the same time providing skeptics with persuasive evidence of program effectiveness. . . . We can bring about sorely needed realignment to get us away from a stand-off between one group of people who are seen as rigorous and objective, who are willing to focus on outcomes, and who are absolutely convinced that nothing works, and the people on the other side who are seen as soft and subjective, who are eager to focus on process to the exclusion of results, and who believe that well-designed interventions can change lives*—**Lisbeth Schorr, Getting Smart, Getting Real, 1995**

Program managers and policy-makers have generally relied on lessons from research and evaluation to teach them how to improve programs, allocate resources, and create enabling legislation. In the past, many evaluations relied on and addressed a narrow range of information and largely favored the biomedical, experimental "single problem-single solution" model. More recently, the evaluation profession has had to confront the inadequacies of the scientific method for measuring the effectiveness of broad, complex and interactive services for youth and family.

As result, innovative approaches to evaluating comprehensive community change initiatives, such as YFC, are being explored. New work is underway as part of a "theories of change" approach to evaluation—work on identifying interim milestones that link interventions with outcomes and show the progress of these reform and system-building efforts.

We strongly recommend that these innovations be applied to any YFC-like initiatives in order to capture the rich and otherwise undocumented lessons from this experience.

C.   Policy

Based on our work and our observations, following are some thoughts that the TA team believes could help to inform future legislative efforts of this kind and that we believe will enhance the likelihood of improving the successful outcomes for youth living in at-risk communities.

- **Focus support on neighborhoods.** Pay attention to supporting local jurisdiction(s) to promote neighborhood decisionmaking efforts that cross-cut local, state, and Federal categorical boundaries.

- **Phase in the funding effort.** Experience suggests that for future programs, it is more productive to divide funding into two stages: (1) planning grants, and (2) implementation grants to sites that demonstrate that they are ready to undertake this next step. During the planning phase, the range of governance/accountability issues should be addressed. For example, time spent on developing common goals and benchmarks that address both progress and outcomes and clearer understandings of why the YFC funds were not subject to the same categorical criteria that govern other JTPA programs would have substantially helped in several communities. Furthermore, time spent at the program startup to develop common reporting systems across agencies using the YFC neighborhood as the community-wide test site can help expedite accountability and community-wide systemic change efforts.

- **Design as if geography matters.** A different technique should be used to establish subjurisdictional boundaries. For example, the focus on distressed neighborhoods could be achieved by a congressional requirement that a population range–not an absolute number–be established. The legislation should spell out the indicators of distress and have Federal agencies develop a scoring rubric against those indicators as one key index for funding. Communities could be asked to show proof they are targeting on geographic areas with the highest incidence of distress.

A complicating factor when considering geography is the fact that not all institutions recognize the same boundaries. For example, not all youth inside the designated catchment areas attend the same schools while some youth outside the catchment area are enrolled in designated YFC schools. Issues arose over which youth were eligible for YFC services. Likewise, potential employer partners may be situated a considerable distance beyond the catchment area, but since they employ many who reside in the targeted area, they need to be engaged as partners. Such examples of geographical mismatch pose barriers to collaboration. Future initiatives need to consider bridge building activities whenever the political, educational, economic, cultural, and programmatic boundaries do not exactly coincide, which is to say, always.

Ë   **Build in incentives to collaborate.** To stimulate more innovation, states and the Federal government need to create incentives for collaborative efforts at the local level. For example, incentives through grant guidelines, jointly funded programs, or performance standards can all be used. Some of the incentives should focus on reducing the strict income and age eligibility rules. If a community can document collaborative approaches for targeting resources in the most distressed neighborhoods or that they intend to focus on a population group with multiple indicators of distress, such as gang members, absolute incomes and/or age limitations become unnecessary barriers for good program design.

Communities should be allowed to integrate funds from a variety of sources if they can show that **all** youth are accommodated through education and support services that are appropriate for their circumstances. Proof of this could come from a community showing how Federal, state, and local dollars would be used to provide access for traditionally defined out-of-school youth to education services, based on academic and industry standards.

