

Youth Investment in Rural Areas



One of twelve training packets created for Texas Workforce Board regions as part of the Texas Workforce Commission Youth Program Initiative.

1. Powerful Partnerships
2. Getting Your Youth Advisory Group From Here to There
3. You and Youth in the Middle: Effective Case Management
4. Employer Engagement
5. Youth at Work: Making the Most of Work-Based Learning
6. Youth Investment in Rural Areas
7. Windows on the Workplace: Mentoring, Youth, and WIA
8. Community Resource Mapping: Knowing Your Youth Services Landscape
9. Letting Numbers Guide: Labor Market Information and Youth Services
10. Engaging Out-of-School Youth
11. Building Your Year-Round Youth System
12. Evaluate It!: From Policy to Practice to Performance

You may download additional copies of this packet or any in the series from the Board & Network Partners area of the Texas Workforce Commission website: www.twc.state.tx.us/customers/bnp/bnp.html.

©
Produced by School & Main Institute, Boston, MA
Design by Soul Food Design, Cambridge, MA

Youth Investment in Rural Areas

TRAINING GOALS

- Explore the assets and challenges of youth and workforce development in rural areas.
- Review rural service delivery strategies and how you might use them to strengthen your effort.
- Identify where and how you can use “place-based” learning to help area youth prepare for further education and employment.

IN THIS PACKET

FOOD FOR THOUGHT _____ 2

Rural Riches and Realities _____ 2

Youth Workforce Investment in Rural Areas _____ 3

Rural Service Delivery and Organizational Models _____ 4

Rural Rules of Thumb _____ 6

 One: Do “Extreme” Resource Mapping _____ 6

 Two: Find Work in Places and People _____ 7

 Three: Make Technology You Have Work for You _____ 9

 Four: Resist Isolation with Collaboration _____ 10

 Five: Promote Youth Potential, Promote Rural Potential _____ 13

TOOLS FOR ACTION _____ 14

Activity One: A Strong Sense of Place _____ 15

Activity Two: Places that Work _____ 16

 Wagon Wheel Brainstorm Notes _____ 18

 Place-Based Learning Project Planner _____ 19

Activity Three: Technology to the Max _____ 22

 Technology to the Max Worksheet _____ 23

Activity Four: Consultants’ Challenge– Blanca County _____ 25

 Case Study-Youth Services in Rural Blanca County _____ 26

Activity Five: Collaborate or Isolate Game _____ 30

Activity Six: Putting it Together – A Fresh Look at Area Assets _____ 32

 Rural Youth Services & Opportunities Map _____ 33

GREAT MOMENTS IN RURAL AREAS _____ 34

MORE GREAT RESOURCES _____ 35

Rural Economic and Community Development _____ 35

Texas Rural Resources _____ 35

Rural Education _____ 35

Place, Project, and Community-Based Learning _____ 35

Entrepreneurship _____ 36

e-Mentoring and e-Learning _____ 36

Technology _____ 36

Transportation _____ 36

Childcare _____ 37

Rural Funding Resources _____ 37

Learning from Others _____ 37

OUR THANKS _____ 38

Rural Riches and Realities

Ask people who live in rural areas to describe the benefits and you hear things like:

- Plenty of land and room to breathe
- No traffic
- No or low crime
- Close family – good family network
- Good community groups
- Good quality of life
- Less anonymity

Turn the conversation to the topic of youth and you hear:

- There's nothing to do
- Youth leave
- There are no jobs
- We're a dying community
- We're too isolated
- Everyone knows your business

Rural areas in Texas changed a great deal these past 15-20 years. Suburbs grew rapidly and once huge tracts of agricultural land have been parceled out for development. Rural economies shifted: agricultural and rural manufacturing declined, the services sector increased, and jobs started to look more like those in urban and suburban areas. Population in rural counties diversified. And technology closed distances: the world, pop culture, and new opportunities can connect you to any place from any place.

Yet youth are still youth. Rural youth have always needed the same development opportunities that youth anywhere need: positive educational outcomes, opportunities for exploration, affirmation, caring adults, safe and positive settings, and effective support services when they hit obstacles.

While WHAT youth need may be similar from place to place, HOW you provide it, especially for rural areas, can be different.

This packet will help you explore the unique characteristics of youth services in rural areas and identify the blend of approaches that matches your area's strengths and needs.

Youth Workforce Investment in Rural Areas

What about rural settings makes developing youth services unique? Here are a few considerations rural service providers point out:

- Fewer labor market and community intermediaries.
- Employers are smaller – it can cost them more in time or training resources to host youth.
- Less diversity in the economic base.
- Services and employers are scattered across a wide geography.
- No network of social, youth or human service agencies.
- Few youth-specific services.
- Limited or no public transportation; distances between communities and services are great.
- It's more difficult to attract education, health, and youth development professionals.
- Youth workers must play a generalist role; there are few professional development opportunities.
- Schools, community colleges, and county government are central and play dominant roles.
- Youth seem to have lower aspirations.
- There is a perception that rural areas are “better off” and “closer knit” than urban areas and therefore don't need youth activities, services, etc.
- People all have contact with each other, but that doesn't mean that they or organizations they represent coordinate.
- There are fewer educational options and alternatives.
- Youth organizations operate in competitive environment – they compete for resources, people, etc.
- Youth workers are from “outside” the community they service.
- There is less awareness of existing services and support. You need to do more outreach.
- People want to be self-reliant and prefer not to use available services.

- People are afraid that confidentiality will be compromised.

Not all rural areas face every one of these challenges, nor is youth development necessarily more difficult in rural areas than in urban. It IS different, though. Even a quick review of the list you just read should already suggest why and how you might build programs and relationships, look at resources, and support staff differently.



Rural Service Delivery and Organizational Models

Integrate. Reach out. Build up. Connect.

Over the years, communities from Maine to Texas have experimented with different models for organizing service delivery in rural and frontier (extremely isolated) areas, whether for mental health, well-baby check-ups, literacy, or multi-service efforts like WIA.

LOOKING ACROSS THEM, YOU SEE FOUR BASIC SERVICE METHODS AT WORK¹:

INTEGRATING SERVICES

Agencies and organizations co-locate services or collaborate to deliver them at a single center or via a services team.

REACHING OUT

Services are delivered by a person (a circuit rider, roving case manager, etc.), a mobile unit, or at small satellite sites.

BUILDING UP LOCAL CAPACITY

Programs train local professionals and paraprofessionals, and in so doing, enable others (teachers, doctors, etc.) to deliver or monitor support, or provide self-help materials.

CONNECTING

People use telephone hotlines, web and video-based teleservices (telehealth, telementoring, case conferencing, etc.) and technology tools to connect clients to services.

WIA efforts have tended to rely on one or both of the first two strategies: one-stops and case managers certainly fall into the WIA implementation scheme. In the end though, most rural areas find that one strategy alone won't work. It's some combination of all four.

Put each one of the youth elements required by WIA under a lens for closer inspection. Where might organizations or providers integrate service offerings or co-locate services in order to maximize physical and human resources? Where might you better use human capacity (including youth themselves)? Provide services via technology?

But what's the actual organizational infrastructure behind the delivery strategies? In rural areas, not surprisingly, you're most likely to find regional, rather than community-based, organizational models. That is, a regional network, association, county group, or agency will coordinate services on behalf of a large geographic spread.

A RECENT SURVEY OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS IN RURAL AREAS TURNED UP FOUR COMMON ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS²:

SOLE PROVIDER

A single organization provides a wide variety of services, covering many different needs – health, workforce preparation, childcare, education, transportation, and so on – for an entire county or counties. Because it sits at the intersection of so many needs, it can tap multiple funding sources. It can also spend quickly, given the depth and breadth of its mission.

HUB & SPOKE

One organization, often a strong community-based organization, oversees programs and services but doesn't actually deliver them. Instead, the organization convenes, organizes, leverages resources for,

¹ Frontier Mental Health Strategies: Integrating, Reaching Out, Building Up, and Connecting Letter to the Field No. 6. Jack M. Geller, Ph.D., Marshfield Medical Research Foundation; Peter Beeson, Ph.D., Prairie Wind Productions; Roy Rodenhiser, Ed.D., Rochester Institute of Technology.

