



Getting Your Youth Advisory Group from Here to There



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

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Getting Your Youth Advisory Group from Here to There



TRAINING GOALS

- Understand how a Youth Advisory Group can power up your youth investment effort.
- Learn how to form and structure your Advisory Group.
- Learn how to plan effectively, task members, and evaluate Advisory Group performance.

IN THIS PACKET

FOOD FOR THOUGHT _____ 3

They're Optional, Right? - Why Have a Youth Advisory Group _____ 3

From Here to There: Youth Advisory Group Development Stages _____ 4

Make or Break Areas for Youth Advisory Group Development _____ 5

 Defining, Refining, and Confirming Your Charge _____ 5

 Recruiting Members _____ 7

 Orienting Members _____ 8

 Organizing Members _____ 10

 Tasking Members Effectively _____ 14

 Evaluating Your Performance _____ 15

 Connecting with Customers and the Front Line _____ 16

 Keeping Members Engaged _____ 18

TOOLS FOR ACTION _____ 20

Activity One: Where Are You Now, Where Are You Going? _____ 21

 Youth Advisory Group Development Stages _____ 22

 Youth Advisory Group Development Checkpoints - Worksheet _____ 23

 WIA Workforce Board/Optional Youth Advisory Group Duties _____ 24

Activity Two: Member Muscle _____ 25

 Member Recruitment Worksheet _____ 26

 Member Compass _____ 27

 Member Recruitment Examples _____ 28

Member Expertise Checklist _____ 29

Activity Three: Function Fundamentals – Advisory Group Organization _____ 30

 Functions Review Worksheet _____ 31

 Infrastructure That Works _____ 32

Activity Four: Charter It _____ 33

 Youth Advisory Group Charter Template _____ 34

Activity Five: Top Five Priorities _____ 36

 More Great Planning Activities That Work _____ 37

Activity Six: My Life as an Advisory Group Member at a Glance _____ 38

 My Life as an Advisory Group Member - Calendar _____ 39

 Practically Speaking! - 15 Things Advisory Group Members Can Do to Fulfill Their Role _____ 40

Activity Seven: Looking In the Mirror – Advisory Group Self Assessment _____ 41

 Youth Advisory Group Self-Assessment Tool _____ 42

Activity Eight: Ready for Feedback _____ 44

 Ready for Feedback Worksheet _____ 45

GREAT MOMENTS IN YOUTH ADVISORY GROUPS DEVELOPMENT _____ 46

MORE GREAT RESOURCES _____ 47

Youth Advisory Group Development _____ 47

General Board Development _____ 47

Involving Youth in Your Advisory Group _____ 47

Group Planning and Facilitation _____ 47

OUR THANKS _____ 48

They're Optional, Right? Why Have a Youth Advisory Group

Why, in Texas, where WIA Youth Councils are optional, would you want one? After all, aren't you just creating another group in a sea of groups working on youth issues?

The simple answer is muscle. Workforce boards are large bodies, full of mandated members and partners. They have broad agendas that cover an enormous span of employment and training opportunities for adults, dislocated workers, and youth. A Youth Council – more often called a Youth Advisory Group (YAG) or Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) in Texas – lets your Board focus energy on youth issues and the youth services community. You can apply strength of the right kind, in the right direction.

FOUR BIG REASONS FOR A YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP

CONNECTION TO YOUTH & FAMILIES

Youth and families are more comfortable with youth agencies and providers than they are with the “workforce system” as a whole. The Advisory Group provides a bridge.

CONNECTION TO AND AMONG YOUTH NETWORKS

Youth, educational agencies, and the workforce system do not have strong historical ties. By and large, they operate in worlds apart. Most youth-serving organizations have had only fleeting, single program experiences collaborating with each other.

LEADERSHIP AND LINKAGE ADVANTAGE

Your Advisory Group can include members that may not be able to participate on your Workforce Board. Tactically, this gives you a way to leverage additional, critical relationships within youth service networks.

WORKFORCE BOARD SANITY

“Things fall apart, the center cannot hold,” goes the famous Yeats poem. A bit dramatic

to mention here maybe, but it certainly captures the dynamics of large-scale, system-building efforts. Your Board has hundreds of pieces of work to fit together. An Advisory Group can hold the youth pieces together.

This training packet is designed to help you assess the organizational and leadership power you bring to WIA youth services – whether you are a relatively new Advisory Group or one with a few miles on the tires!



From Here to There: Youth Advisory Group Development Stages

Here, Advisory Group, go build a system.

Before you get into the nuts and bolts of advisory group work, stop and take stock of your group. Where are you now?

The mission of a WIA Youth Advisory Group is rather unique in the world of groups.

You are:

- A subgroup of a larger regional entity, the Workforce Board, with authority defined by that body.
- Born out of legislation, not necessarily community will.
- Given oversight of a categorical stream of funding, yet at the same time encouraged to champion a broader youth service system vision.
- A catalyst for a collaborative and systemic venture.
- Not the only committee, Advisory Group, board, or network that cares about youth issues in your area.
- Regional rather than community-based.
- Intended to facilitate services, not deliver them.

A challenging backdrop and mission for a group.

Experienced organizational “groupies” know that great groups aren’t born overnight.

They develop. They grow into their capacity to tackle large-scale community challenges. You wouldn’t ask a seventh-grader to build a house or drive your car to the store for groceries. And yet we so often do exactly that with groups:

HERE, YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP, GO BUILD A REGIONAL YOUTH INVESTMENT SYSTEM...

Whether you are a newly forming Advisory Group or a seasoned group, help your Advisory Group understand your group’s developmental trajectory, where you are on it, and where you want to go. You have a vision for a youth investment system. You need a parallel vision for your group’s role in creating it. Knowing where you are developmentally can help you focus your work, manage expectations, and support advisory group members appropriately. It’s also incredibly comforting!

Below are five stages many legislated community-based advisory groups or boards experience on the road to collaboration. Take note! Development isn’t always neat and tidy. Like a seventh-grader with extra big feet, you may experience characteristics of several stages at once.

Youth Advisory Group Development Stages

COLLABORATIVE BODY	You are part of a group of community partners, mandated and other, who plan together; share human, financial, and material resources; and evaluate results collaboratively.
COORDINATING BODY	You actively coordinate youth activities and projects with other community organizations.
OPERATIONAL GROUP	You have established procedures for planning and tracking results. You have strong relationships with mandated partners, organizations, and constituents.
FORMATIVE GROUP	You seek out members, define roles, and identify main goals.
CHARGED INDIVIDUALS	Someone or something (i.e., legislation, an event, a source of funding) has called your group into existence and charged it with a particular mission.

Make or Break Areas for Youth Advisory Group Development

LOOKING TO POWER UP YOUR ADVISORY GROUP? PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO SEVEN IMPORTANT AREAS.

- Area One:** Defining, Refining, and Confirming Your Charge
- Area Two:** Recruiting Members
- Area Three:** Orienting Members
- Area Four:** Organizing Members
- Area Five:** Tasking Members Effectively
- Area Six:** Evaluating Your Performance
- Area Seven:** Connecting with Customers and the Front Line
- Area Eight:** Keeping Members Engaged

AREA ONE: DEFINING, REFINING, AND CONFIRMING YOUR CHARGE

Texas' unique waiver on mandatory Youth Advisory Groups makes it incredibly important that your Workforce Board make a formal "go or no" decision: we want a Youth Advisory Group or we don't, and here is why.

As a Board, ask yourselves: Do you have the skill and relationships to fulfill WIA youth duties? Review the pros and cons of an Advisory Group, the role it might play, and the overall scope of your youth investment goals.

If you create a Youth Advisory Group, give it a clear charge and instructions, if it has any, about membership, responsibilities, and operations. The voluntary nature of Youth Advisory Groups in Texas leaves WIA's requirements in these areas at the discretion of your Board.

Don't flounder in ambiguity! Launch your Advisory Group with a solid sense of its duties, authority, and relationship to the Workforce Board. Can non-Board members participate and if so, are there any requirements about the percentage of Board vs. non-Board members? Can the advisory group make decisions? Which kind? Are there required members? Outline any expectations the Board has about how the group operates and reports to the Board.

MANDATED WIA YOUTH DUTIES

Under the Workforce Investment Act, Boards have mandated duties related to youth ages 14-21¹. In Texas, your Board can designate all or some of the responsibilities to a Youth Advisory Group.

- Coordinate youth activities in a local area. Ensure that all WIA youth program elements are available to all eligible youth.
- Link youth and their families to the workforce development system.
- Develop portions of the local workforce plan that relate to eligible youth, including descriptions of a ten youth element system, provider procurement, and how youth performance indicators will be tracked.
- Recommend eligible providers of youth services.
- Oversee eligible provider activities.

take action! confirming your charge

Make a formal "go or no" decision on a Youth Advisory Group. If go, outline a formal charge and guidelines for membership, role, main duties, and authority related to policy, funding, staffing, etc.

¹ Workforce Investment Act of 1998

Where do you want to be on the continuum of youth leadership options?

OTHER POSSIBLE YOUTH ADVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Broker relationships and encourage referral and collaboration between youth service organizations.
- Facilitate recruitment of partners and opportunities critical to the success of a youth system, i.e., mentors, employers, partner/ referral sources, etc.
- Report and publicize issues that impact success of youth in the labor market.
- Identify, share, and celebrate effective practices for youth employment and training.
- Leverage additional resources.
- Advocate the development of a broader youth service delivery system.

