

Moving from **Knowledge** to **Action** in San Francisco:

Creating a Comprehensive Youth Work Professional Workforce System

Youth workers play a critical role in today's society. For working parents, youth workers who staff after-school and community-based programs provide a bridge of vital supports, services and opportunities for children and youth between the end of the school day and the end of the work day. For children and youth across the nation, youth workers serve as positive adult role models, mentors, coaches, tutors and friends. And for our most vulnerable youth, youth workers at programs focused on providing vocational training, substance abuse and prevention, residential treatment and a host of other services are a lifeline."

[Next Generation Youth Work Coalition: Putting Youth Work on the Map]

In many communities across the country, young people of all ages are spending significant amounts of time in programs run by youth workers. According to the Matter of Time Study conducted by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development in 1992, out-of-school time hours constitute the biggest block of time in the life of a young adolescent. With more dollars being dedicated to after school programs, front line youth workers are relied upon now more than ever before to provide support and opportunities for the healthy development and academic success of young people during out-of-school hours. In many cases, adult leaders in out-of-school time programs spend more face-to-face time with young people than teachers during the school day. Yet little infrastructure has been built to prepare new youth workers for these important jobs or to support their ongoing professional development.

Despite the lack of professional development infrastructure, a recent study by the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition shows that youth workers are extremely satisfied with their jobs and enthusiastic about their work and the field. The irony is that while workers report extremely high levels of job satisfaction—nearly 80 percent of those surveyed reported being either satisfied or very satisfied—they also do not tend to stay in their jobs for very long. The San Francisco Beacon 2006 Workforce Study reflected similar findings. While youth workers are extremely motivated and committed to the mission of their work, they are seriously affected by extrinsic factors such as compensation and organizational instability. Youth workers report that career ladders within their organizations and the field in general are unclear, and that they must move around within the field in order to attain higher wages or gain new skills or promotions. The continual shifting of youth workers from job to job threatens the development of positive relationships between young people and skilled staff, as well as the implementation of effective youth programs, thus presenting significant challenges to quality programming that achieves longer lasting impact for young people.

California is at the forefront of the increasing demand for after school programs. The requests for new programs and more youth workers increased as the public realized the potential of effective after school programs to provide key developmental opportunities and academic support for young people. Under Proposition 49, the After School Education and Safety Program (ASES) received an additional \$430 million in the 2006-07 state budget for elementary and middle school after school programs. According to the California School Age Consortium, California after-school programs need an estimated 12,000 new workers to meet staffing needs for this broad expansion. Additionally, the 21st Century Learning Center Initiative in California has more than doubled in size over the last four years, bringing the total funding for programs to \$136.4 million, half of which has been earmarked for high school after school programs. This rapid upscaling has caused concern among program and field leaders about how to recruit enough qualified youth workers to fill new positions and, more broadly, how California and the field will be able to develop and retain youth workers over time.

Over the past few years, significant progress has been made to focus the field's attention on the issues of recruitment, development and retention of front line youth workers. Several states and cities are creating standards and competencies linked to training and professional development systems and to study compensation and career pathways. Universities and colleges across the country have created on-line and traditional certificate programs and undergraduate and graduate degrees in youth development and school-age care, including the University of Arizona, University of Minnesota, Clemson University, Penn Valley Community College and San Diego City College to name a few.

In 2005, representatives from diverse sectors of the field, including youth workers, national and local community youth-serving agencies, local and national youth development and after school intermediary organizations, and corporate and foundation philanthropies, came together to form the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition (Next Gen). Next Gen is dedicated to creating a strong, valued youth work profession whose workforce is stable, prepared, supported and committed to youth. The Next Gen Coalition serves as a national resource to highlight and share learning from workforce development efforts that are taking place across the country. Through Next Gen's efforts, the hope is that individuals, organizations, communities and states can learn from one another, build on each other's efforts and create a coherent system that meets local needs and reflects a common set of assumptions and goals. Next Gen is also engaged in doing work in areas, where little is being done -- most recently profiling the workforce and leading efforts to address career ladders and compensation.

Historically, the city of San Francisco and the greater Bay Area have been viewed as leaders in the youth development field. The workforce area is no exception. To begin addressing San Francisco and the field's concerns about recruiting and developing a strong, committed and valued workforce, the Community Network for Youth Development (CNYD) conducted a study of existing efforts to recruit and provide professional development resources for new and veteran youth workers at some of San Francisco's large youth serving organizations, intermediaries, and school and city departments. The results revealed that the foundation for a comprehensive workforce development system for youth workers exists. What the region lacks is a coordinating body, which ties all of the components together and focuses on some of the more difficult issues, such as compensation and career ladders. This briefing is meant to catalyze local field leaders to initiate discussion about how to create a professional regional workforce system for youth workers that will extend beyond individual agencies or initiatives and act as a magnet for new workers, while retaining those with experience.