Ë   **Promote communications and understanding.** New collaborative situations need to be promoted that would encourage communication across institutional lines at all levels, for example, through joint meeting of administrators from education, labor, and human services; encouraging joint training at the line-staff level; or multi-institutional conferences.

Ë   **Strategize early for sustainment and growth.** It is too late to begin designing a strategy for sustainment and growth when the primary funding source is in its last year. Difficult though it may be, programs that are funded by sources that have a finite funding date must begin early to develop strategies that can lead to new

sources of money to support the system and help it grow. This means involving State programs such as School-to-Work, local government resources, local foundations, and local and regional businesses and business foundations early and often in program planning and implementation so they will be eager to assist in the continuance of at least those parts of the system that reflect their own agendas.

Ë **Revisit allowable activities.** There will always be a tension in the intergovernmental system regarding the appropriate balance between loose and tight language in legislation delineating allowable activities. YFC lessons suggest that it is important not to impose arbitrary age limits nor limit the use of dollars in such a way that they can only be used for activities directly related to a training or job placement function. This does not mean it is desirable to have the "allowable activities" doors open to the point that funds essentially would become general revenue dollars. What it does mean is that any future funding for employment development efforts for at-risk youth should include allowing communities to fund the types of services that were included in the YFC legislation.

Ë **Support networks.** An explicit investment in adult development and facilitated peer-to-peer networks is critical to the success of a comprehensive initiative such as YFC. To promote best practice, share learning progress, promote going to scale and sustainability, efforts such as YFC need to be a part of a national network. Although many of the day-to-day solutions rest within the local areas, facilitation and "just in time" information based on cross-cutting and broad-based research can accelerate the effort. A national resource pool of funds mechanism that brings together representatives involved in such national pilot projects is helpful. This can be done through a variety of means, for example, conferences, communication technology, or support for travel to and from one site to another.

Ë **Continue research focusing on comprehensive services to youth.** YFC has reaffirmed the research that youth are best served in a setting that provides comprehensive services. What it has not yet shown is the best way to implement comprehensive services, especially given the challenges listed in this report–categorical programs with narrowly defined funding sources, geographic boundaries, differing accountability systems, and the list goes on. More work is needed in designing implementation strategies that can provide holistic services to youth while being true to the lessons learned from YFC.

Ë **Build youth employability strategies on youth development principles.** YFC has shown that successful youth employment is built on the principles of youth

development. Youth development is an ongoing process in which youth meet their basic physical and social needs and build the competencies and connections needed for survival and success. To have successful youth development, young people need to be engaged and invested. Youth need to be nurtured, guided, empowered, and challenged to do important work and be recognized and honored for doing it. YFC success in melding youth development and youth employability efforts has important implications for other similar efforts.

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Appendix A

SCANS Skills

SCANS: Workplace Know-How

The know-how identified by SCANS is made up of five workplace competencies and a three-part foundation of skills and personal qualities needed for solid job performance.

WORKPLACE COMPETENCIES—Effective workers can productively use:

- **Resources**—They know how to identify, organize, plan and allocate time, money, materials, space, and staff.

- **Interpersonal skills**—They can work well with others on teams, teach others, serve customers, lead, negotiate, and interact well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

- **Information**—They can acquire, evaluate, and use data, organize and maintain files, interpret and communicate, and use computers to process information.

- **Systems**—They understand social, organizational, and technological systems and operate effectively with them; they can monitor and correct performance; and they can design or improve systems.

- **Technology**—They can select a variety of equipment and tools, apply technology to specific tasks, and maintain and troubleshoot equipment.

FOUNDATION SKILLS—Competent workers in the high-performance workplace need:

- **Basic Skills**—They are functional in the areas of reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking, and listening.

- **Thinking Skills**—They have the ability to learn, to reason, to think creatively, to make decisions, and to solve problems.

- **Personal Qualities**—They exhibit individual responsibility, self-esteem and self-management, sociability, and integrity.

