Planning a YouthBuild Program

Phase 1: Invite youth and community involvement in the planning process.

Identify who will plan and facilitate meetings.

Often the convener is the person who generated the idea that YouthBuild would be a good fit for their community. Conveners may be self-identified as they are personally motivated to ensure the planning process leads to the full vetting of a YouthBuild program. If an organization or an established group is supporting the process, conveners may be designated based upon their skills (such as community organizing) or title (grant writer, for example).

Identify the target area.

One of the initial questions to be answered is, "*what geographic area are we serving?*" If you are serving an urban, densely populated area, your geographic location may be concentrated over census tracts, block groups, or neighborhoods. If you represent a rural or tribal community, the area you serve may cover numerous counties or many square miles. Some of the key questions you will need to think about as you determine an area to serve include:

1. Are there enough eligible opportunity youth in the area to justify setting up a program?
2. What types of transportation are available for young people to get to and from the program?
3. Will the specified geographic area overlap that of an existing program?

For the purposes of proposal development and future growth, you may also want to define target areas, or areas of emphasis, within a broader community. For example, it is possible for several YouthBuild programs to serve a large city, but to target different sections. In terms of implementing a program, this means that you will always recruit and draw from your target area first, but can also assist youth from outside the target but within larger predefined parameters. Or you may decide to change your target area over time. This decision is often based on who you ultimately serve and any changing demographics within the community.

Seek maximum involvement from key stakeholders, including and particularly young people.

How often have you entered a planning process only to realize that you have inadvertently left out a key stakeholder? The ramifications of forgetting to involve stakeholders in the planning process can be damaging in many arenas, including the political, financial, and programmatic. YouthBuild is a collaborative program that can only be successful if there is participation and investment from the community. Extend the invitation to participate and hear about YouthBuild far and wide. This will be the network that can help you think strategically about planning a YouthBuild program and may ultimately connect you with necessary public officials and opportunities, money, individual donors, eligible youth, and program resources. Young people from the community are critical stakeholders that must be part of the planning process from the beginning.

Facilitate informational community meetings about YouthBuild.

One way to gain investment for your initiative is through facilitated community meetings. These meetings are informational and your first visibility efforts in the community and therefore should be planned carefully in order to gain both the support and resources you need.

Maintain and distribute notes and records of the meetings.

Recording and distributing the minutes of each meeting is vital. The minutes serve as both a convenient reference source in the planning process and documentation of the ideas and strategies that were discussed.

Phase 2: Determine whether YouthBuild is the appropriate strategy for your community.

Broadly examine the needs of young people and the community.

Research what the community and the young people need, for it is hard to make an accurate judgment on personal experience and observation alone. The YouthBuild program application requires some hard data about community needs so it makes sense to start this process early on.

Research sources include:

- *Completed studies on the community.* Public offices such as departments of education, chambers of commerce, local United Way organizations, or departments of planning and community development will have data. Local community foundations and nonprofits often conduct studies as well.
- *Census tract data.* This data offers indicators of the status of youth and the community.
- *A community mapping process.* Where are the youth? Where are the resources that serve them? What are they? Is the local high school dropout figure an accurate and realistic one? These answers will identify needs and will be the clues you need to make decisions about the type of youth and demographics you will serve. It will allow you to identify resource opportunities and gaps and, finally, will answer the most important question, "Can this area support a YouthBuild program?"
- *Newspaper articles or documented personal narratives.*
- *Information from community or neighborhood roundtables.*

Examine the YouthBuild model and individual YouthBuild programs.

While each YouthBuild program is different, they all are committed to engaging young people through the YouthBuild design and program standards. To determine if this is a positive strategy for your community, take a look at the model on the YouthBuild USA Web site, www.youthbuild.org. Also, there is nothing better than a first-hand look at a local YouthBuild program. Across the United States, there are over 200 local YouthBuild programs. You can find a map of YouthBuild program locations on the YouthBuild USA website. Ask questions of the local program staff and young people you meet with to assist you in your own decision-making process.

Compare the YouthBuild model to other possible approaches.

YouthBuild will not be the answer for every community. There may not be enough eligible young people to support a program, or another YouthBuild program may already be operating in your area. There may be existing non-YouthBuild programs that have similar goals such as Job Corps and other Workforce Investment & Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs. Look at all of the existing programs and opportunities to determine if starting a new YouthBuild program is the most effective strategy. The time you take examining other programs will be time well spent, for it is also important to make a concerted effort to explore partnerships with existing community programs if you do decide to start a YouthBuild program.