Many youth councils around the country wrestle with a handful of fundamental mission “defining and refining” questions:

WHOM DO WE SERVE? WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF WIA WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY CONTEXT?

ARE WE A PASS-THROUGH FOR FUNDS OR A COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP BODY?

WHAT IS OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER YOUTH-RELATED GROUPS? ARE WE A CONVENER OR A JOINER?

Work with your Workforce Board to answer these questions. Your answers will depend on the people you involve, whether other youth-related efforts and governance exist in your area, and – to be frank – the relative power you wield in terms of resources leveraged, decision-making, and partners.

Overall though, the Workforce Investment Act encourages you to think big and graft your efforts into the broader landscape of youth and community development efforts.

Youth Advisory Group Charge Continuum of Options



“Adapted from the “Youth Council Toolkit: Information and Options for Forming Youth Councils Under the Workforce Investment Act.” New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals (NYATEP), September 1999

AREA TWO: RECRUITING MEMBERS

IDENTIFYING MEMBERS

WIA rules outline required membership for your Workforce Board. In Texas, however, a Youth Advisory Group has no particular membership requirements unless your local Workforce Board specifies otherwise. Often, you have a blank membership slate.

This is your first big test! Every region in the country has a deep reservoir of talent, passion, and concern for youth. Can you tap people who can establish strong ties with critical youth networks, constituencies, and potential partners? Use a four-point Membership Compass to evaluate whether potential participants give your Advisory Group the "skill and will" it needs for the job at hand:

INTERESTS: What interest or stake does this member have in your effort?

AUTHORITY: What decisions, staff, resources, etc. can this person impact within his or her organization or other groups?

INFLUENCE: What reach does this person have into organizations, professional and personal networks, and critical constituencies?

EXPERTISE: What expertise does this person have with youth needs, issues, policy, and resources? What other skills and knowledge do they bring (planning, marketing, leadership, writing, program evaluation, etc.)?

You may also want look for people and organizations that make sense at this stage of your

Advisory Group's development. Some people are great "start-up" people (as are

some organizations). They thrive on unknowns and the seeming chaos of new adventures. They will roll up their sleeves without a moment's hesitation. Add anyone like this you know to your potential member list!

RECRUITING MEMBERS

Once you identify potential members and important stakeholder organizations, invite – or recruit – people to participate. How can you get the people you need? Some boards use a formal selection process. Others recruit one-on-one. Still others cast the widest possible net for members.

You may want to:

- Seek suggestions from county officials, workforce investment board members, and other community leaders.
- Ask for nominations and/or interview prospective members. Some programs use a very formal appointment process where the mayor or other community official identifies members – and swears them in.
- Visit representatives of key stakeholder groups and youth organizations to identify good candidates (actual people or positions).
- Hold general information sessions or recruitment meetings.
- Announce your search at community forums and events.

Whatever your approach, think tactically!

- Who is the best person (Board member, provider representative, partner, employer, etc.) to make the invitation?
- Who do you want (or what type of person do you want) from a particular stakeholder group or organization?
- What materials do you want to use in recruitment, for example, to outline the role and responsibilities of an Advisory Group member?

take action! recruiting members

Brainstorm a list of potential members (people or organizations). Review your list. Beyond titles and representation, do you have the skill and will you need?

Create an information sheet and a "frequently asked questions" sheet you can give prospective members. Decide the MOST effective way to contact and invite each potential member. Who or what can't they refuse?



Make it more than hello and a handshake.

Finally, have answers ready for the most common questions potential members ask:

- What time commitment is required?
- What do I have to do?
- My organization really wants to participate. Could I delegate someone else to attend meetings or participate on my behalf?
- I can't attend all meetings. Can I still be an Advisory Group member?
- If I participate, can my organization still apply to be a WIA youth provider?
- Would serving on the Advisory Group represent any conflict of interest (i.e., my organization may respond to WIA Requests for Proposals, etc.)?

Even if you think member recruitment will be as easy as a series of simple phone calls, be prepared! It's the rare Advisory Group recruit who has no questions.

AREA THREE: ORIENTING MEMBERS

Orientation often consists of a 10-lb. packet of reading material and a 'sink or swim' approach to the job. Don't entrust a function as important as orientation to paper and a handshake alone.

New members need to:

- Meet each other.
- Get hooked on the work and their role in making it happen.
- Evaluate their interests, strengths and readiness to serve – individually and as a group.
- Connect with existing members (new members, older Advisory Group); perhaps even identify a seasoned member who can coach or guide them during their first 3-6 months.

Orienting new members is fundamentally an act of marketing and relationship building. As such, it's worth looking at an important distinction from the world of marketing.

People with a product (or vision) to sell consider two types of benefits:

Functional - What the product or program does. It's a truck. It handles well and gets good mileage.

Emotional - How the product or program will make you feel. You will look incredibly cool going off-road in this vehicle. Your friends will find you exciting.

Appeal to both with new Advisory Group members. Feed their practical needs and tap their zeal! If you provide a packet, include information about youth issues, a young person's story, or a vision of the youth system Advisory Group members will build and the impact it will have on young people. You'll also want to include information on how the Advisory Group 'drives' – for example, strategic goals and performance indicators, member roles, and meeting schedules. The same goes for any orientation (or reorientation) meeting or event you plan.

SAMPLE ORIENTATION AGENDA

- Welcome & Congratulations
- Member Introductions
- Youth Service Vision & Advisory Group Charge
- Interests: What Do You Want to Get out of This?
- Participant & Provider Panel
- The Work Ahead: 5-Year Strategic Goals, Current Priorities, Upcoming Decisions
- Member Expertise – Skills I/We Have
- Member Role
- Questions & Answers
- Housekeeping

take action! orienting members

Identify the methods and materials your Advisory Group will use to orient new members and help them find instant footing in the mission and work.

Designate a New Member Advocate – someone to ensure new members get the orientation and support they need the first 4-6 months of their role.

SAMPLE ORIENTATION PACKET

- WIA fact sheet
- Summary of WIA youth elements and performance indicators
- Success story, article, sheet of quotes from participants or partners, newsletter or other interesting material from a provider, etc.
- One-pager or executive summary of local 5-Year Workforce Plan's youth goals and list of current year's priorities
- A "certificate" that congratulates new member on Advisory Group selection
- An overview or list of the Advisory Group's main duties
- Member role description
- An organizational chart that includes Board and Youth Advisory Group structure
- The Advisory Group's charter or bylaws
- A calendar of Board and Youth Advisory Group meetings, provider and other youth organization events (and member birthdays!)
- Contact information for Board, Board staff, and Advisory Group members
- List of current providers and partner organizations
- Advisory Group self-assessment tool

Four Member Orientation Scenarios

SCENARIO ONE: OFFICIAL BOARD WELCOME

Members receive orientation packet. They attend a meeting of full Workforce Board where they are formally welcomed and charged with their mission. A former or current program participant and a partner/direct service staff member speak. Advisory Group and Board members mix and mingle over light refreshments. The Board adjourns. Advisory Group members to a 1 1/2 to 2-hour orientation.

SCENARIO TWO: YOUTH SERVICES ROAD TRIP

Part 1: Members meet on Friday morning for coffee and muffins. They participate in a facilitated overview and fun discussion of WIA youth vision & their role. Next, they visit 3-4 youth programs: one-stop center, local high school, an employer, and community-based youth program. Local press invited to participate. The day ends with a short debriefing. Part 2: Follow-up meeting with facilitated discussion of Advisory Group goals, plans, and member roles.

SCENARIO THREE: LIVELY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING WITH HOMEWORK

The Board chair welcomes new members at an Advisory Group meeting and gives members their charge. The meeting includes a panel of past and current youth participants and provider staff. Members then participate in orientation activities: meet and greet, WIA youth overview, vision exercise, strategic goals, and basic Advisory Group operations. They get a 'homework' assignment to 1) review the year's goals and identify areas of particular interest and 2) interview at least 3 other people about youth services.

SCENARIO FOUR: THE LONE NEW MEMBER

For established boards, the Advisory Group chair and representative from a participating organization or company take the new member out to breakfast or lunch. They arrange for member to visit a youth program or representative/perspective they wouldn't normally see.

Think community-wide “multi-organizational chart.”

AREA FOUR: ORGANIZING MEMBERS

INFRASTRUCTURE ACCORDING TO FUNCTION

Advisory groups, as their name suggests, can be fairly passive by nature. Members meet; they review progress and provide advice on important decisions. They chip in their two cents from time to time – opinions or small offers of assistance – when moved. Your group may have been given such a role. On the other hand, you may have positioned yourselves and your mission further out, in more action-oriented areas of the continuum of options (see page 7). If so, you have heavy lifting to do and you’ll need operational oomph – muscle – to do it.

Where does your operational capacity come from? It comes from:

- Advisory Group and Workforce Board representatives
- Staff in the organizations they represent
- Provider organizations
- Youth and their families
- Other partners and partner organizations

They are the “members” of committees, work groups, and focus groups. They are your “staff” – whether paid or unpaid, under your direct supervision or not.

