



Improve YouthBuild Participants' Postsecondary Readiness and Success: Recommended Partnership Activities

YouthBuild programs play an integral role in connecting young people to promising career and postsecondary education (PSE) pathways.

Partnerships with two- and four-year colleges, apprenticeship programs, and technical education programs provide more opportunities for YouthBuild participants to earn postsecondary credits and stackable credentials, explore and prepare for family-sustaining careers, and significantly reduce the amount of time and money spent on postsecondary education once they graduate from YouthBuild.

Successful postsecondary partnerships often start with small, clearly defined activities and then expand to more comprehensive efforts.

This tool provides an overview of PSE partnership activities that support a YouthBuild program's:

- **Academic preparation**
- **Creation of promising career tracks**
- **Engagement of participants in postsecondary/career preparation and planning**
- **Creation of data systems to track participant progress**

These activities are organized by “lower touch” initiatives that can be done by programs in the early and intermediate stages of partnership development and more resource-intensive initiatives that are typically implemented in the advanced stages of partnership development.

Check out participant examples and key definitions on page 4.



Three Stages of Partnership Development: Definitions

■ **EARLY: Activities done by programs and PSE institutions in the beginning stages of partnerships.** These activities require little to no resources (e.g., many are already offered by the PSE institutions) and do not require large amounts of implementation time, funding, staffing, or planning.

■ **INTERMEDIATE: Activities done by programs and PSE institutions that have established a track record of partnership work.** This work typically involves more planning and resources. Activities might be specifically designed toward YouthBuild participant needs but may already be offered by the PSE institution with some minor modifications. These efforts may be outlined in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or articulation agreement.

■ **ADVANCED: Activities done by programs and PSE institutions with an established history of successful partnership work.** Partnership activities are multifaceted and robust (e.g., a pathway of courses offered to YouthBuild participants that lead toward career certification). These activities are typically codified with formalized agreements and require high levels of implementation time, funding, staffing, and planning.

Are you in the early stages of developing PSE partnerships and not sure where to start?

Many community colleges offer “college success” courses that teach participants study skills and college student success strategies, and engage them in career exploration, while exposing them to available resources at the college.

YouthBuild programs can partner with community colleges to provide participants access to college success courses. This low-cost and effective activity can positively impact participants while also planting the seeds for a more robust PSE partnership.

Recommended PSE Activities

Stages of Partnership Development

Academic Preparation	
■ Early	Partner with PSE institution(s) to provide participants access to existing college readiness courses.
■ Intermediate	Work with PSE faculty to assess opportunities to add/incorporate PSE readiness into existing YouthBuild academic curricula.
	Invite PSE instructors to evaluate participant work regarding PSE readiness.
	Participants practice COMPASS/Accuplacer placement tests and receive tutoring, software access, and/or instructional support from PSE institution(s).
■ Advanced	Collaborate with PSE staff to create specialized bridge programming, which can be offered at YouthBuild program or at PSE institution(s).
	Work with PSE faculty to align the YouthBuild curriculum with postsecondary expectations.
	Offer participants access to accelerated developmental education opportunities.
	Work with PSE partner(s) to identify mentors/tutors for current YouthBuild participants. (Leverage federal/work-study funds to pay mentors.)
	Develop or provide access to career-based contextualized coursework, such as a credit-earning construction-based math course.
Create Promising Career Tracks	
■ Early	Offer short-term certification and/or credit towards one high-demand/high-wage career track.
■ Intermediate	Offer multiple certifications or credits towards one high-demand/high-wage career track.
■ Advanced	Diversify portfolio of dual credit/certification opportunities by offering additional career certification tracks.
	Offer diverse career readiness tracks that are aligned with participant interests and readiness levels.

