Strengthening Educational and Career Pathways for D.C. Youth

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> "The District can and should do far more to increase the proportion of young people earning an educational credential beyond high school and obtaining a full-time job."

Summary

In the District of Columbia, far too many young people fail to make a successful transition to adulthood. They drop out of school before earning a high school diploma, a post-secondary degree or training credential with value in the labor market, and ultimately fail to get or keep a good-paying job. The District can do far more to leverage its considerable assets to ensure that youth and young adults stay on track or get back on track to achieve these key educational and employment outcomes.

Current efforts to prepare D.C. youth for careers and post-secondary education are woefully inadequate. While there are pockets of excellence, few programs provide evidence of effectiveness; serious employer involvement remains the exception rather than the rule; partnerships among government agencies, public education (K-12 and post-secondary), and community service providers are often non-existent or ineffective; and information to evaluate and improve programs is usually lacking. The District and its partners should embrace the following agenda:

■ **Adopt a goal that by 2022, 90 percent of DC youth will earn a post-secondary credential and obtain full-time work by the age of 24.**

■ **Identify how many young people are now falling out of the educational and training pipeline at different points.**

■ **Develop, improve, or expand programs** to re-engage them and to support all youth in transitioning successfully to adulthood. Programs should more tightly link secondary and post-secondary education and integrate education, training, work-readiness and youth development principles.

■ **Develop clear engagement points for employers** to work with training providers, public schools, post-secondary institutions, unions and community-based groups in order to provide a pipeline of qualified residents to employers who are ready to hire them.

■ **Insist on quality improvement and performance measurement.** Use the National Youth Employment Coalition's Promising and Effective Practices Network as a resource, re-orient the Department of Employment Services' youth portfolio towards a more balanced approach between summer and year-round programs, and improve oversight on both substance and administrative functions like contracting. Close programs that cannot demonstrate effectiveness.

■ **Dramatically improve the city's capacity to generate and use data** to track the progress of the District's young people along educational and career pathways and in meeting its goals.

I. INTRODUCTION

The road to adulthood typically involves achieving economic self-sufficiency, living independently, and perhaps starting a family. Different eras and cultures have different milestones and timetables. In today's context in the United States, a successful transition typically involves the following educational and employment milestones:

- Finishing high school or earning an alternative credential,
- Earning a two- or four-year college degree or a certificate with value in the labor market, and
- Work experiences (internships, part-time jobs, entry-level jobs) that lead to jobs with good wages and opportunities for advancement

Post-secondary education has become more and more important as a threshold to attain middle-class status and earnings. Higher education levels typically translate into higher earnings. While earnings vary widely across occupations, bachelor's degree holders on average earn 74 percent more than those with only a high school diploma.[1]   Other research indicates that students who attend community college—both those who earn associates degrees and those who don't—earn more than high school graduates who do not continue their education.[2]   And the economic costs of not earning a high school diploma are severe and well-documented. In 1970, almost half of those without high school diplomas were in the middle class, a figure which fell to 33 percent in 2007.   The average lifetime earnings of a person without a high school diploma is $1.2 million, compared to $1.8 million for a high school graduate, $2.3 million for an associate's degree holder, and $3.4 million for a bachelor's degree holder.[3]

Employment experiences also matter in the transition to adulthood. Early work experiences such as internships, summer and part-time jobs allow youth to explore their interests, expose them to the expectations of the workplace, connect them with mentors, and provide opportunities to learn hard and soft skills.   If a teen works one year, he or she is likely to work the next year. Those with limited work experience in their late teens and early twenties face limited earnings later in life.[4]   Apprenticeships and sustained internships can improve the transition to work and are also effective in meeting the developmental needs of young people, by providing increasingly demanding responsibilities and challenges in a structured and supportive environment.[5]

Yet, incorporating work-based learning into the educational system is more the exception than the rule. The "college for all" approach that dominates the educational establishment leads to the mainstream ideal of completing an academic program of study in high school and then graduating from a four-year college.   Integrating employment and occupational skills into the high school and post-secondary curricula is often disparaged, with career and technical education (previously known as vocational education) seen as a dumping ground for students not deemed "college-ready." The legacy of tracking, segregation, and discrimination in the educational system certainly provides support for that view—education can be a vehicle for upward mobility but it can also perpetuate inequality based on race and class.

However, a growing chorus of political, business, educational, and philanthropic leaders is encouraging the development of additional educational pathways beyond the focus on a baccalaureate degree. Only about 30 percent of Americans earn a four-year degree by their mid-twenties, showing that the "college for all" approach is not translating into the desired outcomes.[6] While post-secondary education is clearly a gateway to economic opportunity, two-year degrees and certificates can also lead to family-sustaining wages.   Average earnings measured by degrees mask large differences by field of study (say,
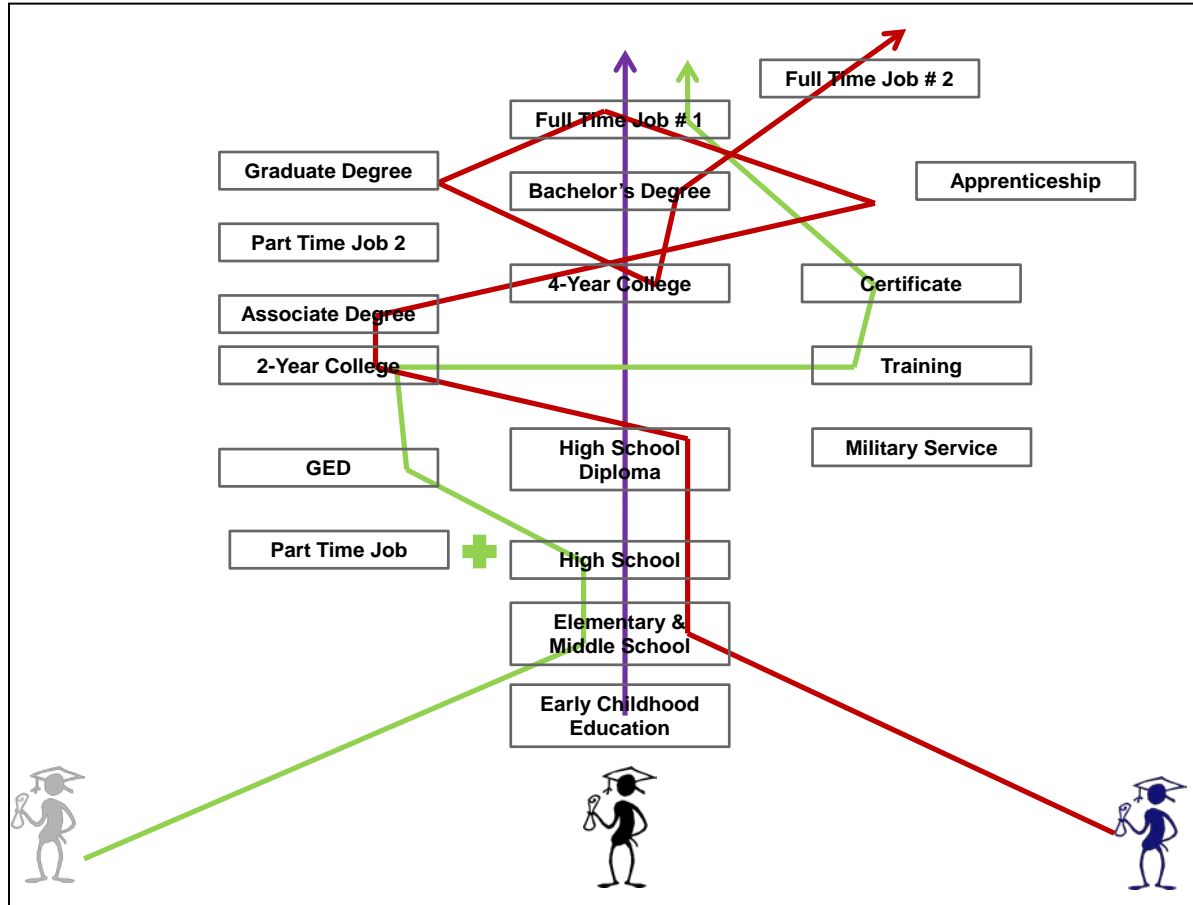
between computer science and the liberal arts) and also hide substantial overlaps in earnings between degree levels. For example, certificates with real value in the labor market can sometimes out earn higher education levels. A person holding an engineering certificate earns more on average ($47,000) than a person holding an AA in the liberal arts or a BA in education. Twenty-seven percent of license and certificate holders and thirty-one percent of associate degree holders earn more than a bachelor's degree recipient.[7] Lastly, a wide swath of jobs in the labor market—good jobs, with good earnings—do not require a bachelor's degree or more. By 2018, sixty-three percent of job openings are projected to require some post-secondary education. About 33 percent will require a bachelor's degree or more, while thirty percent will require some college or an associate's degree.[8]

Figure 1 shows the various paths, both linear and zigzagged, that young people take through education and employment.   As noted above, the mainstream ideal is to finish high school in four years, attend college full-time, graduate in four years and then obtain a full-time job. This linear path is the easiest to navigate and is represented by the figure in the center of the graphic. It is not perfect—there is still important work to align high school graduation requirements with the skills needed to succeed in college, for example, but it is the favored path and the one for which most educational institutions are designed. For people who are not on this path or fall off of it, it can be more challenging to attain an educational credential with value in the labor market. Transitions between programs (say, from a GED program to occupational training or post-secondary education) are weaker.

However, many people do succeed in alternate pathways. The remaining two figures in the graphic provide examples. The person on the left side of the graphic leaves high school before graduating, gets a GED, goes to community college for occupational skills training, earns a certificate, and then gets a full-time job. The person on the right side of the graphic earns a high school diploma followed by an associate's degree, enters an apprenticeship, gets a full-time job, earns a four-year college degree (either attending full- or part-time), and then obtains his or her second full-time job.   These example individuals do navigate their way through various educational options and earn credentials that have traction in the labor market.