How do you mobilize them?

You develop collaborative, multi-institutional infrastructure that includes them.

In other words, you organize more than just yourselves, as Youth Advisory Group representatives. Formally. A Board or

Advisory Group intent on developing comprehensive and collaborative youth services must be completely outward-looking. You care about far more than a few Advisory Group subcommittees – a typical stopping point for organizational development.

Your infrastructure for getting work done is out there – in the community – within and across organizations.

Equally as important, you identify the functions your collective actions must support.

In newly formed or young Advisory Groups, members are often doers and leaders. One minute you’re editing newsletter copy; another, making strategic resource decisions. You’re in the roll-up-your-sleeves “shirt sleeves” stage of organizational development. In the process, you cover responsibilities that span three general functional areas:

IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING LEADERSHIP

At this stage, a small core of people can get a huge amount of work done. However, when you think of your overall goal, a youth investment system...Eventually, you HAVE to part and parcel out functional responsibilities. You direct the energy of leaders into a clearly defined set of leadership functions. You engage staff and clients in provider and partner organizations to help you plan and implement. Activity Three in this packet provides a tool you can use to assess how well you are engaging and equipping people to cover the three broad functional areas.

take action! organizing members

Use the “Infrastructure That Works” materials in this packet to evaluate your Advisory Group’s functional strengths and gaps. Examine how your current organizational structure helps you accomplish the goals you set for yourself. Revise it if needed.

Create an Advisory Group Charter that conveys how you will operate and make decisions.

Review the templates you use for MOU’s, partner agreements and role descriptions. Do they accurately reflect your mission and the relationship you want with a person, provider, or partner?

² Burns, Mike and Figs, LaCharla, “Board Basics: A Primer for Community Development Organizations,” The Enterprise Foundation, Columbia, MD, 1999.

**Critical Leadership and Intermediary Functions
WIA-Initiated Youth Advisory Groups Can Perform**

- Evaluate and publicize employer and youth needs – and intersections between the two.
- Initiate community and provider asset mapping – evaluating the quality and coverage of existing services.
- Convene various constituencies –providers, youth, families, community leaders, etc. – to discuss youth issues and needs.
- Analyze service delivery tools and methods to look for areas of collaboration (materials development, training, etc.).
- Advocate for harder-to-reach youth.
- Create forums and tools that foster stronger referral behaviors.
- Identify, communicate, and coordinate resource development opportunities.
- Broker new relationships between youth providers.
- Coordinate employer recruitment and involvement.
- Celebrate program and youth successes.

Now take things one step further. Focus on leadership functions. You are a WIA-motivated Advisory Group – an important intermediary and cheerleader in the mission to create a more powerful youth services system:

What specific leadership functions (or activities) make sense given your group’s position in the landscape of youth service advocates and leadership bodies?

Now organize around these critical functions! Review your Advisory Group’s goals, duties, and this year’s work and activities. Look for items that need a bit of backbone or structure behind them. Your infrastructure should match critical functions and the work you have articulated as directly as possible. Bottom line: will you have committees and an organizational chart like most groups? Probably, but you will have a much better feel for when standing committees are necessary (because they support a critical function) and when short-term workgroups will serve just fine.

As an added measure, describe the role and functions of each subcommittee or workgroup, and add that information to your organizational chart. Many people who belong to boards can’t tell you what various subcommittees do, why, and what support they need.

And keep an eye out for the telltale signs of a functionally-confused, operationally-challenged group:

- Committees match components, key concepts, or main headings of a particular grant or policy (great for framing a proposal but not necessarily the right guides for developing powerful infrastructure).
- Subcommittees are created because advisory groups in “other communities have them.”
- Committees are inactive.
- Members can’t actually tell you what committees or work groups exist or their purpose.

- Constituencies are divided. All the employers are in one committee, the educators in another, and so on. People you want to collaborate actually work apart.
- Paid staff members are the only people who know anything about plans, programs, and services.
- Important functions are overlooked or unassigned. Important work has no organizational muscle (except that of staff) behind it.
- Members are unclear or insecure about their roles. They get overly involved in operations, micromanage staff, etc. and under-involved in important leadership functions.

THE ROLE OF STAFF

Most Workforce Boards and their Youth Advisory Groups have paid professional staff – and need them. However, the presence of staff creates an interesting organizational tension: if staff do everything, you potentially 1) undermine the role of leadership and 2) diminish your overall reach and impact. As you organize your YAG, identify staff support beyond Board and WIA-paid staff. Board members may have staff that can help carry out the work – and who may already be fulfilling a function you'd want any staff you hire to perform.

GOVERNING AND OPERATIONAL DOCUMENTS

The peril and power of paper! Smart Advisory Groups know how to use a few key pieces of paper – and more importantly, the process behind them – to their advantage. For systems and practices to change, rules, roles, and responsibilities must change. A few key documents will help you negotiate changes in these areas and formally capture what you negotiate.

GOVERNING DOCUMENTS

Most Workforce Boards have bylaws. Your Advisory Group may want to add sections that address your particular charge and operations, or you may need to create your own governing materials, i.e., a mission statement, charter or bylaws, etc.

- Do you need a rallying cry like the Declaration of Independence? Craft a mission or vision statement.
- Do you need to articulate a formal governing structure and important checks and balances like the Constitution? Make a charter.
- Do you need to capture important rules and procedures like law? Write bylaws.

Crafting your documents should help your Advisory Group cement its vision and resolve. Avoid putting your group through anything that resembles a hollow, perfunctory exercise or group wordsmith project. Instead, create activities that let members articulate the MAIN ideas, points, and commitments. Inject a dose of fun into what you do: use drawings, words, and wacky sculptures, anything that inspires members to talk and brainstorm. Then, equip your best writer(s) with examples and dispatch them to pound out a draft members can review.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Use formally negotiated job or role descriptions everywhere and anywhere you can, starting with your own Advisory Group members. Typically, groups create job descriptions for people they directly hire. You need one for the hiring process anyway. However, your not-so-hidden agenda is to write or change job descriptions across the community so that they reflect stronger youth practices and service coordination.

MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING

MOU's have an official role in WIA efforts: to seal the deal with a contractor. Your MOU's likely contain a fair amount of contract legalese and boilerplate – as they should. But, MOU's can also reflect important guidelines for how a youth provider works with other providers and on behalf of the youth system as a whole.

In addition, you can and should use partner agreements and MOU's to formalize relationships with non-provider partners. In these instances, your agreement will focus on the role a partner will play, the benefits your Advisory Group and that partner will gain, and any resources you've agreed to share (human, financial, or material).

- Specifically invite people to your meetings – to present briefly, share a success story, or to listen to a key discussion and provide feedback.
- Invite public comment on major issues or decision items.
- Post all meeting minutes publicly to a website.
- Send news or a summary of important decisions and opportunities to providers and partners.
- Announce RFP's in community newspapers, youth network newsletters, and other forums.

WHETHER TO BE A 501(C)3

You may decide, as you organize, that you should formally register your group as a non-profit 501(c)(3). On the other hand, communities are saturated with youth-oriented non-profit organizations. Establishing another may just add another competing organization to the field. Ask yourselves:

Why – exactly – do we need to establish a new non-profit?

Are there existing groups that could fulfill these same functions?

ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSPARENCY – OPEN MEETINGS

One final thought on how you organize and operate your Advisory Group. You are, of course, a public leadership body. As such, you are legally required to follow certain requirements: open meeting rules, procurement procedures, fair hiring practices, and so on. These are minimum requirements. You may well want to raise the standards even higher:

Real tasks for real members.

AREA FIVE: TASKING MEMBERS EFFECTIVELY

Advisory Group members need good road maps to navigate WIA work – especially their role in it. Good tasks start with good plans, and good YAG planning starts with a few practices consistently applied.

REALISTIC USE OF PLANNING TIME

Planning takes time; something Advisory Group members will have in short supply. Work backwards. If you can only have two hours, what are the MOST important things you want to get from them? Too often, people have overloaded or unclear expectations about what should happen when they gather to plan. Are you looking to get a fully-baked cake out of the oven or do you only need to identify the main ingredients so that other people can bake?

- What kind of planning is appropriate for your group – strategic or operational? What kinds should others do (task groups, subcommittees, staff)?
- Where do you most need advisory group member ideas and expertise?
- Where do you need their buy-in, commitment, or endorsement?

PLANNING WITH ENERGY

With such varied organizations, people, and personalities in your Advisory Group, you have every reason to craft dynamic, interactive and engaging planning activities. Planning shouldn't be excruciating! Play with elements of your meeting format to bring out the best in people while you have them in the same room.

People: Mix ideas and perspectives by mixing people. Your group doesn't have to plan en masse every step of the way; you just need to endorse plans as a group. Try partners, triads, small groups, and/or the full group. What arrangements make sense given the task or question on the table?

Tools: You'll have a plan document, likely in chart or table format. However, there are many ways to express and report ideas leading up to and away from those ubiquitous plan formats. Consider: flip chart/paper, sticky notes, whiteboard, flowcharts, and crayons. As a twist, use a video camera to capture the highpoints or final goals on tape.