Review goals for local youth development and community development.

One of the keys to sustaining a YouthBuild program is effectively supporting or complementing

local youth development and community development goals. Every region of the country should be served by a workforce investment board (WIB) through the local department of labor, and each of the WIBs should have a youth council that develops local policy and subcontracts to regional organizations to serve both in-school and out-of-school youth. Another mechanism for involvement is becoming a nonprofit member of the local chamber of commerce. A final important strategy is getting involved in the local community development and planning office. It is important to network within the broader community, interfacing with private and public organizations and keeping abreast of meaningful area strategies. YouthBuild programs must be involved in local community development strategies. Ideas for developing productive partnership include:

- Boarding up condemned or dilapidated buildings
- Cleaning up the neighborhood
- Assisting elderly economically disadvantaged homeowners with home repairs
- Testifying at consolidated plan hearings
- Integrating YouthBuild programs into consolidated plan activities
- Assisting in regional affordable housing activities as a community housing development organization (CHDO).

Determine the appropriateness of YouthBuild to address the existing goals of the community.

Building a relationship with the entities noted above is critical to becoming an indispensable part of the underpinnings of the community. The question is, "What does YouthBuild currently have the capacity to do to contribute to existing community-wide strategies?" Build and negotiate strategies with local agencies and government that will create win-win relationships and increase your capacity and strengthen these relationships over time.

Test for commitment from the group.

Personal time investments is the key to the success of your future program. YouthBuild is based on collaboration. Ask people to actively participate in gathering data, doing research, building relationships, providing initial resources (like meeting locations, food, copy machines, etc.) and even writing parts of the program proposal

Phase 3: Inventory needs and assets

Clearly identify the needs of the local youth and the community that would be addressed by YouthBuild.

Identifying youth and community needs has been mentioned earlier in this document but it is important that the program answers the needs of the youth in your community. One strategy for learning what these needs are is alerting young people in the area (by flyers or word of mouth, for example) as to the plans for the YouthBuild program, and encourage their thoughts and input.

- Invite young people to participate on your planning committee. These young people need not be permanent participants, just representative of youth in the community at large.
- Research the community via recent studies, data, or trends regarding local youth, and find out how concerns are being addressed.

This same thought process is also helpful for understanding community needs. For example, if there is an area of the region with no youth services but many youth, it would make sense to include that area in your YouthBuild planning.

Identifying your target area is a critical piece of decision making. Even if you are willing to accept a young person from anywhere within a region, there should still be a target area that you identify and serve because of the intensity of its need (which may be based on a number of factors, such as poverty, dropout statistics, unemployment, and housing concerns). Once you identify a target area, you must be sure that it can adequately support a YouthBuild program. The rule of thumb is that, through recruitment, you will be able to secure at least three times as many applications as you have actual program slots. Be sure that the area you identify can support this number of recruits and offers the potential for housing development as well.

If you are in an urban area, you may choose to serve the city but your target may be several census tracts, or a sector of the city. If in a rural area, you may cover an expanse of several counties but target one town within the counties. The decision is yours, but it should be based on the following considerations:

- Is there a compelling need for the program?
- Are necessary services, such as transportation to get youth to and from the program, available?
- Are you overlapping the target areas of an existing YouthBuild program?
- Are there nearby opportunities for jobs and placement?

Identify the resources required to organize and implement a youth program.

One of the ways that you engage and retain youth is through a range of concrete services, or services that address immediate needs, such as housing and transportation. For example, if you plan to serve a number of young women with children in the program, you would need to plan to link with some day care and related concrete services for women. Thus, this planning factor involves really thinking about the group of young people you intend to serve and

identifying the concrete and support services that you will need to engage and retain them throughout the program.

Clearly identify local assets available to support the YouthBuild program.

Earlier we identified resources available to support the young people. Now we need to look at the resources available to support the program. For example, the student support component is a critical part of any YouthBuild program. The planning committee needs to determine what areas of support it has the capacity to handle within the program and which areas will need to be resourced and supported from outside the program. If the program determines it can provide case management to the students but cannot address drug issues, then you would need to identify and collaborate with an organization that can provide drug-related services.

Identify gaps in available assets and target sources.

Once you have identified the local resources and assets described above, you need to find any remaining gaps that need to be filled. Sample community asset-mapping aids that can assist your thinking process are available on the Internet and through nonprofit organizations. The chart that follows is an example. You will need to complete the chart with identified resources or note where the gaps in service are. A thorough assessment may be many pages long. Before you embark on this assessment you may want to discover whether any other group in the community has recently completed such a project.