² Workforce Development Networks in Rural Areas of the United States. SRDC Policy Series, September 2003, No.1. Gary Paul Green. Southern Rural Development Center.

and builds the capacity of other providers and partners. The survey found examples of fairly decentralized versions of this model: for example, each county or community might also have its own advisory group or board. This approach requires strong leadership and management from the lead organization.

EMPLOYER-CENTERED NETWORK

Employers – or more often a group that represents them, like a Chamber of Commerce or Business Council – pool resources to fund worker training and business development initiatives. This spreads the cost of creating a healthy business and hiring climate. On the other hand, the initiatives can be quite targeted: a particular type of skill (technology) or worker (higher skilled). Also, professional (outside) contractors usually provide the training, so organizational and community capacity isn't necessarily developed as a result.

INDUSTRY SECTOR OR CLUSTER NETWORK

A subset of employers with interests in a particular industry cluster sponsors workforce development programs. For example, a group of manufacturers or health care providers starts an apprenticeship program. The training is highly specialized and often done in collaboration with a community college or occupational training provider. It's very structured – longer-term and deep in its employee-by-employee impact – but serves a targeted few and is most often tied to traditional area industries rather than new opportunities.

THERE ARE A FEW OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL SERVICE DELIVERY WORTH REMEMBERING:

There is an innate tension between the organizational structure of services – run by large agencies not always based in the

community – and the home and family-based care that many people in rural areas are more comfortable with. People living in rural communities have a long history of self-reliance, something today's service environment sometimes inadvertently overlooks.

Volunteers play a huge role – which means volunteer recruitment, training, and support figure prominently in agency and provider responsibilities. A volunteer workforce also has its challenges! Sometimes volunteer responsibilities mount quickly: in essence, volunteers are called to play the part of a paraprofessional, often without the training, tools, and resources the role really requires. On the other hand, they are a powerful source of energy and can provide exactly the grassroots connection to rural people and places that providers, especially outside providers, need.

Rural Rules of Thumb

Be “extreme” mappers.

Piney East Texas is as different from stretches along the Texas-Mexico border as two areas can be. Really, the only feature rural areas share is “low population density,” a nice Census method for defining rural. That’s another reason why there’s no single model for rural youth service or even rural economic development. There are good rules of thumb, however.

HERE ARE FIVE “RULES” THAT HELP RURAL AREAS MAXIMIZE THE OPPORTUNITIES THEY HAVE FOR YOUTH - AND CREATE NEW ONES.

- One:** Do “Extreme” Resource Mapping
- Two:** Find Work in Places and People
- Three:** Make Technology You Have Work for You
- Four:** Resist Isolation with Collaboration
- Five:** Promote Youth Potential, Promote Rural Potential

RULE ONE: DO “EXTREME” RESOURCE MAPPING

Youth have assets and so do communities. What organizations, people, opportunities, and characteristics of your area can strengthen and stimulate your overall youth services system?

Workforce boards in rural areas often report that one of the key issues they face is the lack of awareness of workforce services and community resources. Many roll out a resource mapping initiative to address this issue. In truth, resource or asset mapping is an important step for any youth development effort these days. It is **ESSENTIAL** for rural areas. And it is **DIFFERENT** for rural areas.

While urban communities must contend with the sheer magnitude and jumble of potential system pieces, rural communities need to think broadly and creatively about resources. Some assets, like the number and type of employers, are incredibly tangible. Others, like your community’s inclination for entrepreneurship or opportunities for youth-led community development, are less so.

People in rural areas simply have to define the term resource more broadly. You don’t have the luxury of looking only at “existing youth providers and programs” the way resource mappers might in more densely populated areas. Rural mappers leave no stone unturned. Rural mappers see beyond programs to places, people, and untapped potential.

MAPPERS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES SHOULD ASK:

- What human, material, financial, physical/geographic, programmatic, and organizational and cultural assets does our community have?
- What are our community’s particular strengths or unique features? What ‘story’ does our community have to tell?
- What opportunities exist or could exist?
- What are we missing that would be useful or valuable to community members?
- What are serious issues we face? Needs we really need to address?
- What activities and events occur in our community?
- What cultural, historical, physical, and other attributes does our community want to preserve?
- Who has “work” that needs doing (older citizens, clubs, churches, etc.)?

take action! rural resources

Grab a copy of your area phone book, a community calendar, a local church or civic group events bulletin, and a cup of coffee – and read! See if you can find at least 8-10 community or cultural organizations, places, businesses, and so on that you didn’t know existed in your area.

Create a resource or asset map that shows the array of potential youth services and resources in your area: programs, cultural and historical institutions, small and large employers, civic groups – any place that a youth could work, learn, or receive support.

Where there's a place, there's a way.

RULE TWO: FIND WORK IN PLACES AND PEOPLE

Workplace experiences, employer and mentor coaching, and jobsite training are at the heart of WIA youth services. All require employers – or would seem to. In rural areas, you don't see an employer at every turn. However, there are usually more employers than even locals imagine. Again, grab that area phone book!

Even with all employers considered, rural areas often don't have a very diverse base of industries, and companies tend to be small. As a result, traditional work-based learning placements can be harder to come by and might not always align well with young people's interests.

Yet, there **are** opportunities for 'work' at every turn. People involved in successful rural youth development and workforce preparation see work everywhere – in the places, history, culture, interests and needs of the community itself. It's as if they wear special x-ray vision glasses. Any place in the community, not just an employer's shop, can provide a valuable career training opportunity, as long as you provide the right structure, focus, and support.

So instead of "work-based" learning, strong rural youth efforts organize around the broader notion of "place-based" learning: learning that makes the most of a "place" – any place – in your community. They use a combination of worksite, community service, entrepreneurial, project-based, and other opportunities. Give people in these communities an ordinary place – a parking lot, a nearby river or park, a nursing home – and they create projects that help young people explore a broader career area. In their hands, community service and entrepreneurship become as significant and active as any traditional 'employment sector' in the area.

In order to make place-based learning work, you need to apply the same principles you would to work-based learning.

PLACE-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES SHOULD:

- Focus on a set of specific academic and occupational skills or competencies.
- Be hands-on.
- Provide opportunity to practice, demonstrate, and assess skills.
- Involve input or expertise of someone skilled in the subject or field.
- Generate a product, ideally something authentic.
- Be safe and appropriate for the age of youth served.

There are different models you might use to structure good learning projects. These methods are widely known and used in educational circles – but each gets even better with a good career spin.

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING (PBL)

Students and youth are always doing projects. Great projects give – or better yet, let youth identify – a specific challenge, problem, scenario or dilemma. With the help of a youth program staff member, teacher, coach, or mentor, they then work on a solution, and along the way, learn important skills they need. A PBL approach fits incredibly well in after-school settings or in communities with limited internship and job opportunities. For example, local employers, mentors, or volunteers can work with individual or groups of WIA participants on 6-10 week projects and create an experience that is as robust as an internship.

SERVICES LEARNING AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

Now a national movement, service learning lets youth directly address community needs and build skills while they do it.

Sometimes service learning is connected directly to a class or course; other times not. The [National Service Learning Clearinghouse](#) is a great place to explore various approaches.

At a minimum, service learning is structured around learning goals – it’s not a one-shot or periodic volunteer program. Less formal, short-term community service projects can also be great learning experiences. In either case, they blend well with WIA goals. Treat “volunteer” opportunities as you would “job positions.” Include career-related skill development, outline responsibilities, and connect young people to community people with related expertise. Show youth career paths related to social action and service, especially in rural areas – AmeriCorps, Teach for America, and other opportunities. And let youth interests and observations about the community bring new service opportunities to light.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND MICRO-BUSINESS

From the classic lemonade stand to student-run radio stations, youth bring incredible gusto to business ventures. And business ventures bring loads of skill development opportunities to youth. In rural communities, entrepreneurship, micro-businesses, and home-based business development allow people to create new economic opportunity. Make WIA youth a part of economic and community development efforts!

There are a number of organizations that focus on youth entrepreneurship, many of which have project ideas and youth training materials you can download. Look for great resources in the back of this packet.

HERE ARE EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS RURAL YOUTH HAVE DONE:

- Helped fire and police departments map rural routes and homes in order to complete the local emergency response system.
- Designed brochures for local historical sites.
- Launched a local grocery store.
- Started a small recording studio business.
- Created a local film festival.
- Operated a credit union and small business loan program – run by youth for youth.
- Started technology “Help Desks” for schools, provided tech support to low-income families in rural outlying areas, and run computer classes for community members.
- Created policy alert materials to communicate youth concerns to policy makers and legislators.
- Conducted home energy and safety audits for neighbors.
- Researched and wrote grants for local cultural programs.
- Helped collect water samples from area rivers.
- Started a student-run museum in partnership with a local historical society.
- Helped launch and staff youth centers.
- Boosted tourism by helping to convert old railways into recreational paths.
- Participated in summer business camps to develop start-up plans for new business ideas.