A Framework to Organize Our Thinking

Building a comprehensive workforce development system can be complex. Youth workers and organizational leaders will need to join with multiple government, community, and educational systems to create a sustainable model of support. Since youth workers can be found in a variety of settings—school based programs, community organizations, social services, recreation, among others—a broad based coalition will need to be forged to ensure that a comprehensive system, which addresses the full-range of youth worker needs, is built.

Where do we begin? First we need an organizing tool. The Next Gen Coalition developed a professional development framework, which we have expanded to outline the components of a comprehensive workforce development system. This preliminary study of San Francisco’s workforce efforts identifies potential anchor systems and offers transferable and scalable ideas from the region and other communities. This study is not a comprehensive catalog of all efforts underway in the San Francisco. This study is meant to be added to as more knowledge is gained and shared and to serve as a starting point to put together a comprehensive regional workforce system.



A Framework for creating a professional workforce system for youth workers:

Recruitment: A system to identify and recruit new youth workers into the field with a diversity of cultural backgrounds, education and experience.

Standards and Competencies: Agreement upon the knowledge, skills and experiences needed to work in a variety of settings, with different age groups and in different positions throughout the system.

Training and Professional Development Resources: Training and other professional development resources linked to agreed upon standards and competencies, that can be integrated into a more comprehensive Learning Delivery System.

Learning Delivery System: Coordination of a wide-range of existing training and professional development resources —some examples include pre-service higher education coursework, in-service training opportunities offered by individual organizations and local or national intermediaries, apprenticeships and peer mentoring experiences.

Career Ladders and Compensation Guidelines: Explicit mechanisms for attracting workers to the field and for ensuring fair and adequate pay along the continuum of their careers.

Research and Evaluation Systems: Systematic research and evaluation approaches that address whether and how professional development improves practice and whether and how improved practice leads to improved youth outcomes.

The Foundation: Building on Existing Work

Below are summaries of promising efforts in each area of the workforce system framework. While most of the work is agency focused, the potential exists to successfully adapt these strategies for broader application. (More detailed profiles of the organizations highlighted in “Building on Existing Work” are available on request.)

Recruitment

In California, with the rapid expansion of after school programs, considerations for attracting and preparing new youth workers are paramount. It is a common misconception that anyone can do youth work, which can lead to hiring decisions being made simply to fill positions. The reality is that youth workers need to possess a broad range of knowledge and skills and to be able to apply them effectively when working with young people. Inevitably multiple strategies will need to be employed to address the immediate needs to fill open staff positions during this expansion period. And field leaders will need to begin addressing some of the core workforce challenges, which are known to discourage new youth workers from joining the field, such as compensation and career potential.

Below we highlight several efforts to attract and prepare new youth workers, including a youth employment training program, a university based teacher training program, which provides on-the-job experience in after school programs and an organization tapping into a new resource for after school—retired seniors.

Building on Existing Work:

Engaging Older Adults as Youth Workers: Experience Corps Bay Area is hosted by the Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center. Similar to Americorp, Experience Corps Bay Area volunteers fill staff and volunteer positions in after school programs and sponsoring agencies contribute a match of funding for each volunteer. Experience Corps offers adults 55 and older volunteer opportunities to tutor, provide classroom assistance, and help out in after school programs, while providing rich inter-generational experience for youth within those programs. Experience Corp Bay Area volunteers receive training and are eligible for educational awards, stipends and Elderhostel scholarships depending on their level of service and term of commitment. Over a dozen cities across the United States host Experience Corp programs. The Experience Corp Bay Area is securing financial support to share best practices and assist other programs across the state to engage older adults as part-time employees and volunteers in after school programs.

Hiring from within: The San Francisco Boys & Girls Club believes that one of the best recruitment strategies is to hire from within their clubs. They offer pre-employment and leadership programs to develop club members to become teen workers. Qualified teen staff are then recruited, mentored and eventually hired for open positions. Boys & Girls Clubs believe that higher retention of these staff over time is due to the long-term relationship of the teen staff with the community and their full-integration of the values and culture of the club.

Job Fairs: California School-Age Consortium hosts regional job fairs for afterschool employers to help meet the immediate staffing needs of local programs. This past year, CalSAC led or supported

job fairs in Los Angeles, San Jose, Oakland, Sacramento, and San Diego. Job Fairs are organized in collaboration with local employers, employment offices, colleges and universities. Job Fairs help employers fill open positions and also bring much needed attention to the afterschool field within the community.

Partnering with local colleges and universities: Several YMCA branches in San Francisco collaborate with San Francisco State University to provide internship and workplace study opportunities for students, which can potentially lead into full-time employment after graduation. Through these opportunities, students gain hands-on experience and make connections to their classroom learning, while providing staff support to programs.