*   *   *   *

Appendix B

**A New Way of Thinking
and
A New Way of Doing**

Working Model for the Development of Progress Indicators

The Figure 2 conceptual model on page 15 of the report is offered as a stimulus for critical discussion and planning with YFC teams. It depicts distinct and intersecting domains that represent both well-established and underdeveloped dimensions of YFC. It is intended to help think through and structure the work to be done in order to realize the goals inherent in YFC.

The three major circles in this model represent core areas of work to be done by YFC teams. The domain **of** "Program and Systems Building" represents the essential elements for effective programming. It is the home of new curriculum development; innovative assessment processes; active teaching and learning environments; effective combination of work, service, and learning in classrooms, at work places, and in the community; and it is charged with the task of implementing best practices in all these areas for both "in-school" and "in-the-community" participants. This demands a system-building effort aimed at connecting a variety of activities that reflects an awareness of the new education and skills standards.

With regard to the dual goal of **program and system-building,** it is important to note the premise of YFC, i.e., that no single approach or strategy will prove effective for **all** young people in the community. To adequately meet the needs of YFC participants, the new program and system-builders must create the capacity to respond to differences among individuals. Such a system would have at least four elements: a program mix that is **flexible and varied** enough to address a spectrum of individual needs and skill levels and that has the means (through assessment) to identify those needs; the capacity to provide **intensive and long-term programming**, with appropriate interim outcomes, for those youth with the greatest need; an **integrated and collaborative** approach that can provide an array of services, in particular a mix of work and learning, service learning; a **graduated sequence of services** that extends over time, combining, for example, school year and summer programming over several years, to provide for the development of a hierarchy of skills and experience at work and in class.

The domain of "Community Access/Awareness" encompasses the fundamental principle of community collaboration, ownership, and shared values. The work of YFC teams largely focuses on developing the community governance structure and building community strength through participation in decisionmaking. Development and maintenance of a genuine community resource center that aims to become the "hub" for community growth and action is also a major focus of startup and ongoing work.

The domain of "Resource Development/Sustainability" is the center of the institutional change agenda. Finding new resources and using old resources in new ways in order to sustain and grow YFC is the charge for this area.

The three areas of intersection among the core domains highlight critical features of the YFC agenda.

Intersection A focuses on the importance of resource development keeping pace with program and system changes in schools, in workplaces, and in the community. This is the locus of policy of formulation and resource allocation.

Intersection B provides the locus for community recruitment campaigns, needs assessments, employer involvement in skills standards, curriculum development, workplace learning arrangements, and employability certifications.

Intersection C opens the door for grassroots advocacy for resources devoted to services of particular value to the community and for institutional changes regarding decisionmaking.

The common central (shaded) area in which all domains converge can be viewed as the YFC niche as a unique, multidimensional initiative, bringing together this array of work and policy initiatives.

Using this model as a starting point for the development of site-by-site progress indicators, a series of focused discussions were conducted with the Community Resource Boards and staff to identify site-specific strengths as well as areas for further growth and planned action. The outcome was the workplans and/or progress indicators for each domain. (See Appendix C.)

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Appendix C

**Key Steps for Developing Program
Components and Progress Indicators**

A.   PROGRAM AND SYSTEM-BUILDING

This area concerns the project's infrastructure for organizing and leading the community toward YFC development and implementation. Major progress indicators and corresponding activities are:

Community Resource Board (Mechanisms for Ensuring Community Input and Control)

G   Identify a diverse group of individuals from various disciplines and representations, e.g., parent, youth, business, industry, education, community-based organizations higher education, government, neighborhood association, religious institution

G   Identify function and operational infrastructure, e.g., bylaws, of community group to form a formal board or council.

G   Investigate whether the board will incorporate as a 501(c)3.

G   Identify committees of the board and formal lines of communication, e.g., institutionalization, education, health, employment and training, and fund raising.

G   Clarify the board's role regarding oversight, guidance, direction, policy, expansion, scope and range of program services, institutionalization, identification of other funding, relationship to the lead agency, identification of volunteer goods and services, lead agency staff, and partner agencies.

G   Develop and identify forums for community involvement, input, decisionmaking, and addressing client needs.