Recommended PSE Activities

Stages of Partnership Development

Postsecondary/Career Preparation and Planning	
■ Early/ ■ Intermediate	Engage students in existing PSE career planning/financial aid workshops.
■ Intermediate	Work with PSE institution(s) to organize campus tours.
	Work with PSE institution(s) to create an inventory of participant support resources and ensure that participants are familiar/fluent with these resources.
	PSE staff hosts financial aid workshops/parent nights and visits your YouthBuild program to offer FAFSA completion assistance.
■ Advanced	Engage PSE career centers to assist participants with career planning and preparation.
	Assign participants to primary PSE academic/career counselors.
	Engage successful YouthBuild alumni in career mentoring.
Track Participants' Postsecondary Progress	
■ Early	Assess participants' PSE/career interests, challenges, etc.
■ Intermediate	Develop basic PSE tracking infrastructure, which may include participant FAFSA completion rates, PSE enrollment rates, and Compass/Accuplacer scores.
	Identify what resources PSE partner has/uses to leverage participant progress (e.g., software and texting systems, academic coaches, etc.).
■ Advanced	Establish a system for alumni support tracking. This may include first-year participant retention data, attendance, financial aid application completion, and course completion toward degree attainment.
	Establish regular case management meetings with relevant PSE staff to discuss individual and overall participant/alumni progress.

Program Examples

Academic Preparation / Advanced: A YouthBuild program and its college partner convened YouthBuild staff and the college's academic deans and college/developmental-level math instructors for day-long retreats to create a shared vision for college readiness. First, the team identified academic and soft skills that participants needed for postsecondary success. Second, the team reviewed YouthBuild's academic, leadership development, and construction curriculum and provided recommendations on the ways that the curriculum could specifically cultivate these skills.

Create Promising Career Tracks / Early: A YouthBuild charter school and its community college partner collaborated to provide participants access to Spanish 101 and Art Computer Graphics dual credit course work. Engaging participants in these courses provided an important opportunity to expose them to postsecondary coursework while they earned both general education credit towards a postsecondary degree and credit towards their high school diplomas.

Postsecondary Career Prep and Planning / Intermediate: A postsecondary partner assigned a financial aid advisor to visit a YouthBuild program to host a financial aid workshop at a parent/guardian night. During this workshop, the financial aid advisor shared important [FAFSA](#) information with participants and parents/guardians, including important deadlines and the need for parental/guardian involvement (i.e., submitting tax, income, and financial-related documentation options) while also addressing concerns and challenges about the application process.

Track Participants' Postsecondary Progress / Advanced: YouthBuild staff and their community college partner reviewed a combination of quantitative data (i.e., participant postsecondary enrollment rates, average postsecondary GPAs, and course drop rates) and qualitative data (i.e., participant and staff feedback) and decided that the YouthBuild program needed a major redesign to prepare students more effectively and appropriately for postsecondary success. To facilitate this shift in program design, the YouthBuild program appointed a steering committee to oversee the process and ensure that staff members from all departments, not just education, were included. With the steering committee's guidance, the YouthBuild program revised its organizational vision to include a more central focus on postsecondary education and training as they reexamined every existing component of their programming to include more explicit PSE readiness support.

Key Terms

Accuplacer test: A PSE entrance exam used to assess students' readiness to enroll in college-level coursework. Students are typically required to enroll in developmental math, reading, or writing classes if their scores do not meet specific benchmarks.

Bridge programming: A course (or courses) offered after participants complete the YouthBuild program and before they enter the PSE institution. It emphasizes the skills they need to be successful at the PSE institution.

Certification: A credential that shows that a person received appropriate training in a specific field or technology. Examples of certifications are the Professional Human Resource (PHR) certification and Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (HVAC) certification.

Credential: A general term describing a professional or academic qualification that is typically earned via coursework and/or occupational training.

COMPASS test: A PSE entrance exam used to assess students' readiness to enroll in college -level course work. Students typically enroll in developmental math, reading, or writing classes if their scores do not meet specific benchmarks.

Degree: An official credential that is earned when someone successfully completes specific coursework requirements within a subject area. For example, (i.e., a bachelor's degree or an associate degree).

Developmental education courses: Also known as developmental education, these are non-credit, pre-college courses designated to help students learn the math, reading, and/or writing skills they need to be successful in credit-bearing, college-level coursework.

Dual credit/dual enrollment: These courses allow students to earn PSE credits while enrolled in high school/ YouthBuild program charter schools.

FAFSA: The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the online form used to obtain financial aid (grants and loans) from the federal government to help pay for PSE.

Postsecondary education (PSE): Any training or education that occurs after high school credential completion. This may include training in technical education programs, apprenticeship programs, community colleges, or four-year colleges and universities.

Work-study program: Federal work-study provides part-time jobs for college students with financial need, allowing them to earn money to help pay for education expenses.