



STRATEGIC PLAN 2013 to 2016

Youth Job Center Vision

YJC will be a leader in job readiness, placement and career pathways planning for youth. We establish the industry standard for effective outcomes with youth, valued partnerships with employers and strategic partners, and organizational effectiveness in workforce development. YJC's clients will be successful at finding and keeping jobs, its employer partners see YJC as their service provider of choice, and other agencies seek advice on how to replicate YJC's success.

Youth Job Center Mission

We prepare youth ages 14 – 25 for success in the workplace. We provide job readiness, placement and employment support in partnership with employers.

Youth Job Center Core Values

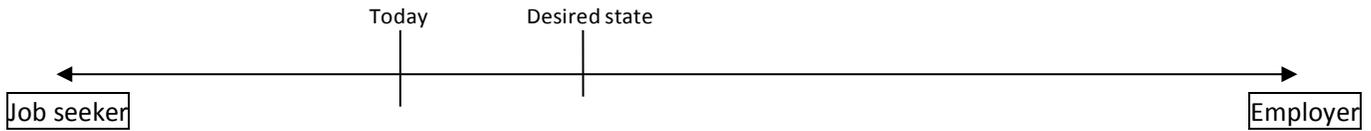
- Work has the power to shape futures and change lives
- Youth can be responsible, contributing members of their community
- Youth gain valuable experience and knowledge in the employment process
- Youth overcome barriers to employment when the playing field is leveled through skill---building, education, partnership and increased opportunity
- Youth need help in finding a job and starting a career
- Employers need a trusted source of job---ready workers

How Does This Strategic Plan Differ From Previous Plans?

1. Increased focus on employers for resource planning, partnerships and board development. e.g., business advisory council.
2. Intentional focus on 2 distinct youth segments: 14 to 17 yr. olds and 18 to 25 yr. olds
3. Success is measured by a balanced mix of quantitative and qualitative factors and includes employer partner criteria.
4. Driven by industry sector demand and increased employer focus, YJC will outreach beyond the agency's current geographic service area. This will increase the number of employers, and thereby also increase the pool of potential donors, board members, educational institutions and other partners.

YOUTH JOB CENTER GUIDING PRINCIPLES (2013---2016)

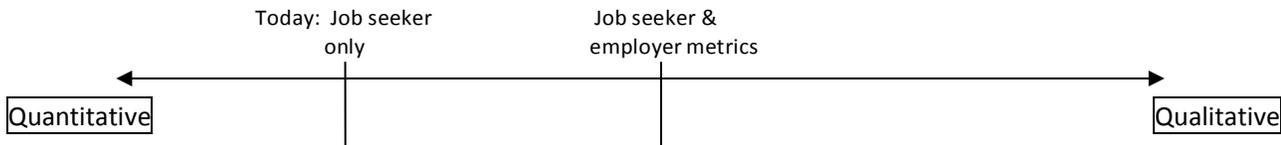
1. Success for job seekers comes when YJC has excellent professional relationships with employers, and employers are given a voice so that YJC knows their needs. YJC believes that our mission serves two (2) clients – youth job seekers and employers, and this plan increases our engagement and resources with employers.



- Youth job seeker profile includes ages 14---25:
 - With a focus on helping Youth find and move upward in careers, rather than simply finding jobs, and, yet
 - Recognize YJC’s unique services for 14---17 yr olds
- Employer profile includes businesses that:
 - Offer opportunities in high---growth industries and in---demand occupations,
 - Are seeking qualified, skilled workers,
 - Offer livable wages and benefits, and
 - Are able and willing to collaborate with YJC on multiple levels which includes building career pathways for young workers.

2. We intend to serve youth job seekers and employers as CLIENTS, using the business definition of this term. This means developing a long---term relationship, providing various services and engaging both groups in various ways with ongoing interactions. Metrics will shift to include both traditional quantitative and newly defined qualitative measures (e.g. employer and job seeker satisfaction, quality of placements, etc.) for job seekers and employers. Three models might be:

- Employer engagement
- Career pathways planning for 18---25 yr olds
- Preparing more 14---17 yr. olds, students who are 1st time job seekers



3. We remain committed to current and innovative program models with a strong focus on YJC itself delivering and facilitating:

- On---the---job training and work experience opportunities
- “Soft” skills training such as career readiness and workplace behaviors training that meet current workplace and employers’ needs
- Case management -- closer, longer---term staff relationships with young job seekers over

time. Facilitating and tracking youth job seeker progression along career pathways.