**take action!
places, people & projects**

Drive around your area. Talk to people during the course of a week’s activities. Take notes on people you encounter, potential projects, and possible community improvements. Ask young people you know to do the same.

Analyze your community’s place, project, and people-based learning opportunities. What people in your community have expertise to share or work that might need doing? Where might youth improve the community, create a business venture, or do a project that helps them practice career-related skills?

Ask young people about skills and interests they have. Could they tutor, teach, or share their expertise?



From telephones to teleservices...

RURAL RULE OF THUMB THREE: MAKE TECHNOLOGY YOU HAVE WORK FOR YOU

In parts of the world with little water, people learn how to use every drop seven times. So it should be with technology in rural communities.

Rural areas have capitalized on technology advancements, in particular the Internet, in recent years. Distance learning is fairly commonplace. Almost any high school or community college in a rural area will use web-based or video-conferencing tools that can connect students to information, people, and experiences they can't access locally. However, actual technology use can still be spotty or pocketed. It's used with certain youth and not others. The computer lab hums with activity during the school day but falls quiet each evening.

Strengthen your youth development efforts by looking at your technology infrastructure – not just computers, but also phones, your local cable station, and so on. Without spending another dime, look closely at what technology you have, where it's located, when it is and isn't used. Where are you maximizing what your infrastructure already has to offer? Where can you better use existing tools to serve WIA eligible youth?

HERE ARE EXAMPLES OF HOW RURAL COMMUNITIES HAVE USED TECHNOLOGY:

- Connected youth with mentors using e-mentoring sites.
 - Provided online courses for youth and youth workers.
 - Connected youth with professionals – writers, NASA scientists – for feedback on projects.
 - Participated in satellite broadcast events.
 - Placed internet kiosks around the community for youth.
 - Run classes for low-income mothers, taught by area youth at the local high school.
 - Helped youth launch an Internet café for other youth and the community.
 - Delivered health and medical services (telehealth and telemedicine projects).
 - Provided video family and speakerphone family counseling to teenagers with epilepsy in rural areas of eight states in the mid and southeast.
 - Delivered online entrepreneurial leadership courses – taught by local college faculty – to high school aged youth.
- Provided a 24-hour 1-800 telephone line so that youth can get recorded information on services and how to access them.
 - Used a television channel to spotlight area careers, jobs, and employers.
 - Ran virtual job shadow events with a leading medical center in the state – i.e., surgery beamed live to youth.

take action! technology

Do a quick technology self-assessment. What tools do you already have in your community? What web-based resources could support youth career development? How might you use them more effectively or differently to enhance your youth initiative?

RURAL RULE OF THUMB FOUR: RESIST ISOLATION WITH COLLABORATION

People in rural communities tend to know each other. They see each other often, belong to some of the same groups, or have children in the same sports leagues and schools. Organizations also tend to know each other. However, knowing a face and a name – or knowing about each other – isn’t enough. Working together – collaboration at the management and delivery levels – is critical for rural communities.

Collaboration allows you to:

- Look broadly at community assets and use tight resources more effectively.
- Leverage community and regional support for large-scale issues or initiatives.
- Deliver services in a more cost-effective manner – share common functions, staff, facilities and overhead, etc.
- Support staff effectively.
- Build relationships that extend geographic reach or ensure that your effort is connected to strong community roots.

Yet, it’s so easy to isolate youth work and the people who do it. Limited and targeted funding streams, time constraints, limited staff, and rural geography serve as the backdrop for your effort and are strong forces driving fragmentation and isolation. If you throw more money and programs into the mix, without putting equal energy into nurturing ties that bind people and organizations across the region together, you provide short-term help but actually exacerbate the isolation problem.

Building collaborative relationships in rural areas requires the same fundamental skills

needed anywhere else. Use the Powerful Partnerships packet in this training series to help you explore them. That said, rural regions do have a special set of features and dynamics that affect collaborative behavior.

WHAT’S DIFFERENT ABOUT COLLABORATION IN RURAL AREAS? HERE ARE A FEW CONSIDERATIONS:

COMMUNITY AND COUNTY LEVEL TIES

Workforce boards in rural areas often support a HUGE expanse of territory. People will drive far – farther than people in other areas of the country would ever imagine or consider – to represent their community at a meeting or on a leadership body. But there’s a limit to what they can do – and quite frankly, a limit on how much coordination and collaboration that stimulates.

More importantly, power in rural communities often sits with “town fathers” and county commissioners – a traditional, sometimes fairly conservative form of leadership. You may bristle at the idea or feel quite comfortable with it. Either way, you need to understand the leadership structure of your area and identify how leaders can tangibly and visibly support you.

Many regional rural efforts identify specific ways to encourage community and county level (homegrown!) decision-making and collaboration.

- Create county or district level advisory groups or advisors (permanent or issue/decision-driven).
- Carry out routine visits, meetings, or calls with county and town officials.
- Identify collaborative resource development projects, i.e., grant funding, employer participation.

Cross the miles in collaborative style.

- Plan collaborative public or promotional information campaigns, i.e., services information, parent or youth tips.
- Build in county, district, or town level control of particular activities or responsibilities, i.e., local resource mapping teams.
- Create temporary or permanent single-issue coalitions.
- Sponsor leadership training programs.

PHYSICAL TIES

Rural collaboration can often ‘get physical’: organizations co-locate services in the same facilities, often where people are already apt to go, or they coordinate outreach to remote areas. Think library bookmobile or mobile blood pressure unit. Only these days, the mobile is a roving multi-service operation.

PRACTITIONER TIES

In rural areas, youth service professionals are fewer and farther between. They are harder to recruit in the first place, and those available are often generalists, jacks-of-all-trades addressing, as best they can, a wide variety of youth goals, issues, or needs. Leave them alone to figure out their multi-role challenge on their own, and the quality of service suffers immensely.

Instead, strong rural initiatives pay extra attention to staffing and staff development. They connect staff to other youth professionals – as part of a formal interagency team, professional program, or informal support network. Some communities create multi-agency service teams that work together to provide “wrap-around” services. Others coordinate training for key staff from youth -serving organizations. In Australia, a faraway place but one very familiar with rural service issues, a local community college even sponsors a youth worker certification program.

Because geography and time can hinder face-to-face interaction, make the most of free web communication tools – discussion lists, message boards – to keep peer-to-peer groups connected with each other and other professional resources.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS & COUNTY GOVERNMENT AS COLLABORATORS

Certain relationships deserve special attention, and in rural youth services, your relationship with schools and county government are two of them. They play such a central role. In fact, they are often two of the largest employers in rural counties. Organizationally speaking, however, they are rather self-sufficient. They can be wonderful collaborators, somewhat elusive or evasive partners (often with very good reason), or even major resource competitors. And often, all three at once.

People behind successful rural efforts smartly manage these key relationships. They work to understand the priorities, realities and forces that drive these institutions – and then identify work that overlaps with those interests. They aren’t afraid to openly discuss potentially divisive issues like failing or out-of-school youth, funding use, turf, staff and resource commitments and create solutions that are visibly win-win. And they are realistic: they know when to leave harried administrators and overwhelmed staff alone and how to identify other inroads. For example, they go directly to youth and youth organizations, the personnel office (for jobs), other county agencies (housing, the courthouse), or identify a committed “go to” person.

POSTSECONDARY COLLABORATION

Rural areas don’t have the variety of educational, alternative education, and occupational training options available in thickly populated areas. Postsecondary

institutions are often the only institution that can fill that gap. In fact, they are the largest provider of workforce development programs in many rural areas. Sometimes though, incredible pockets of expertise go overlooked or untapped!

Rural colleges have considerable expertise in rural service delivery models, convening potential partners, entrepreneurial education, technology and distance learning, mentoring, service learning, counseling, community and economic development, program evaluation, and more. They can't do it all, of course, but they are usually all ears when constituents outline projects and marketable programs that strengthen departments, the institution and the region.

