

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 12-10
	DATE October 19, 2010

TO: ALL STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS
 ALL STATE AND LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARDS
 ALL STATE ONE-STOP CENTER SYSTEM LEADS
 STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES

FROM: JANE OATES /s/
 Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Release and Availability of Employment and Training Administration (ETA) Occasional Paper 2010-09, *Innovating Under Pressure: The Story of the 2009 Recovery Act Summer Youth Employment Initiative: Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis & Marion County, Phoenix & Maricopa County*

1. Purpose. To announce the release and availability of ETA Occasional Paper 2010-09, *Innovating Under Pressure: The Story of the 2009 Recovery Act Summer Youth Employment Initiative: Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis & Marion County, Phoenix & Maricopa County*.

2. Background. On February 17, 2009, President Barack Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) into law, providing \$1.2 billion in targeted funding for the workforce investment system to generate employment and training opportunities for economically disadvantaged youth nationwide. Congress and the U.S. Department of Labor encouraged states and local workforce investment boards to use the funds to create meaningful work experiences for these young people in summer 2009.

This study documents the implementation of the Recovery Act summer youth employment initiative in four featured communities. The researchers conducted interviews and in-depth site visits over a two-week period in each community and developed individual case studies describing the recessionary challenges and strategies in the four communities during summer 2009. These four communities collectively received an infusion of more than \$37 million and provided an estimated 16,650 summer jobs for low-income and disadvantaged youth.

3. Publication Description. This report describes the local context for implementation, provides insight into specific assets and innovations that were used to achieve the community goals, and identifies elements of best practices and lessons that may inform future summer youth employment initiatives.

KEY FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

While the study yields many reflections about the experiences of each local community, five main ingredients for success stand out:

1. Leadership trumps all.

Leaders in these four communities were strong, resilient risk takers who shared three core management qualities: mission focus, results orientation, and a commitment to monitoring for continuous improvement.

2. Cross-sector partnerships are necessary.

Adaptive capacity helped the four communities to make the most of this opportunity.

3. Incorporation of youth development principles adds quality and skills.

With so many youth involved in so many communities across the United States, an opportunity exists to engage and educate youth on other critical life and work skills issues (e.g., financial literacy, health). This aligns well with broader youth development goals.

4. Alternate pools of money and flexible lines of credit are helpful.

Communities with such resources (particularly Chicago and Detroit) had important flexibility with respect to moving quickly, paying youth, and cash flow.

5. Think big: Consider the role of work and learning in preparing youth for post-secondary education, work, and life.

The summer of 2009 re-opens the door to broader links between employment and training and education – “year-round summer” with creative project-based and work-based learning for academic credit has proven to be a valuable pathway for young people struggling in traditional classrooms. Investing in the transition to post-secondary education and credentials can lead to valuable outcomes for older youth.

LESSONS LEARNED

All communities turned learning under pressure into an opportunity. They made mistakes and miscalculations and faced unknowns, but these led to lessons learned. As noted earlier, each of the communities strove for continuous improvement.

- *Focus on the quality and training of supervisors to enrich the youths’ learning experience.* For example, Phoenix and Maricopa County developed and implemented a deliberate process of orientation and training, including a worksite supervisor’s handbook and hired staff (called career advisors or case managers) whose responsibilities included worksite monitoring and support.
- *Streamline eligibility determination, assessment, and orientation.* In Chicago, the Department of Family and Support Services Commissioner authorized staff to streamline the eligibility review process, and, where necessary, to allow participants to begin working while eligibility determination was still underway (with completion of necessary paperwork to follow).

- *Create a seamless infrastructure for data management, payroll options, and other critical processes.* Despite employing various creative strategies, such as using debit cards instead of checks in Indianapolis and Marion County, all of the communities experienced data management and payroll problems that affected their ability to ensure quality.
- *Consider vouchers for transportation and clothing for participating youth.* The participants often lacked good access to transportation and professional clothing. Transportation to worksites in particular was a problem in all four communities, especially when jobs that would interest youth were not located near their homes.
- *Match jobs and educational offerings to participants' skills, interests, and locations.* The four communities found that their lofty vision of “great matches” quickly turned to the reality of getting kids to work – communities couldn’t job match as much as they would have liked. The strategies used by the four communities were a good start.
- *Acknowledge that no one can go it alone.* A key element of success in all four communities was the presence of pre-existing collaborative relationships on which to build. Forming internal collaborative working groups or teams to share the responsibility and establish an “all hands on deck” strategy also contributed to success in the four communities. All four communities demonstrated this level of collaboration. The Chicago and Detroit experiences were especially noteworthy in this regard.

4. Inquiries. To view an abstract of this publication, as well as to download the executive summary and full report, visit the ETA Occasional Paper Series Web site at: <http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm>.