Many others do not succeed, however. The national high school graduation rate in 2008 was 75 percent.[9] About 1,600 high schools across the country have been designated as "dropout factories" for graduating sixty percent or less of their students.[10]   There is leakage at multiple points along the educational pipeline, including high school graduation, entry into post-secondary education, persistence in post-secondary education, and completing post-secondary education.   One national analysis found that of every 100 students entering ninth grade, 67 completed high school, 38 directly enrolled in post-secondary education, 26 returned to post-secondary education for a second year, and 18 completed a bachelor's degree within six years or an associate's degree within three years.[11]

Figure 1. Examples of Pathways Through School and Work

Source: Data Quality Campaign

Accordingly, this brief focuses on youth and young adults in the District of Columbia—generally but not exclusively in the age range of 16 to 24—at risk of not earning a post-secondary degree or credential with value in the labor market. The brief examines policies and programs that help young people transition to adulthood with the skills to obtain and retain a job that provides economic stability and opportunities for advancement. These programs are in multiple spheres, encompassing K-12 education, post-secondary education, workforce development programs funded by the federal Workforce Investment Act, adult literacy and English for speakers of other languages, apprenticeships, skills training and work readiness services offered by nonprofit or community-based organizations, and proprietary schools. (Employers do run their own training and skill-building programs—according to Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce, about $450 billion worth per year—but mostly serve higher-skilled workers. College graduates are almost twice as likely to receive formal on-the-job training as high school graduates.[12]) This brief considers programs that offer the following activities:

- Preparation for, and assistance with, seeking and obtaining a job
- Engaging people in work experiences such as internships, community service activities, job shadows, subsidized and/or short-term employment, and applied learning projects
- Career exploration and counseling

- Career and technical education (teaching specific skills for an occupation or craft, which could happen in high school, community college, apprenticeships, or other training programs)
- Basic literacy and numeracy skills development
- Development of "soft skills" critical for success in work such as personal responsibility, self-management, integrity, problem solving, and interpersonal communication
- Orientation to the world of work, workplace culture and expectations, and strategies for maintaining employment
- Training in entrepreneurship, including business development and management
- Preparing people who are struggling in school or who have dropped out to earn a high school diploma or an alternative secondary credential such as the GED
- Contextual education that connects school subjects to real-world applications and experiences
- Post-secondary education leading to certificates, two-year degrees and four-year degrees. Some post-secondary programs may also include skills training programs that do not lead to a certificate or a degree.

Programs carrying out these functions often provide supportive services such as child care, case management, and transportation directly or through referrals.

II.   **THE NEED: The District fails to prepare a significant proportion of its youth for success in careers or college.**

School enrollment and labor force status among low-income youth with less than a four-year college degree

About 85,000 young people between the ages of 16 and 24 live in the District.   In order to identify young people who missed or at risk of missing key educational and employment milestones and who are struggling economically, the following filters were applied to include only those young people with the following characteristics:

- Living below 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold[13]
- Education with less than a four-year college degree
- Not self-employed
- Not enrolled in the Armed Forces
- Not receiving retirement income
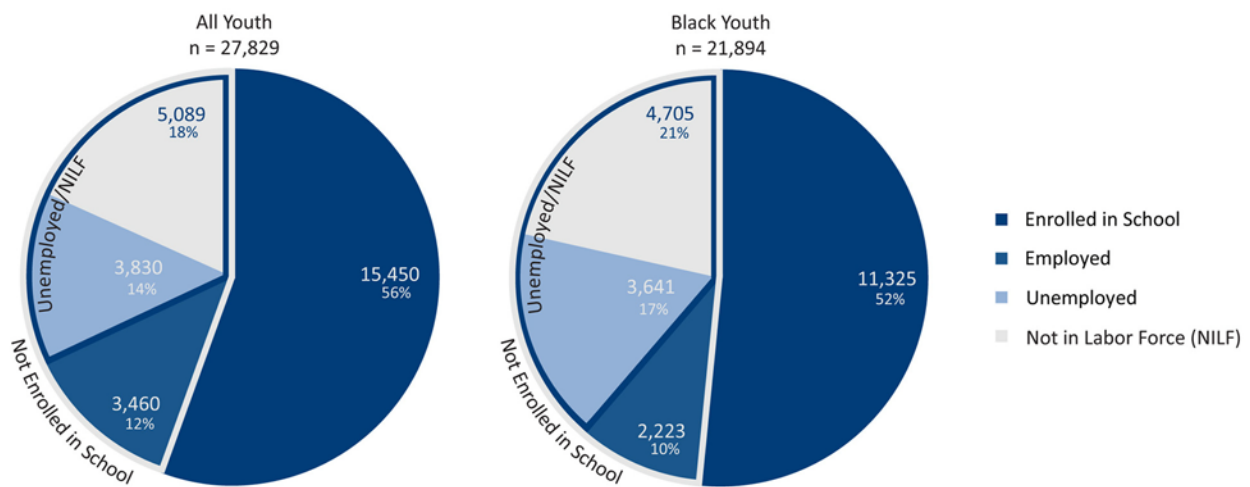- Not living in group quarters (such as college dormitories, military barracks, or jails)

About 28,000 young people living in the District fit the above criteria.   Within that population of low-income youth with less than a bachelor's degree, data showing whether young people are enrolled in school—and if they are not enrolled in school, whether or not they are working—give an indication of whether they are on a positive trajectory.

In 2009, almost 9,000 young people—one-third of the low-income youth population with less than a four-year degree, and one in 10 of the total population of 16-to-24-year-olds—were not in school and were not working.   Specifically, of those not enrolled in school, about 3,800 were unemployed and about 5,000 were not in the labor force. (Not being in the labor force means a person is not working or looking for work. These individuals are not captured in the unemployment category, because to be

unemployed a person has to be actively looking for work.) Young people so disconnected from work and education face limited prospects.

Those with a high school diploma or equivalent and no further education make up one-quarter of low-income youth without a bachelor's degree (about 6,900) and are especially likely to be disconnected: seventy five percent are out of school and not working.   Looking at the numbers by gender, there are roughly equal proportions of young men and women in the total number of 27,829. Females appear to be more disconnected than males, perhaps because of family and child-rearing responsibilities: 28 percent of young men are not in school and not working, compared to 37 percent of young women.

Figure 2. Low-income young people aged 16-24 with less than a bachelor's degree, Washington, D.C., 2009
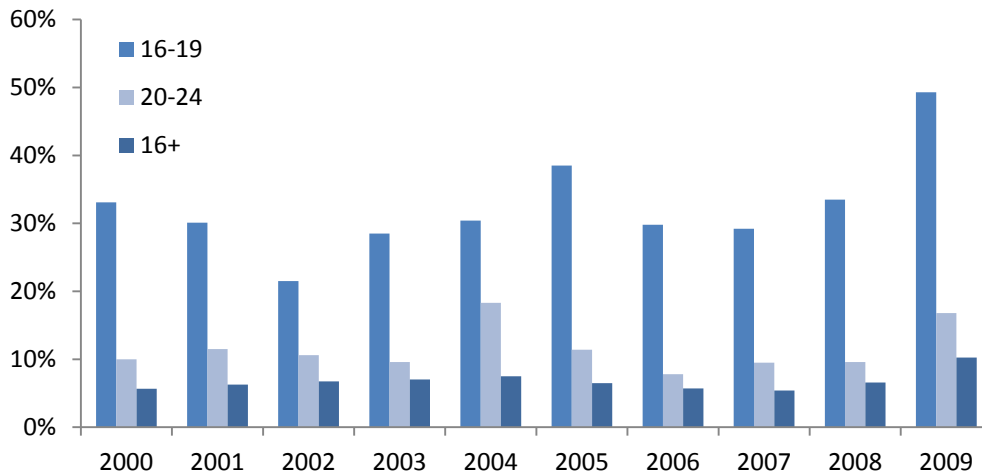

Source: American Community Survey, 2009

The black population makes up the vast majority (almost 80 percent) of low-income 16-24 year-olds in the District with less than a four-year degree. (The sample sizes for whites, Hispanics, and Asians are too small to allow for presentation—the margins of error are too large to be confident that the numbers are accurate.)   Almost 40 percent of low-income black residents between the ages of 16 and 24 with less a four-year degree are not enrolled in school and are not working. Specifically, of those not in school, about 3,600 are unemployed and about 4,700 are not in the labor force.
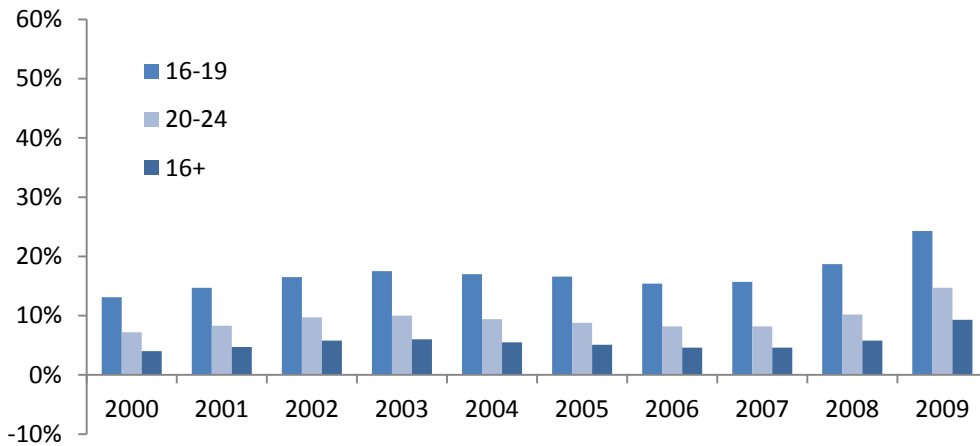
2)   Unemployment
District youth are on the wrong end of a number of trends regarding unemployment. Unemployment in Washington, D.C. is consistently higher than national and regional averages. In July 2011, unemployment in the District reached 10.8 percent, compared to 6.2 percent in the region. [14]   Both nationally and locally, the unemployment rate is consistently higher among youth than among adults. The unemployment rate among 16-19-year-olds in the District reached almost 50 percent in 2009, and 17 percent among 20-24-year-olds, compared to a citywide rate of 10 percent. (See Figures 3 and 4 for more details.)