YOUTH AS COLLABORATORS

Young people and existing youth-run organizations can and should be especially strong collaborators. Involve them formally in youth outreach, referral, and project identification and implementation – let young people lead initiatives and build your youth services infrastructure.

Getting youth to serve as leaders (versus “doers”) for community-based (versus school-based) initiatives can be challenging. Some communities design special youth leadership courses, run by area college faculty or retired business people, or hold youth summits. Others provide stipends to youth who serve on leadership bodies, help collect data and resource information, and/or do other leadership and youth system-building jobs.

COLLABORATION TO ADDRESS COMMON RURAL NEEDS

In communities where resources are scarce, good organizations end up competing with each other. Yet many organizations, in the course of running their programs, hit

against the same set of issues. Childcare and transportation are two often-mentioned examples. How can your WIA youth effort – or WIA eligible youth themselves – help with these challenges?

HERE ARE IDEAS FROM OTHER RURAL AREAS:

- Help with childcare worker recruitment – job fairs, leaflets, newspaper ads, and posters.
- Co-sponsor childcare worker training workshops.
- Implement a survey to measure childcare demand.
- Participate in efforts to create and staff daycare centers and after-school “kid clubs.”
- Distribute a packet of information on careers in childcare and related area educational programs. Hold meetings for area parents and others interested in the childcare field.
- Run a service to help childcare providers fill vacancies or find tutors.
- Research good after-school and daycare activities and create a toolkit for providers.
- Turn vacant space (parking lots, buildings, etc.) into safe places for children.
- Run classes on how to finance and buy a car.
- Work with partners to create private vehicle ownership or car donation programs.

**take action!
rural
collaboration**

Identify 3-4 specific ways you can encourage collaborative behavior in your program or region. Where is collaboration most needed in your current effort? Do you need to cultivate stronger ties to local communities in your service area? Among provider staff? To key partners? Or is there a broader rural challenge you face that youth and your WIA youth effort could help address?



There always more than meets the eye.

RURAL RULE OF THUMB FIVE: PROMOTE YOUTH POTENTIAL, PROMOTE RURAL POTENTIAL

Perceptions of young people, especially “aimless” older youth, are often pessimistic. Rural youth are more likely to use alcohol and drugs, become teen parents, drop out – or so perceptions increasingly run.

Youth, likewise, often have fairly pessimistic views of their community. They can be blind to opportunities and resources right under their noses. Some of the benefits of rural life are obvious and mentioned often. But there’s usually an adult slant to them: quality of life, peace and space, etc. Youth care about opportunity. And when it comes to opportunity, rural communities can be too self-deprecating (there are no opportunities here), partly delusional (we need to figure out how to get our youth to stay here), or they simply fail to highlight examples of “what there is to do” that are meaningful to youth.

It’s a public relations and marketing dilemma, pure and simple, and one that smart rural initiatives tackle head-on. Community members need to see more of the positive things youth in this age bracket and demographic can do. Youth need to see that opportunities for a great life exist everywhere, including their own region. The key word, of course, is...see.

HOW DO YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES VISIBLY PROMOTE THE VALUE AND OPPORTUNITY IN EACH OTHER? HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES:

- Make sure youth participate in very public community service projects – sometimes in youth-only groups and sometimes alongside other community adult volunteers (employers, leaders, etc.)
- Let youth take the lead in important activities, i.e., mapping youth services, resources, or needs.

- Create projects that give youth a sense of community ownership – that highlight interesting historical, cultural, recreational, environmental, economic, and individual points of intrigue and interest in their community.
- Invite youth to serve on important community boards or create advisory groups for their boards – city and county government, community development, and even economic development.
- Highlight successful careers and people in the paper and on local television – and make sure to include examples of younger people.
- Send lists of possible story topics and feature leads to local reporters.
- Arrange for a special column series on working youth and area employers for the local newspaper.

take action! promoting potential

Actively incorporate activities and projects that get youth out – physically out – into the community to explore its past, present, and possible future.

Identify at least 3-4 methods your effort can use to regularly promote the accomplishments of young people you serve.

Activity One: A Strong Sense of Place

Goal

- Understand the strengths and challenges of your geographic region; identify community traits you want to preserve and areas you want to develop.
- Examine the forces most affecting the success of youth in rural areas of your state.
- Identify similarities and differences across rural areas in your state.

Materials

- Flip chart paper, colored markers, masking tape
- Post-Its®

Time

- 20 minutes

Instructions

1. Working alone for 3-4 minutes, think about your community and region:

- What's unique about where you live? What are your area's strengths?
- What are the major forces shaping life and institutions in your community right now?
- What forces most affect life and successful outcomes for youth?
- What would you like to see stay the same in your community? What developments or changes would you like to see, especially in the immediate future?

2. Next, compare notes with people at your table.

If you come from the same community:

See if your group can come to consensus on a "Top 5" list for each of the topics:

- Top 5 strengths or unique traits of your area
- Top 5 forces affecting community life right now
- Top 5 forces affecting youth
- Top 5 things you want to preserve and top 5 things you want to develop or change

Don't worry if you can't list five items for each topic! Have one member of your group record your lists on flip chart paper.

If you come from different communities or regions:

Ask one person to draw a large outline or picture of your state on a piece of flip chart paper. Have each person in your group record five things that make their region unique or strong on a Post-It®, and then stick it on the map. Do the same thing for each "Top 5" topic above. After each member has placed notes on the map, review the map as a group.

- Do you see any patterns in how people in your group view the strengths, needs, and opportunities in their community?

Discuss similarities and differences around the state, and have one member of your group record them.

Activity Two: Places that Work

Goal

- Understand place-based or community-based learning practices and how rural areas in particular can use them to strengthen WIA services.

Materials

- Wagon Wheel Brainstorm- Place-Based Learning Ideas
- Place-Based Learning Project Planner
- Post-Its®
- Flip chart, colored markers, masking tape

Time

- 60-80 minutes

Preparation

Tape four pieces of flip chart paper to the wall, one next to the other. Label each piece of paper with one of the topics on the Wagon Wheel Brainstorm Notes worksheet.

Review the instructions on how to do a wagon wheel brainstorm (# 3 below). Make sure that your workshop room can accommodate this method – or adapt the activity as suggested if space is tight!

Instructions

PART I

1. Grab a partner, chair, pen, and the Wagon Wheel Brainstorm worksheet.
2. For the next 15 minutes, you'll brainstorm place-based learning project ideas. The best ideas often come from four sources. Take a moment to review them.
 - **Youth Interests, Assets, and Passions:** What do youth you know or work with love? Care deeply about? What careers or hobbies interest them? What are they good at?
 - **Community Needs and Interests:** What could youth do to help or serve your community? What are some of the development, service, or entrepreneurial opportunities?
 - **Academic and Occupational Skill Development Goals:** Given career interests or workplace demands, what skills do youth need to practice and who in the community could help them?
 - **Places and People that Teach:** What are some of the interesting places, locations, or settings in your community? How might they give youth a window on possible interests?

Activity Two: Places that Work, Continued

3. Now, with everyone, create a wagon wheel in the center of the room using your chairs. You can do this standing up if space in the room is tight or if furniture can't be moved. To create the wagon wheel, move your chairs to form two circles, one inside the other, like a wheel with a rim and hub. Each set of partners should sit facing each other, with one partner on the rim of the circle, the other on the hub. Make sure that you leave enough room between chairs so that people can easily move from chair to chair as the activity progresses.
4. Begin brainstorming! Start with your partner and the first topic: Youth Interests. Take three minutes to brainstorm project ideas that come to mind. Write ideas down as quickly as you can.
5. After three minutes, the wheel will “roll” to the right. Partners seated on the outside of the wheel should move one seat to the right; people at hub should remain seated. Discuss the same topic with your new partner – but see if you can come up with more new ideas. After three minutes, roll again. This time, however, move on to the second topic: Community Needs.
6. Continue until you've had a chance to brainstorm ideas on all four sources. Brainstorm each topic with at least two people. After eight turns of the wheel and 24 minutes, stop (unless your group wants to keep rolling for a bit longer to generate more ideas).
7. Take a few moments to review your notes individually. Record your top 8-10 project ideas on Post-Its®. Be sure to write the idea source (youth interest, community need, etc.) at the top of each Post-It®. Stick your notes on the appropriate flip chart sheet on the wall (by topic).
8. As a large group, review the ideas posted!
 - Which do you particularly like?
 - Are there any patterns to the ideas?
 - How many of the ideas would work in your area?
 - Do any seem particularly suited to older youth? Out-of-school youth? Youth with special needs?