Preparing new youth workers: The California School-Age Consortium's Afterschool Corps is a cohort of young adults (16-24) interested in after school and child care jobs that are referred through youth employment agencies, schools, and other sources. CalSAC provides a job coach to work with the youth to build skills needed to work in after school programs, as well as interviewing practice for when they meet with employers at the interview day arranged by CalSAC. Once employed, the young adults continue training with their CalSAC job coach to enhance and develop their skills. Afterschool Corps members earn stipends for attending job coaching and for taking on leadership roles in the project. Currently about 50 young people have enrolled in the program and 25 have been employed by after school programs in San Francisco, Oakland, and Ukiah.

Utilizing Career Centers: California School-Age Consortium is reaching out to community college Career Service and Child Development Departments, universities and employment offices – one stop centers, Employment Development Department and youth employment programs to educate them on the need for new workers in the field and the job requirements, so they are better able to recruit students and other potential employees. CalSAC directs potential afterschool workers to its Career Center at www.calsac.org where they can search for job opportunities in their area as well as access interviewing and career advice.

Learning from Others:

Fresno Teaching Fellows Program: The Teaching Fellows program in Fresno, CA recruits incoming and current college students who are on a teaching career path and places them in various after school and enrichment programs in their area of interest. The program offers students work experiences which enrich their preparation for classroom teaching, on-going training in after-school programming, as well as a living stipend of \$750/month. In return, the Fellows serve as after school teaching assistants 15 hours per week in low performing schools in the area. Currently, the program engages 200 teaching fellows that are placed in 40 schools. The demand for large numbers of after school workers in the Central Valley has led to the development of a non-profit organization, the Teaching Fellows Foundation, which coordinates the program and promotes university partnerships to increase the pool of highly qualified, trained Teaching Fellows for local school district after school programs funded by 21st Century CLC and ASES funding.

Cultivate Young Workers: Leadership & Renewal Outfitters, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, offers a year-long Journey Fellowship program for young adults ages 18 to 22 who have expressed an interest in working with youth. The program consists of four weekend retreats that help participants explore who they are and what they want to be doing with their lives. In addition, they are mentored by experienced youth workers and work as interns to gain exposure to youth work. All costs for housing, meals, retreats, internships, and materials are paid by the Journey Fellowship program. Graduates

help recruit new applicants from their high school or college campuses and become a strong voice promoting the youth work profession. (Next Generation Youth Work Coalition: Findings, Implications & Innovations: Promising Workforce Practices in Youth Work)

Standards & Competencies

Findings from the Next Gen surveys of youth workers show that the settings, activities and job responsibilities of youth workers vary a great deal. Creating cross-cutting core competencies for all youth workers, regardless of setting and job responsibilities, could establish a portable skill set, which serves as a base from which to expand their knowledge and skills in areas they chose to pursue, such as arts, sports or recreation, counseling, or academic support, as well as across ages. A clear competency framework outlining the skills, knowledge and experience needed in youth work, could also provide clear links between the skills obtained through training to broader professional and competency development. In essence, a set of core competencies is the foundation of any comprehensive professional development system and can set a standard for the profession.

In San Francisco, program quality standards have been adopted by youth serving agencies throughout the city, as a part of the Afterschool for All Initiative (AFA). The next logical step in the AFA Initiative is to define the staff skills needed to meet these standards through the definition of core competencies for youth workers at various levels in the system. Additionally, training offerings will need to be aligned to the defined competencies. Fortunately, several competency frameworks already exist —the National Collaboration for Youth, Achieve Boston, among others. You will see below a description of the platform that has been established in San Francisco to base core competencies upon, as well as a description of competency frameworks, which can be adapted to meet our region's needs.

Building on Existing Work:

San Francisco adopts Quality Program Standards: Last year, the Department of Children, Youth & Their Families of San Francisco (DCYF) developed the After School Cluster High Quality Standards, with the assistance of a community advisory group. All DCYF funded agencies serving youth are required to adopt the quality standards as a part of the After School for All Initiative. DCYF is also working with other key youth serving systems and funders in San Francisco to adopt the standards of practice. SFUSD Team ExCEL and the YMCA of San Francisco are currently aligning their standards, tools and resources with DCYF's After School Cluster High Quality Standards to ensure continuity across cross-funded programs.

Developing Core Competencies: Community Network for Youth Development's Youth Development Framework for Practice has been the basis for standard setting in San Francisco in many cases. Over 100 community based organizations have been trained to use CNYD's research-based Youth Development Framework for Practice as the basis for quality programming and staff development. The Beacon Initiative was the first large scale initiative to adopt the framework practices as standards, followed by the San Francisco Department of Adolescent Health, and most recently the San Francisco Department of Children Youth and their Families (DCYF). In 2003, the San Francisco YMCA partnered with CNYD to develop an in-house Youth Development Certificate program based upon the practice standards outlined in the Framework, which is the basis of training required for all new staff. CNYD is in the process of finalizing youth worker competencies, skills and knowledge matched to the five key practice areas defined in the framework and is taking care to align the competencies with existing field standards where possible.