G   Identify the board's role in the social and economic development of the community.

G   Identify a diverse group of parents to plan parental and neighborhood activities that train, inform, support, and empower parents.

G   Plan activities that increase parental knowledge of nutrition and nurturing, e.g., growth and development stage.

G   Establish a program to increase parental literacy.

G   Establish an intergenerational literacy program.

G   Plan and execute workshops and service to empower parents regarding available services at the local, State, and national levels, e.g., medical, housing, and child care.

G   Plan and execute a program that will encourage parental involvement in the education of in-school and out-of-school children, youth, and young adults.

Program Administrative Infrastructure

    1.   **Multiagency Collaborations**

G   Develop joint common goals and objectives to guide the process.

G   Define and discuss the expertise or specializations of each collaborator.

G   Discuss how the collaboration process will be fostered in all levels of the organization.

G   Clarify lines of authority.

G   Identify how the responsibilities for obtaining the goals and objectives will be met.

G   Plan and execute activities that enhance consensus-building.

G   Identify technical assistance to facilitate and guide initial agency meetings.

    2.   **Development of Written Agreements**

G   Identify written goals.

G   Identify written measurable objectives.

G   Develop a list of clearly defined agency expectations.

G   Clarify policies, procedures, and roles at all administrative and service delivery levels.

G   Identify reporting expectations.

G   Plan regularly scheduled meetings that include responsible individuals from all departments.

G   Identify clear beginning and ending dates of the agreement.

G   Affix the signatures of all accountable individuals.

    3.   **Staff and Management Capabilities**

G   Select managers who have experience operating large, complex, human service projects.

G   Develop written job functions and qualifications.

G   Employ staff with appropriate credentials and who reflect community diversity.

G   Orient staff to YFC's and DOL's vision.

G   Provide staff with specialized training and TA.

4.   Management Information Systems

G   Ensure that MIS collects information on all participants (in-school and out-of-school).

G   Program managers use reports from MIS on a regular basis to assess the effectiveness of various program components.

G   Ensure that reporting requirements for the national evaluation have been established and are being addressed.

G   Share MIS data with the community resource board and other community members.

G   Use MIS data in short-term and long-term planning.

5.   Systems-Level and Client Case Management

G   Ensure that administrators have a strategy for coordinating provision of services from other agencies.

G   Ensure that the case managers know what they can and cannot promise to clients.

G   Ensure that the case manager can requisition services and resources across institutional lines.

G   Ensure that referral procedures and service delivery are client-centered.

G   Ensure that the case manager monitors, verifies, and records client progress with service providers.

G   Develop an agreed-upon working definition of case management.

G   Develop job descriptions, e.g., case manager, supervisor of case management, etc.

G   Select appropriate case management staff.

G   Plan and execute training for all case management staff.

G   Identify and assess human service agencies/institutions to participate.

G   Assess the quality and quantity of services the agencies have provided in the community.

G   Develop a broad list of services available from each agency/institution.

G   Develop formal written interagency agreements.

G   Arrange meetings with participating agencies/institutions.

G   Plan and execute training for staff of the participating agencies/institutions.

G   Define the working relationship with the agencies/institutions.

G   Identify broad outcomes for the clients.

G   Develop training that will empower the clients to access the system.

School-To-Work Component (In-School)

G   Obtain review and discuss your State and local school-to-work plan with all appropriate individuals.

G   Obtain review, and discuss the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1993 and Goals 2000: Educate America Act with all appropriate individuals.

G   Develop and execute a plan that will make employers full partners in the process.

G   Develop and implement a plan that will identify and actively involve post-secondary educational institutions, private and public employers, labor organizations, government agencies, community groups (including religious institutions), and parents/youth in linking school and work.

G   Plan in-service training with all school faculty.

G   Plan all aspects of the school-based, worked-based, and connecting activities.

G   Develop standards that will assist students in obtaining above-average academic and occupational standards of performance.

G   Investigate and obtain information on programs such as tech-prep, career academics, school-to-apprenticeship, cooperative education, and business education compacts.