PART II

9. Now, in teams of 3-4 people, pick one idea your team would like to work on. Using the Place-Based Learning Project Planner, take 20-25 minutes to plot out a project and the details. You can form your team by:

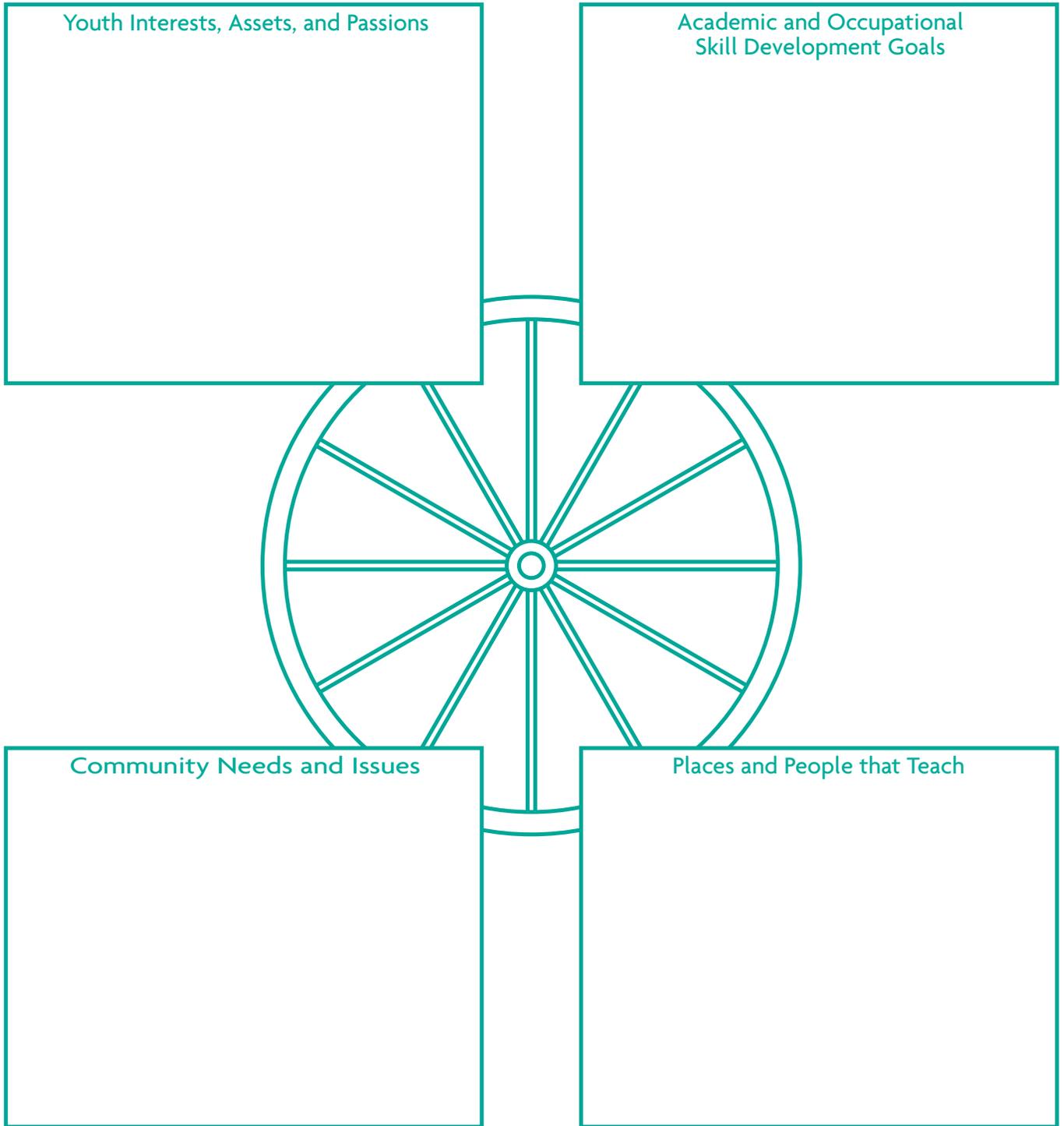
Project interest: You all like the same project idea.

People interest: You like each other and can agree on one idea.

Special interest: You want to work on a project that would work with younger youth, out-of-school youth, young people with disabilities, etc.

10. Be ready to summarize your exciting project idea – two minutes

Wagon Wheel Brainstorm Notes: Place-Based Learning Ideas



Place-Based Learning Project Planner

PROJECT OVERVIEW, GOALS, AND ACTIVITIES

Project Name

Project Overview

Briefly describe your project idea. What will youth do? What is the main activity, product or challenge at the heart of your project?

Setting or Place

Where will the project take place?

Need or Interest Project Meets

Why is this project needed? How will it benefit youth and the community?

Main Youth Skill Development Objectives

How does this project connect to basic, academic, or occupational skills? What are the most important skills you hope they gain?

Workplace or Career Exposure

What careers will this project expose youth to? How? Will they work directly with anyone in these careers?

Place-Based Learning Project Planner, Continued

Main Steps or Activities

What 3-5 main steps will youth carry out for this project?

Evidence of Skill Development

What are the most important skills you want youth to practice? What evidence will show you they improved or mastered the skills? How will you collect or observe that evidence?

SKILL	EVIDENCE	ASSESSMENT METHOD

Activity Three: Technology to the Max

Goal

- Explore ways you can maximize existing technology to better connect youth to career and job training resources and manage youth services across your rural region.

Materials

- Technology to the Max Worksheet

Time

- 40-50 minutes

Instructions

1. In small groups of 3-4, brainstorm a list of the range of technology tools and resources available in your community.
 - What computer/internet, phone, cable/video, etc. equipment is available?
 - Who has it? Where is it located?
 - Are there any specific technology projects or initiatives underway?
2. Next, using the Technology to the Max worksheet, list ways technology could help you deliver and manage WIA youth elements (20 minutes).

See how many ideas come to mind. Anything goes – from the practical, very doable, to way-out-there notions! If you get stuck on an element, stop and run through your list of tools. How might a phone help? How might a local cable show opportunity help?
3. Review your ideas and flag 5 or 6 of your best ones. Have someone in your group report them back to the full group.

Technology to the Max - Worksheet

WIA Youth Element	How Technology We Have Might Help
Tutoring, Study Skills	
Alternative Secondary School Services	
Summer Employment	
Paid or Unpaid Work Experiences	
Occupational Skills Training	
Leadership Development	
Supportive Services – Housing, Health, Childcare, etc.	
Mentoring	
12-Month Follow-Up	
Guidance and Counseling	

Technology to the Max Worksheet, Continued

WIA Youth Element	How Technology We Have Might Help
Referral	
Case Management	
Partner and Provider Linkages	
Family, Participant Input	
Training for Youth Workers, Employers Case Management, etc.	
Other?	
Other?	

Activity Four: Consultants' Challenge – Blanca County

Goal

- Test your knowledge of rural assets, place-based learning, and rural service delivery strategies by playing 'consultant' to another rural region.

Materials

- Blanca County Case Study

Time

- 60 minutes

Instructions

1. Your small (but highly skilled!) consulting team has been hired to help Blanca County develop its WIA youth system. You have been asked to present recommendations to the Workforce Board.

Take 5-10 minutes to read the Blanca County Case Study individually. As you read, highlight or flag important details and jot down any ideas that strike you.

2. Next, meet with your team (3-4 people in your breakout group) to discuss the situation. Use the questions at the end of the Case Study to guide your initial conversation.

Prepare your Top 5 Recommendations to the Board. Be as practical and specific as you can. If possible, identify the priority or order of steps Blanca County community members should take (20 minutes).

3. Report your recommendations to the full group -- the Board! You'll have five minutes. Feel free to present with style and fun (visually, using different members of your group, assuming roles, etc.).

Case Study: Youth Services in Rural Blanca County

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION / STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Santa Maria is the largest city in Blanca County and is the County Seat. With a population of 10,000, it contains 65% of the county’s total population.

There is an elected City Council of five members, all elected at large and serving two-year terms. The Mayor is elected on a partisan basis and serves for four years, with no limit on terms. The Mayor is beginning the final year of a third term, and two new members of the City Council were elected earlier this month on a “reform slate.” In addition, there is an elected County Commissioner, and the offices of county government are in Santa Maria.

