



## *Making the Case-* **Funding Template**

**F**unding remains a critical issue for any organization and no less so for a youth development training and technical assistance resource center. The following piece provides language that can be used when writing a proposal for the support of a Center. It is not all the information that will be needed but is offered to provide some of the language that makes the case for the importance and need of this type of organization.



*“A nation that truly wants no child left behind must make sure that workers who care for children, youth and families have the motivation, resources, and support to succeed.”*

Paul Light, March 2003  
*The Health of the Human Services Workforce*  
The Brookings Institution

Despite their deep commitment and passion for bringing about positive change in the lives of young people, community organizations across the country are undermined by a variety of forces, including significant increases in demand for services, high staff turnover, unstable private and public funding, and difficulty adapting to changing community demographics and increasingly complex needs. These organizations work with a vigor and single-minded zeal that often drives them to notable victories, particularly in the early stages of their development. However, without critical organizational capacity building and professional development supports, these organizations are limited in their ability to make strategic, sustainable progress—they are likely to function on a ‘service plateau,’ failing to fully reach out to young people in need of their services.

Recent research studies confirm that regional and national training and technical assistance resource centers play a crucial role in helping organizations mitigate these challenges by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, contacts and other resources they need to do this work. Centers can add strength and capacity to an array of programs, institutions and systems in the youth-serving sector by:

- Providing youth development workers and youth-serving agencies with community-based training and technical assistance;
- Building skills and competencies of youth workers through professional development systems;

- Developing regional and national networks of youth workers and youth-serving agencies; and
- Helping agencies integrate youth development principles and practices in the day-to-day operations of youth service agencies<sup>1</sup>.

As one research study concluded, “Intermediary organizations have transformed youth worker professional development in many places across the nation, with the result being a national network of local, community-based systems of training and support.”<sup>2</sup> By increasing the skills, knowledge, morale, and effectiveness of youth serving agencies, training and technical assistance resource centers are also increasing the resiliency and capacity of the youth served by these agencies.

A training and technical assistance resource center’s expansive view of the field extends beyond any single organization. Local training and technical assistance resource centers “operate in a position between the youth-serving organizations they assist and a body of knowledge, skills, contacts, and other resources.”<sup>3</sup> They act as a broker to provide both broad reach and sharp focus on key youth development issues.

Several research studies have found the contribution of training and technical assistance resource centers to be highly beneficial with respect to educating and training youth workers. An impact study of the 15-city 1996 National BEST Initiative - designed to increase training and education resources for youth workers in local communities—found that staff were significantly influenced by their participation in Advanced Youth Development (AYD) training. The study concluded that staff who complete this training are more effective at helping youth develop specific competencies, and they also are more able to network to exchange information on behalf of the young people in their program.<sup>4</sup>

Another study, undertaken in 1997 by the University of Arizona, examined the impact of prepared and engaged youth-serving American communities,<sup>5</sup> a national initiative of 4-H. Looking at what participants, agencies, and communities gained through this initiative, researchers found that youth development is promoted in daily interactions among youth workers and youth, and between organizational and professional development personnel. They further found that training and technical assistance is a critical factor in advancing the youth development approach.

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1 *The intermediary guidebook: Making and managing the community connections for youth.* (2001). San Francisco: Intermediary Network.

2 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.

3 Wynn, J.R. *The role of local intermediary organizations in the youth development field.* (Discussion paper SC-03, p.11). Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children, 2000. See also Gil G. Noam (Ed.). (2004). *New Directions for Youth Development*, 101.

4 Academy for Educational Development. (2002). *BEST strengthens youth worker practice: An evaluation of Building Exemplary System for Training Youth Workers (BEST).* New York: Academy for Educational Development, Center for School and Community Services.

5 University of Arizona Institute for Children, Youth, and Families. (2003). *National 4-H impact assessment project: Prepared and engaged youth-serving American communities.* Tucson, AZ: Author.

Beyond the youth development field, a variety of studies have been conducted to explore the relationship between teacher professional development and student achievement. While not focused exclusively on youth service providers, these studies provide further evidence to support the link between staff/teacher preparation and youth outcomes. A 2001 Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) study entitled, “A Compilation of Professional Standards of Practice for Teachers,” found a correlation between teacher qualifications and student achievement.<sup>6</sup> HFRP’s consultations with leaders in the youth development field revealed a strong consensus that quality out-of-school youth development programs are characterized by effective staff recruitment, training and development.