Learning from Others:

Creating a Core List: Representatives of the National Collaboration for Youth (NYC) have pulled together the work done by many organizations around competencies to create a core list that can be used across the National Collaboration for Youth member organizations. The competencies are for entry-level youth development workers such as the front line volunteers or part-time employees. The goal was to keep the list extremely simple, yet include enough substance to make it useful for recruitment activities such as job descriptions and interviews, as well as development plans for further training, coaching and support. NYC's membership includes 50 national organizations, which reach 40 million young people nationwide and employ up to 100,000 people.

Aligning Competencies with Training: The C.S. Mott Foundation has brought together national leaders in the after school field to address the challenge of providing meaningful and connected professional development for front line youth workers. Their efforts have led to the development of core competencies for front line youth workers and supervisors and the creation of a professional development management tool, which will assist supervisors to assess youth worker skills and training needs and develop relevant and connected professional development plans. The final report describing their efforts and tools is due to be released this summer.

Training & Professional Development

In general, professional development is viewed as an effective strategy for increasing program quality. Early childhood education studies have found that the quality of daycare children receive is associated with providers' educational attainment and participation in training workshops, and that the quality of care is in turn linked with children's more positive social and cognitive outcomes. More importantly, when considering youth workers' contentment, professional development opportunities are considered as a way to increase job satisfaction and retain employees.

San Francisco has a rich diversity of innovative training and professional development opportunities available to youth workers. However, we clearly lack the infrastructure to assist youth workers and agencies to add up the skills and knowledge developed through training or to link skills gained to professional credentials or compensation. While most of the youth workers in the Next Gen survey report having access to training opportunities, concrete links between participating in training and tangible rewards were rare. Only 20% of respondents said their organization "formally recognizes" their participation in training—meaning it results in a promotion, stipend or wage increase. Below we attempted to highlight the wide range of professional development and training opportunities available to youth workers in San Francisco, including local intermediaries, peer training, local university and college connects and professional networks, which could be built upon to create a more connected infrastructure.

Building on Existing Work:

Training Organizations

California School Age Consortium (CalSAC): CalSAC supports after school programs and providers throughout California. They offer training, resources, and advocacy information to advance programs' work with children. To meet growing demand, CalSAC is developing a continuum of services for after school staff and programs to support professional skills development, leadership development, organization and program planning, and human resource management. CalSAC's training and consulting

services range from free on-site training for program staff to strategic planning facilitation for organizational growth and sustainability.

Community Network for Youth Development (CNYD): The core work of CNYD is providing training, coaching and consulting to support high quality youth development programming. CNYD offers group training and online learning, learning communities that focus on peer exchange, and speakers forums that keep the field abreast of cutting edge practice innovations and research. CNYD resources are centered on the Youth Development Framework for Practice, a research-based tool that connects youth development theory and practice, assesment and program and organizational change strategies.. CNYD supports youth development professionals in a wide variety of settings, including school-based after-school programs, community organizations of all sizes, public youth-serving agencies, such as park and recreation departments and public health, and large-scale youth initiatives.

Health Initiatives for Youth (HIFY): HIFY believes that young people are knowledgeable about their own health needs and about why they choose the kinds of risks they do take. At the same time, they also believe that there are gaps in young people’s information that can best be filled by exciting, interactive, and honest education as well as by providers, parents and community members. HIFY provides a wide range of workshops for youth and specialized training for peer educators. For health providers, they offer trainings and in-services.

SFUSD Team ExCEL: The School Health Department employees 8 full-time staff to provide and coordinate trainings, provide on-site coaching and general support to all school-based after school programs in San Francisco funded through their department. Each District Coordinator oversees 6-10 schools. Over the past several years, School Health has developed several strategies to support their program staff to create high quality experiences for the young people they serve, including large scale training institutes, training workshops, on-site coaching, specialized learning communities, and providing training classes for credit at San Francisco State University.

Sports 4 Kids: Sports4Kids Community Training Program provides customized staff trainings to schools, after school programs, summer camps, recreation centers, and various other youth service organizations. The After School Program Training Series helps after school providers explore how to use play and physical activity as a medium for youth development within their unique settings and communities. Participants also share and practice implementing healthy and effective group management practices to create an environment conducive to successfully programming.

Team Up for Youth: Team-Up for Youth believes high-quality sports programs have the powerful potential to help young people become successful adults. So Team-Up strives to help community-based sports organizations improve and implement programs that are centered on the well-being and healthy development of youth participants Combining stimulating presentations with interactive exercises and role-playing, their training staff demonstrates how youth development principles are effectively applied in the field.

