

Framework for Job Corps – Youth Challenge Collaborations

Background: *The Youth ChalleNGe Program*

Youth ChalleNGe (YC) is a residential program for “at-risk” young people from the ages of 16-18. At-risk for the purposes of YC means a high school dropout. The program is administered by State National Guard programs in partnership with the Department of Defense (DOD). DOD provides 60% of the funding, with a 40% state match. Participants must be drug free with no felony convictions. There is no income eligibility requirement. The program lasts 22 weeks, beginning with an intensive 2 week boot camp, followed by a 20 week phase focusing on leadership, community service, job readiness and academic development. There are 32 YC sites operating in 27 different states. The White House Commission on Disadvantaged Youth has recommended better alignment of the YC program with the youth programs funded by DOL.

Several Job Corps centers have been approached by YC programs regarding forming partnerships. Given the Administration’s support for increased coordination of programs and the potential for improved services to students, the Job Corps program should pursue these partnerships, but do so in a thoughtful and deliberate fashion. Partnerships between the two programs should be structured to avoid duplication, share resources in an equitable manner and provide the maximum benefits to the students.

Governing Principals for Job Corps-Youth ChalleNGe partnerships

Job Corps – YC partnership agreements should be approved by the Regional Director and formalized by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The MOUs should:

- attempt to ensure that the arrangements are not duplicating services;
- address the issue of resource sharing in an equitable manner;
- address program responsibilities with respect to miscellaneous and support services such as outreach and admissions, transportation, child care, room and board, health care, placement and mentoring;
- address liability issues¹;
- identify methods for collecting and sharing student records and information; and
- address student clothing allowance, stipend and transition allowance issues².

¹ Both the Youth ChalleNGe program and the Job Corps program provide the standard federal workers compensation coverage for its participants. The presiding program at the time of injury will be responsible for completing the proper paperwork in accordance with federal law and program policy and regulations.

²YC provides up to a \$15 per week living allowance (amount established by each individual YC site, some sites are \$5/wk.) Each Job Corps center will determine if the Job Corps bi-weekly living allowance will be distributed to the concurrently enrolled student on the regular student pay schedule or will be withheld for payment upon graduation, termination or other action resulting in a Job Corps student’s permanent separation from the Job Corps center. If the concurrently enrolled student becomes a full-time residential Job Corps student he or she will be incorporated into the regular student pay schedule. YC authorizes a graduation stipend up to \$2200 (exact amount established by individual site) if the YC graduate is gainfully

The Regional Office should review the center operating budgets and staffing, and adjust them, where appropriate, to account for services provided by YC.

YC graduates should meet the standard Job Corps eligibility requirements (unless a pilot or demonstration program at a center provides otherwise).

If the partnership involves concurrent enrollment of students, the partnership must meet the requirements outlined in the Job Corps Policy Requirements Handbook (PRH) Chapter 3, Sections 3.11 and 3.14.

Types of Partnerships

Partnerships between Job Corps and Youth ChalleNGe will typically fall into one of two general categories: 1). Consecutive enrollment and, 2). Concurrent enrollment.

Consecutive Enrollment

Under a consecutive enrollment partnership, students will enter the Job Corps program upon graduation from YC. Such partnerships will be the easiest to administer, and would appear to make the most sense where the programs are not co-located, or at least not located near one another.

The focus of consecutive enrollment arrangements should be to facilitate a seamless transition from YC to Job Corps. The application and admission process should be initiated early enough during the student's entry into YC to ensure uninterrupted services.

A smooth transition from YC to Job Corps would be enhanced if the student begins developing a personal career development plan while in YC. The transition would also be enhanced if the general work readiness training provided by YC mirrors, as closely as possible, the training provided in Job Corps' Career Preparation Period.

Concurrent Enrollment (co-enrollment)

In a concurrent enrollment (or co-enrollment) partnership, students would be enrolled in both YC and Job Corps for at least a portion of their overall training period. While such partnerships would impose increased administrative challenges, they have the potential to maximize program efficiencies, and increase benefits to students. Concurrent enrollment partnerships would also allow both programs to receive credit for student attainment. Concurrent Enrollment partnerships are most well suited for cases where the YC and Job Corps sites are co-located, or at least in close proximity.

employed (working 40 hours per week) or is enrolled full-time in an institution of higher education. A YC graduate may also be working part-time and attending an institution of higher education part-time to be eligible for the graduation stipend. Youth ChalleNGe does not consider Job Corps an institution of higher education.