Location: Typically, boards, committees, and Advisory Groups meet in the same place time after time. Hold the meeting somewhere interesting – a youth program, employer partner, or at a new member's organization. Rotate regular meeting locations. And let people move around once they arrive. Key points are often made in smaller, one-on-one conversations by the coffee or in break-out groups.

KEEPING THE PLAN ALIVE AND IN FOCUS

Plans can be fairly dry, static and dense documents. It often feels as if the process itself is the point, not the product, and certainly not the details (which could shift at a moment's notice!). Besides, you're usually mandated to do plans anyway. However, a good plan, especially in a complex environment like that of WIA youth services, is a powerful management tool.

HERE ARE TWO WAYS TO KEEP THE PLAN IN FRONT OF PEOPLE DURING THE FRENZY OF IMPLEMENTATION:

Highlighter Attack: Give the final version of the plan back to members and ask them to highlight areas and activities where they feel they will be most useful. Discuss what they highlight – and what they don't. Red flag warning if the "Responsible" column of the plan says "Staff," "All," or "Anytown Youth Organization." Drill for specifics and for member actions. You want people to own

take action! tasking members

Use plans actively. Start by lifting out the youth elements of your Local Workforce Plan. Where do you need to flesh out the details (work plans)? Create a one-page checklist of major goals and review progress at every Advisory Group meeting. Work groups and committees should do the same.

Ask members to review Advisory Group goals and plans, circle areas where they personally should be involved, and list specific actions they can take to support goals.

the contents of the plan, see themselves in the details, and identify potential gaps. Repeat the process quarterly.

One-Page Contract or Report Card:

Filter out the main goals and targets of your plan and put them in straightforward, one-page checklist format. This is your contract with yourselves: “We will get the following items done by [date].” Take this out at the end of every Advisory Group meeting and check your progress.

BETWEEN-MEETING ACTIONS & TASKS

Showing up at meetings is often the high standard we set for active Advisory Group participation. Members generally feel most comfortable in meetings. Once there, they step easily into their role. Their focus is on today’s Youth Advisory Group meeting agenda.

Yet, it is between meetings that the real action occurs – and where members usually feel least comfortable with their role. People should leave each meeting confident about how they can fulfill the functions identified by your group as critical to achieving goals.

What leadership actions, even small ones, could each member take to support other people (staff, partners, etc.) with crucial assignments or tasks?

What practical behaviors can members incorporate into their weekly and monthly routines that will further goals?

Members can even set personal challenges for themselves – or for each other, if your Advisory Group has a bit of a competitive streak running through it – by quantifying

actions. For example: you can challenge each other to “get on one new meeting agenda per month,” “interview two youth participants,” or “visit one youth program.” May the most active Advisory Group member win!

AREA SIX: EVALUATING YOUR PERFORMANCE

Evaluation under WIA is multi-layered – convoluted even! Ultimately, you care about a small subset of mandated youth performance indicators:

WIA YOUTH PERFORMANCE INDICATORS³

- Entry into employment, education or advanced training, or military service
- Attainment of secondary school diplomas or their recognized equivalents
- Attainment of literacy skills

To achieve the indicators, however, you need people and organizations, even whole systems, to accomplish things. In turn, those people need your Advisory Group to accomplish things. In all of the layers, you can easily forget to measure your Advisory Group’s own performance. In other words, what indicators do you have for yourselves?

IDENTIFYING “DASHBOARD” NUMBERS

Numbers are good. They are concrete. You either achieve them or you don’t. There are many, many numbers you can use to track progress, and ultimately, success. However, if you had to limit yourself to a few key numbers (speed, temperature, gas level, battery charge!), to gauge how your Advisory Group is doing each month, what would you track and how? Here are a few examples:

take action! evaluating performance

Identify your Advisory Group’s “dashboard” numbers and quality indicators. Work a review of them into each monthly meeting.

Focus your gaze inward at least once a year! Do an annual self-assessment of your Advisory Group that includes external feedback.



³ Workforce Investment Act of 1998

What are your Advisory Group’s own performance measures?

- New youth provider contacts made
- Number of providers who responded to our RFP
- Number of new employers we helped recruit for this initiative
- Number of staff at my organization who understand and support Advisory Group goals
- Number of customers who gave us feedback

KNOWING WHERE QUALITY ABSOLUTELY COUNTS

Sometimes scrappy is okay. You get the job done and that’s what counts. You mark progress and move on. Sometimes how you get the job done, and the quality of the job done, is critical. Did your Advisory Group perform effectively? Efficiently? With quality?

In the same way that you identified ‘dashboard’ numbers, look at where quality really counts in your Advisory Group’s performance. Define what that quality looks like and how you might get a quick read on it. Like ‘dashboard’ numbers, filtering out a few key ‘quality indicators’ will help you keep your eyes on what is most important or telling (and you’ll be more likely to articulate it clearly to others).

GETTING IN A SELF-REVIEW GROOVE

Self-assessment doesn’t need to be heavy-handed. Quick reviews, done routinely, are very powerful. Your Advisory Group members only meet a certain number of times a year. What will you evaluate at monthly meetings? What might you do once or twice a year? For example:

MONTHLY

- Group performance “Dashboard” check
- Goals report card or checklist
- Workforce Board update

QUARTERLY

- Work plan review
- Quality check
- Key staff feedback

ANNUALLY

- Customer and partner/provider feedback
- Strategic plan review
- Member self-assessment survey
- Third party evaluation, if needed

Monthly reviews should be short and sweet: for example, a five-minute review at the end of the meeting. More than anything, they focus members so that they don’t lose track of major items amidst all the detail.

At least once a year, your Advisory Group should conduct a more in-depth evaluation of its performance. Include external feedback from staff, providers, customers, partners, etc. Put your own performance goals out there, boldly, beyond meeting room doors, and let others scrutinize them and you!

AREA SEVEN: CONNECTING WITH CUSTOMERS AND THE FRONT LINE

Some Advisory Group members see WIA-served youth and provider staff every day. Others don’t. For that reason, you need a handful of methods for systematically collecting and sharing feedback: information that comes directly to you from the front lines.

There are many methods you can use. What feedback do you want, from whom, and when do you need it?

take action! customers and the frontline

Develop a plan for identifying and organizing good feedback people – i.e., a small database members can use, as needed; a formal advisory group; periodic focus groups, etc.

Create a list of questions members can ask different constituencies, if and whenever they have the chance.

Structured - Ongoing

- Ask youth, family members, and employers to serve on the Advisory Group.
- Create special customer advisory subcommittees (i.e., youth & families, employers, provider staff, etc.)
- Identify existing groups that can provide regular advice: industry associations, youth groups, parent groups, etc.

Open-Ended Feedback

- Comment cards
- Customer feedback hotline or phone number
- Web-based suggestion form

Decision Input or Work Plan Development

- Focus groups Phone or face-to-face interviews
- Informal “on call” or ad hoc advisors

End of Year Review

- Site visits
- Interviews
- Surveys

Your methods can be very formal:

“We will create a youth-only subcommittee to advise our group.”

“We will create a survey for 100 WIA-eligible, non-participating youth to learn what services might be of value to them.”

“Each Advisory Group member will volunteer 5 hours/month for a youth organization.”

Other methods go after engrained behavior:

“Each member will make it a habit to interview three stakeholders, quickly by phone, prior to finalizing a work plan or taking up a decision on the table.”

At a minimum, plan at least one formal, face-to-face opportunity (focus groups, phone interviews, site visits, etc.) each year that enables Youth Advisory Group members to speak directly with customers and the staff that support them.

WHATEVER YOUR COMBINATION OF METHODS – FORMAL AND INFORMAL – YOU’LL WANT TO CONSIDER:

GOOD “FEEDBACKERS”

Who should you ask for feedback? Who might have particular insight or expertise or perspective not often represented? Whom does the issue or decision directly affect? Take a lesson from frogs. Frogs are incredibly sensitive to changes in their habitat. If things aren’t good, they get sick, develop mutations, or disappear from the environment. Scientists watch them closely for this reason. Who are your frogs – the people, often quiet, that can tell you the most about the internal dynamics of a program or activity?

QUESTIONS THAT DISCOVER AND UNCOVER

Questioning is both an art and a discipline. Too long a survey or interview and you quickly wear out your welcome. Journalists often go into an interview with twice as many questions as they know they could ever ask. They want to be prepared. What if their interviewee is a person of few words? What if the topic takes a turn in a new direction? However, a good journalist also knows the short list of questions he or she really WANTS answered.

Make a list of questions you want to ask, then go back over it and highlight the ones you REALLY need to ask. And like a good journalist, always confirm that you can call back with additional questions.

THE FUTURE OF FEEDBACK

You went after the information because you wanted members to see it. What is your Advisory Group's forum or format for presenting customer feedback? You might add a section to monthly Advisory Group reports or create a step in your decision-making process where you stop to hear customer input.

FEEDBACK CONTACT MANAGEMENT

Once you identify willing people, don't lose them. Ask if they could provide feedback again. Add them to a list or database. Many businesses keep a running list of customers they can call for feedback, to test new ideas, etc. Your Advisory Group can do the same. The list doesn't need to be big: 15-20 youth, former participants, family members, employers that your members can call 'as needed' (with respect to their time).