YMCA Youth Development Certificate Program: Among the vast training resources the YMCA provides to their branch employees, an interesting resource developed in partnership with Community Network for Youth development (CNYD) is their Youth Development Certificate Program. All staff working with youth at any branch of the YMCA of San Francisco is required to attend 16 hours of training on basic youth development and then depending on the needs of the agency and staff they can request additional training. If staff complete 40 hours of Youth Development Training, they receive a \$250 bonus.

Youth Leadership Institute (YLI): Youth Leadership Institute creates programs which bring young people and their adult allies together to create positive social change. Building on these real-world program experiences, YLI creates evidence-based curriculum and training programs which promote youth leadership and social change efforts.

Professional Support Networks

Within the San Francisco Bay Area many support networks exist that are geared toward connecting youth work professionals with program resources including, the Violence Prevention Network, Youth Employment Coalition, and the California School Age Consortium Bay Area Chapter. Supporting the further development of such support networks will be a key to helping youth work professionals feel recognized, valued and supported. Recognizing the value of peer networks, the After School for All Initiative has requested proposals to establish a peer mentoring program for youth workers in both school and community based settings. One particularly promising model in the Bay Area is the Youth Development Peer Network.

Youth Development Peer Network (YDPN): YDPN was established in 2003 by a core group of local youth workers, in partnership with the Community Network for Youth Development, interested in creating a network specifically for front line youth workers. Completely volunteer run and peer-led, the YDPN membership base includes 450 youth workers from throughout the Bay Area. The YDPN provides opportunities to connect youth workers working across a range of settings and with a variety of ages with events that offer networking, skills building, and rejuvenation. YDPN wants to ensure that youth worker knowledge and experience inform the development of the field, particularly efforts to professionalize the workforce. As such, they have participated in the study to profile San Francisco's youth workers for the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition and several members of the YDPN have attended Next Gen convenings.

Connections to Higher Education

After School Best Practices Course: San Francisco State University College of Extended Learning and San Francisco Unified School District's ExCEL After School Programs are offering a course on After School Best Practices (CAD 350). Students who successfully complete the 8 week course will earn two credits through SFSU's College of Extended Learning. Designed for individuals working in San Francisco ExCEL After School Programs, this course will provide participants with opportunities to develop a variety of skills to enhance their professional capacity within the programs in which they currently work. Through participation in workshops, participants explore current theories and practical examples for developing, implementing and maintaining a successful program. Guided independent research following each workshop allows participants to connect session information to their local sites. This course incorporates a series of on-going workshops offered by the SFUSD SHPD ExCEL After School Programs central office.

Community College Youth Worker Training: The Oakland Community Afterschool Alliance (OCASA) has brought together representatives from Peralta Community Colleges, Oakland Unified School District, Oakland's workforce development office, elected officials and community organizations to design and pilot a youth worker training program at Laney College in Oakland. They plan to pilot courses for 30 students in the fall of 2007. The program is geared toward entry-level workers working in after school programs. The first semester classes will include Introduction to Youth Development, CPR/First Aid and Introduction to Tutoring. Students will also be able to receive credit for work experience. If approved, the full design will be five semesters with an AA degree awarded to students who successfully complete all coursework.

Learning From Others:

Youth Worker Certificate: All new staff members from City of Chicago funded youth and school-age programs are encouraged to take a 28-hour course entitled Advancing Youth Development (AYD) within their first few months of service. Upon completion of the AYD course, participants receive a Youth Worker Certificate. The AYD training is offered through two key intermediary organizations: the Chicago Youth Agency Partnership—for youth workers; and the MOST Initiative—for school-age workers. Participants can also take the course for credit from several Chicago area colleges. One local university recognizes the course as part of its four-year undergraduate program in Youth Work. Plans are currently underway to make completion of the AYD course a requirement for all staff members working in City of Chicago-funded programs, as well as to link receipt of the Youth Worker certificate to wage increases.

Afterschool Academies: With funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Foundations, Inc., Citizen Schools, the Community Network for Youth Development, Gary and Eve Moody, and the YouthLearn Initiative at Education Development Center collaboratively developed and provide training to after school workers in the core approaches and methods of effective after school education during three-day academies in pre-selected sites. Academies have been conducted in Atlanta and Macon, GA; San Jose, CA; and Raleigh, NC. Several academies will be held during 2006–2008 to prepare local after school trainers to facilitate future trainings.

The Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance: (Great Plains IDEA, or G PI) is a consortium of human science colleges at ten universities that offers a multi-institutional post-baccalaureate degree program in youth development (Online degree program). The youth development program offers a thirty-six-credit master's degree as well as two certificates for individuals who do not wish to pursue a master's degree: specialist certificates in youth development or youth program management and evaluation. Twenty-eight credits for this program are offered through the consortium, with the remaining eight credits offered through the student's "residential institution." These last eight credits permit faculty and degree candidates to take courses furthering their specialization or negotiate practicum experiences, where they can work with their faculty adviser to enhance and apply the skills they have acquired. (National Collaboration for Youth: National Youth Development Learning Network e-Newsletter – Professional Development Series)

University of Minnesota: In the College of Education and Human Development, in association with the Center for 4-H Youth Development, the University of Minnesota offers a Youth Development Leadership Master of Education degree. An interdisciplinary faculty teaches this 30-credit master's degree program. Students are fulltime, working professionals with at least two years of work experience in the field. Each yearly cohort averages 21 people. Focus areas include concentrations in evaluation, research, children's rights, counseling, program development, special needs populations, supervision, family systems, and social group work. There will soon be options at University of Minnesota to move from an undergraduate Youth Studies degree, to an MA to MEd, and then a PhD, with non-credit options in between from the Youth Work Institute. (National Collaboration for Youth: National Youth Development Learning Network e-Newsletter – Professional Development Series)

Learning Delivery Systems

A comprehensive learning delivery system includes a wide-range of accessible competency-based professional development opportunities, which could include training, coaching, individualized in-

struction in classrooms or on-line, mentoring programs, or peer networking brown bag exchanges, to name a few. An effective learning delivery system will establish methods to assist organizations and practitioners to identify their learning needs and support them to gain the knowledge and skills vital to delivering high-quality services to children and youth. Additionally, a training system sets quality standards for trainers and training and provides recognition for practitioners. Creating a comprehensive learning delivery system would ensure that the professional development of youth workers adds up to something – possibly a certification, or at the very least competencies.

In the United Kingdom, all youth workers —full-time, part-time or volunteer—are expected to hold appropriate qualifications that are achieved through multiple pathways, linked to definable positions. Training programs are developed by a range of employers, colleges and universities, which are centrally certified and therefore vocationally and academically trained workers hold equally portable degrees that are recognized across the region and pegged to a consistent set of employment positions with different levels of responsibility and pay. This is one example the United States can look to as we begin to establish a system, which serves youth workers by providing portable skills and recognition. Currently, there is only one city in the country attempting to create such a system – Boston through the Achieve Boston Initiative. With the development of the Afterschool for All Technical Assistance Collaborative, San Francisco has started to lay the groundwork for creating a connected learning delivery system.

Building on Existing Work:

Afterschool for All Collaboration: The Afterschool for All Technical Assistance Collaborative (AFA TAC) is a new partnership between the California School-Age Consortium, the Community Network for Youth Development, SFUSD ExCEL After School Programs, and Sports 4 Kids. Their vision is to create a coordinated city-wide model of technical assistance to support after school programs and develop a workforce of prepared, committed, stable, and valued professionals. This collaborative is in the beginning stages, but has the potential to create a comprehensive learning delivery system for San Francisco youth workers.

Learning from Others:

Achieve Boston: Achieve Boston has created a comprehensive training system which includes a Competency Framework for both after school and youth workers, a wide-range of professional development opportunities—such as workshops, trainings, and college courses, and an on-line catalog which provides information about professional development activities available throughout Boston and a self-assessment tool to help youth workers link their needs to training opportunities. Youth workers can search the catalog for professional development opportunities by competency area, topic, dates, or keywords. Coordinating such opportunities into a training system helps individuals identify their professional needs, access resources, further develop their skills, and track their progress and achievement using a common framework. Youth workers can also create an on-line confidential personal career development portfolio in the Achieve Boston Professional Registry, which tracks qualifications and experience, including workshops, conferences, continuing education units (CEUs) – a key resource for a transient workforce.

Across the Pond: In the United Kingdom, all youth workers – full-time, part-time or volunteer – are expected to hold appropriate qualifications that are achieved through multiple pathways, linked to definable positions. Youth workers can acquire credentials through certified training programs or higher education institutions. The structure and diversity of certification paths offer opportunities

to all types of workers, including those who may lack high school degrees or are not interested in college. Training programs vary in length and focus and involve substantive field experience. While training programs are developed by a range of employers, colleges and universities, they are centrally certified and therefore vocationally and academically trained workers hold equally portable degrees that are recognized across the region and pegged to a consistent set of employment positions with different levels of responsibility and pay. (Next Generation Youth Work Coalition: Findings, Implications & Innovations – Promising Workforce Practices in Youth Work)

Career Ladders & Compensation

Most professions have clear career pathways that are defined by level of education, experience, and job responsibilities, which are linked to salary expectations. This is not the case in youth work. For many frontline staff, career advancement, specifically salary increases, require job changes. The Next Gen survey of youth workers found that most youth workers report that there are no clear opportunities for promotion within their organization and even though training is available, links between training and tangible rewards are weak.