G   Recruit youth and young adults who have not obtained a high school diploma or GED to enroll in an alternative education program.

G   Ensure that the work-based component includes (a) planned program of job training and experience, (b) mastery of skills relevant to a career major, and (c) issuance of skills certificates.

G   Ensure that the school-based component includes (a) career exploration and counseling, (b) student identification of a career major by 11th grade, (c) mastery of academic skills, (d) issuance of skills certifications, and (e) regularly scheduled evaluations.

G   Develop a component of connecting activities.

School-To-Work Component (Out-of-School)

G   Identify students/clients who will participate in YFC.

G   Develop and implement multiple recruitment strategies.

G   Plan and execute orientation with written information packages.

G   Develop a standard operations procedures manual.

G   Identify and develop all components of the program:

     N   Intake

     N   Assessment (basic education/literacy, preemployment, work maturity, occupational skills, life skills, barriers, interest, and goals

     N   Counseling/coaching

     N   Skills training

     N   Literacy (curriculum identification)

     N   Job readiness

     N   Job development

     N   Job placement and followup

     N   Support services: Housing, child care, living assistance, drug and alcohol programs, parenting, and pregnancy prevention.

G   Create individualized employment development plan.

G   Identify appropriate evaluation measures (summative/formative).

G   Develop and issue skill standard certifications.

Community Resource Center

G   Inform the community through public meetings of the intended use of the facility.

G   Identify a facility that is in a safe/neutral zone.

G   Identify a facility that is easily accessible by public and/or private transportation.

G   Contact and meet with the local transportation authorities.

G   Identify the outside of the facility with the appropriate YFC logo.

G   Identify a facility that requires minimum renovation.

G   Identify a facility that will meet local zoning requirements.

G   Identify a facility that has reasonable rental/purchasing requirements.

Connecting Activities (Sports and Recreation Programs)

G   Identify a safe place(s) for the activities.

G   Plan activities that extend beyond the traditional days and hours.

G   Identify activities that encourage male/female participation.

G   Identify activities that encourage team-building.

G   Identify activities that will encourage the building of positive self-esteem.

G   Identify activities that will encourage the positive development of work habits.

B.   COMMUNITY ACCESS AND AWARENESS

G   Identify agencies to assist in the ongoing positive promotion of YFC, e.g., television, newspaper, and video.

G   Prepare printed flyers, community inserts, billboards, and posters to promote YFC.

G   Develop an ongoing strategy for information to be shared in the community, e.g., small and large successes of the program.

G   Conduct a series of town meetings and focus groups to gather information and input from the community.

G   Develop a program logo that is used on all materials and clearly identifies the YFC facility and van.

G   Plan and execute tours and open house activities.

G   Plan a schedule of community meetings, ceremonies, and other events to be hosted at the YFC facility.

C. RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINMENT

G Map community resources and incorporate existing resources to support YFC programs—YFC funds are used to leverage existing funds.

G Pursue outside funding sources, both locally and nationally.

G Collaborate with related Federal and State initiatives for education reform.