YOUTH AS ADVISORS

Youth served by WIA funds are old enough to have an opinion. Many youth councils do use them. One Council, in California, has a young person as co-chair, requires that at least 50% of the council be youth, and provides stipends to youth who advise. Others form a separate youth committee. If you ask youth to participate formally in your Advisory group or on a related committee, prepare and support them. Many have never served a formal role in a governing or advisory body. Organizations like Youth On Board have great materials you can use.

AREA EIGHT: KEEPING MEMBERS ENGAGED

Creating a youth investment system is a demanding enterprise. There's seriousness to the purpose, the business details, and the nature of the funding that can start to weigh heavily on an Advisory Group. That said, your Advisory Group is a wonderful networking forum, professional development opportunity, and community and youth connection for members. Keep members fresh and energized by amplifying these benefits.

Mix and mingle. Let members work together in different combinations, especially one-on-one or in smaller groups. Every member should have a chance to connect directly with every other member.

Arrange a youth-related volunteer project at least once a year that members can do together. Challenge youth in a particular program to a basketball or softball game; work side-by-side with youth participants on a community service project, etc.

Celebrate small successes. WIA youth goals are big and challenging. Reward yourselves and others (provider staff, task groups, etc.) along the way. Identify simple, fun incentives whenever you set an important target. For example:

"When we create our youth services database, we'll send each other congratulatory e-cards."

"After we establish a clear partnership relationship with five critical youth agencies, we'll throw ourselves an ice cream sandwich party."

**take action!
keeping members engaged**

Ask Advisory Group members to identify fun incentives and disincentives (a free movie pass! A call from their mother!) for accomplishing tasks.

Be serious about the work...in a fun way.

“When we successfully help our youth service providers recruit 50 additional mentors, we’ll go play mini-golf.”

Small, even silly, milestone markers like these help members experience progress viscerally and feel appreciated. These two things, progress and appreciation, are what keep members engaged over time.

Circulate and refresh. Provide opportunities for members to step into new roles or even cross-train. Just because someone is good with numbers doesn’t mean they always do the budget (alone!).

Finally, manage burnout. A person’s energy, interests, and attention will surge and ebb. Don’t take it personally! Do recognize when people need a break. Keep them engaged with small, doable tasks. If the situation merits, replace them temporarily – a sabbatical of sorts, where another member of the organization can stand in – or do so permanently.



Activity One: Where Are You? Where Are You Going? Advisory Group Development

Goal

- Take a developmental view of your Youth Advisory Group's growth. Discuss where you think you are in relation to the stages.

Materials

- Youth Advisory Group Development Stages Picture
- Youth Advisory Group Development Checkpoints Worksheet
- WIA Workforce Board / Optional Youth Advisory Group Duties

Time

- 20 minutes

Instructions

1. With members of your Advisory Group, review the Youth Advisory Group Development Stages and Checkpoint handouts. Have each person look at the checklist separately first. Then, compare notes!
 - Are you "at" one stage in particular? Which one? Is it cut-and-dried?
 - Do group members have a longer-term vision of what your Advisory Group should be or do? What is it? Is development part of your plan?
 - How do you currently support Advisory Group development?
2. What activities or support would help members – and the group as a whole – be ready for the next stage? Identify 3 or 4 things that would help.

Youth Advisory Group Development Stages

COLLABORATIVE BODY

You are part of a group of community partners, mandated and other, who plan together; share human, financial, and material resources; and evaluate results collaboratively.

COORDINATING BODY

You actively coordinate youth activities and projects with other community organizations.

OPERATIONAL GROUP

You have established procedures for planning and tracking results. You have strong relationships with mandated partners, organizations, and constituents.

FORMATIVE GROUP

You seek out members, define roles, and identify main goals.

CHARGED INDIVIDUALS

Someone or something (i.e., legislation, an event, a source of funding) has called your group into existence and charged it with a particular mission.

Youth Advisory Group Development Checkpoints - Worksheet

Stage	Checkpoints
Endorsement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We know why we need this group. Community leaders have validated the need for us! <input type="checkbox"/> We understand our charge, our mission. <input type="checkbox"/> Our board has endorsed the scope and scale of our mission: WIA-eligible youth vs. youth investment system (all youth). <input type="checkbox"/> We understand our duties. <input type="checkbox"/> We understand the authority we have, especially related to use of funds, negotiations with partners, and policy decisions.
FORMATIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We have criteria for identifying members and a process for recruiting them. <input type="checkbox"/> We know how to orient members to WIA requirements and our mission as an Advisory Group. <input type="checkbox"/> We share a vision for our youth investment system, as well as our Advisory Group's role in nurturing that system. <input type="checkbox"/> Each member of our Advisory Group understands his or her role and how to effectively fulfill that role. <input type="checkbox"/> We understand the youth service providers in our community and the programmatic assets and gaps they represent. <input type="checkbox"/> We understand critical community/partner linkages we need to nurture at this stage. <input type="checkbox"/> We have explicit procedures for managing ourselves and for making decisions. <input type="checkbox"/> We know what information we need in order to make decisions effectively and how to get it.
OPERATIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We have clear objectives and methods for tracking and publicizing progress. <input type="checkbox"/> We collect and review feedback regularly from critical constituencies and use it to revise procedures, policies, and support. <input type="checkbox"/> We can identify needs and develop the capacity of provider organizations and/or staff. <input type="checkbox"/> We have established linkages with critical partners at multiple levels within partner organizations. <input type="checkbox"/> We evaluate our own performance and address our own professional and leadership development needs.
COORDINATING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We know what role we play in a broader youth investment system and our relationship to other youth networks. <input type="checkbox"/> We actively promote and facilitate coordinated planning, training, and service and tool development among providers. <input type="checkbox"/> We have an effective cross-program/agency youth outreach and referral system. <input type="checkbox"/> We share information about youth, resources, and opportunities across programs.
COLLABORATIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We work collaboratively with community leaders to identify long-term strategies for sustaining our youth services system. <input type="checkbox"/> We leverage additional resources and blend resource streams to support our youth investment system. <input type="checkbox"/> People at each level of the organizations involved in our youth system work with each other, across organizational lines, to achieve major system goals.

WIA Workforce Board / Optional Youth Council Duties

- ☑ Write youth components of the Local Workforce Plan
- ☑ Ensure 10 youth program elements are made available to all youth participants
- ☑ Define two eligibility “barriers” – one for basic eligibility and one for the 5% non-income eligible exception
- ☑ Articulate youth provider selection process
- ☑ Make available list of eligible providers, program descriptions, performance and cost information
- ☑ Report progress on youth performance indicators
- ☑ Include parents, youth, and former participants in program design and implementation
- ☑ Build linkages to educational agencies and other youth organizations

Workforce Investment Act of 1998

Activity Two: Member Muscle

Goal

- Explore the membership of your Advisory Group and how you can make the most of the skill and will in your group.

Materials

- Member Recruitment Worksheet
- Membership Compass
- Member Recruitment Examples
- Member Expertise Checklist

Time

- 30-45 minutes

Instructions for New Advisory Groups

1. Identify a small group of people to help identify prospective members.
2. Together, brainstorm a list of all the youth serving organizations and programs in your community.
3. Now, using the Membership Compass as a guide, create a list of potential members. If you know the exact person, list him or her. If not, list the organization and the type of person you want (title, skills, experience, etc.).
4. Next, list information you think your prospective members would want or need. What are their interests? What issues do they care about?
5. Identify how you will engage prospective members: who will contact them, how, and when.
6. As you engage new members, ask them to look over the Member Expertise Checklist. Beyond their position and organizational affiliation, what specific skills and knowledge do they bring to your effort?

Instructions for Existing Advisory Groups

1. Give Advisory Group members the Member Expertise Checklist. Working individually, check off areas where you have valuable skills and knowledge.
2. As a group, report back and compare responses. Ask one member to make a “tick mark” on a master list each time an Advisory Group member reports skills in that area. Look over your list. Where is your Advisory Group strong? Where could you use help or training support?

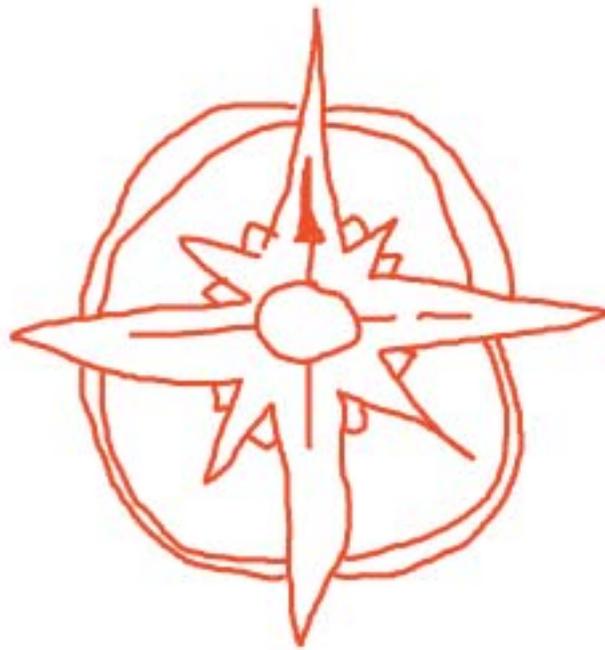
Tip: Remember that Advisory Group members also have reach into their organizations – where you’ll find even more expertise, authority, influence, and interest (for task or working groups, etc.). You may recruit new members only once a year but you’ll always be trying to involve people in your effort. Use these same strategies!