Figure 3. Annual Unemployment Rates in Washington, D.C. by age, 2000-2009

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure 4. Annual Unemployment Rates in the United States by age, 2000-2009

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

3)   K-12 data

Information on D.C. public schools points to a crisis. An analysis of the cohort of incoming public school ninth graders (both DCPS and charter) in the fall of 2001 found that of every 100 students, 43 graduated from high school within five years, 29 enrolled in post-secondary education within 18 months of graduating high school, and nine earned a post-secondary degree within five years of enrolling in

college.[15] While there are excellent public schools in the city, access to a high-quality education is by no means distributed equally across the District.

High School Graduation Rates
Graduation rates are a fundamental indicator of school performance.   While individual high schools have high graduation rates, the overall rate for the District of Columbia is unacceptably low: 43 percent for the class of 2008.[16]   The EPE Research Center estimates that of the class of 2011, 13 public school students dropped out each day after starting 9th grade. Of the 4,161 incoming 9th graders in 2007, an estimated 1,789 graduated in four years and 2,373 did not.[17]

For graduation rates to be useful, they must be reliable, based on sound data and ideally comparable across states and jurisdictions. Across the country, states have used different and inconsistent methods that have resulted in a range of graduation rate calculations, causing confusion about the true scope of the dropout problem.   Research indicates that the methods used by many states have produced artificially high graduation rates. In 2008 the U.S. Department of Education issued new regulations related to calculating graduation rates to take effect starting with the 2010-2011 school year. The new federal requirements require states to collect student-level longitudinal data, so they can calculate the proportion of entering ninth graders who graduate in four years with a regular diploma. (They can also calculate rates using the time period of five or six years to allow students an extended time to obtain a diploma.) [18] The EPE Research Center reports that the "leaver rate," the methodology used by D.C. up to this point (and by 25 other states), tends to produce inflated graduation rates because it systematically undercounts dropouts. Indeed, the District's reported graduation rate for the class of 2008 is 75.5 percent, 32.5 percentage points higher than the rate calculated by the EPE Research Center.[19]

With the federally-required change in the methodology used to calculate graduation rates, the District's reported graduation rates are likely to decline sharply.

Truancy

The eleven comprehensive DCPS high schools reported truancy rates in the 2009-2010 school year ranging from 18 percent to 67 percent. A student is defined as truant if he or she is under 18 years old, has been a member of the school for 25 days or more and has accumulated 15 or more unexcused absences from that school.   Truancy is a risk factor for dropping out of school, gang activity, substance abuse, and criminal activity.[20] Such high rates in the D.C. public schools signal the likelihood of serious trouble in the future for these young people.

Table 1. Truancy rates, Comprehensive DCPS High Schools, 2009-2010 School Year

	Enrolled	# Truant	% Truant
Anacostia	909	566	62%
Ballou	1111	647	58%
Cardozo	672	348	52%
Coolidge	627	275	44%
Dunbar	713	478	67%
Eastern	339	132	39%
Roosevelt	695	334	48%
Spingarn	542	350	65%
Wilson	1555	376	24%
Woodson	485	267	55%
Woodson Academy	198	36	18%
Total	**7846**	**3809**	

Source: D.C. Public Schools

III. **THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE:** *The District has numerous initiatives to prepare youth for careers and college, but too often these lack coordination, capacity, and evidence of effectiveness.*

While many programs and individuals are doing good work to help young people succeed in education and employment, the indicators listed above point to a crisis. Discussions with practitioners, employers, and leaders from the political, educational, civic and philanthropic sectors make it clear that no one is satisfied with the status quo. No one thinks that the city is doing what it needs to do, as effectively as it needs to do it, or at the necessary scale in order to improve outcomes for District youth.

In sum, there are multiple players in the public, private and philanthropic sectors, a lot of activity, and numerous funding streams—and consequently a fragmented landscape of service delivery. In general, these programs operate in their own silos, and without taking advantage of opportunities to leverage funds and coordinate services.

1)   Overview of Key District Government Agencies
A number of public agencies in the District provide, fund, or oversee services connecting young people to education, training, and employment opportunities. Many of them are responsive to specific federal funding streams with their own eligibility guidelines and performance measures, complicating their ability to create pathways that span multiple public systems and providers. With some exceptions, it is difficult to obtain information on program quality, performance and costs. Existing data systems do not provide sufficient information to track progress and outcomes on a systematic basis.

These agencies include:

- *Policy and oversight bodies*—Workforce Investment Council (WIC)/Youth Investment Council (YIC); Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE); Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education; Public Charter School Board

- *Agencies funding or providing services related to employment and training*—Department of Employment Services (DOES); Office of the State Superintendent for Education (funds adult literacy and career technical education [CTE] in addition to its policy duties); Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS); Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA); Income Maintenance Administration (IMA); Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation (CYITC); Healthy Families/Thriving Community Collaboratives

- *Entities providing secondary and post-secondary education*—D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter schools; University of the District of Columbia - Community College (UDC-CC); Trinity University; other post-secondary institutions that receive large numbers of D.C. students, especially through the TAG scholarship program

The Department of Employment Services, the primary workforce development agency in the District, is discussed in greater detail below in Section 2. Other key agencies that provide education, training or other related services focused on preparing young people for post-secondary education and careers include the following.

i.) The K-12 System (DCPS and public charter schools)

Public education in the District is in a state of ferment, with major reforms in DCPS and a vibrant network of charter schools. Preparing students for post-secondary education and careers is core to the mission of the elementary and secondary public education system. DCPS and public charter schools both offer a number of specific initiatives and programs, such as career and technical education and alternative programs for off-track students. In the last several years, DCPS reorganized its central office, creating leadership positions focused on alternative schools, youth engagement and secondary school transformation. It also created a student placement team, dedicated to helping disengaged students or those involved with the juvenile justice system find appropriate schools or programs. Charter schools, by their nature, do not form a system, although they are authorized and monitored by the D.C. Public Charter School Board. In the 2010-2011 school year, 74,986 students were enrolled in public schools: 45,360 in DCPS (about 60 percent) and 29,356 (about 40 percent) in public charter schools. [21]

- *K-12: Career and Technical Education*

Career and Technical Education (CTE) prepares students for employment, apprenticeships, and post-secondary education in a particular occupational field. In 2009, DCPS operated about 35 CTE programs serving approximately 2500 students, although only about 1,000 were CTE "concentrators," taking a sequence of at least three related CTE courses or at least one advanced CTE course. Additionally, about 2100 students at public charter schools participated in CTE programs.[22] CTE offerings spanned a range of occupations, including Construction, Hospitality, Health, Business, Information Technology, Arts & Communications, Engineering, and Human Services. The Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE) administers CTE, chiefly with federal funds (about $4.5 million) governed by the federal Carl D. Perkins Act.

- *K-12: Alternative High School Programs*

Both DCPS and public charter schools offer programs for students who have struggled in traditional education settings or who are not on track to graduate. Within DCPS, some are stand-alone schools, such as the Luke C. Moore Academy and the Washington Metropolitan High School, while others are programs within schools, such as the STAY and Twilight programs. Charter schools include Carlos Rosario, Next Step/El Proximo Paso, Latin American Youth Center YouthBuild, and Maya Angelou.

ii.) Adult education programs

Adult education services assist people in improving their literacy and numeracy skills; prepare students for the GED exam; and help individuals with limited English proficiency improve their skills in speaking, reading and writing English. In the District, these services are primarily offered by nonprofit organizations. OSSE administers the federal funding for adult education programs through Title II of the Workforce Investment Act and makes grants to nonprofits that provide services. In program year 2006-07, the District served almost 3,400 residents in adult education programs, 250 (seven percent) of whom were between the ages of 16 to 18 and 907 (27 percent) of whom were between the ages of 19 to 24.[23]

iii.) University of the District of Columbia Community College (UDC-CC)

UDC-CC offers academic and career-focused associate degrees, certificate and workforce development programs, continuing education and developmental education for students who need further study to become college-ready. UDC-CC was launched as a separate entity with its own Chief Executive Officer in 2009. Previously, the University of the District of Columbia had been the city's sole public institution of higher education and served as both a community college and state university. UDC-CC started by assuming responsibility for UDC's sub-baccalaureate programs and has experienced dramatic enrollment gains as it has expanded its academic and occupationally-focused offerings. As a new institution, UDC-CC has made strides in establishing itself as a gateway to learning opportunities for District residents. It offers open enrollment and affordable tuition, and is developing and strengthening its partnerships with public schools, community-based organizations, other post-secondary institutions and employers. In the fall of 2010, 2,675 students enrolled in UDC-CC's academic programs, up from 1,779 in the fall of 2009.[24]

iv.) Workforce Investment Council (WIC)/Youth Investment Council (YIC)

The WIC and the YIC are mandated by the federal Workforce Investment Act and charged with overseeing workforce development policy and programs. The YIC is a subcommittee of the WIC. The WIC and YIC are meant to meaningfully engage top business, education, nonprofit and government leaders across multiple agencies to establish and implement a strategic workforce investment agenda. Members are appointed by the mayor. Over half of the WIC's membership is required to be from the private sector.