*   *   *   *

Figure 1
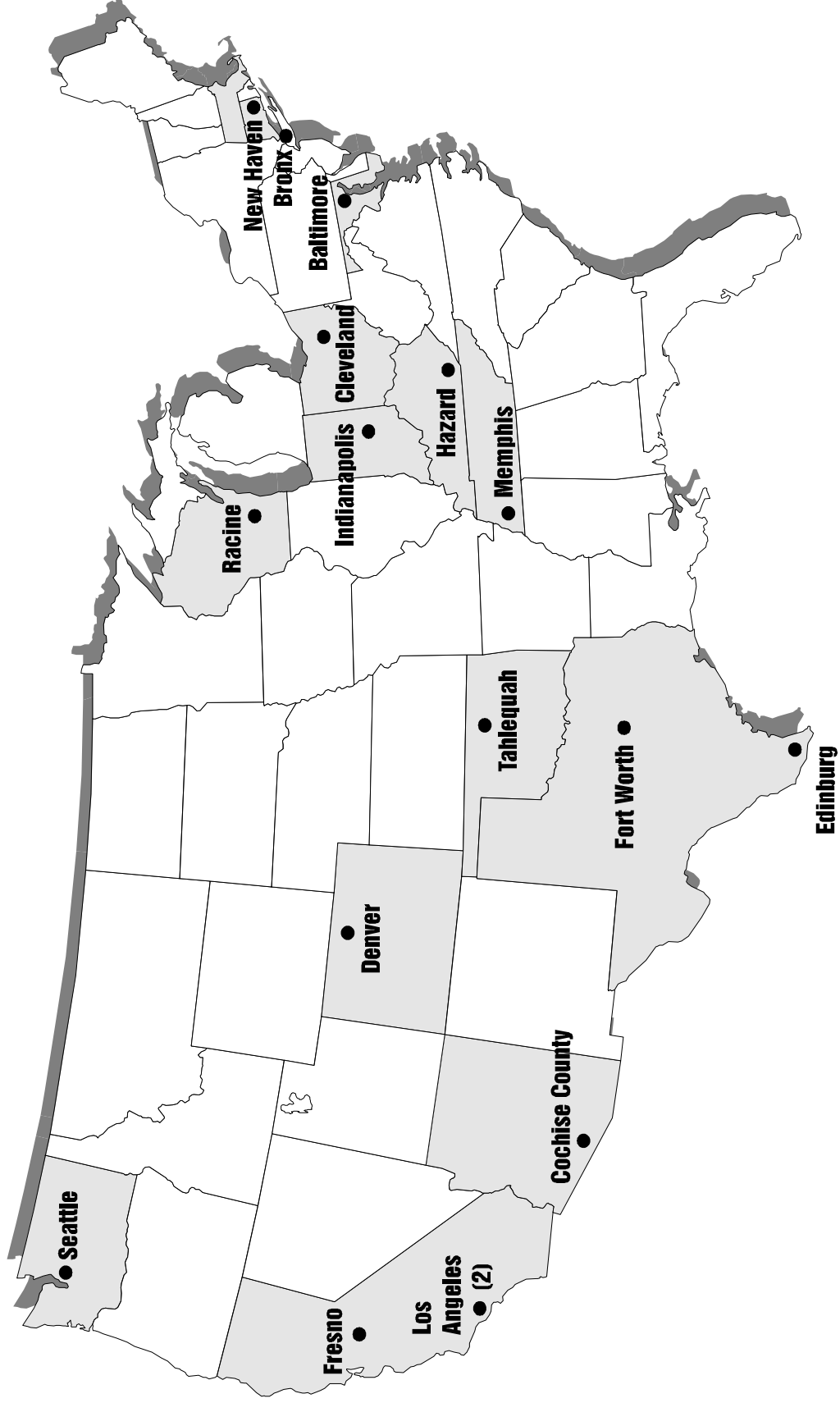
Youth Fair Chance Demonstration Sites