Economic development activities are housed in the Santa Maria Chamber of Commerce. The chamber director serves as a member of the local workforce board but does not regularly attend workforce board meetings. Federal legislation, coupled with reforms at the state level, call for an integrated Workforce Investment Board and a “one-stop shopping” approach, but leadership hasn’t moved confidently and consistently to ensure that the requirements are met.

The City of Delward is 70 miles away in an adjoining county. Delward has an active workforce board with a large workforce center, a community college, and many youth services – one or two that would like to do some rural expansion work with particular programs like Upward Bound.

B. DEMOGRAPHICS

The population of Santa Maria is dwindling and has been for a few years. Despite this, there has been a steady increase in the Hispanic population. The current population is as follows:

- White: 52%
- African American: 2%
- Hispanic: 36%
- Asian: 2%
- Native American: 8%

A significant number of youth leave Santa Maria each year with no intention of returning. The median age of the population continues to increase as the youth leave the town.

C. SCHOOLS

There are 1,500 school-age children in Santa Maria who attend the following schools:

- Two public elementary schools (550 students)
- One public middle school (450 students)
- One public high school (340 students)
- An alternative high school program operated by the local community college (30 students)

It is not clear where the remaining 130 school-age youth spend their days.

Three smaller communities feed into the middle school and high school. Two communities bus youth into the elementary schools. One community is large enough to have its own small grade school (K-8); however, the local school board closed the school because of diminishing funds. As a result, some children have long bus rides.

There is a growing concern about the rising dropout rates at the public high school, recently calculated at 8.5% per year by school officials. Public schools grapple with mandated “minimum performance standards” and the tests that accompany them. Results from the latest round of exams disappointed nearly everyone.

Case Study: Youth Services in Rural Blanca County, Continued

The school infrastructure desperately needs updating. Several modules have been added to the existing structures that are no longer deemed safe for children and teachers.

The Superintendent, who has held that position for three years and has two years left on his contract, serves at the will of the School Board, a five person at-large body.

The school district recently received a \$15,000 foundation match grant to work with a local farmer to experiment with new crops or farm-based products.

D. POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Santa Maria is home to a branch of the San Rafael Community College whose home campus is 70 miles away in Delward. Most classes provided in Santa Maria are continuing education courses, although a growing number of people are seeking ESL and GED classes. The college is very interested in identifying additional classes that would benefit the business community.

The closest four-year institution is Jacob University, located two hours north of Santa Maria. The university is a small private institution affiliated with the Baptist Church and has approximately 1200 students.

E. BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Santa Maria thrived along with the rest of the state during the oil and gas boom. However, the bust hit the town particularly hard, and the population dropped significantly as oil companies closed their operations. Currently, the largest employer is a maximum-security prison, followed by the school district and county government. Because Santa Maria is located on a major interstate, small service industries are doing well and offer the majority of opportunities for youth seeking employment. Recent economic development efforts have focused on attracting distribution centers to town, but no breakthroughs seem imminent.

Because the prison plays such a large role in the community, locals often joke that only three types of people live in Santa Maria: those in the prison, those working for the prison, and those waiting for someone to get out of prison.

Cattle-ranching is the dominant agricultural industry, with two large ranching operations in the surrounding area. A number of Hispanics are employed in these operations. The community realizes that diversification of industry must take place for the town to thrive but are unsure of how to proceed.

The Chamber of Commerce is small but active. The part-time executive director recently set up a small lab of computers in a spare room and plans to start evening classes for community members.

F. COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Santa Maria has a small community foundation (\$50,000 in grants per year) that is run by the matriarch of the Mogard family. She has a penchant for literacy programs. There is a modest infrastructure of community organizations, all of which are proud to have survived since the bust.

There are seven churches in the city. Three of the churches reach out to Hispanic youth, usually low-income children with complicated lives. These churches have seen a dramatic increase in Wednesday night youth groups. The Ministerial Association wants to provide support to these youth, looking at the potential faith-based funding from federal government to support outreach and services. One minister in particular wants to do an extensive community service project with youth that includes food pantries, clothing for families, and a computer system to track services across churches.

Case Study: Youth Services in Rural Blanca County, Continued

In addition to a Boys & Girls Club, there are three significant community-based non-profit organizations in Santa Maria:

- The Santa Maria Multi-Service Center (built during the oil and gas boom) focuses on youth recreation. They have a gym and exercise room and run a summer camp at a site they have owned for 50 years on a lake 2 hours from the town center. They also operate a meals program for the elderly, a day care center, and host a drop-in health center one day a week.
- The Santa Maria Community Development Corporation (CDC) develops affordable housing and manages 45 rental units in three sites around the city.
- Viva La Raza, a longstanding Hispanic community organization, provides ESL and GED services, as well as employment and training counseling. The organization has also sponsored several youth groups whose activities include training for peer leaders and mentors.

These organizations do not coordinate their services very well at all. There is no formal vehicle for the Executive Directors or the Boards of Directors to communicate or plan joint efforts. In addition, there is some tension between the Multi-Service Center (which is the oldest and most traditional of the organizations and which has a reputation as serving the long-time, white residents of Santa Maria) and the newcomer organizations. The majority of the CDC clients are newcomers, and it has been able to play a liaison role between the “old-timers” and the newly arrived residents. Much to the consternation of the Hispanic community, infighting has left this population largely unrepresented by and in community organizations for over a decade.

There is one 4H Extension Agent in the community resulting in a strong 4H program. High School football dominates Friday night activities in the fall and weekend youth sports. There are other school-related activities, including a strong student government.

Youth say they are bored and that there is not enough to do. There is a growing concern about the teen pregnancy, STD rates, juvenile crime, and drug and alcohol use in the community.

G. COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Festivals include the 4th of July, a Christmas Walk, and Pioneer Days. The Mogard Western Heritage Museum and Fort serves as the focal point of Pioneer Days activities. Historians believe the fort is the first pioneer fort in the state. Smaller towns surrounding Santa Maria look to the town for cultural and community activities for their children. Friday night football is a huge fall event.

H. THE AREA WORKFORCE CENTER

It is estimated that there are approximately 500 families living below the poverty level that may be eligible for WIA services. At this time, only 10 percent of those eligible are receiving services. Santa Maria does have a small workforce center with one youth specialist that serves four communities in Blanca County. She also works with some adult clients. As the county is large geographically, some services to the smaller communities are diluted.

I. OTHER FACTOIDS

The Mogard Family is the predominant force in the county – original homesteaders five generations back. The family still owns one of the large ranching operations, but many Mogard children have moved to the “big city.” They routinely open the ranch up for youth 4H activities and have a small wildlife preserve located on the eastern portion of their ranch that the high school biology department uses frequently.

The closest large metropolitan center, with approximately 800,000 people, is 3 1/2 hours away.

Forty miles west of the town is the Guadalupe National Park. The Rio Blanco runs through the park, and several entrepreneurial outfitting operations have sprung up offering white water rafting trips.

Case Study: Youth Services in Rural Blanca County, Continued

Blanca County Case Study Discussion Questions:

1. What are the main challenges Santa Maria faces related to WIA implementation? Which youth elements will be most difficult to make available?
2. What assets could this rural community tap to address the implementation challenges it faces?
3. What are some of the place-based, service learning, or entrepreneurial learning opportunities available?
4. You can interview people in the community to learn more. Who would you interview? What else do you want to know?
5. If you gave this case study to young people, what might they recommend?

Activity Five: Collaborate or Isolate Game

Goal

- Look at different WIA youth implementation areas and how key organizations, institutions, and people in rural communities can collaborate.
- Get beyond the rhetoric of collaboration – who would ever say it’s a bad thing? – to look very practically at when it works or doesn’t and why.

Materials

- One deck of playing cards for every 50 people
- Post-Its® or slips of blank paper
- Flip chart, markers, masking tape

Time

- 45-60 minutes

Preparation

Put enough playing cards on each table so that there is one card per person (4-5 people per table, 4-5 cards).

Write each of the following topics on a separate Post-It® or slip of paper. Add other WIA implementation functions if you can think of them. Fold each topic and place them all in a hat, cup, or bowl.