HFRP’s findings have been replicated by several other studies, including a decade-long research project conducted in Tennessee, Texas, and several large city school districts. This study, entitled *The Real Value of Teachers: Using New Information about Teacher Effectiveness to Close the Achievement Gap*, confirmed that of all the factors influencing student achievement, teachers have the greatest impact. According to Kevin Carey, Senior Policy Analyst and author of the report:

*“The differences separating teachers cannot be attributed to differences in students, because value-added systems isolate the teacher’s impact by controlling for prior student achievement and other factors. Value-added data show that, even in the same schools or districts, even with kids whose prior achievement was similar, some teachers get great gains while others allow achievement to lag.”*

Likewise, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) studied the ways in which teacher qualifications and other school inputs are related to student achievement across all fifty states. The findings of both the qualitative and quantitative analyses suggest that policy investments in the quality of teachers may be related to improvements in student performance.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond investigating the relative impact of youth worker and teacher training on youth outcomes, many of these studies suggest conceptual frameworks and standards for delivering professional training and organizational capacity building by training and technical assistance resource center organizations. Mark Krueger, a University of Vermont professor and director and founder of the Youth Work Learning Center, outlined four principles that are key to effective technical assistance:

**1. It must be adaptable, fluid and changing.** Effective technical assistance must be based on the user’s stage of development, capacity and need, and not on a fixed blueprint.

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<sup>6</sup> Darling-Hammond, Linda. (2000). *Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence*. Education Policy Analysis Archives, 8(1), 1–51. Available at [epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v8n1](http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v8n1). Haycock, K. (1998). Good teaching matters: How well-qualified teachers can close the gap. *Thinking K–16*, 3(2), 1–16. Available at [www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/product+catalog/reports+and+publications.htm](http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/product+catalog/reports+and+publications.htm).

<sup>7</sup> Darling-Hammond, Linda. (2000). *Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: A review of state policy evidence*. Stanford University.

2. **It is collaborative.** Effective technical assistance is founded on trust between provider and training and technical assistance resource center, and their mutual understanding of the provider's environment and context. It requires regular communication through a variety of channels.
3. **Users feel they are an important part of the process and their expertise, capacities and resources are valued and utilized.** Although receiving technical assistance is usually sufficient incentive to interest providers in participating, Krueger found that some users may need additional incentives. Both the agency and the training and technical assistance resource center need to actively engage in problem solving and the construction of new approaches.
4. **Providers are able to respond to a broad range of environmental, fiscal, service model, and demographic variables.**

The BEST assessment placed a strong value on the leadership role of training and technical assistance resource centers, pointing to the singular ability of such entities to leverage funding, drive human resource development, and institutionalize positive youth development approaches within both agencies and communities. While some national youth-serving organizations (YWCA, Girls Inc. etc.) have built professional development infrastructures, the vast majority of independent nonprofits lack a centralized system for training and professional development. Training and technical assistance resource centers are crucial in building the organizational capacity of these groups and promoting best practices, evaluation and assessment, and human resource development.

Organizational training and technical assistance resource centers can assist the youth development field to:

### **Save Time and Money**

Youth development training, technical assistance, and resource centers are able to mobilize quickly, with minimal duplication, to address the needs of multiple agencies and individuals. Rather than having multiple organizations create independent curricula and training, resource centers can package innovative, state-of-the-art training, information sharing, and networking opportunities for a vast array of organizations and individuals.

With youth development information growing exponentially, training and technical assistance resource centers are well placed to synthesize, process, and disseminate only the highest quality information. Through newsletters, website links, articles, electronic dialogue, and libraries, training and technical assistance resource centers assure that providers receive information quickly and in a useable form. When appropriate, training and technical assistance resource centers also convene forums and trainings to foster information sharing and dialogue. All of this saves time for individual programs and youth workers and assures that community organizations receive state-of-the-art resources from the field.