A concurrent enrollment would provide the opportunity to explore other opportunities. For example, currently YC participants are limited to GED preparation. If co-enrolled, an eligible student could pursue a high school diploma while still enrolled in YC. YC could offset the cost of slots in high school diploma classes by providing GED preparation to non-YC Job Corps students.

In addition, it might be possible to combine resources to provide an integrated Career Preparation Period for all students. A co-enrollment partnership might also open up the possibility for YC students to begin vocational training prior to graduating from YC.

Additional Issues:

In concurrent enrollment partnerships, Job Corps should consider admitting YC students only after they complete the 2-week boot camp portion of their YC training, where the drop out rate is higher.

Job Corps should consider establishing a single point of contact for all YC activity at the local Job Corps center and the local OA office.

Job Corps centers wishing to establish a partnership with a YC site should consider including staff from the local Outreach and Admissions office in the development of the MOUs or contract agreements.

Job Corps center and/or OA staff should consider providing an orientation presentation for incoming YC students to inform the students about the opportunity to enroll in Job Corps.

In keeping with PRH Chapter 1, Section 6. R2.d, a Job Corps-YC partnership would be enhanced if YC makes contact with the last school the applicant attended and requests a copy of the official high school records to be included in the application file. At a minimum, these records should include an official transcript in a sealed envelope (with the school seal affixed), and an Individual Education Plan (IEP), if applicable.

The OA and YC local points of contact should discuss center waiting lists at the beginning of each YC class. YC programs typically have two classes per year. While the Job Corps program has “open entry, open exit” which may result in waiting lists that can vary by center.

The sharing of transcripts documenting status of the eight core components (academic credentials, job skills training, health and hygiene training, community service hours, leadership/followership training, responsible citizenship, life-coping skills training and physical fitness training), medical evaluations and other relevant student information should increase efficiency.

Youth ChalleNGe has a well-developed mentoring program. The active mentoring phase begins once a student has graduated from Youth ChalleNGe. To support Job Corps’ career transition services period, it would be beneficial to arrange contact by the

mentor during the Job Corps enrollment period. More importantly, this relationship should continue throughout Job Corps enrollment and post-Job Corps graduation.

Tracking

To demonstrate the benefits of a partnership, it will be important to track the outcomes of the joint program participants in order to determine its value and success. Regional Offices should inform the National Office of Job Corps of all Job Corps-YC partnerships in advance.

In addition, an identifier in the application system will need to be developed by the Job Corps Data Center (JCDC), to identify YC applicants by the Job Corps counselors during the admission process. The information necessary to determine its efficacy will require a special quarterly run for the National Office of Job Corps. The following items of data collection are recommended:

- Number of Youth ChalleNGe students (cumulative and quarterly)
- Average length of stay for Youth ChalleNGe students
- Vocational completion rate
- GED and High School Diploma attainment
- Number of Military placements (actual and percent)

NOTE: The challenge in collecting this specific data is that particular elements require a distinguishing identifier to pull the Youth ChalleNGe graduates/terminees. Currently, no coding exists to designate an individual as a Youth ChalleNGe graduate or terminee.

An additional component that would assist the National Office of Job Corps would be tracking the number of applicants who are economically ineligible. For future considerations, it will be beneficial to know the number of ineligible applicants to determine the viability of Youth ChalleNGe as a Job Corps recruitment source. Information related to Youth ChalleNGe students that are ineligible to enroll in Job Corps will need to be addressed through the collection of ineligible applicants as a part of the OASIS system.

Information Sharing

The relationship between Job Corps and Youth ChalleNGe is new. Consequently, members of the Job Corps system are unfamiliar with Youth ChalleNGe, and vice versa. The National Office of Job Corps recommends that all six Job Corps Regional Offices invite Youth ChalleNGe representatives to provide a brief overview of the Youth ChalleNGe program at their upcoming regional meetings. Additionally, the National Offices of Job Corps and Youth ChalleNGe will work cooperatively to develop joint national goals and to provide joint opportunities at national leadership meetings.