In the District, the WIC has historically been located within the Department of Employment Services. Until very recently, it has not had a permanent executive director for several years and has not acted in a leadership capacity on education, training and employment policy and practice.   In 2011, the Gray administration announced it would move the WIC to the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development.

v.) Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS)

DYRS, the District's cabinet level juvenile justice agency, administers detention, commitment and aftercare services for youth held under its care in its facilities or residing in the D.C. community. Approximately, 1,000 adjudicated youth committed to DYRS by the D.C. Superior Court are under DYRS supervision.[25] DYRS engaged in significant reform over the past several years which included a reduced reliance on institutional care and an increased focus on youth educational and workforce preparation. DYRS obtained a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to expand educational, workforce development and employment opportunities for DYRS-committed youth. Through its lead entity/service coalition effort, DYRS funded two nonprofits to provide and coordinate a range of services, supports, and opportunities in the community for DYRS youth, including workforce development. In addition, DYRS contracted with the See Forever Foundation, operator of the Maya Angelou charter schools, to provide education and workforce development for DYRS-committed youth held at the New Beginnings Youth Development Center.

vi.) Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)

CFSA is the child welfare agency in the District. It serves 4,054 youth from infancy to age 21, of whom almost 2,000 are in foster care. Older youth aged 13 to 21 make up 53 percent of the foster care population.[26] CFSA's Office of Youth Empowerment (OYE) provides programs and growth experiences for District foster youth to help prepare them for adulthood and for independent living after their emancipation from the child welfare system at age 21.

2) *The Department of Employment Services (DOES)*

The Department of Employment Services (DOES) is the agency most closely associated with workforce development in the District and administers the federal Title I Workforce Investment Act dollars. Since 2009, DOES has invested over $130 million in youth employment activities. The vast majority of those dollars have been devoted to the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), (SYEP), in which youth work primarily in government agencies but also in nonprofits and private-sector offices. Most of the positions are subsidized. (Please see Table 2 for more details.)

Table 2. Funding for Youth Workforce Development, D.C. Department of Employment Services, FY 2009-2012

	Actual FY 2009[27]	Actual FY 2010[28]	Approved FY 2011	Proposed FY 2012	Total
Youth Workforce Funding	$43.4*	$40.7	$27.5	$19.7	$131.3
Summer Youth Employment	$40.0[29]	$28.9	$19.1	$12.1	$100.1
Year-Round Employment	unknown	$10.5	$7.6	$6.8	$24.9

* Prior to the Proposed FY 2010 budget, DOES provided information on youth programs under the category of "Youth Programs Information" and did not break out the different components of youth programming. The $43.4 figure is taken from the "Youth Programs Information" line in the FY 2011 proposed budget, and presumably includes summer and year-round programs and the Mayor's Youth Leadership Institute.

The summer jobs program is primarily funded by local dollars and has been a tradition in the city since the Barry administration. In 2008, the Fenty administration allowed unlimited enrollment, which overwhelmed DOES' administrative capacity, causing a $34 million budget over-run, for a total cost of $55.7 million.[30] The agency continued its commitment to serving large numbers of youth (about 20,000) in 2009 and 2010, despite persistent administrative and quality problems. In 2010, the program closed a week early due to cost overruns caused by accepting more participants than the budget allowed.

By contrast, the year-round programs for in-school and out-of-school youth serve a much smaller number of participants. These programs, funded in part through the federal Workforce Investment Act, engage youth in activities including work readiness, employability and life skills development, and vocational training. While the agency primarily directly operates the summer jobs program, it contracts with private organizations to provide year-round services. The programs failed to meet federal performance requirements in the last two years and the department is thus eligible for sanctions. DOES has also under-spent its youth allocations through the Workforce Investment Act.[31] In 2010, DOES sought to re-vamp the programs, developing RFPs that reflected national quality standards and best practices from other jurisdictions. However, in early 2011 the city cancelled the contract awards it made weeks earlier, citing procurement problems.[32] In September 2011, it announced new contract awards, which will be challenged by at least one organization who received a contract in the first round but not the second.[33] The number of youth served in 2010 and 2011 has no doubt precipitously dropped, since the agency froze enrollment in 2010 in anticipation of the new contracts.

Table 3. Number of participants in DOES' summer and year-round youth workforce programs, 2007-2011.

Program Year	Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)	Year-Round Program, In-School Youth	Year-Round Program, Out-of-School Youth
2011[34]	~14,000	n/a	n/a
2010[35]	Over 19,000	n/a	n/a
2009[36]	over 20,000	525	200
2008[37]	over 19,000	435	248
2007[38]	over 12,000	357	290

3)   The Nonprofit Sector

In partnership with the DC Alliance of Youth Advocates (DCAYA), Brookings developed a survey of local nonprofits to learn more about their challenges, opportunities and capacity in providing workforce development services to District youth. Brookings identified 136 organizations in the District that provided some form of education, training, or development services to youth or young adults. Brookings reached out to this group in the summer of 2009; 74 of the organizations completed the survey. 46 of the respondents, who demonstrated a significant organizational focus on youth workforce development, answered additional questions that delved more deeply into services provided and challenges faced. Please see Appendix A for the methodology and more detailed findings.

Total organizational budgets among surveyed organizations for 2008 ranged from $110,000 to $45,000,000. The median budget was $1.75 million.

Table 4. Total organizational budget size among nonprofit organizations serving Washington, D.C. youth, 2008

	n = 46
Below $1 million	42%
Between $1-3 million	24%
Between $5-10 million	22%
Above $10 million	12%
	100%

Most organizations are not dedicated exclusively to education, training, or employment services for youth, and so devote only a portion of their total organizational budget to youth workforce services. The size of the budget dedicated to youth workforce development ranged from $11,700 to $2.8 million. Over half of the organizations dedicated less than $300,000 to youth workforce development. The median budget dedicated specifically to youth workforce development was $269,688.

Table 5. Size of Program Budget Dedicated To Youth Workforce Development Among Youth-Serving Nonprofit Organizations, Washington, D.C., 2008

	N = 38
Below $100,000	21%
Between $100,000—$300,000	34%
Between $300,001—$500,000	16%
Between $500,001—$1 million	13%
Above $1 million	16%
	100%

Program length varies. Some programs noted that their programs are ongoing, without definite starting and stopping points. Others reported that program length ranges from 3 45-minute sessions to two years. More than half of the programs are fairly short-term, less than 3 months. Programs with a specific length were distributed as follows:

Table 6. Workforce development program length among youth-serving nonprofit organizations, Washington, D.C., 2009

Program Length	n = 77
Less than 4 weeks	6%
4 to 12 weeks	48%
12 to 24 weeks	18%
24 to 52 weeks	19%
More than 52 weeks	9%

Program size also varies, although it tends to be on the small size.   Some programs (usually those not targeting youth specifically) served less than 10 young people, while others served up to several thousand (the highest number representing youth served in a series of short-term workshops focused on entrepreneurship).   The median number of youth served was 25, while the average was 60. Concerns about data quality prevented us from providing a total number of youth served by nonprofits.[39]

Over one-third of organizations reported having to turn youth away. At the time that the survey was administered, 37% of organizations reported having to turn away youth they could otherwise serve because they did not have enough space, funding or staff. Programs reported turning away between 10-500 youth, with a median of about 20.

A number of programs report that they provide training leading to industry-recognized certificates. The most common certificates are for construction (7) and for computer-related skills (10).

Table 7. Programs Offering Training Leading To Industry-Recognized Certificates Among Youth-Serving Nonprofit Organizations, Washington, D.C., 2009

Type of Certification	Number of Programs
Automotive (ASE Certification)	1
Catering and Food Safety (ServSafe Food Protection Managers Certificate)	1
Child Development (Associate Certificate)	3
Computer Repair, Computer Programming/IT, Software Skills (Microsoft Office Specialist, CompTia - A+, Net+, etc. Microsoft Adobe)	10
Construction (Green Advantage, HVAC Certificate)	7
Customer Service	1
Emergency Preparedness	3
Medical and Health	1
Total	**27**

Organizations vary in their ability to track and measure progress among their participants, and a substantial portion report interest in further discussing how to develop meaningful and realistic performance measures. Eleven of the 46 nonprofits (24%) did not track any program outcome measures. We categorized the reported performance measures into broad categories:

Table 8. Categories Of Performance Measures Used By Youth-Serving Nonprofit Organizations Offering Workforce Development Programs, Washington, D.C., 2009

Outcome Measure Categories	Frequency
Complete Program	15
Obtain Education Credential (GED or High School Diploma)	17
Obtain Professional Training Credential or Certificate	9
Enrollment in College or Vocational Program	14
Job/Internship Placement/Retention	21
Skill Attainment	20
Other	15
Don't Track	11

The survey also asked the organizations to provide an estimate of the percentage of their participants who successfully exit or complete the program. Programs reported a wide range of successful exits,

between 19 and 100%. As it was a self-administered survey, we were not able to follow-up with organizations about their data quality and information-gathering systems.

Major Survey Findings:

- Nonprofits offered a variety of workforce development services, such as GED preparation, academic assistance, work readiness training, occupational skills training, job and internship placement, wraparound services and case management.
- Organizational and youth workforce program budgets were relatively small. The median organizational budget was $1.75 million; the median budget for youth workforce programs was about $300,000.
- Program size varied, although it tended to be on the small side. The median number of youth served was 25 and the mean was about 60.
- Program length also varied, but more than half of the programs were less than three months.
- While the majority of programs reported that they built relationships with employers, fewer engaged in specific employer engagement activities such as tailoring curriculum to meet employer needs, asking employers to conduct mock interviews, or conducting training leading to an industry-recognized credential.
- Over one-third of organizations reported having to turn youth away they could otherwise serve because they did not have enough space, funding or staff.
- Organizations varied in their ability to track and measure progress among their participants. A substantial portion of respondents reported interest in further exploring how to develop meaningful and realistic performance measures.