Member Recruitment - Worksheet

Category	Organization Name(s)	Potential Member Names and Contact Information	Recruitment Strategies (Method, Who Responsible)	Notes/Status
Employers				
Local School District(s)				
Youth-Serving Community Organizations				
Youth or Former Program Participants				
Out-of-School Youth Providers				
Juvenile Justice				
Housing				
Other				

Membership Compass

interests



expertise

authority

influence

Member Recruitment - Examples

Potential Member	Interests	Authority	Influence	Expertise
<p>School District Asst. Superintendent</p> <p>Stakeholder Group: Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New requirements and pressures of No Child Left Behind (Reauthorization of the Elementary/Secondary Education Act) • New TAKS test and scores • Funding and/or services for high-risk students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget proposals/spending authorization • Staffing/hiring • Program endorsement/design • District's professional development strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District and building level administration • School committee • Youth and their parents/families • District website, local press • Area colleges and universities • Local educational association • Education-business partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and budgeting • Public relations • Special education requirements, including IEP's (individual education plans) • Student safety and privacy • Transportation issues/liability
<p>Labor Union/ Apprenticeship Program Representative</p> <p>Stakeholder Group: Labor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High wage/high skill jobs • Provider opportunities related to apprenticeships • Grievance procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote on union executive Advisory Group • Youth apprenticeship program oversight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Union apprenticeship program staff • Regional and local union leaders • Employees • Union membership • Employers • Industry associations • Parents/ families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing and advocacy • Employee-management relations • Workplace safety • Workplace skill assessment, training, supervision models
<p>VP, Community Relations/ Large Employer</p> <p>Stakeholder Group: Business/Employer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company public/ community image • Relationships with educational and community-based organizations • Her 17-yr. old daughter and friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PR budget; periodic grant funding • Community relations strategy & campaigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company management team and CEO • Company website • Employees and supervisors • Company partners • Suppliers • Customers • Parents/families • Business groups and professional associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public relations and marketing • Community outreach • Relationship management • Partnership development • Event coordination
<p>Former Participant (now employed at local hospital)</p> <p>Stakeholder Group: Clients/Youth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking • Professional advancement • Help younger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer leadership • Input on departmental decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-workers, supervisor and other hospital staff • Younger youth • Peers • Family • Program staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program experience • Peer-to-peer communication/PR • Computer - multimedia
<p>Owner, Small Business</p> <p>Stakeholder Group: Business/Employer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring (summer, part-time, and full-time positions) • Expansion of customer base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget • Hiring / HR practices • Schedule • Company giving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees • Customers • Suppliers • Local Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, or other business groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting; financial management • Hiring practices • Customer service • Quality control
<p>Owner, Small Business</p> <p>Stakeholder Group: Business/Employer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional mentors and youth participants • Resources / funding • Connection to other youth organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing • Program / service priorities and development • Mentor recruitment • Resource and partner development • Monthly newsletter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentors, employees, professionals • Area schools • Youth and their parents/ families • Other community-based organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor recruitment, screening, and orientation • Youth outreach / recruitment • Parental involvement • Marketing and community awareness • Grant-writing / resource development

Member Expertise Checklist

Where are your skills? Where are you strong as an Advisory Group? Where might you need support?

	Potential Member Has	Total # Members That Have
Youth and Workforce Issues		
Knowledge of comprehensive youth development approaches		
Knowledge of labor market statistics and data sources		
Knowledge of regional and local educational outcomes – dropout rates, test scores, college and work-bound rates, etc.		
Community and Regional Resources		
Knowledge of youth organizations and networks		
Knowledge of support services: child care, transportation, health		
Knowledge of business, employer, industry group networks		
Database creation and management		
Skills Related to WIA Youth Program Elements		
Knowledge of youth workplace issues and policies		
Knowledge of youth educational requirements – secondary, alternative, and GED		
Youth outreach and involvement		
Program evaluation		
Strategic Planning and Management		
Planning meeting facilitation skills		
Group and task management skills		
Performance evaluation		
Partnership Development		
Negotiation		
Collaborative management		
Marketing and Public Relations		
Positioning and messaging methods		
Marketing channels and PR opportunities		
Performance Management / Accountability		
Contract management		
Quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis		
Customer service		
Other?		

Activity Three: Function Fundamentals – Advisory Group Organization

Goal

- Explore the functions your Advisory Group should address in order to operate effectively and achieve your goals
- Identify areas where your Advisory Group is strong and areas that need attention

Materials

- Infrastructure That Works Handout
- Functions Review Worksheet

Time

- 45-60 minutes

Instructions

Use this activity and the Infrastructure That Works tool to help you organize in little ways and big. Take any aspect of your work and refract it against the three functional areas. For example:

- The overall organization of your Advisory Group and youth effort.
- A particular goal you have, i.e., making your Youth Advisory Group a critical “go to” table for community youth development planning.
- A strategy or initiative you want to start, i.e., setting up an after-school tutoring effort.

1. With your group, identify a particular goal, activity, or element of your work. Where do you need organizational muscle?

2. Now, individually, review the list of functions on the Infrastructure That Works handout – and think about the critical leadership, planning and implementation functions needed for the work you identified. As you review :

- Check ✓ items you believe your group covers effectively
- Star ★ items you believe need attention

3. Discuss your impressions with your group. Use the Functions Review worksheet to take notes.

- Which functions do you, as a group, feel are covered? Not covered?
- How would you more effectively address functions that need attention? Does anyone else need to be involved? Who?
- Does your Advisory Group’s organizational structure help people organize in a way that makes sense given the functions you need to cover? Organizationally what is working? What needs adjustment?

4. Create a list of high-priority changes and adjustments and devise a plan to address them!

Functions Review - Worksheet

	Leadership	Planning	Implementation
Functions we cover			
Functions that need attention			
Who we should engage to address functional gaps			

Infrastructure That Works

leadership functions

- ENSURE CREATION OF VISION
- MARKET VISION
- RECRUIT CRITICAL PARTNERS
- ASSIGN STAFF
- ENSURE RESOURCES AVAILABLE
- DETERMINE OPERATING STRUCTURE
- APPROVE IMPLEMENTATION PLANS OR PROPOSE IMPROVEMENT
- CLEAR BLOCKS / BARRIERS
- ENSURE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGES
- ENSURE EXPANSION

planning functions

- CREATE IMPLEMENTATION PLANS OR REVISE BASED ON PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS
- SECURE NEEDED RESOURCES
- BECOME CHAIRS OF IMPLEMENTATION TEAMS
- RECRUIT IMPLEMENTERS
- ORIENT AND SUPERVISE IMPLEMENTATION WORK
- TARGET AND SOLVE PROBLEMS / BARRIERS
- REPORT TO LEADERS
- ADVOCATE FOR POLICY CHANGES
- ENDORSE EXPANSION

implementation functions

- FORM IMPLEMENTATION TEAMS
- DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES
- PROPOSE IMPROVEMENTS BASED ON EVALUATION RESULTS
- IDENTIFY RESOURCE NEEDS
- RECRUIT MORE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEMBERS
- IDENTIFY PROBLEMS / BARRIERS
- IDENTIFY NEEDED POLICY CHANGES
- DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Activity Four: Charter It

Goal

- Develop a common understanding of what your Advisory Group wants to achieve.
- Agree on operating ground rules and responsibilities – and commit them to writing.

Materials

- Youth Advisory Group Charter Template
- Flip chart paper, markers, masking tape

Time

- 45-60 minutes+

Instructions

Use the Youth Advisory Group Charter Template to create your first charter or as a tool to revisit your group's mission. You can work as a group or ask specific members or pairs to discuss and draft sections. Either way, encourage members to focus on the main points of what they want to say, not the perfect words!

Have members report back on their section, with one member recording ideas on flip chart paper. Discuss and adjust as needed. Give your raw charter material to 1 or 2 members to write up. Review the draft at your next meeting and ask each member to sign it when ready.

Youth Advisory Group Charter Template

1. Vision/Purpose: What is the intended outcome, product, or impact of the Advisory Group?
2. Mission/Role/Functions: What will our Advisory Group do in order to achieve its intended outcome?
3. Customers: Who are the intended beneficiaries of our Advisory Group's work? Whom do we want to impact (serve, help, change)?
4. Members: Who should serve on the Advisory Group? What types of members do we want? Are there others we should add in order to achieve our purpose?
5. Linkages and Relationships: With whom should we work in order to achieve our purpose? What types of collaborative relationships do we need to form?
6. Communication: How often should our Advisory Group meet? For how long? What are attendance expectations? How will members communicate between meetings?

Youth Advisory Group Charter, Continued

7. Success indicators: How will we know the Advisory Group is achieving its desired outcome(s)? What will we examine to determine the success of the Advisory Group?

8. Accountability: How should Advisory Group members be held accountable? What can you do to ensure the Advisory Group stays on track and achieves its purpose?

9. Are there any other agreements we want to make about the Advisory Group and its work, for example, planning, scheduling, staffing, or anything else?