- Training staff that work with youth
- Tracking youth outcomes/performance indicators
- Working with employers
- Marketing youth services
- Identifying services or service providers
- Providing mandated follow-up support
- Identifying resources
- Creating case management, learning plans, or other tools that work across programs

Instructions

PART I

1. Form small groups of 4-5 people. Appoint one person in your group Dealer. Have each group pick one topic from the hat.
2. Ask your Dealer to shuffle the cards and deal one to each person. The suit of the card you receive from the Dealer determines your initial inclinations in the scenario you will play out.

Activity Five: Collaborate or Isolate Game, Continued

Hearts: You LOVE collaboration. Everything should be done collaboratively or not done at all!

Diamonds: You're pragmatic. You think collaboration can be useful most of the time but has its limits. After all, a camel is a horse designed by committee, as the saying goes.

Clubs: You're on the fence, unsure about what exactly collaboration might achieve. Might be good, might not.

Spades: You're an isolationist! You pretty much think collaboration wastes valuable time: many meetings with little to show for it.

3. You represent a group of local community, workforce board, or youth council members meeting about the topic you selected. Introduce yourselves to each other. You may invent a specific identity (Don Fletcher, school guidance counselor, or Anita Herrera, Chamber member). You don't need to divulge your initial inclination for or against collaboration.
4. Start your meeting! You may "run" the meeting however your group wishes. You may also change your mind during the conversation, based on a particularly persuasive idea or point. Just don't give up too easily! Make each other work a bit!

You have 8-10 minutes to discuss your topic.

5. Ask one member of your group to summarize your topic and the main outcome of your "meeting" for the full group.

PART II

6. Now back to reality! Think of two examples from your own community – the best example of collaboration you've seen in your community – from any area of community life – and the worst example of collaboration.
7. Share examples with your table. Ask one person to record examples given on a flip chart in two columns: best and worst. Discuss any patterns or lessons you see. What made collaboration work or not work? List any major lessons on your flip chart. (15 minutes)
8. Report back to the full group. Give 1-2 of your collaboration examples and 1-2 of the most important patterns or lessons you noted.

Activity Six: Putting It Together – A Fresh Look at Area Assets

Goal

- Revisit your view of the assets and opportunities your community has available to support WIA youth services.
- Identify short and longer-term goals for maximizing youth resources.

Materials

- Rural Youth Services & Opportunities Map

Time

- 60 minutes

Instructions

1. In teams of 3-4, brainstorm – as quickly as you can – a list of services and opportunities that currently existing in your area. Ask a member of your group or table to record ideas on flip chart paper. Use the four youth development area topics and age groups on the Rural Youth Services & Opportunities Map to guide you and capture your own notes. Give yourselves 5 minutes per topic and then move on to the next topic. When you finish, count the number of items on each list and record the number at the top of your flip chart paper.
2. Report out. Ask a different member of your group to read examples from your lists to everyone in the room. Try not to repeat items given by another group.
3. Next, with your table or group, discuss what services and opportunities might support WIA-eligible youth. (15 minutes)
 - What is the relationship between the services you listed and your WIA effort? Are you currently maximizing youth opportunities in your area? How might you better do so?
 - Do your interests overlap with other providers and/or services?
 - Are there any noticeable gaps in the services or support available for youth? For youth in particular age categories?
 - Did other groups in the room list services that you didn't? Which? Give you any ideas?
4. Review your map individually for 5 minutes. Using a different color pen or pencil if possible, add any new ideas, practices, or service strategies discussed during this session that would help you address gaps, overlaps, and possible areas of collaboration.
5. Put a small ★ star next to three ideas, action steps, or priority items you would like to work on immediately.
6. Report your priority items to other people at your table. If you come from different communities, ask for feedback and suggestions. If you come from the same community, discuss priorities and agree on the most important and immediate steps you should take to maximize local services and opportunities.

Rural Youth Services & Opportunities Map

	Education & Workforce Development	Health	Family Support	Financial Stability
Younger Youth AGES 14-18, IN SCHOOL				
Out of School Youth AGES 14-18				
Older Youth AGES 19-24, IN SCHOOL/TRAINING				
Out of School Youth AGES 19-24				

EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

The [QUITMAN COUNTY YOUTH CREDIT UNION PROGRAM, MISSISSIPPI](#), is run by youth for youth. The credit union sponsors a small business loan, banking services, and other programs that help youth support their education, transportation, and other needs.

[TEHAMA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA](#) has used interagency delivery strategies for more than 20 years. An Interagency Coordinating Council facilitates collaboration, and created a multi-agency governance system for youth services (in response to a county-wide survey that identified substance abuse and juvenile crime as two major areas of concern with residents). A Multi-Agency Treatment Team provides integrated case management and direct services. An Early Response Team supports youth referred to protective services. A Health Improvement Partnership took the lead in developing a common data management system for use across agencies.

When the Head Start program began to require more advanced teacher qualifications – an Associate degree at a minimum – it put rural communities to the test. Already hard-pressed to recruit staff and provide professional development opportunities, many worried they would lose valuable staff and perhaps their entire program. [THE HAVASUPAI INDIAN RESERVATION, ARIZONA](#), went to Northern Arizona University to explore possible technology solutions and a great partnership was born. With support from a federal grant, the university and tribal officials installed satellite dishes and began to beam early childhood education classes to isolated locations across the region.

The [OREGON WORKFORCE ALLIANCE YOUTH COUNCIL](#) wanted to provide more leadership training for geographically isolated at-risk youth enrolled in regional WIA programs – something particularly lacking in the services available. The Council also wanted to attempt something not done before: design a program that would serve all 23 counties in its workforce region. The answer? Survivors Youth Leadership Experience, a 5-½ day summer leadership training camp at Oregon State University-Corvallis sponsored by a powerful crew of partners, including nine contractors, the university, 4-H, two Job Corps centers, the National Guard, and staff from other youth providers from the region and state.

The [PANHANDLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD, TEXAS](#), is part of Panhandle Twenty/20, a regional collaborative process focused on future livability and economic, healthcare, educational development linked to demographic changes in Panhandle counties. The Board's youth team members work with various task forces to incorporate WIA youth elements and to look at who has access to good services and who doesn't.

[TRI-COUNTY WORKFORCE YOUTH COUNCIL, YAKIMA, WASHINGTON](#) meets via video conferencing and creates web sites for multiple partners and youth. For example, the Yakima Chamber maintains database of about 1500 work and community-based learning opportunities for youth, provider staff, and educators, organized by career pathway and geographic location. Support for the database comes from multiple sources, including Tech Prep, WIA, and fee-for-service contracts with area school districts

Youth in rural [DEL NORTE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA](#), publish a quarterly newspaper called the Community Tide. The Del Norte Triplicate, the local newspaper, prints the youth paper and provides mentors for youth writers and editors.

Students in [CLEAR LAKE, SOUTH DAKOTA](#), design and develop web pages for business and agencies in their community. They're also working on a database of community information, including economic and educational opportunities, housing and land costs, recreation, local history, and more.

With a 62-county rural region to support, the [LOCAL AREA I WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD, NORTHWEST KANSAS](#), has some case management ground to cover. So, the Board recruits staff from partners and providers who can “go to the client.” Memoranda of Understanding tied to performance structure the relationship, and the Board offers Youth Case Management certification training as part of the package.