IV : THE VISION: *What would a robust system of career and educational pathways look like?*

Brookings engaged the Center on Law and Social Policy (CLASP) to identify and document effective practices from other communities, based on their experience working with communities around the country engaged in cross-system programming to prepare high-risk youth for education and employment. Their research is available in a separate CLASP report, *Building a Comprehensive Youth Employment Delivery System: Examples of Effective Practice.*

A comprehensive youth employment delivery system pulls together diverse resources and funding streams - public, private, and philanthropic—in a strategic way. It draws on the strength of public systems and community providers to create supported pathways that provide youth with the education, skills, and access to good jobs and successful careers. Such a system must have a broad range of options, depth in support services, and the nimbleness and flexibility to connect youth to the most appropriate set of services. These services include integrated education, skills training, and work experience leading to secondary and/or occupational credentials; postsecondary education and training opportunities; applied skills such as teamwork, leadership, oral and written communication, and ethical responsibility. Additionally, the system must value the contributions from multiple sectors: nonprofit, public agencies, schools, and employers and outline clearly defined expectations for different players.

CLASP identified five key functions of an effective youth services delivery system:
- *A strong convening entity* to amass stakeholders, shape a community vision, maximize resource sharing, and hold systems accountable to that vision.
- *An effective administrative agent* to work in partnership with the education system, other youth systems, and community providers to assure that the vision of the convening entity is effectively implemented.
- *A well-trained case management arm* which is responsible for engaging youth by identifying and meeting needs in the areas of education, employment, basic skills, and wrap-around supports.
- *Strong partnerships across systems that serve youth,* such as education, juvenile justice and child welfare systems, to share resources and provide additional support to very vulnerable youth.
- *High-quality work experience and career exposure components* which provide hands-on exposure to the work place, instill appropriate work behaviors and ethics, and allow for exploration of various occupations and career options.

CLASP also documented specific examples of effective practices for each of the components from eight other communities—Baltimore, Boston, Hartford, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Portland, and San Diego.

The District falls far short in its performance on the five functions identified by CLASP. It does not have a convening body to develop a strategy and a vision to help young people reach key educational and employment milestones, although the rejuvenation of the Workforce Investment Council and the likely creation of a P-20 Council may fill that hole. Nor does it have a body charged with implementing the convening entity's vision. The body could take a variety of forms, such as a nonprofit intermediary like the Philadelphia Youth Network, a specific governmental office or agency, or a collaborative effort among government agencies, public education, and nonprofits.

The last three functions—case management, partnerships across systems, and high-quality work experiences—are sometimes in place but more often not. When they are in place, it is based on the initiative of individual programs, leaders, and staff, not on a systematic effort or policy guidance.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS: How to better prepare D.C. youth for success in careers and post-secondary education

The District can do better. It cannot afford to continue having ten percent of the total 16 to 24 year old population disconnected from education and work.   The problem is particularly concentrated among low-income young people with less than a bachelor's degree: among that population, nearly one-third are not enrolled in school and not working. Among young low-income blacks with less than a four-year degree, nearly 40 percent are not in school and are not working.

The Department of Employment Services is the primary workforce development agency in the District, but the conversation about better preparing the city's young people for careers cannot begin and end with them. The problem demands an organized and strategic response. There are countless creative, committed and entrepreneurial individuals and organizations working to improve the life chances of District youth, strengthen the city's social fabric and reinforce its economic competitiveness. But services and efforts are fragmented, data to make mid-course corrections and track progress is elusive, service quality is uneven, an inefficient and troubled procurement system hinders service delivery, and too many youth are falling through the cracks. The whole equals less than the sum of its parts.

1. **Adopt a goal that by 2022, 90 percent of DC youth will earn a post-secondary credential and obtain full-time work by the age of 24.**

Too many young people in Washington, D.C. are disconnected from employment, educational, and economic opportunities.   The District should challenge itself to do better by setting a bold and ambitious goal: increasing the proportion of youth who earn a post-secondary credential and obtain full-time work by the age of 24 to 90 percent over ten years.

To support this goal, the city needs to commit to making serious program and policy changes. The Mayor, City Council and the city's partners should adopt a framework of career and educational pathways to guide the city's programs and policies related to youth and young adults. Figure 5 provides a schematic of such a pathways approach: the points of entry for young people, types of programs and services, , and the ultimate goals of educational credentials and careers. A system of career and education pathways refers to an integrated set of activities, programs and supports leading to certificates, credentials, licenses and two- and four-year degrees with demonstrable value in the labor market.[40] It accommodates multiple trajectories through the education and training system.   It provides a series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to reach educational milestones, secure employment and advance on the job.   Inherent in the concept of pathway is that where a person stands now is connected to the previous step and to the next step.

The education and workforce field includes many players—government agencies, nonprofits, employers, and educational institutions—and a pathways framework can organize how these multiple entities work together, define shared goals and identify their respective roles.   For example, GED programs should consider how they connect students to post-secondary education, skills training, or employment. High school CTE programs should have heavy employer involvement in curriculum design and lead to job opportunities, apprenticeships, or further education.   UDC-CC or an occupational skills training program

may partner with a community-based organization to help recruit students and provide wraparound supportive services.   Of course, this is already happening in some cases, but not at the necessary scale.

The isolated interventions and programs of different government agencies and nonprofits are not adequate to the task of preparing District youth, many of them disadvantaged and with serious barriers to success, for post-secondary education and careers.   Few dispute this. No single entity or funding stream, from a bureaucratic behemoth like DCPS to the more modestly-funded Workforce Investment Act youth employment programs to a privately-funded community-based nonprofit, has the authority, scope or resources to develop a comprehensive career and educational pathways system on its own.
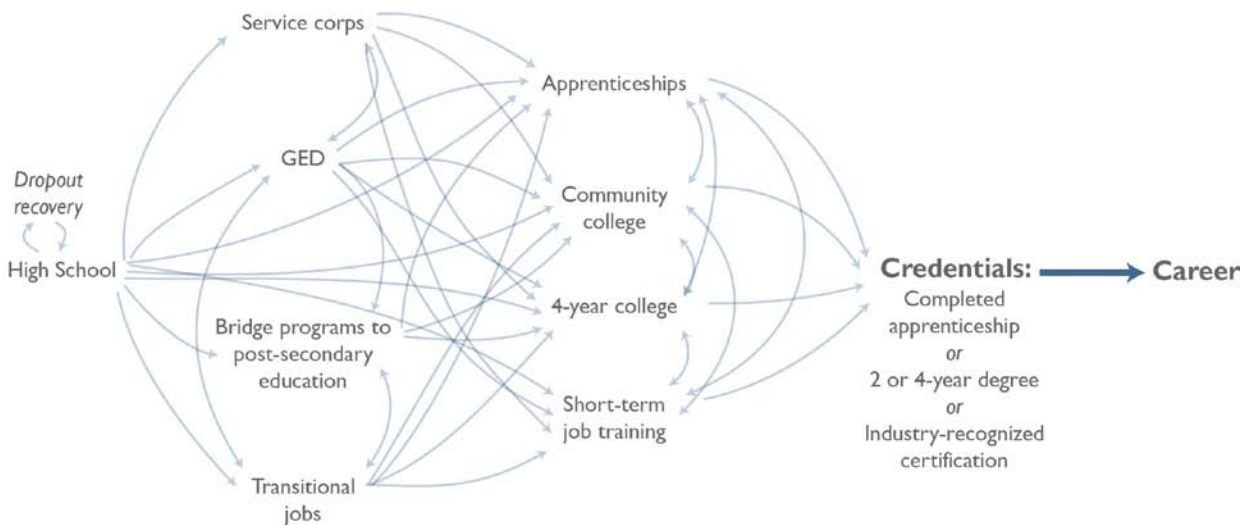
Figure 5. A New Career and Educational Pathways Framework

2. **Identify how many young people are now falling out of the educational and training pipeline at different points.**

Although truancy numbers, graduation rates, and youth unemployment figures indicate that high numbers of young people are falling out of the education and training pipeline, exact figures are not available at the present time. Without these numbers, the city does not understand the full dimensions of the problem and consequently has trouble tailoring responses.

The process to identify off-track youth should be thorough but with a focus on the big picture, not looking for unnecessary precision, elaborate assessments or measures, or the rigor associated with an experimental program evaluation.   The major subpopulations (not mutually exclusive) to focus on include the following:

1. Left high school without a diploma
2. Chronically truant / at-risk of dropping out
3. Involved with the juvenile justice or child welfare systems
4. Mental health or substance abuse problems
5. Not in school and not working
6. Homeless
7. Pregnant and/or parenting
8. No plans for education, training or employment after high school
9. Started but did not complete post-secondary education, including a degree, certificate or apprenticeship

Many of the identified young will have serious barriers to schooling or employment: a criminal record, homelessness, substance abuse, parenthood and other responsibilities. They may not believe they can succeed in education or employment based on their past experiences and the horizon of possibilities they see around them. The city will probably need to prioritize some of these subpopulations as those they'll focus on first, depending on its judgments as to the severity of their needs, the availability and quality of its administrative data to identify certain groups, and/or its assessments of its ability to assist them.

3. **Develop, improve or expand programs to re-engage young people** and to support all youth in transitioning successfully to adulthood. Programs should more tightly link secondary and post-secondary education and integrate education, training, work-readiness and youth development principles.
   a) High school Career Academies that integrate academic and occupational skills in specific industry sectors and forge strong connections with employers.

The first step is to develop an inventory of available programs (public, private or nonprofit) to keep young people on track or get them back on track. The inventory should include programs in the following public-sector agencies:

- K-12 system (such as CTE programs, credit recovery, alternative programs, dropout prevention)
- Adult education, GED preparation and English for Speakers of other languages
- Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services
- Child and Family Services Agency and the neighborhood family support collaboratives
- Department of Employment Services
- UDC-CC and UDC

The inventory should also include programs in the nonprofit and private sector, such as post-secondary institutions, community-based organizations, proprietary schools, and unions.