## **Improve Effectiveness**

The provision of training and technical assistance is key to the training and technical assistance resource center's ability to strengthen and sustain organizational, institutional, and system development. However, knowing that training by itself is insufficient, training and technical assistance resource centers work with executives, boards of directors, and staff to help agencies embrace change, think strategically, create flexible systems, and prompt institutional change by improving the policies, procedures and operations of the entire organization.

Youth development training and technical assistance resource centers promote experimental approaches as well as established best practices to help organizations infuse youth development practices into existing programs and services. Using creative, yet established methods of learning—training, assessments, peer learning communities, coaching, and practice laboratories—resource centers work within a community, service system, and/or organization to support developmentally based youth programming.

## **Inspire Change and Innovation**

Working in partnership with other local, regional and national groups, youth development training and technical assistance resource centers generate new ideas, strategies and programs. To foster universal appreciation for the importance of youth development, they promote discussion and debate among new and existing linkages and connections between people, institutions, coalitions, and initiatives. Serving as a bridge between youth-serving groups helps training and technical assistance resource centers forge partnerships on key initiatives and create networks for widespread adoption of youth development principles and practices.

Youth development training and technical assistance resource centers also bring youth development principles and practices to wider audiences and partners in the prevention field. This is important because the prevention approach has been highly influential in driving policy making, funding, and practice. Youth development training and technical assistance resource centers are critical players in gaining the support of leaders in the prevention field to advance youth development practices that focus on preparing young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood by addressing their broader developmental needs.<sup>8</sup> Positioned as neutral conveners, youth development training and technical assistance resource centers can reach diverse groups like faith-based providers, workforce development, education, juvenile justice, mental health, and funders.

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<sup>8</sup> Prevention approaches tend to focus on strategies that keep behaviors or acts from happening or existing. Youth development, by contrast, is "...the ongoing growth process in which all youth are engaged in attempting to (1) meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, be valued, be useful, and be spiritually grounded, and (2) to build skills and competencies that allow them to function and contribute in their daily lives." (Pittman, 1993.).

## Produce Results

Youth serving agencies today are under tremendous pressure to demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs in order to ensure funders, government officials and the public at large that their investments are worthwhile. Youth development training and technical assistance resource centers assist providers in developing meaningful accountability and evaluation systems that provide information to drive program improvements as well as demonstrating program impact. Training and technical assistance resource centers “open a dialogue between researchers and practitioners to foster and share new kinds of expertise and information.”<sup>9</sup> They share and synthesize assessment data, sponsor research that links policy to practice, provide local organizations with training and concrete tools for measuring outcomes, and engage the field in discussions on accountability and the link between assessment and program improvement. They can use assessment data to advocate for funding and policies that will benefit the entire youth-serving sector.

Training and technical assistance resource centers also model ways to effectively involve youth as leaders and partners. Through learning and reflection on their own successes and challenges, resource centers provide leadership on engaging youth and fostering youth leadership, and they provide concrete tools for fostering youth/adult partnerships, and training youth and youth workers in effective and appropriate practices.

## Increase Influence

Training and technical assistance resource centers bring visibility, influence, and credibility to the youth development field. Whether through vigorous advocacy in partnership with local organizations or through behind-the-scenes training and supports, youth development training and technical assistance resource centers bring attention and recognition to the field. Community-based organizations—whose mission is to provide critical youth development services and activities—are unlikely to be focused on influencing the broader youth development field. Moreover, they generally lack the level of influence necessary to affect fundamental system-wide change. By contrast, training and technical assistance resource centers often have the stature, neutrality, and organizing skills to bring all players to the table to respond to emerging policy issues and to influence positive approaches and healthy outcomes for young people.

Youth development training and technical assistance resource centers are uniquely positioned to increase the capacity of the youth-serving sector to effectively adopt youth development approaches, to create professional development structures to sustain and retain youth workers, and to forge regional and national partnerships committed to a common youth development language and system. By investing in youth development training and technical assistance resource centers, youth-serving agencies are provided with the infrastructure, knowledge and skills they need to make a positive difference for America’s young people.

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<sup>9</sup> *Local Intermediary Organizations: Connecting the Dots for Children, Youth, and Families; New Ways to Work with Jobs for the Future*, the American Youth Policy Forum, the AED, Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, the Coalition for Community Schools and the Finance Project, 2002.

Found at: <http://www.intermediarynetwork.org/connectdots.html>.