- Creating intentional alliances with other organizations on hard skills training
 - Collaborating with educational, training and job development agencies to create and identify those pathways.
4. We remain committed to building an array of specific “deep” and “wide” partnerships with local government, non---profits and other entities that serve Youth job seekers. We define “wide” as many partnerships and “deep” as close and more intensive relationships, with multiple lines of communication and a strong model of coordinated, cooperative case management.
5. We are committed to providing our Youth job seekers with the following, each of which mirrors the demands of our Business Clients. YJC will directly provide some and partner for others. The intent is to get the right mix of readiness elements for the different youth age segments.
- Personal readiness:
 - Preparing each youth in various areas – mental, interpersonal, home situation, attitudes; providing supports directly and through referrals; addressing barriers to employment Youth face, including basic academic skills, criminal record, mental health, substance abuse, and housing.
 - Providing each employer client with workers who are ready to work and who have worked to resolve/address life issues that get in the way of excellent job performance.
 - Skills readiness:
 - Providing youth clients with specific skills preparation, both the “soft” skills of good workplace behaviors, professionalism, efficiency, and the “hard” skills of specific, industry---recognized training and credentials.
 - Understand where the “skill gaps” exist, especially in industries located in those communities we serve.
 - “Presentation/Job Search” readiness:
 - Youth clients will receive solid job search skills, resume preparation, interview skills, self---presentation, self---awareness, and the ability to present themselves appropriately to employers.
 - Career readiness:
 - Our Youth clients will have a clear understanding of their own career goals, become aware of the need to have a vision for his or her life, their aspirations, and long---term goals for work and education.
 - Our Youth clients will attain appropriate national certifications
 - Our Business clients will benefit from our deep understanding of their needs, our ability to understand the kinds of workers they require, and our ability to deliver those workers to them in a responsive manner.
 - Retention and Post Placement:
 - Supporting business clients in staff retention as well as check---in post placement support for youth clients.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Overarching Theme for the Strategic Plan

Balance and growth are priorities for YJC, and stand as central themes for this plan. YJC has proven itself through decades of service to youth in Evanston and beyond, and continues to provide high quality service to businesses in those communities. However, the needs of youth and employers have only increased. US employers have a shortage of the number of workers in particular industries and a shortage of the “right skills”. The supply of under- or un-employed youth is at its highest level in recorded history. The Youth Job Center has a strong base from which to grow programmatically and financially to address both employer and youth needs.

During this Plan period we will identify specific, measurable and attainable actions to balance the involvement and services to businesses and youth in order to have a more significant impact in communities. In order to create this balance, certain goals related to employers will expand.

YJC’s Strategic Plan is focused on three “Pillars” which are the main strategic and operational goals, and components we believe are critical for the future of the organization. Each Goal is supported by a number of objectives and actions that the Youth Job Center staff, board and volunteers will pursue in order to reach that Goal.

Summary of Goal Areas

1. Strategically Targeted Services
 2. Expanded Capacity
 3. Using Information and Best Practices to Improve Results
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Goal 1: Strategically Targeted Services

The Services provided by the Youth Job Center will prepare Youth for the challenges of the world of work as it is now, and as it will be in an ever more demanding future. Our work for our business clients will be responsive and focused on the services most needed and most valuable.

Objective 1. Invest in Employer Relationships

- Build deeper relationships individually and with groups of employers.
- Work with employers wherever our job seeker client base can reasonably travel to and from potential worksites.
- Build partnerships to expand the menu of services we offer to our business clients (opportunities for tax credits, WOTC, etc),
- Respond to market needs, utilizing labor market information and intensive data gathering with our employer clients, industry associations, chambers and other partners to provide the prepared workers our business clients require.

Success Criteria: Employers/businesses will see YJC as a partner, providing more value than just a source of candidate referrals.

Objective 2. Expand Industry Sector Focus and Career Pathway Development

- YJC will focus on particular industry sectors and target the preparation we give our Youth clients toward careers in five industry sectors that are the largest in the metro area, including: (over time, these may shift)
 - Manufacturing
 - Information Technology
 - Transportation/Logistics
 - Healthcare
 - Service Industries (Hospitality, Retail, Customer Service occupations)
- Create and maintain a Business Advisory Council of executives, managers and HR managers from employers in each of the targeted industries, to serve as industry drivers to our work.
 - We will engage and empower this group (and others) as a primary voice that helps set our priorities for employers as clients
 - We will engage existing (and add) Board members who are also employers in order to access their industry expertise and employment opportunities.
- Focus our efforts toward linking Youth to a limited, targeted number of specific pathways toward which we will deliver and/or facilitate training.
- Research and identify “hard skills”, training partners and industry stakeholders to assist us in ensuring that the training we provide or facilitate is responsive to the demands of our targeted industries and employers.