Resources

Rural Economic and Community Development

- Rural Information Center – US Dept. of Agriculture <http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/>
- National Center for Small Communities <http://www.smallcommunities.org/>
- Center for Rural Affairs <http://www.cfra.org/>
- Rural Policy Research Institute <http://www.rupri.org/>
- Southern Rural Development Center <http://srdc.msstate.edu/>
- The Aspen Institute <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/csg>
- Rural Development Initiatives <http://www.rdiinc.org/index.html>
- Center for Applied Rural Innovation <http://www.cari.unl.edu/>
- National Rural Development Partnership <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/nrdp>
- 100 Do's and Don'ts for Economic Developers <http://www.aces.edu/department/crd/publications/CRD-do&dont.html>
- The Main Street Program – National Trust for Historic Preservation <http://www.nationaltrust.org/>
- Rural County Governance Center http://www.naco.org/Template.cfm?Section=Agriculture_and_Rural_Affairs1
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation Collection of Rural Community Development Resources <http://www.unl.edu/kellogg/main.html>
- National Rural Health Association <http://www.nrharural.org/>
- Frontier Mental Health Services Resources Network <http://www.wiche.edu/MentalHealth/Frontier/index.htm>
- Mapping Community Assets Workbook (.pdf) – Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory Rural Education Program http://www.nwrel.org/ruraled/publications/com_mapping.pdf
- Canadian Rural Partnership Asset Mapping: A Handbook http://www.rural.gc.ca/conference/documents/mapping_e.phtml
- Partnerships in Communities: Reweaving the Fabric of Rural America http://www.kelloggfellows.org/Resources/Publications/View_Publication.asp?DBID=9

Texas Rural Resources

- Texas Rural Partners <http://www.trdc.org/>
- Texas Rural Communities <http://www.texasrural.org/>

Rural Education

- Rural School and Community Trust <http://ruraledu.org/index.html>
- Pulling Together: R&D Resources for Rural Schools <http://www.ncrel.org/rural/>
- ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools <http://www.ael.org/eric/>
- Rural Community College Initiative <http://srdc.msstate.edu/rcci/>
- Rural Clearinghouse for Lifelong Education and Development <http://www-personal.ksu.edu/~rcled/>
- Thriving Together: Connecting Rural School Improvement and Community Development <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/fam22.html>
- Innovative Approaches in Rural Education <http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ricpubs/educate.html>

Place, Project and Community-Based Learning

- Rural Roots <http://ruraledu.org/roots/roots.htm>
- What Does Place-Based Learning Look Like? Examples of Place-Based Learning Portfolios – Rural School and Community Trust <http://ruraledu.org/rtpportfolio/>
- Learning In Deed: Making a Difference Through Service Learning <http://learningindeed.org/index.html>
- The Foxfire Fund <http://www.foxfire.org/>
- What Kids Can Do <http://www.whatkidscando.org/home.asp>
- At the Table <http://www.atthetable.org/>

- 4-H <http://www.4-h.org/>
- Building a Foundation for Community Leadership: Involving Youth in Community Development Projects (pdf) http://srdc.msstate.edu/publications/199/199_tbl.pdf
- National Service Learning Clearinghouse <http://www.servicelearning.org/article/archive/5/>
- Student TechCorps <http://www.studenttechcorps.org/index.html>
- Weaving in a Future Tense: Youth in Community, Youth in Citizenship – W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Entrepreneurship

- Rural Entrepreneurship Through Action Learning - REAL Enterprises <http://www.realenterprises.org/>
- BizWorld <http://www.bizworld.org/>
- Junior Achievement <http://www.ja.org/>
- Youth Venture <http://www.youthventure.org/home.asp>
- Kaufman Foundation – Entrepreneurship <http://www.emkf.org/pages/150.cfm>
- Ye\$ - Youth Entrepreneurship Guide (pdf) <http://www.utextension.utk.edu/pbfiles/pb1554.pdf>
- BizTech - National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship <http://www.nfte.com/>
- Business Ideas – Virginia Cooperative Extension <http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/homebus/354-301/354-301.html>
- Ca\$hing in on Business Opportunities: A Guide to Building a Home-Based and Micro-Business Program http://srdc.msstate.edu/publications/homebased_curriculum.html
- Small Business Start Up Kit – US Small Business Administration http://www.sba.gov/starting_business/startup/guide.html

e-Mentoring and e-Learning

- Electronic Emissary- University of Texas, Austin <http://emissary.wm.edu/>
- IBM MentorPlace <http://www.mentorplace.org/login.do>
- International Telementor <http://www.telementor.org/>
- iMentor - Resources <https://www.imentor.org/resources/imentor2.jsp>
- MentorNet – eMentoring Network for Women in Engineering and Science <http://www.mentornet.net/>
- ThinkQuest Competition <http://www.thinkquest.org/>
- Distance Learning Resource Network <http://www.dlrn.org/>
- PBS Distance Learning: Overview and Resources <http://www.pbs.org/als/dlweek/>

Technology

- Getting Online 2.0: A Small-Town Guide to Creating 21st-Century Communities (pdf) <http://www.smallcommunities.org/ncsc/Pubs/GettingOnline/GettingOnline2.pdf>
- TechSoup <http://www.techsoup.org/>
- Community Technology Center Start Up Manual (pdf) <http://www2.ctcnet.org/manual/coverprefacetoc.pdf>
- e-School News Funding Center <http://www.eschoolnews.com/funding>

Transportation

- Rural Transportation – USDA <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/Transport/>
- Transportation Toolbox for Rural Areas and Small Communities <http://ntl.bts.gov/ruraltransport/toolbox/index.html>
- Transportation for Rural Communities: Strategies for Serving Welfare Participants and Low Income Individuals (pdf) <http://www.macoint.com/publications/transpo2.pdf>

Childcare

- Innovative Approaches – Partnerships in Rural Communities and other Resource Materials - Child Care Partnership Project <http://www.nccic.org/ccpartnerships/facts/fs18.htm> and <http://www.nccic.org/ccpartnerships/resource.htm>
- Information and Funding Resources - Child Care Center FAQ – Rural Information Center <http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/faqs/childc-1.htm>
- Child Care for Welfare Participants in Rural Areas (pdf) <http://www.macoint.com/publications/Child%20Care.pdf>

Rural Funding Resources

- Rural Resources - Agriculture Network Information Center - USDA <http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ruralres/funding.htm>
- National Rural Funders Collaborative <http://www.nrfc.org/>
- Grant Programs - Federal Transit Administration <http://www.fta.dot.gov/library/program/grantprog.html>
- Rural Health Grant Programs – US Department of Health and Human Services <http://ruralhealth.hrsa.gov/funding/>
- Rural Education Achievement Program http://www.aasa.org/government_relations/rural
- Conservation Grants Center <http://www.conservationgrants.com/>
- Finding Resources to Support Rural Out-of-School Time Initiatives (pdf) <http://www.financeprojectinfo.org/Publications/ruralost.pdf>
- Grants and Opportunities for Rural Texas – Texas Rural Partners http://www.trdc.org/Resources/grants_and_opportunities.html

Learning from Others

- Workforce Development Networks in Rural Areas of the United States (pdf) <http://srdc.msstate.edu/publications/srdcpolicy/green.pdf>
- Case Studies -Thriving Hometowns Network – Center for Small Communities <http://216.197.97.151/search.cfm>
- Managing Information with Rural America (MIRA) – Idaho <http://mira.lcsc.edu/>
- Rural Youth Job Strategy Internship Projects – Canada <http://www.gov.on.ca/omafra/english/infores/ryjs/internship.html>
- Model Programs in Appalachia – Entrepreneurship Everywhere http://www.entre-ed.org/_arc/home1.htm
- ProjectPaycheck - Wyoming <http://dwsweb.state.wy.us/dwsnews/releases/pepnet.asp>
- Community Development Success Stories – Texas Rural Partners <http://www.trdc.org/success.htm>
- Entrepreneurial Leadership Program – Accelerator Online <http://www.acceleratoronline.com/viewpage.asp?p=94&f=14>
- BUILD – Business United in Investing, Lending, and Development <http://www.build.org/>
- Let a Thousand Voices Speak: A Guide to Youth in Radio in the United States (pdf) <http://www.nfcb.org/projects/nyrtp/youthmanual/youthmainmanual.pdf>
- Quitman County Youth Credit Union Program, Marks, MS See also: Youth Credit Union Network <http://www.natfed.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=285>
- Net Cafe <http://www.ournetcafe.com> and <http://www.ci.watsonville.ca.us/cafe.html>
- Wolf Den Market – Turning an Idea into Reality <http://ruraledu.org/roots/rr201e.htm>
Student-Run Grocery Store Up and Running <http://ruraledu.org/roots/rr201d.htm>
Will a Grocery Store Save this Small Town?
<http://www.startupjournal.com/howto/successstories/200101091008-eig.html>
- Dramatic Consultations Using Telemedicine – Dept. of Health & Human Services <http://telehealth.hrsa.gov/grants/success.htm>

Our thanks to the many people who helped bring this training series to life:

- Board members and staff of Texas' 28 local workforce boards who were easily accessible, frank and thoughtful about their work, and eager to share lessons learned and examples.
- TWC staff members who also reviewed drafts and helped us clarify nuances of policy, definition, and language.
- Texas youth program staff, educators, and workforce professionals who participated in or facilitated training courses using field test copies of packet materials.
- The talented crew of School & Main Institute coaches and adjunct faculty working closely with Texas boards during the preparation of these materials.