This assessment should include a summary of the approximate number of slots in the programs, program duration, types of services provided, and any available outcome or progress measures. Much of this information should be relatively easy for individual agencies to provide, and in fact much of it is has already been collected by other bodies, such as the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education in its research to create the Education and Youth Development Plan. It may be harder to gather information

from nonprofit or private entities, but a rough assessment is possible, and can use the survey used in this report as a launching point.

However, creating more slots in existing programs in existing silos is insufficient. Programs should more tightly link secondary and post-secondary education and integrate education, training, work-readiness and youth development principles in order to equip young people with the academic, occupational and personal skills they need to succeed. The blend of these elements and the setting should vary based on the age, academic and developmental levels of the youth in question: more school-based and educationally focused programs for younger youth and more community-based and career-focused programs for older youth.

While some programs in the city do use these approaches, it is not happening at the necessary scale. Rather than relying on the sequential approach of traditional education and a focus on "seat time" (that is, spending a prescribed amount of time in a classroom), programs can take a more flexible approach to instruction and awarding credits and credentials, while still retaining rigor. Programs serving young people with serious disadvantages or difficulties with school and employment will need to incorporate (and budget for) case management and other supportive services.

Some examples of this approach include the following:

- Service-learning programs such as those associated with the Service Corps or YouthBuild that combine community service and development work with GED or other academic instruction, stipends, mentoring, and other supportive services.
- GED or job training programs that also award post-secondary credits towards a certificate or degree at a local community college or other post-secondary institution.
- Community college developmental education programs that combine remedial education with occupational skills.
- Dual enrollment or early college programs, in which high school students take college courses, typically at a community college, and earn college credit or an associate's degree. They combine high expectations with high support and are often targeted at youth who may face challenges in the transition from high school to college.

3a.   High school Career Academies that integrate academic and occupational skills in specific industry sectors that forge strong connections with employers.

The District should reinvigorate its career and technical education (CTE) programs in public high schools. The small number of CTE students—especially those who complete an organized program of study—and the overall lack of emphasis on CTE is an opportunity lost. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently highlighted CTE—both its promise and need for rejuvenation—when he said, ". . . for far too long, CTE has been the neglected stepchild of education reform. That neglect has to stop. . . The mission of CTE has to change. It can no longer be about earning a diploma and landing a job after high school. The goal of CTE 2.0 should be that students earn a postsecondary degree or an industry-recognized certification –and land a job that leads to a successful career."[41]

Career Academies are a particular form of Career and Technical Education (CTE) with a proven track record of keeping students engaged in school and preparing them for successful transitions to postsecondary education and employment, without compromising academic goals.

Three components differentiate career academies from other types of CTE:[42]

- *School-within-a-school organization:* They are organized as small learning communities to create a more supportive, personalized learning environment, typically serving 150-200 students from grades 9 or 10 through grade 12.
- *Career theme for academic and technical curricula:* Rather than focusing on specific job skills, academic and technical education is organized around a range of occupations in a career field based on local employment demand.
- *Employer partnerships:* Formal relationships with local employers foster work- and career-related activities for students, mentorships, and guidance on curricular activities.

A rigorous evaluation of career academies eight years after scheduled graduation demonstrated positive and statistically significant program impacts. Career Academy students produced sustained earnings gains that averaged 11 percent (or about $2,000) more per year than for non-Career Academy students—a boost of nearly $17,000 in earnings over the eight years of follow-up.[43]

There is concern that CTE encourages students to enter into the labor market immediately after high school, thus dissuading them from pursuing postsecondary education. However, Career Academy participants were just as likely to pursue postsecondary education as members of the control group. By the end of the eight-year follow-up period, about 50 percent of Career Academy graduates had earned a postsecondary credential, including bachelor's and associate's degrees and certificates. Career Academy graduates were also more likely to live independently with children and a spouse or partner. Young men experienced positive impacts on marriage and being custodial parents.[44]

To achieve similar results, the District's public schools should adopt the model with fidelity, and not relabel existing CTE programs as Career Academies with cosmetic revisions. Career Academies should begin in ninth or tenth grade and have a school-within-a-school organization, a career theme for academic and technical curricula, and partnerships with employers. Given that Career Academies were particularly effective for students at risk of dropping out, the District should also develop a strategy to connect high school reentry programs to Career Academies. Career academies can motivate at-risk students to finish high school by providing them with realistic options for their future in postsecondary education or employment with advancement possibilities.

4. **Develop transparent and clear engagement points for employers to work with training providers, public schools, post-secondary institutions, and community-based groups in order to provide a pipeline of qualified residents to employers who are ready to hire them.**
   a) Continue efforts to re-invigorate the Workforce Investment Council and its subcommittee, the Youth Investment Council
   b) Create a workforce development intermediary

Creating career pathways necessarily requires employer involvement.   Programs providing education and training are on the "supply side" of the hiring equation. To be successful, career pathways must connect education and training with the "demand side"—the people and organizations doing the hiring. Employers are the ultimate enforcers of standards of skills and work-readiness. Schools and programs that send unprepared young people into jobs, internships, apprenticeships or other work-based learning experiences will soon lose their employer partners unless they improve.

Of course, many local and regional employers already connect with education and training organizations—they shape curriculum, donate equipment and money, offer internships and work experiences (sometimes paid), and share information on job openings. However, as a matter of policy, the District has not developed clear mechanisms (or guidance to its many partners, grantees and contractors) to help employers meet their labor force needs, as defined by the employers.

Education and training providers typically judge their value by measures such as the number of participants who complete the program, increase their skills, and obtain or retain employment. Employers, however, typically are interested in a different set of questions when/if they partner with an education or training provider:

- Will this service help me find candidates with the skills I need?
- Will this service help my employees become more productive?
- Will the employees I hire from this program perform as well or better than employees I hire from other sources?
- Will the employees I hire from this program stay on the job?
- Will this program save me time or money or allow me to use staff or other resources more efficiently?[45]

Responding to these questions and tailoring programs accordingly can be a culture shift for education and training organizations.   Nonetheless, while education and training organizations often incorporate social and supportive services, they must also meet the needs of employers. Workforce development programs cannot rely on employers' charitable instincts if they are to meet their stated goals of connecting participants with employment.

4a.   Re-invigorate the Workforce Investment Council and its subcommittee, the Youth Investment Council.

The Workforce Investment Council (WIC) and its subcommittee, the Youth Investment Council, are federally-mandated entities created by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). The District's WIC combines the functions of state and local workforce boards.   Members include representatives of local businesses, government agencies, community-based organizations, labor, and education. Private sector members are to be a majority. The WIC's duties include the following:
- Developing policies to increase and enhance employment opportunities for residents, and grow a labor force prepared to meet the needs of current and prospective employers;
- Facilitating collaboration across business, education, training, human services and economic development, including employers, city agencies, educational institutions, and community-based organizations;
- Establishing, and guiding the implementation of, a strategic workforce investment plan for the city;

- Establishing performance standards and performance measures;
- Assisting in developing and monitoring an employment statistics system;
- Identifying service providers;
- Overseeing workforce development services provided to youth and adults, including One-Stop Career Centers; and
- Assessing the effectiveness of workforce development policies and investments and continuously improving them.

The WIC has not had a permanent executive director for several years and has lacked strong backing or interest from the executive branch across several administrations. Nor has the legislative branch previously focused sustained attention on workforce development. The WIC has been housed in the Department of Employment Services, compromising its ability to provide policy guidance across agencies and sectors and to oversee the Department's programs.

Not surprisingly, the WIC has largely been dormant and ineffective, despite sporadic and vigorous efforts of past chairs and staff. It has not carried out its roles to guide policy and oversee performance related to education and training. It does not have a strongly engaged membership, especially from the private sector, since it is not clear what the WIC accomplishes.

The Gray administration is taking action on several fronts regarding the WIC, all of which bode well for the WIC's viability, but none of which are a guarantee of success in the absence of sustained attention and leadership:
- Moving the WIC from DOES into the office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
- Recruiting a new Executive Director
- Reconstituting the membership

A successful WIC would have the following characteristics:

- It would meaningfully engage top business, education, nonprofit and government leaders across multiple agencies to establish and implement a strategic workforce investment agenda.
- It would be closely allied with economic development officials and plans. The workforce system itself does not create jobs. The WIC's role is to help meet employer needs and prepare residents for available and projected jobs.
- It would have a very strong connection to the Mayor. The Mayor should see the WIC as a key vehicle for setting and accomplishing his workforce investment priorities.
- It would have a senior-level, highly respected Director who executes the WIC's efforts.
- It would have direct influence over how workforce funding (including but not limited to WIA) is allocated—investments should follow the agenda and policies established by the WIC.[46]

The WIC should be a hub of relationships, linking employers, government agencies, nonprofit service providers, DCPS and charter schools, UDC and UDC-CC, and others and providing policy leadership. In order to do that, staff members need to be skilled in outreach, research, analysis, written and oral communication, and strategic planning.

As the Gray administration moves forward with the WIC, we suggest that it develop and release a plan with measurable goals and interim progress measures. The WIC, and the wider community, can then see the WIC's progress.

Suggested key priorities for the WIC moving forward:

- Adopt the Educational and Career Pathways framework to guide its efforts to help District residents improve their skills, education and earnings and to match qualified District residents with employers who are ready to hire them.
- Improve the quality and transparency of data on the performance of federally and locally-funded workforce development programs. Develop a uniform assessment and process to award contracts and monitor funding based on performance. Performance measures should include not only outcomes, but also process and interim measures to avoid penalizing programs that serve clients with serious educational and employment barriers.
- Work with DOES' labor market information division to strengthen the information and analysis on the local and regional economy. Supplement quantitative data with real-time input from local employers to better understand and predict the regional labor market and to drive workforce development priorities and programs.
- Implement an industry sector initiative (several plans have already been developed). Identify stable or growing sectors and specific employers in which there may be good-paying job opportunities for District residents, systematically engage these employers in internship or apprenticeship programs, solicit their input on curriculum, and help them to meet their unmet labor force needs. The WIC should carry this out in conjunction with the workforce intermediary described below, or support the intermediary in taking the lead.
- Facilitate alignment and connection of resources across workforce, education, human services and economic development.