Success criteria: YJC will create and recruit members for the Business Advisory Council, in each of the targeted industries. The Business Advisory Council will set success criteria annually, such as create (2) specific partnerships between an educational institution, YJC and employers.

Objective 3: Develop and Enhance Valuable Strategic Partnerships

- Refine YJC’s partnership model by building on the ongoing conversation among the network of various nonprofits in the community, regarding how best to work together.
- Intentionally formalize and systematize relationships with our partner organizations, building relationships at all levels of the respective organizations and, like our client relationships, focus on relational rather than transactional partnerships.
- Identify new partner organizations that can provide particular benefit to our clients and serve as mutually beneficial relationships.
- Work to develop a revenue stream with Oakton Community College in which we serve as their “placement” arm, delivering high quality job matching and placement services for students graduating from the institution.

Success criteria: YJC will build and sustain connections that enable partners to be successful such that they see YJC as instrumental to their success. YJC Program committee to identify

specific success criteria that will include actual metrics for partnerships. (e.g., Oakton, ETHS, automotive partnership)

Objective 4: Deliver customized, responsive services for the 14---17 age group within YJC's wider service model

- Recognize unique needs of this age group, and develop customized services to meet their career and workforce needs.
- YJC will build upon existing in---school partnerships and replicate these with additional institutions.
- YJC will challenge this age group to explore career pathways and utilize YJC industry relationships to give Youth exposure to a variety of career and industry experiences.

Success criteria: We will see growth in the number of younger Youth served through ongoing relationships that will help them meet their immediate need and understand their need for career development goals.

Objective 5: Streamline and focus service offerings:

- We will simplify our offerings so that YJC offers clients and staff pathways that they can seamlessly and routinely navigate for their success
- Recognizing that YJC currently uses “too many names” and silo’ d program offerings, we will work to improve branding and naming of our service offerings under a common heading. This is so that clients, employers and other partners know the YJC name and its overall service delivery more than any single program or funding stream.
- We will strengthen our ability to market and present our core mission across all programs and services.

Success criteria: We will have simplified models for working with our clients (14---17 age group; 18---25 age group; employers) and for partnerships. Donors and grantors understand and increasingly support our work because they better understand how we do what we do. Board members and employees can readily describe these models to others.

Goal 2: Expanded Capacity

YJC recognizes that this balancing strategy requires increased and diversified revenue streams and more effective utilization of all available resources – fiscal, human capital, governance, technology, partnerships, scalability and adaptability. We recognize that our resource development efforts need to expand beyond Evanston, IL. We will work to expand our capacity in all these areas, in priority order, so we can deliver higher quality services to our clients.

Objective 1: Increase and broaden financial sustainability

- Fiscally responsible: Continue to “fund what works” and direct resources to the services and activities that are most effective. We will rigorously evaluate existing activities to strategically maintain and enhance those services that are working, and develop the discipline to abandon those models, services or activities that are not working to provide true value to our clients.
- Develop a revenue stream that is durable, that is always growing and broadening, utilizing new sources and deepening relationships with existing ones. Specifically, this will include:
 - Securing support from a pool of businesses that mirrors our business client base, through sources including in-kind support and fees as well as grants and charitable contributions.
 - Seeking government and foundation grants from sources that match our ideals, goals and objectives.
 - Soliciting individual donors and contributors from a more diverse pool, from throughout the Chicago metropolitan area and at a wider range of levels.
 - Creatively identify the potential for revenue generation/earned income opportunities.
- Ensure that sufficient resources exist to support the models of service that are valuable to our clients.
 - We recognize marketing communication and social media is a major factor in communicating the agency’s results and success to-date to clients, employers and to the broader community. Continued success is largely dependent on our ability to drive and communicate our results effectively.

Success criteria: The board and staff will set goals for balanced support among employers, foundations, government agencies and individual donors; and for new donors in each of these areas. YJC routinely meets its annual revenue goals and spends resources within its approved budget. New programs are funded by new grants and gifts targeted to those purposes. Individual donor base expands to mirror growth in employer partners. Overall (re)define what good financial stewardship means going forward.