10. What are the next steps for the Advisory Group? What are the action items growing out of this charter discussion? Who will be responsible for doing what? When and how will we follow up on agreements made in the charter?

Activity Five: Top Five Priorities

Goal

- Help a group, even a large one, come to consensus on the top issues or priorities it should tackle

Materials

- Flip chart, markers, masking tape

Other Helpful Tools

- More Planning Activities That Work

Time

- 30 minutes

Instructions

1. Working alone, write down the top five strategic priorities that, in your view, would, if addressed, make the biggest difference in your Advisory Group or Youth Advisory Group's effectiveness.
2. Working in small discussion groups (5-8 people each), come to consensus on the five priorities that everyone agrees are important to the organization's effectiveness. Each small group should put its top five priorities on a flip chart.
3. Working in the whole group, everyone looks across the priorities listed on the small group flip charts and identifies common priorities. If a priority is mentioned in every group, then, by definition, it is a priority that everyone in the whole group considers important.

My Priority Notes...

My Top Priorities	My Group's Top Priorities	Our Advisory Group Priorities
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.

More Planning Activities That Work

Your Vision in Technicolor

Start a group vision or mission statement exercise without words. Rather than write the statement, draw a picture of the vision on a flipchart. When you are happy with the picture, have one member write 1 or 2 sentences that describe it.

Planning By Post-It®

Trying to articulate goals or priorities? Need to get a lot of ideas out and distill them to major themes and issues? Try this: Have group members write their ideas down, one per Post-It®. Ask each person to stick his or her Post-Its® on the wall. Next, as a group, arrange “like” notes together, sticking one on top of the other. Add a new note on top that summarizes the theme or issues of each pile. These represent priorities or goals the group cares about. Place straggler notes (ones that don’t seem to fit anywhere) off slightly to one side. Discuss the stragglers. If they now fit in one of the piles, put them there. If they are important – an issue or goal in and of their own right – place them alongside the other groups. If they aren’t as important, but you don’t want to forget them, record them as “maybe later” items.

Mind Mapping and Melding

Great for a group that needs to prioritize issues related to a particular need or goal, then dig into strategies for addressing them. Tape 6-8 pieces of flip chart paper together, on the wall. This will serve as your “map” area. Draw a 12” circle in the middle of the blank map. In the center of the circle, write the name of the theme or issue members will discuss, for example: “better youth services” or “interagency collaboration.”

Ask members to think silently for 3-5 minutes and jot down the major challenges or issues that come to mind. Next, ask people to go up to the map, one at a time, and draw a “branch” off the circle for each of their challenges. If the challenge relates to (is a subtopic of) an existing branch, the person should draw a sub-branch off that existing branch. The final map will likely have 5-8 main branches and a number of sub-branches. To help your group prioritize issues, give each member ten small, colored dot or star stickers (colored markers will also work). Ask members to use their stickers to mark the issues they want the group to focus on. A person can put all ten of their stickers on one branch or sub-branch or spread votes. Use the results of the map – the top challenges raised – to frame planning. Pairs or small teams can work on strategies for a particular challenge.

If You Plan It, Can They Build It?

Use as a fun warm-up activity for teams of 3 or 4. Give each team a bag of 8-10 small objects of different sizes and shapes (larger Legos®, Knex®, or other connecting toys work well). Ideally, give each team the exact same collection of objects. Team members are not allowed to touch the bag. At the same time, one member of each team can open the bag and empty the contents on the table. Without touching any of the objects, team members have 8 minutes to think of something they could construct with the objects and write (not draw) a plan for how to do it. When time is up, they should leave their plan and objects on the table and rotate as a group to the next table. Once at the new table (at your “go”), they have 5 minutes to build the contraption, per the plan.

Activity Six: My Life as an Advisory Group Member

Goal

- Explore your daily routines, interactions, and connections to see where and how you might integrate actions that help you fulfill your role as a Advisory Group member.

Materials

- My Life as an Advisory Group Member Calendar
- Advisory Group Member Role or Job Description (if members have)

Other Helpful Tools

- Practically Speaking, 15 Things Advisory Group Members Can Do to Fulfill Their Role

Time

- 30-45 minutes

Instructions

1. Think about your weekly or monthly activities for the month ahead. What else do you do? What other groups or activities are you involved in? What are your “spheres of influence”? Brainstorm a list.
2. How might you integrate your Youth Advisory Group goals and the critical functions you need to fulfill into those moments?
3. Use the My Life as an Advisory Group Member Calendar to show ways you can integrate your Advisory Group role and WIA youth goals into other areas of your life, activities, and work.
4. If you have an Advisory Group Member Role Description, review it. As it stands, it is probably generic –all Advisory Group members have the same description, except perhaps officers. Make a list at the bottom of your description that relates specifically to things YOU can do to fulfill your role. Use the examples from your calendar.

If you don't have a Role Description yet, take 15-20 minutes to create one for yourself. In it, outline:

- Your Basic Role
 - Major Responsibilities
 - Particular Expertise You Bring to the Role
 - Specific Actions You Can Take to Fulfill the Role
 - Title – feel free to have fun with this one!
5. Be prepared to report on your role and supporting actions to the group.

My Life as an Advisory Group Member - Calendar

MONTH:						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Practically Speaking!

15 Things Advisory Group Members Can Do to Fulfill Their Role

1. Perfect the “5-minute pitch.” Learn how to explain the Advisory Group’s mission, major goals, benefits, and opportunities in five minutes or less.
2. Serve as a mentor. Employ WIA-eligible youth.
3. Identify other staff members in your organization who need to support the Advisory Group’s goals, and equip them with the information and action recommendations they need to do so.
4. Grab coffee with a new Advisory Group member or provider representative each month.
5. Post youth system news and opportunities in a company newsletter or calendar.
6. Call or visit a Board or Advisory Group member from a neighboring Advisory Group to compare notes, lessons, successful programs, etc.
7. Provide email addresses and/or contact information for other people in your organization or network who would be interested in or need to receive information and news about your WIA youth services effort.
8. Get on other agendas throughout the community. Present your Advisory Group and WIA youth vision elsewhere in the community: staff brownbag luncheons, meetings, and sessions.
9. Ask your organization to provide a scholarship, matching funds, or information about grants and resource development opportunities.
10. Identify a provider organization or staff member for special recognition – personally call to thank someone for his or her work on behalf of WIA youth services.
11. “Adopt a program” – pick a program, service or activity you particularly like and want to see succeed. Attend events, invite others to participate, and talk it up.
12. Take a key committee or task group person to lunch to get an update.
13. Keep an eye and ear out for ‘stories’ that would make for good press – interviews, photographs, letters to the editor, announcements, etc.
14. Follow up with staff, an Advisory Group task group, or a provider, etc., to get feedback on the impact of a decision made or to check on progress on a particular target.
15. Interview one provider staff member and/or youth participant each month.

Activity Seven: Looking in the Mirror – Advisory Group Self-Assessment

Goal

- Identify how you will evaluate your own performance as an Advisory Group and as individual members
- Discuss ways you can hold yourselves accountable to each other

Materials

- Youth Advisory Group Self-Assessment Tool
- Flip chart, markers, and masking tape

Time

- 45 minutes

Instructions

1. Take 10 minutes to work independently on the Youth Advisory Group Self-Assessment Tool.
2. Next, in small breakout groups of 2-3 people compare notes. Did you hold similar views of your Advisory Group's practices? What are your strengths? Gaps?
3. Now, put the Self-Assessment Tool away. Tools like that suggest such perfection! Time to get practical. With your group, identify 5-8 "measures" you could use to evaluate your own performance (20 minutes). Think about:
 - The work you expect of others and how you as leaders can support that work
 - The way you relate to important organizations and/or constituencies
 - Expectations you have about the way you operate or duties members should perform
4. Ask a member of your breakout group to report your list to the full Advisory Group. One member should record group ideas on a flip chart.
5. Discuss the list! See if your group can reach consensus on a few measures or indicators it can use to evaluate its own performance. Look for:
 - Things that can be counted!
 - Things that show short-term, as well as long-term progress
6. Finally, individually, jot down ideas for how you hold yourselves accountable. What happens if your group doesn't hit its targets? What happens if it does? What happens if individual members don't fulfill their roles or assignments? What happens if they do? HAVE FUN HERE! You may not have many formal lines or methods of accountability. You'll need to be creative! What are some interesting, wacky, even silly incentives and disincentives you could use to spur yourselves on?
7. Report on and discuss your accountability ideas as a group. Identify several methods you would like to try.

