

## **Making the Case- Establishing the Importance: What Research Tells Us**

Evaluations of youth development training and technical assistance resource centers (intermediaries) reveal impressive results. “The agencies that receive assistance from intermediaries... attribute to them a variety of improvements in their operations as well as changes in local policies and funding.<sup>1</sup>”

### **Broker Funding**

- A vibrant peer learning network of highly functioning intermediaries, representing 25 communities in 15 states, leveraged more than \$33 million in private sector investments to provide services to more than 100,000 students, more than 13,000 teachers, and nearly 10,000 employers<sup>2</sup>.
- A New York City-based intermediary, Youth Development Institute (YDI), facilitated strategy sessions with local agencies to dissuade the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development from its plans to cut funding to youth-serving organizations. The consensus among agency personnel is that this turnaround in the city funding plan would not have happened without YDI’s intervention and leadership<sup>3</sup>.

### **Increase Organizational Effectiveness**

- Two intermediaries, Community Partners in Los Angeles and the Fresno Regional Foundation in Fresno, were at the core of the James Irvine Foundation Youth Development Initiative to strengthen the management and organizational capacity of youth-serving nonprofits. This \$4.3 million initiative increased budgets and number of youth served, expanded staff, diversified funding sources, and increased success rates by 68%. As executives’ understanding and commitment to a strong management infrastructure increased, they delegated tasks more, and created new structures, policies and procedures. “Intermediaries were critical to the Initiative’s success...[they] play multiple roles: coach, broker, trouble shooter”. The James Irvine Foundation learned that to be successful, the intermediaries needed a track record of success, and credibility with the field and community<sup>4</sup>.

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1 “Strengthening Youth Development: Increasing the capacity of communities to support their youth.” Youth Development Institute/Fund for the City of New York, May, 2003, pg.5

2 *New Ways to Work: Building Connections between Schools, Communities and the Workplace*, Bi-Annual Report 2000-2002.

3 “Strengthening Youth Development: Increasing the capacity of communities to support their youth.” Youth Development Institute/Fund for the City of New York, May, 2003, pg.5.

4 James Irvine Foundation Youth Development Initiative, [http://www.irvine.org/grants\\_program/former/cyf/ydi.shtml](http://www.irvine.org/grants_program/former/cyf/ydi.shtml)

- As a result of regular convening of directors, staff most frequently attending Youth Development Institute (YDI) meetings and training activities had the highest rated youth development quality and the most positive youth findings. 57% described the technical assistance as essential to the success of their Beacons initiative and 38% described it as very helpful<sup>5</sup>.
- YDI also learned that the New York City Beacons' professional development participants now have a common language to articulate their work practices and more skills to design youth programs and implement them in a high quality manner. It prepared many staff members for promotion to managers and directors in the agencies or gave them the type of qualifications needed to make job changes to new venues. The training impact is reflected in how agencies interact with other organizations trying to improve their youth worker practice. Staff routinely cite the importance of YDI's whole organizational change approach, which engages the entire staff or youth department<sup>6</sup>.

## Help Youth Meet Educational Goals

- Evaluation of TASC, an afterschool intermediary, shows the generation of 192 projects serving over 45,000 students in New York that have increased school attendance and improved educational gains, especially in math achievement<sup>7</sup>.
- In Kansas City, the intermediary, Youthnet, supports eighteen collaborating agencies for afterschool services. A three year evaluation of program participants shows a 40% increase in math and English, a 15% increase in completion of homework, an 18% decrease in unexcused absences, and 11% improvement in behavior in school<sup>8</sup>.

## Strengthen Communities and Service Delivery

- The BEST Initiative provides its Advancing Youth Development curriculum (AYD) to youth workers through one of its 15 Youth Development Intermediaries. They regularly involve youth as planners and leaders, work more intentionally to help youth develop specific competencies, and contact other youth-serving organizations to exchange information and resources for the benefit of young people in their programs. 75% of AYD graduates found that training helped them increase youth involvement in program development, and shift from an adult-centered orientation to a youth-centered perspective. Local

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5 "Strengthening Youth Development: Increasing the capacity of communities to support their youth." Youth Development Institute/Fund for the City of New York, May, 2003

6 Warren, Constancia; Feist, Michelle; and Nevarez, Nancy, *A Place to Grow: Evaluation of the New York City Beacons: Summary Report*, New York City: Academy for Educational Development, Final Report, 2002.

7 *What Have We Learned from TASC's First Three Years? Evaluation of the TASC After-School Program*, Policy Studies Associates, Inc., 2001.

8 Learn more about YouthNet: <http://www.kcyouthnet.org/whatis.asp>

intermediary organizations helped youth-serving organizations to strengthen systems of support available to their workers by providing increased supports for professional development, such as mentoring, training, or release time. They also collaborated more and fostered more networking within the youth-serving sector, and increased their commitment to the field by aligning their policies and practices to support the youth development approach. AYD is delivered by local intermediaries who also provide technical assistance and linkages to resources<sup>9</sup>.

- LINC, a local investment commission, and Southern Eco, a social justice intermediary, increased the effectiveness of neighborhood-based efforts to improve schools through community master planning that resulted in more community connections, increased voting, and provided greater involvement by community members<sup>10</sup>.
- A qualitative evaluation of a youth-serving intermediary's relationships and communication with its members reveals these lessons:
  - A high value is placed on how to work together rather than on client delivery;
  - The high value placed on people as resources increases competence, confidence and generates a network of peer support;
  - Smaller staffs lead to more peer involvement and learning,
  - Clients are involved in ways that are meaningful to them and of value to the organization; create a safe, nurturing environment is created where people can learn best;
  - There is a focus on the whole person; and
  - Multiple levels of staff in all spheres of the organization are involved<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Johnson, Elaine, Rothstein, Fran, Gajdosik, Jennifer. "The intermediary role in youth worker professional development: Successes and challenges" *New Directions for Youth Development*, No. 104, Winter, 2004, Wiley Periodicals, Inc. Pg. 51 - 64

<sup>10</sup> *Connecting with Schools*, Vol. II, Collaborative Communications Group for the Kettering Foundation, November 2004

<sup>11</sup> Kurtz, P. David. *A Case Study of a Network as a Learning Organization*, *Administration in Social Work*, Vol 22(2), 1998.