Objective 2: Board Development and Engagement

- YJC will utilize our Board more strategically, seeking expertise on all aspects of our work, particularly engaging their insights with respect to helping us better understand the job market and our targeted industries, and utilizing Board members' business and employment networks to develop new business clients.
- YJC will better orchestrate Board meetings and activities to generate more valuable discussion and to tap the wealth of information, insights and guidance our Board can provide. Board meetings will be true dialogues and provide engaging communication, not simply reports and administrative actions. This will include rotating venues.
- Significant work will continue to take place on Board committees so that members and staff increasingly value committee work as much as full Board meetings.
- YJC Board member recruitment will be ongoing, with diligent efforts to attract members who reflect diversity in ethnicity, expertise/talents, geography, employment and interests in youth.

Success criteria: Each Board member brings three new employers into contact with YJC each year. Board and committee meetings routinely include time devoted to discussion of a strategic issue that could benefit from their deliberation. Increasing numbers of Board members come from areas and experiences that are new to the Board.

Objective 3: Talent and Leadership Development

- YJC will recruit, retain and develop a high quality staff able to deliver the level of professionalism and service expected by our Youth and Business clients.
- YJC will engage in an honest evaluation of all staff functions and duties, and the individuals in all positions, and take steps to ensure the best fit between skills, interests, abilities and duties and functions.
- YJC will seek the most qualified staff possible, and will dedicate sufficient funds to attract staff members with particular experience in our targeted industry sectors and with advanced degrees wherever appropriate.
- YJC will develop a comprehensive staff professional development strategy, including elements that have been goals in prior Plans, but also new elements. These will include:
 - Creation of individual staff development plans that include timelines for completing training/professional development activities, obtaining credentials, etc.
 - Implementing 1--2 YJC staff teambuilding exercises or retreats annually
 - Seeking particular credentials for workers within the workforce development arena, such as the Certified Workforce Development Professional credential or other similar credentials.
 - Establish a budget line item to achieve this objective
 - Defining the role of and establishing a Human Resources board committee to help lead and monitor this work.

Success criteria: Board and Executive Director establish the Human Resources committee;

identify committee members and its first year charge. Existing staff policy and procedures are regularly reviewed. YJC has an established succession plan.

Goal 3: Using Information and Best Practices to Improve Results

YJC is recognized in our community as an excellent model of high-quality workforce development services. We strive to be even more successful and to be known more widely across the region and nation for the innovative delivery of demand-driven, career-focused workforce service. With this comes the need to significantly improve our ability to use data in measuring and evaluating the services we say we deliver.

Objective 1: Labor Market Information in Support of Career Pathway Development

- YJC will conduct business-focused market research to identify the needs of businesses in our community and particular worker training requirements in order to develop customized approaches to meet employer needs.
- YJC will use and develop current labor market information in order to target career guidance, training and placement activities. Work will be done in partnership with other workforce agencies. Sources will include:
 - Traditional Federal/State/Local Labor Market Information
 - “Real time” data from analysis of online job postings, industry publications and other sources
 - “Anecdotal” data from all YJC Board members, members of the Business Advisory Council and the businesses that hire our workers, which can serve as a check and closer focus on the traditional sources’ projections.

Objective 2: Measuring Our Impact

- YJC will routinely define and measure impact in ways that are at the forefront of our field. This includes continued partnership with projects like the PPV/CSW-led workforce Benchmarking Project, national return-on-investment studies and similar research.
- YJC will seek partnerships with our region’s major academic institutions and research/policy organizations to undertake rigorous evaluation(s) of our programs. Seeking funding and support for such research will be a high priority of upcoming development activity with the recognition that third-party validation of our impact is critical for further grant-seeking and growth.

Objective 3: Expand YJC’s Role in Best Practices and Thought Leadership

- YJC will become a sought-after expert in the youth workforce development field, and be a source of information, innovation and policy development by media, policy makers and peer service providers.
- YJC will strive to secure funding to launch a research/policy position, with a focus on further

developing our capacity in this area. Within five years, YJC's goal is for this position to pay for itself in increased public and philanthropic grants, funds saved through organizational efficiencies and fees paid for such work by peer organizations.

GOAL 3 Success Criteria: Establish a committee and task it with developing success criteria for youth placement, retention, career advising, as well as developing goals for new or continuing employer partners, the quality and quantity of those partners and the number and type of new strategic partnerships (employers, academic, community groups, government or others not yet known).