

WIA Forum on Understanding Labor Market Trends and Identifying Career Pathways for Youth

Presenters: Jonathan Latner, Commonwealth Corporation and Karen DeCoster, Department of Education

Panel Members: Ed Gagne, Workforce Central; Larry Smith, Jobs and Community Services; Aaron Tanimoto, Action for Boston Community Development; Wendy Andrade, New Directions; and Brad Sperry, Hampden County Regional Employment Board

Date: Friday, March 7th, 2008, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Venue: College of the Holy Cross, Hogan Campus Center

Purpose of Forum

The Commonwealth Corporation (CommCorp) administers technical assistance to support the Massachusetts Workforce Investment Act's (WIA) Youth Councils and affiliated organizations involved with the workforce development system. In this role, CommCorp provides training, resources, and information regarding youth development issues. Recently, CommCorp's WIA Youth initiative hosted a forum on identifying various pathways for connecting youth to employment and education. Forum activities included resource and data sharing regarding labor market information as well as information sharing around strategies being used on the local level to connect youth to education and career pathways. The session also focused on data-driven strategies for connecting youth to an occupational track. This event is part of a series of activities intended to assist local areas in their efforts to meet the performance mandates under WIA.

Summary of Key Highlights

1. Understanding Labor Market Data Labor and Identifying Pathways for Youth

- ✓ Three main sectors discussed: healthcare, manufacturing and retail;
- ✓ Overview of Hot Jobs in the state of MA –industry sectors that have current openings;
- ✓ Always make sure that students are aware of jobs or industries where there are current vacancies; and
- ✓ Students with CORI's can be employed in health care industry depending on offense. Explore opportunities for these youth.

Online Resources:

- [Healthcare Chartbook](http://commcorp.org/researchandevaluation/documents/Healthcare_chartbook.pdf) (click hyperlink or visit: http://commcorp.org/researchandevaluation/documents/Healthcare_chartbook.pdf)
- Coming soon: Manufacturing Chartbook (visit <http://www.commcorp.org> for more details)
- To view PowerPoint presentation, visit <http://commcorp.org/wia/resources.html>)

Contact:

John Latner at jlatner@commcorp.org for more information or additional resources.

2. Video Resource Guide

In response to issues raised during the Graduation Rate Summit regarding the consequences of dropping out of school, members of Pathways to Success by 21 (P21) initiative have worked diligently on developing “youth friendly” tools to help address this issue statewide. “Think Again: The Connection Between Education and True Independence” showcases youth testimonies on the impact of dropping out of high school and the effect has had on their lives, and the decisions they have made to pursue education as a pathway to career and a higher quality of life.

Online Resource:

- To access “Think Again” online, click on hyperlink or visit <http://commcorp.org/p21/index.html> (click on the “here” hyperlink located two paragraphs from the top of webpage).

Contact:

Gregg McCutcheon at gmccutcheon@commcorp.org for more information.

3. How to Use Labor Market Information to Help Youth Develop a Career Pathway

Helpful resources shared during the portion of the session include:

- ✓ Perkins post-secondary partners—find out who they are through the community colleges in your local area; and
- ✓ Development of career plan (see resources below for details).

Online Resources:

- The [Massachusetts Career Information System](http://masscis.intocareers.org) (click on hyperlink or visit <http://masscis.intocareers.org>) provides career information that includes the occupational outlook for specific career pathways, the educational requirements, a 5-minute career interest inventory, and labor market information.
- The [Massachusetts Department of Apprenticeship Training](http://www.mass.gov/dat) (click on hyperlink or visit <http://www.mass.gov/dat>) provides information on opportunities for occupational exploration through apprenticeships statewide.
- “[The Real Game](http://www.realgame.org/games/TPRG/index.html)” (click on hyperlink or visit <http://www.realgame.org/games/TPRG/index.html>) is a career development resource that allows youth to explore adult life, education, and work.
- The [Massachusetts Department of Education](http://www.doe.mass.edu/cd) (click on hyperlink or visit <http://www.doe.mass.edu/cd>) has an assortment of educational resources that include a career plan that are tailored to assist youth who are on non-traditional career pathways.

4. Creating Career Pathways for Youth (Panel Discussion)

The purpose of this discussion was to have youth serving agencies share their experiences on creating career pathways for youth. The key take-aways from this panel discussion included:

Larry Smith, Jobs and Community Services, Boston

- ✓ Career exploration through hands-on experience used as motivator for getting youth to buy into attainment and a degree and the exploration of post-secondary options; and
- ✓ Make connections to agencies that focus on alternative education.

Aaron Tanimoto, Action for Boston Community Development, (ABCD)

- ✓ Internship or apprenticeship experiences are used as a springboard to a specific trade e.g. building trades or marine sector;

- ✓ Key objectives of internship experience is to allow youth to gain exposure to many trades;
- ✓ A premium is placed on program completion, not success. Quote: “Allow youth to make mistakes without having the pressure to be successful at the venture they undertake”;
- ✓ Partnerships are made with community-based businesses; and
- ✓ Higher educational institutions are used as outlet to reinforce learning that takes place during internship experience.

Wendy Andrade, New Directions, New Bedford

- ✓ Individual Training Accounts (ITA) are used to train youth;
- ✓ Healthcare is main sector most youth are trained in;
- ✓ Training scholarships available and bridge support funds are provided for youth who are not WIA eligible;
- ✓ An emphasis is placed on education—youth are assessed to determine educational level before program participation;
- ✓ An effort is made to provide youth with an experience that includes the exploration of various career pathways;
- ✓ Direct links are made to higher education through community resources and support services; and
- ✓ Recruitment strategy includes obtaining employer feedback around difficulties they encounter when hiring youth and incorporating employer suggestions into youth program service delivery.

Ed Gagne, Workforce Central, Worcester

- ✓ Out-of-school youth are placed at the Manufacturing Advancement Center. Center focuses on workplace assimilation that has three components. It also provides a basic introduction to the baseline skills and knowledge needed to work in this sector;
- ✓ Retail Federation Training (results in certificate which employers find attractive) provides pre-employment work readiness curriculum that must be completed before a youth can enter into training program. This program is successful because youth often find their first job in the retail, specifically, the food service industry;
- ✓ Local employer network has been developed in order to stay connected to businesses in the community. This network is also part of strategy for providing follow-up services for youth; and
- ✓ Biotechnology is being explored as a potential career pathway for local youth.

Brad Sperry, Hampden County Regional Employment Board, Springfield

- ✓ Paid work experiences are integrated into local area’s annual budget;
- ✓ Service providers conduct assessment and provide career readiness programming
- ✓ ITAs are used as a way of getting youth job training;
- ✓ Emphasis is placed on education; a GED is only seen as the first step in getting youth connected to education;
- ✓ Approach to connecting youth employment includes a future focus and the idea that education is about life long learning;
- ✓ Out-of-school youth are required to register with the career center in order to receive follow-up employment and educational services;
- ✓ Career exploration is used as strategy for drawing businesses; and
- ✓ A case manager is used to coordinate youth activities.

Online Resource:

- [Labor Market Information](http://lmi2.detma.org/Lmi/Fplmiforms1.asp) webpage (click on hyperlink or visit: <http://lmi2.detma.org/Lmi/Fplmiforms1.asp>) provides regional profiles, employment projections, regional monthly fact sheets and an assortment of other helpful labor market resources.