Youth Advisory Group Self-Assessment Tool	Not Assessed	Definite Goal	In Progress	Regular Practice
<p>Organized to Mobilize</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each Board member understands WIA's 10 youth program elements and our Board's youth duties. • Our Board has the membership and input we need to make effective decisions about WIA's youth services system. • If we have a Youth Advisory Group, our Board has formally charged the group and clearly outlined its duties, responsibilities, and decision-making authority. • A vision for our youth system is clearly articulated and shared by both our Board and Advisory Group. • If we have a Youth Advisory Group, our Board has identified membership requirements. • Our Advisory Group is organized to fulfill important leadership and planning functions related to youth services (setting policy, planning, coordination of services, oversight and evaluation, resources, linkages, etc.) • Each Advisory Group member has a role description that outlines his or her duties and responsibilities tied to specific youth system development goals. • We have a regular forum where we plan, monitor, and assess youth services. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Active and Energized Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have engaged critical youth stakeholders and with them have endorsed a vision for a regional youth services system. • We have identified ways we can actively promote WIA's youth system vision to potential providers, current contractors, partners, and participants. • Each Advisory Group member can state our "short list" of current targets and priorities. • Each Advisory Group member has identified specific and regular actions he or she can take to promote a youth system approach within his/her institution and networks. • We regularly publicize participant, program, organization, and/or partner successes. • As Advisory Group members, we refer the Advisory Group or a provider(s) to additional funds for which they may qualify. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
<p>System and Services Savvy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a process for evaluating strengths, weaknesses or gaps in our provider/ services system and articulating short and longer-term improvement priorities. Our procurement process reflects our vision and services strategy. • Our Advisory Group has a clear and public process for recruiting, evaluating, and approving potential service providers. Youth organizations and communities are aware of service system development. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Youth Advisory Group Self-Assessment Tool	Not Assessed	Definite Goal	In Progress	Regular Practice
<p><i>System and Services Savvy (continued)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a Memorandum of Understanding with each service provider that outlines responsibilities, performance goals, expenditure and other requirements. • We actively encourage referral between and among providers for both WIA-eligible and non-eligible youth. • We maintain an up-to-date list or database of regional youth programs, services, and resources and make this information available to WIA-eligible and other youth service providers. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<p><i>Quality Driven</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Advisory Group has methods for measuring, monitoring, and reporting youth performance indicators. Providers understand these methods. • We have methods for measuring, monitoring, and reporting customer service indicators (youth, families, employers). • We have clearly articulated methods for assessing provider performance/service quality that includes direct feedback from program participants. • We discuss performance data at the provider, Advisory Group, and Board levels. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
<p><i>Relationship Smart</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We broker relationships with other critical partners, including employers and organizations that can refer youth participants, and do so to the benefit of all programs and providers. • We have specific goals and strategies for involving parent and youth in program design and implementation. • We invite former program participants to volunteer for and/or support youth activities. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			

Activity Eight: Ready for Feedback

Goal

- Create a list of “ready to go” questions Advisory Group members can use to get feedback from customers and front line staff.

Materials

- Ready for Feedback Worksheet
- Flip chart, markers, masking tape

Time

- 45 minutes

Instructions

Imagine you just met a young person or a mentor participating in a program supported by your Advisory Group. It's a quick encounter. You really only have about 5-10 minutes to chat. What questions would you ask? What feedback would you want?

1. In small breakout groups, identify FIVE questions for each main customer or front line staff group. Each breakout group can work on a particular constituency or identify questions for all. You might also want to identify a specific type of person; for example, mentor, younger youth, case manager, etc. Have one member of your group record your questions.

Remember: Interests matter! Do your questions uncover information you need about a constituency or person's interests and whether you are meeting them. If not, toss one question and add an interest question!

2. Report your questions to the larger group. Have an Advisory Group member record all questions on flip chart paper, by constituency.
3. Review the list and circle the questions Advisory Group members like and think would be most effective.

Ready For Feedback - Worksheet

Group	Advisory Group Feedback Questions
Youth (Younger youth, older youth, in-school youth, out-of-school youth)	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Families	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Front Line Youth Service Staff (Case managers, instructors, mentors, job supervisors, etc.)	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Provider Leadership (Community organization director, employer, etc.)	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Other	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

MARIN EMPLOYMENT CONNECTION, CALIFORNIA, strongly believes that youth need to play a big role in creating workforce development solutions that will work for them. The Youth Council created a subcommittee made up of seven high school students, who receive community service credit and a stipend for their work with the Council. Council members serve as mentors. And young people don't sit in on meetings and advise. They're incredibly active with resource mapping, marketing and outreach to area schools and families, and as peer counselors who work with younger youth on leadership skills. Young people also created the Council's youth services web site, an online map of community youth resources. The latest idea? List youth services in a special section of the phone book.

When LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE YOUTH COUNCIL, CALIFORNIA wanted to do a needs assessment of area youth services, it went straight to youth. The Council sent nearly 1300 youth a Youth Survey about the support they had and/or wanted to see more of. 78% of youth, ages 13-17, wanted more community service and out-of-school sports programs. 70% thought the area needed a teen center. The Council incorporated feedback and recommendations in its Youth Master Plan.

At its summer Youth Issues Forum, the YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP OF WORKSOURCE, AUSTIN, TEXAS, decided it needed a "continuum framework" that provides an all-encompassing view of youth services from early childhood through young adult – and that cuts across education, health, work preparation, civic participation and community leadership. They recently approved a framework modified from the Forum for Youth Investments' Dashboards for Youth, which they will use to map services, survey youth, conduct focus groups, and open connections to new partners and providers (like an area early childhood collaborative).

Early in its efforts, the PHILADELPHIA YOUTH COUNCIL, PENNSYLVANIA adopted a set of 13 priority standards for WIA-funded youth programs. Come to find out, other standards were in the works in agencies across town. So, the Council's Standards subcommittee worked with other programs to align efforts – and the Philadelphia Joint Standards Committee and Core Standards for Philadelphia's Youth Programs were born. But the standards are more than just a piece of paper. With agency partners, the Council rolled out training and tools, including a standards "implementation and observation guide," customer satisfaction surveys for youth and parents, and organizational self-assessments. Youth themselves ("peer administrators") help collect customer feedback via surveys and visits to youth program sites around the city.

In PIMA COUNTY, ARIZONA, the council uses a two-tiered procurement process to organize youth services and case management. They issue an RFP to identify providers who want to provide case management services. They issue another separate call for qualified vendors in specific service categories. Case management providers receive funding to hire youth services specialists who are dedicated to the One-Stop case management team but can be based in provider agencies. The team meets weekly for training, joint or team case management, and peer case review. The benefits? Youth have multiple points of entry and location choices. Intake, assessment, and service planning are centralized and standardized. Case managers know the full breadth of qualified services so they can be more responsive to youth needs and coordinate more effectively across organizations – and no one program needs to offer all WIA service elements.

Youth Advisory Group Development

- Recipes for Success: Youth Advisory Group Guide to Creating a Youth Development System Under WIA (pdf) - Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Johns Hopkins University
<http://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/resources/pdf/recipes-ycouncil.pdf>
- Building Better Workforce Boards: A Guide to Membership, Selection, Recruitment and Development
<http://www.nawb.org/asp/pub.asp>
- Self-Assessment Tool for Workforce Investment Boards - National Association of Workforce Boards
<http://www.nawb.org/asp/pub.asp>
- Setting the Stage for Workforce Board Success
<http://www.nawb.org/asp/pub.asp>
- Youth Advisory Group Network
<http://www.lrginc.org/ycn/>
- Youth Advisory Group Toolkit – Department of Labor
http://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/toolkit_2002.asp
- 7 Elements of a Youth Development Infrastructure
<http://www.aed.org/publications/sevenelements2.pdf>
- California Youth Advisory Group Institute
<http://www.nww.org/yci/tools/>

General Board Development

- Board Basics: A Primer for Community Development Organizations -The Enterprise Foundation
<http://www.enterprisefoundation.org/resources/publications/cdlibrary/cdlldetail.asp?id=5&redir=resources&cat=23>
- BoardSource <http://www.ncnb.org/>
- Lessons Learned: A Planning Toolsite - National Endowment for the Arts <http://www.nea.gov/pub/Lessons/>
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide (pdf) or Fundación W.K. Kellogg Guía de Desarrollo de Modelos Lógicos <http://www.wkkf.org/Programming/ResourceOverview.aspx?CID=281&ID=3669>
- Board Café <http://www.boardcafe.org/>
- Establishing a Nonprofit Organization - Foundation Center <http://fdncenter.org/learn/classroom/establish/index.html>
- Texas Association of Nonprofit Organizations <http://www.tano.org/>

Involving Youth in Your Advisory Group

- Youth On Board <http://www.youthonboard.org/>
- Youth Voices in Youth Advisory Groups (pdf) <http://www.lrginc.org/ycn/pdf/april2001.pdf>
- Youth Grantmakers and Engaging Youth (pdf) <http://www.youthgrantmakers.org/Documents/EngagingYouth.pdf>

Group Planning & Facilitation

- Facilitating With Ease! A Step-By-Step Guidebook with Customizable Worksheets on CD-ROM. Ingrid Bens, Jossey-Bass, January 2000.
- Effective Meeting Facilitation: Sample Forms, Tools, and Checklists – Lessons Learned - National Endowment for the Arts
<http://arts.endow.gov/resources/Lessons/DUNCAN2.HTML>
- Virtual Teams – Free Management Library http://www.managementhelp.org/grp_skill/virtual/virtual.htm

Learning from Others

- Issue Brief: Youth Advisory Groups and Comprehensive Youth Planning: A Report from Eight Communities (pdf) – Jobs for the Future. Free registration required to view / download materials. <http://www.jff.org/jff/kc/library/0126>
- How to Ignite Your WIA Youth Council System Through Large Group Collaboration – Spokane Area Workforce Development Council (pdf) <http://www.wdcspokane.com/About/reports/Guidebook%20Final%20202-25-03.doc.pdf>

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