Career ladders and lattices establish clear roles, responsibilities, expectations, and rewards, and are an essential component to professionalize the field of youth work. A career lattice, as opposed to a ladder, recognizes that there are multiple ways or paths to career advancement, which may be better suited to youth work, given that “there is no typical youth worker.” Creating a system that defines the amount and kind of training, education, and experience required to work in specific roles, the salary ranges for these roles, and career pathways so that youth workers are able to chart a course for their careers would be a significant achievement for the field and may be necessary to attract new workers.

The field also needs to address concerns around compensation. There is an almost unspoken assumption that the market cannot support significant increases in child care or youth work salaries. However, findings from the Next Gen study suggest that raising wages, even nominally, and/or increasing access to benefits could stabilize the workforce and advance the profession. In addition to wage increases, other incentives and supports targeted at mid-career employees such as loan forgiveness, credit unions, financial literacy, and retirement counseling could help address some of the financial concerns raised by youth workers.

Building on Existing Work:

National Youth Serving Organizations: The local branches of national youth serving organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area —YMCA and Boys & Girls Clubs — have established clear career ladders, which are tied to training and increased compensation. Professional development goals are established to move people to higher levels of leadership within the organization and stipends or rewards are provided for completing eligible training. Informal career ladders are beginning to emerge in other organizations, including the San Francisco Unified School District’s After School Team ExCel programs.

Learning from Others:

Next Generation Youth Work Coalition Career Pathways Project: In March, 2007, Next Generation launched its first explicit round of policy work in seven “early adapter” states and cities across

the nation that are already on the leading edge in addressing youth work workforce issues including Baltimore/Maryland, Illinois, Missouri, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, New York City, and Vermont. They are currently seeking funding to add California to this list. States and cities participating in the Clear Policies for Career Pathways project will assess their current efforts and define improvement goals; identify aggressive but realistic opportunities for progress; create a workforce lens that policy makers can bring into their analysis of youth program legislation; and champion the cause —share strategies and provide direction for others interested in creating career pathways. The National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) and the National Collaboration for Youth (NCY) will take the lead in providing technical assistance to the states and localities working closely with the Forum for Youth Investment to keep the project fully integrated in the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition’s broader agenda.

Increase Full-time Positions: Many of the part-time staff at Camp Fire USA Alaska Council work second jobs within the school district or at local businesses. Realizing that wages and benefits are important to retaining qualified and competent staff, the council created a task force that has been looking for ways to make youth service work competitive with other businesses in the area. Sensing that one of the biggest reasons staff were leaving the agency was because of their ability to get more hours elsewhere, rather than higher wages, the organization has gradually increased the number of full-time positions it supports, with benefits. The organization has also become more intentional about letting the community know about the value of the work being done with the youth in their area. (National Collaboration for Youth: Capturing Promising Practices in Recruitment and Retention of Frontline Youth Workers, April 2006)

Extend Existing Models: The T.E.A.C.H.® model from the early childcare and education field has been successful at increasing practitioners’ education and compensation levels. It has now been extended to school-age care workers in seven states. T.E.A.C.H.® was founded in 1990 and has grown from a small pilot project serving 21 teachers in North Carolina to a national movement that is in place in 23 states. T.E.A.C.H.® is composed of four components: (1) Educational Scholarships—support for tuition and books, a travel stipend, and often the provision of release time; (2) Formal Education—a set amount of college coursework leading to a credentialed degree; (3) Compensation—an incentive in the form of a raise or bonus and; (4) Commitment—a commitment to remain in the sponsoring child-care program or the field for a specified period of time. (Next Generation Youth Work Coalition: Findings, Implications & Innovations: Promising Workforce Practices in Youth Work)

Offer Benefits through Coalitions or Associations: Youth service organizations are typically small, and many employ staff on a part-time basis. As a result, youth workers often have limited access to affordable health and dental insurance as well as retirement or other benefits that are available to individuals working in other professions or larger companies. The Massachusetts School-Age Coalition (MSAC) has responded to this challenge by developing a plan that offers benefits to workers. Local youth service agencies that are members of MSAC are eligible to purchase insurance and other benefits from an agent who has contracted with the membership organization. The plan began with health benefits and has expanded to include retirement and other basic benefits. (Next Generation Youth Work Coalition: Findings, Implications & Innovations: Promising Workforce Practices in Youth Work)

Research & Evaluation

Motivation to create a comprehensive workforce development system for youth workers is grounded in the notion that a high-performing workforce (e.g. stable, satisfied, supported and competent), influences program effectiveness, and that there is a link between effective programming and positive outcomes for youth. However, while empirical evidence supports this general logic, the linkages

are complex and few studies in the human services sector have demonstrated a causal link between workforce supports and youth outcomes.