Figure 2

Youth Fair Chance: A Working Model for a
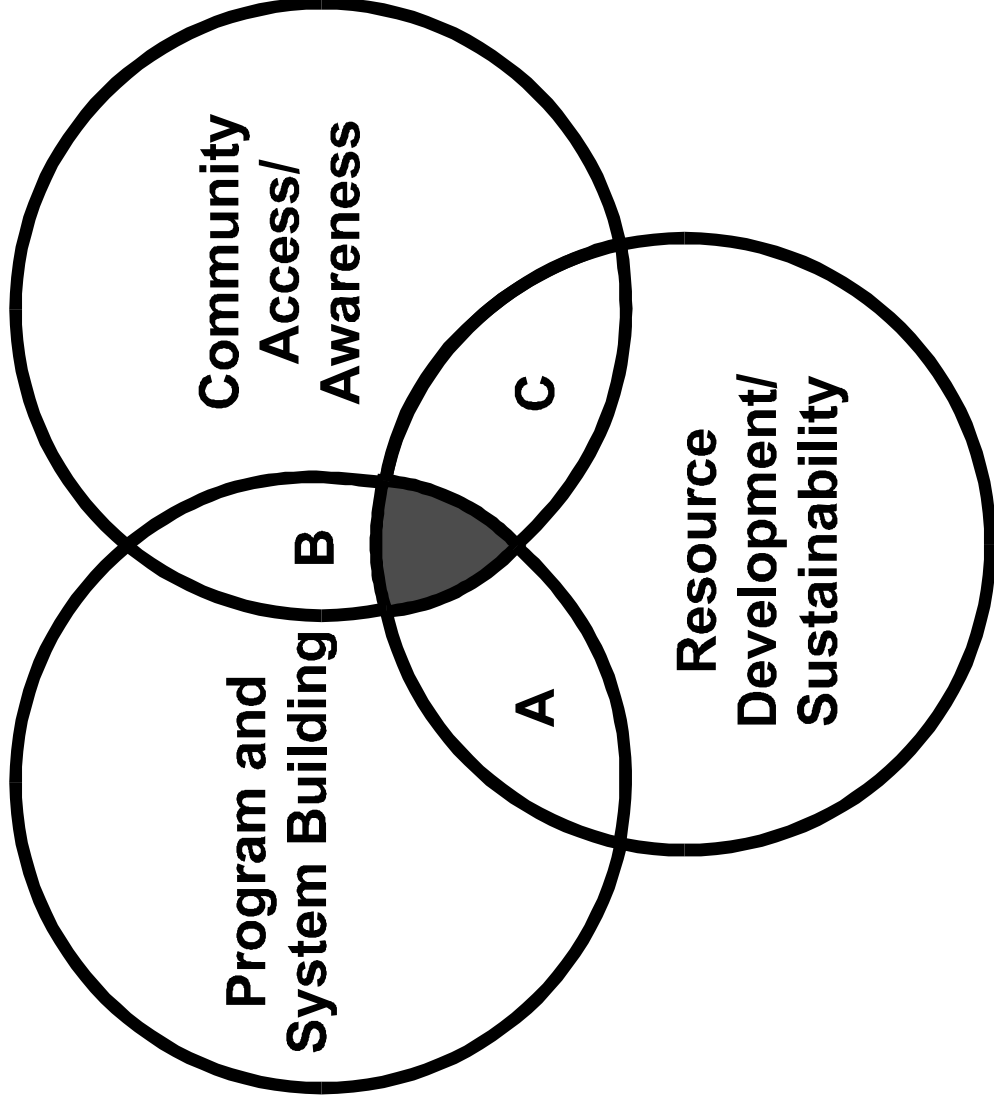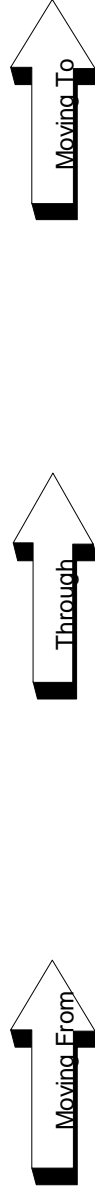New Way of Thinking and a New Way of Doing

Figure 3

Strategic Technical Assistance Investments:
Setting The Stage For a New Way of Thinking and a New Way of Doing

TA activities [1] were all directed towards facilitating a complex paradigm shift including substantial changes in how youth programs are planned, operated, financed, and documented. The first 2 years focused on two dimensions: governance community involvement strategies and service delivery system building.

Moving From → Through → Moving To

GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT		
* Focus on community deficits and narrow definition of "problem" * Top down decision making for the community prescriptive programs, limited ownership among implementors * Programs accountable to funder * Rubber-stamp boards, resists change, ignores diversity	<u>Community Wide Approach</u> * Community resource councils representing "community voice" in governance of YFC * Formal mission and valued-based partnership development with employers, schools, residents, and social agencies * Resource (asset) mapping and public awareness campaigns (social, political, cultural, and economic aspects)	* Focus on community assets * Community-centered collaboration & decision making to all youth service agencies * Programs accountable to the community and participants as well as funder * Program design build on needs and strengths of community * Serves board, encourages risk-taking, capitalizes on diversity among staff, clients, and students