All of the above recommendations relate to strengthening the WIC overall, based on the premise that the WIC cannot effectively advance a youth employment agenda if the basic structure is not sound. The Youth Committee should be an integral part of the WIC's planning and development activities.

4b. Create a workforce development intermediary

A workforce intermediary serves as a direct broker between employers and training providers. While the WIC provides strategic direction and oversight of how WIA dollars are spent, an intermediary has a more operational, on-the-ground focus. Locally, the concept of an intermediary is not new. In 2008, the D.C. Council passed legislation related to the development of the Anacostia Waterfront requiring the city to create an intermediary.[47]   The developer for the Southwest Waterfront, Hoffman-Madison, agreed to provide one million dollars towards its operation.   These funds can be used to hire an executive director and cover additional administrative costs. DOES' local funds for adult job training can pay for the training that the intermediary would broker.

An intermediary understands both the demand and supply sides of the labor market, in a very localized and specific way.   It identifies future hiring needs by engaging employers and staying abreast of economic development trends in the city. It also understands the job training landscape in the city, and knows which programs train for what kinds of jobs and offer what kinds of supportive services. A strong intermediary provides value to job seekers, training providers and employers by being able to answer

the following kinds of questions: Which training providers produce the most job-ready workers? Which jobs require cars? Which jobs bar applicants with criminal records? Which jobs have variable hours that would make it difficult to find regular child care? Which employers and occupations provide opportunities for advancement?

An intermediary actively coordinates between employers, job trainers and job seekers to create a pipeline of qualified, work-ready job candidates for employers with hiring needs. This can be done as part of a First Source approach, targeting employers and projects receiving public subsidies, but does not have to exclusively serve employers receiving public funds. Specifically, an intermediary carries out the following steps:[48]

- Meets with employers to identify the number and types of anticipated jobs, including the hiring schedule, job descriptions, and standard hard and soft skill requirements. This should happen well in advance of the actual hiring date.

- Coordinates job training with educational institutions and community-based organizations to recruit and train job seekers. Some organizations may be able to provide training and services immediately, while others may need to adapt their programs or build their capacity. The intermediary typically enters into an agreement with the provider, through various mechanisms—a contract, a subgrant, an MOU, or scholarships.

- Screens candidates through in-person meetings and refers work-ready, qualified candidates to employers.

Both the Gray administration and the D.C. Council have shown interest in developing a workforce intermediary. Councilmember Michael A. Brown and Council Chair Kwame Brown introduced legislation in 2011 establishing a task force to review workforce intermediary programs implemented by other cities and provide recommendations for establishing a D.C. intermediary. The Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development is planning to incubate the intermediary. The intermediary, as noted above, should work closely with the Workforce Investment Council to coordinate its outreach to employers.

Ongoing funding for the intermediary is a key question. Ideally, it will have a sustainable blend of public resources (such as Workforce Investment Act funds and/or dedicated local funds), employer resources (scholarships, training equipment, hiring incentives to training providers for successful hires), and philanthropic funds (especially for transportation vouchers, case management, books and supplies, and other things difficult to fund with other sources).

At least initially, the intermediary is likely to focus on training and employment for adults and older youth, those between 18 and 24. As the intermediary becomes more established and employers have bought into the approach, they may be willing to look a little farther out than their immediate hiring needs, and link school-aged youth (those under age 18) into a more extended training pipeline.

5. **Foster quality improvement and performance measurement.**
   a) Use the National Youth Employment Coalition's Promising and Effective Practices Network (PEPNet) as a resource.
      - Support a cohort of nonprofits and government agencies to undergo the PEPNet self-assessment and quality improvement process.

- The Youth Investment Council, government agencies and private funders should use the standards to inform their policies, funding and oversight. Funders can incorporate the PEPNet standards into the RFPs and grant/contract processes.
  b) Assist organizations in identifying common, core measures of youth progress and tools for collecting and using data related to those measures.
  c) Re-orient DOES' youth portfolio towards a more balanced approach between summer and year-round employment programs.
  d) Improve program oversight, both on substance and on key administrative functions like contracting and procurement
     - Identify and remedy the organizational deficiencies within the Office of Contracting and Procurement that impedes their ability to award and monitor contracts.
     - The WIC and the YIC should exert their authority to oversee WIA-funded programs and coordinate with other public, private and nonprofit entities, as is their mandate.

"Accountability" is deservedly a watchword but hastily- or poorly-designed performance measures and benchmarks are not helpful. A critical first step is to develop a shared understanding among government, nonprofits, foundations, employers, and community members about what quality means, what are realistic goals, how to use data to measure progress, and the organizational steps necessary to collect and use data.

It can be difficult for service providers to dedicate precious energy, time and resources away from day-to-day activities, but carving that space and time is necessary in order to assess whether a given program is clear on its goals and is achieving its desired results.

Developing systems to generate data on progress measures and outcomes will not happen without supportive organizational cultures and funding sources. Public and private funders should focus on building the capacity of those providing services—within District agencies, K-12 and post-secondary institutions and community organizations—to assess quality; measure progress toward outcomes; and use information to drive improvement. Simply requiring performance measurement will not suffice: organizations need support for management functions related to assessment; assistance in building knowledge of quality practices and skills for collecting and using data; and workable methods for documenting youth progress.

A commitment to results should not send the message that providers should only serve the youth most likely to achieve success. On the contrary, quality improvement and performance measurement should enhance efforts for disconnected youth, so that many more will be employed or pursuing college by the age of 24. A commitment to quality and measurement should permeate program design, contracting, oversight, and technical assistance efforts.

5a. Use the National Youth Employment Coalition's Promising and Effective Practices Network (PEPNet) as a resource.

The PEPNet quality standards bring together lessons from research and practice that specifically address strategies for linking young people to employment and education for a successful transition to adulthood. The PEPNet standards are especially applicable to youth programs funded or operated by the Department of Employment Services and to nonprofits that focus on career preparation, job training, or job/internship placement. They are also relevant to other agencies and programs incorporating those elements, such as the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, Child and Family

Services Administration, GED programs, apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, and alternative high schools.

- Support a cohort of nonprofits and government agencies to undergo the PEPNet self-assessment and quality improvement process.

Several communities around the country have supported cohorts of nonprofits in undertaking PEPNet's Quality Self Assessment. A team of staff, youth and stakeholders at each program rate the organization in relation to the Standards, review the results, and identify areas and strategies for improvement. Programs receive training in administering the assessment and engage in peer learning with the others in their cohort throughout the process. Since organizations will need to devote staff time to a self-improvement process, nonprofits in particular are unlikely to be able to do this without additional funding. The District government and local foundations could support such an effort.

- The Youth Investment Council, government agencies and private funders should use the standards to inform their policies, funding and oversight. Funders can incorporate the PEPNet standards into the RFPs and grant/contract processes.

In 2010, the Department of Employment Services incorporated PEPNet standards into its RFP for year-round youth proposals. Since the contracts have not been awarded due to disruptions in the contracting process, the final status of the year-round programs and the inclusion of PEPNet standards is unclear. As the Workforce Investment Council and Youth Investment Council develop better data on the performance of federally and locally-funded providers, they should look to PEPNet to guide their assessment of program design, progress measures and outcomes.

5b.   Assist organizations in identifying common, core measures of youth progress and tools for collecting and using data related to those measures.

In a 2010 pilot program, the Urban Institute and the Center for What Works provided training and technical assistance to grantees of the Children and Youth Investment Trust providing out-of-school-time services to District youth. They helped grantees identify, collect and report indicators measuring participant progress, typically in the areas of academic performance and school engagement.[49] The government and local funders should support a similar effort with programs preparing youth for college and careers, aligned with the progress measures defined in the PEPNet standards.

5c.   Re-orient DOES' youth portfolio towards a more balanced approach between summer and year-round employment programs.

Summer jobs are not the only way to connect young people to jobs and training, but the summer jobs program is the city's most public, labor- and resource-intensive effort. It consumes a disproportionate share of resources relative to the value it provides. There is also the question of multiple goals for SYEP: providing income, providing something to do ("keeping kids off the street") and providing job placements with well-defined skill and employment-related outcomes. While the three are goals are not mutually exclusive, to the extent that the first two goals are emphasized, the third goal becomes harder to meet. The program becomes less of a true employment experience and more of an income supplement and developmental experience for the youth, which implies that the employer/host site is less of a supervisor and more of a camp counselor.

The 2011 program did not offer unlimited enrollment, experienced minimal bureaucratic snafus, and did more to match youth with job sites based on their interests and experience than in previous years. However, serving 14,000 young people in a three-month surge is a major administrative and logistical task. While it will likely be politically unpopular, if the city is serious about using SYEP as a real opportunity for young people to build skills, the city should scale back the program until it develops the capacity to plan and implement a uniformly high-quality program. DOES needs the staff, resources and time to thoughtfully match young people with job sites, recruit additional non-D.C.-government sites, develop clear standards for youth and supervisors at the job sites and monitor accordingly. The city should be able to answer questions about whether participants gained skills, whether summer jobs lead to future internships or employment, and whether participants provided real value to their host sites.

Additionally, the agency can increase SYEP's impact by connecting it to longer-term opportunities supported by other federal and local resources, such as DOES' year-round programs and high school internships and career and technical education programs. Leveraging the activities of different programs can promote sustained improvements in young people's career and education-related skills.