In order to bolster support for professionalizing the field and to identify the key movers for better youth outcomes, workforce and professional development activities will need to be researched and evaluated. Several tools exist to assess developmental outcomes for youth in out-of-school time programs, some of which are described below. But to our knowledge, no studies have been conducted which link professional development of youth workers to youth outcomes. The Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) has begun some work in this area and has recently received a grant from the Cornerstone Foundation to examine evidence of the relationship between workforce issues and service outcomes. In the meantime, local leaders will need to ensure that evaluations are integrated into and guide the development of any regional learning delivery system to assess its progress and effectiveness.

Building on Existing Work:

San Francisco Beacon Initiative Workforce Study: The Beacon Initiative, a citywide youth development program that serves the youth and communities at eight Beacon Centers in the City of San Francisco, conducted a workforce study in order to better understand the composition, needs and aspirations, and intended career paths of the Center's staff. The Initiative was interested in learning more about the stability of their workforce and the linkage between quality programs and workforce development. The study examined four dimensions of the Initiative: recruitment, retention, training and profession and development; and compensation practices and policies. All of these elements have a direct impact on workforce stability, which in turn affects program quality. You can download a copy of the report at www.sfbeacon.org.

Youth Outcomes Assessment: Evaluator and youth development researcher Michelle Gambone, PhD., in partnership with Community Network for Youth Development, created a youth survey to assess program quality as measured by youth experience based on the five supports and opportunities defined in the Youth Development Framework for Practice. The survey is the starting point for a youth-data driven improvement process in which organizations seek to strengthen organizational practices that lead to an improved program environment that increases young people's developmental experiences. This tool is significant because of the number of programs within San Francisco that utilize the survey and have adopted the framework practices as quality standards, including DCYF, SFUSD After School Programs, Boys & Girls Club of San Francisco, the Metropolitan YMCA of San Francisco, the Department of Adolescent Health and numerous local community based agencies.

Learning from Others:

Youth Program Quality Assessment: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation has developed an evaluation and assessment tool designed to evaluate the quality of youth programs and identify staff training needs. The Youth PQA evaluates four key dimensions of the quality of youth experiences -- engagement, interaction, supportive and safe environments -- as youth attend workshops and classes, complete group projects, and participate in meetings and regular program activities. The YPQA is used primarily to assess program quality, but it also articulates specific staff practices which research shows impacts quality programming, making this assessment a powerful professional development tool.

The Next Conversation: How do we put it all together?

It is time to get serious about recognizing the value of youth work and the contributions youth workers make to young people, communities, working parents, and society as a whole. Bay Area field leaders can start by building a regional workforce system, which supports the professional growth of youth workers and outlines clear goals around recruitment, development and retention of new and experienced workers. It was the intention of this briefing to begin outlining local wisdom and efforts in the area of workforce development, the key anchors in place, and most importantly to show local field leaders the strength of the platform we have to build upon.

As such, the following recommendations are offered for consideration by local field leaders to respond to the challenges of recruiting, developing and retaining youth workers and potentially creating a regional youth work workforce development system.

Convene a Regional Task Force: Convene a representative group of stakeholders charged with making recommendations about how to build a more unified and comprehensive workforce development system in San Francisco County. Create working groups assigned to make recommendations in each of the workforce development areas – Recruitment, Standards & Competencies, Training & Professional Development Resources, Learning Delivery System, Career Ladder & Compensation, and Research & Evaluation. These groups should attempt to build off of existing infrastructure and educate themselves about promising work in other parts of the country that can be adapted locally.

Engage Youth Workers: Ensure that youth workers working across multiple settings (after school, community-based, school-based, social service, parks & recreation, etc) and with multiple agencies are involved in the Regional Task Force and associated workgroups.

Connect to Statewide and National Systems: Align local efforts and decisions with statewide and national workforce plans to ensure continuity and reciprocity for youth workers across agreed upon standards, competencies and professional development efforts. Stay connected with the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition and other similar coalitions to inform our efforts locally.

Acknowledgements

The Community Network for Youth Development would like to thank the program staff and managers who participated in the interviews to create this catalog of local efforts, as well as Pam Garza at the National Collaboration for Youth and Next Generation Youth Work Coalition and Nicole Yohalem at the Forum for Youth Investment for their guidance and advice and the use of multiple publications and historical documents. Funding for the development of this report was provided by the Department of Children, Youth and Their Families. Jennifer Fornal, a Consultant with Community Network for Youth Development authored this report. We wish to personally thank Patricia Morillo, Boys & Girls Club of San Francisco, Al Smith, DCYF, Jason Wyman, Youth Development Peer Network, Ali Vieira, SFUSD School Health Department, Rebecca Goldberg and Kica Gazmuri, California School Age Consortium, Michael Funk, San Francisco Experience Corp, Troy O’Leary, San Francisco YMCA, Sue Eldredge, Community Network for Youth Development for sharing their knowledge about organizational efforts to support youth workers in San Francisco.