Meanwhile, the city's year-round youth employment program has languished. While it has previously served less than about 1,000 young people per year, it is now serving an unknown though much, much smaller number thanks to the Office of Contracting and Procurement's (OCP) difficulties in running an efficient and timely contracting process. The District should remedy the contracting problems, award the much-delayed contracts, and expand the year-round programs over time. Especially for young people at risk of poor educational and employment outcomes, the longer time-frame of a year-round program allows for a more robust set of services and stronger relationships with supportive adults.

5d.   Improve program oversight, both on substance and on the key administrative functions of contracting and procurement

- Identify and remedy the organizational deficiencies within the Office of Contracting and Procurement that impedes their ability to award and monitor contracts.

The Mayor should insist on wholesale improvements in OCP's performance, and City Council should hold the executive branch responsible for doing so. The difficulty that the Office of Contracts and Procurement has had in managing what should be a routine RFP and contracting process for DOES' year-round youth employment programs is deeply troubling. Agencies' substantive work should not be impeded by contracting problems.

- The WIC and the YIC should exert their authority to oversee WIA-funded programs and coordinate with other public, private and nonprofit entities, as is their mandate.

The WIC and the YIC need to develop their capacity to serve in a leadership, oversight and strategic role. The Mayor's and City Council's increased emphasis on rebuilding the WIC and Youth Council is promising, and should be continued.

6.   Improve the city's capacity to generate and use data to track the progress of the District's young people along educational and career pathways and to measure its progress in meeting the 90 percent goal.

a) The Mayor should direct agency heads to start the process of culture change around data, which will have long-term ripple effects on staffing, job descriptions, and organizational work flow.

b) Take advantage of the opportunity provided by the development of SLED to create a data system that can follow residents from secondary education through post-secondary and adult education, workforce development programs, and into the labor market.

Data collection and accountability have rightly come to the forefront in recent years. However, many public and nonprofit programs struggle with how to operationalize an increased data focus. Problems are multiple:

- Different funding streams require different reporting measures, leading to increased time on collection and lack of agreement about which measures are a priority
- Underinvestment in the people, activities, and systems to collect and analyze data
- Outcomes of interest (such as the employment and post-secondary outcomes of high-school, job-training or GED graduates) often cross agencies and funding streams, requiring collaboration and system compatibility, which is often lacking.
- Privacy concerns can make it difficult to understand how to legally share data across agencies.
- Data is generally conceived of as a tool for compliance, not for learning and improvement. The measures that staff are required to input may not be useful to help program operators understand their progress in real time.

There are specific and concrete steps the city and its partners can take to improve its ability to generate and use data, but these all will involve changes in organizational culture and staffing patterns in order to be successful. Too often, data is seen as an "IT problem" or under the sole purview of an "accountability manager." In reality, in order for data to be reliable and useful, multiple levels of an organization need to be engaged to ensure that meaningful measures are entered correctly and are understood and used to measure program performance, inform mid-course corrections, guide policy, and assess aggregate trends.

6a.   The Mayor should direct agency heads to start the process of culture change around data, which will have long-term ripple effects on staffing, job descriptions, and organizational work flow.

Particulars will vary by agency, but the message from the top should emphasize the following: The District is serious about tracking its progress towards meeting its goals. The only way to do that is through accurate information, conveyed in user-friendly ways, providing meaningful indicators of progress (that is, evidence of a skills increase or a job placement instead of only evidence of program completion). People and programs should use information to assess what's working and what's not to guide program and policy decisions.

In order to do this, the District will need to develop clarity around the questions it wants the data to answer, and to invest political capital and financial resources in developing the infrastructure to ensure data quality, support analysis and communicate information. This infrastructure extends to nonprofits in addition to government agencies, since nonprofits provide government-funded services through contracts and grants.

6b. Take advantage of the opportunity provided by the development of SLED to create a data system that can follow residents from secondary education through post-secondary and adult education, workforce development programs, and into the labor market.

The city, under the leadership of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, is in the midst of developing the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLED), which will provide year-to-year individual-level data on public school students (both DCPS and charter) in K-12 schools. A longitudinal data set, while complex to construct, provides high value. It allows users to identify patterns and relationships between interventions and outcomes. SLED's value will increase exponentially if the city designs it to include links to post-secondary education, adult education, workforce development programs, and wage data. Such linkages would allow the city to:

- Follow the educational progress and labor market outcomes of all adult students and workers
- Track and measure the educational and skills development progress, completions, and outcomes
- Track and measure the labor market outcomes[50]

More concretely, it would allow the city to answer questions like the following:

- To what extent do high school dropouts who earn a GED go on to obtain a postsecondary credential?
- What are the educational and labor market outcomes for unemployed workers who use federal and state resources to obtain training at community colleges?
- What value do noncredit community college certificates have in the workplace?[51]

Developing SLED is a long-term project, and the executive and legislative branches will both need to engage thoughtfully in the process and provide political and financial support to OSSE and other agency staff.

VI. CONCLUSION

Too many young people in Washington, D.C. are disconnected from employment, educational, and economic opportunities. It's time to flip the script and end the cycle of low expectations, low achievement, and limited prospects for employment and economic security. The District should commit to a bold and ambitious goal: by 2022, 90 percent of DC youth will earn a post-secondary credential and obtain full-time work by the age of 24.

To support this goal, the city needs to commit to making serious program and policy changes. The Mayor, City Council and the city's partners should adopt a framework of career and educational pathways leading to good jobs, good careers, and good wages, with a focus on identifying where young people fall off the pathway and developing strategies and programs to retain and re-engage them. The city must also improve its capacity to gather, analyze and use data to measure progress towards meeting its goals and make mid-course corrections. Lastly, the city must improve its core operational competencies around contracting so that public dollars designated for workforce development programs are disbursed in a timely, fair and efficient manner. A career and educational pathways framework would enable multiple stakeholders—government agencies, employers, K-12 and post-secondary institutions, community-based groups, unions and others—to work together to develop a talent pipeline for the regional economy and connect young people to opportunity.

Appendix A. Survey Methodology

In the summer of 2009, the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program surveyed local nonprofits to learn more about their challenges, opportunities and capacity in providing education, training, and employment-related services to District youth.

Youth-serving nonprofits have a variety of focus areas, including leadership development, entrepreneurship, academic achievement, performing arts, career and technical education, placement in jobs and internships, helping youth in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, and so on. Similarly, there are a variety of nonprofits providing employment-related services that do not target youth, although some of their participants may be between the ages 18 and 24.

Survey sample

We drew on the following sources in developing our sample:

- A 2008 list from the Department of Employment Services of its contractors providing employment services to in-school and out-of-school youth;
- Witness lists from D.C. Council hearings on the topic of youth employment;
- DOES responses to oversight and performance questions provided to former Councilmember Carol Schwartz;
- The membership of the D.C .Alliance of Youth Advocates;
- DOES' Summer Youth Employment host sites and contractors listed in a *Washington Post* D.C. Wire blog post, "List of All D.C. Summer Jobs Vendors," October 17, 2008;[52]
- Lists of grantees of the Jovid Foundation, Moriah Fund, and the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation;
- Resource directory compiled by Workforce Organizations for Regional Collaboration; and
- The Urban Institute's National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS)—Active Organizations Search Tool. This tool allows users to collect program information on all registered nonprofit organizations. The research team searched for nonprofits serving the District of Columbia using the following National Taxonomy of Exempt Entity codes: I21 (Delinquency Prevention), J02 (Management and Technical Assistance), J21 (Vocational Guidance, Counseling, and Testing) and J22 (Vocational Training.)

Once the survey team had compiled a list of organizations, contact information including agency address, phone number, e-mail, executive director, and likely survey contact person were collected from organizations' websites. When this information was not listed, the survey team filled in the contact information using the NCCS search tool and Guidestar, another searchable database of nonprofits.

Survey Instrument

Brookings staff and a consultant were the lead survey developers, with feedback from CLASP and the following other organizations:
- DC Alliance of Youth Advocates
- Martha's Table
- Latin American Youth Center
- Urban Alliance Foundation

- MetroTeenAIDS
- Sasha Bruce Youthwork

We designed a survey to accommodate the variation among nonprofit organizations providing education, training, employment and other services to youth. We developed several screening questions to make an admittedly qualitative judgment as to whether organizations focused sufficiently on workforce development services to youth to complete the survey.

We used several yes/no screens to determine whether organizations should continue to fill out the survey once they started:
- Does the organization provide services in the District of Columbia
- Does the organization serve youth between the ages of 14-24

To determine the extent to which the organization focused on youth and workforce development, we used the following screens:

- Does the organization provide workforce development services, defined as the following:
    o Building relationships with employees and placing people in internships or jobs;
    o Providing programming that exposes people to careers and/or other occupations;
    o Career and technical education (teaching specific skills for an occupation or craft);
    o Work readiness training that provides a general orientation to the world of work, such as punctuality and interpersonal skills ("soft skills training);
    o Entrepreneurship;
    o GED and External Diploma preparation
- Does the organization devote more than one-third of their programming to workforce development
- Do young people aged 14-24 comprise more than one-third of enrollees

The survey was disseminated using SurveyGizmo, an online survey tool in July, 2009. We contacted organizations via email with reminder emails and follow-up phone calls. As an incentive for organizations to participate, we entered organizations that completed the survey into a raffle of prizes for $250, $200, and $150. We drew the winning raffle entries at the September 2009 general body meeting of the DC Alliance of Youth Advocates.

Appendix Table 1. Survey Response Rates

		% of total sample	% of completed surveys
Completed surveys			
Screened in	46	33.8%	62%
Screened out	28	20.6%	37.8%
Total completed	74		
Partial responses	5	3.7%	
Did not respond	57	41.9%	
Total survey sample	**136**	**100.0%**	

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