Resource areas	For Youth	For a YouthBuild Program
High School Degree		
Mental Health		
Substance Use		
Childcare		
Transportation		

Conduct a feasibility study on implementing and sustaining a YouthBuild program.

The most devastating scenario for a community is to invest and believe in a program serving them, only to have the program disappear due to lack of funding. Thinking through this up front is a critical piece of the decision-making process. If resources cannot be cultivated or if there is no one skilled enough to cultivate them, then the organization needs to seriously rethink the decision to begin the program. Note that it takes approximately three program cycles for staff and organization to feel that they are totally comfortable operating a YouthBuild program. Only at this point should a YouthBuild consider expansion into other vocational tracts. A vocational tract, in addition to the construction tract, can be a source of ultimate sustainability and would need an initial feasibility study to determine if such tract would feed an in-demand industry. Sustainability can come from many sources, cover a broad range of options, and may be combined in a variety of supports around a YouthBuild program. This same feasibility study should be open to a review of job placement areas, college placements, and ongoing identification of pipeline industries

Phase 4: Identify key organizers and a local champion.

Recruit and organize members for a steering committee or planning coalition.

Organize a small, focused group of individuals to plan and manage program activities. While a large network of support and collaboration is needed, a committee that is too large may be cumbersome when compiling ideas and designing the program. Opt for eight to twelve committee members with a variety of expertise. Possible members include:

- Representatives of each component area of the model. These do not necessarily need to be the people who will ultimately work with the program. Examples of representatives include a local housing developer for the construction component and a school official for the education component.
- Staff of public officials (congressional aides, for example)
- Grant writers
- Young people.

Recruit a local champion.

Champions will always play a key role in your program. Choose a champion that is in a position to rally groups and individuals around your cause, garner positive visibility, cut red tape, secure resources, and negotiate outcomes. At YouthBuild USA, Senator John Kerry has historically been the champion. Your champion should have the ability to help you access resources, build coalitions, and move obstacles.

Survey resources within planning agencies.

You will need resources to plan a YouthBuild program, as well as identify sources of planning funds. Existing sources such as the U.S. Department of Labor do not provide grants for this purpose, however, there is time allotted during the early implementation stages of the DOL grant to complete planning activities. Planning funds should be set aside to cover the costs of:

- The planner, convener, or facilitator
- Grant writing (the grant writer and cost of producing grants)
- Meeting essentials such as supplies and postage
- Large community events or meetings that provide information and garner support for the program
- Visits to an existing YouthBuild program.

Possible sources to secure planning funds from are local and community foundations. You might also secure support from a local business alliance.

Select an appropriate sponsoring organization and clarify the agency's commitment to and involvement in the project.

The sponsoring organization that will become the lead fiscal agent plays a huge role in the development and sustainability of the program. This organization must have (1) a full understanding of and investment in the project from the top level of the organization down and (2) the capacity to manage multiple streams of funding. For example, the organization's board of directors should not be merely approving the submission of a YouthBuild grant, they should understand the outcomes they are committed to achieving and the implications of this

collaboration. This is a long-term proposition for the community. Once a YouthBuild program takes root in a community, the community invests. People begin to count on the program and what it offers the young people in the neighborhoods. If the program ends, it can be devastating to a community.

Draft a planning time line.

The planning process for a solid YouthBuild program can take between six and eighteen months. If a sponsoring organization already operates some of the YouthBuild components and decides that YouthBuild will enhance what it already does, then the planning process may be shorter because some of the decisions have already been made and pieces are already in place. A longer, more thorough planning process is required when planning is initiated through an individual or group interested in identifying an organization to operate a program or starting up an independent program. In this case, forming a 501(c)(3) organization is a vital part of the community organizing process. Develop a time line that will take all of this into account. Also consider the time it will require to secure and obtain commitment for the housing project(s) for the young people to work on–this should be included in the time line.

Brainstorm the structure and design of the YouthBuild program.

The design of the program is critical to the program's overall impact. Each program needs a design and structure that will both answer the programmatic needs in the geographic area they have defined and will best utilize the resources in the area. Overall operational viability must also be considered, that is, what will it take to manage this program over time?

Identify candidates for sponsoring organization and partner agency.

Finding potential lead and partner agencies will consume more time the larger the community organizing effort. Some of the key qualities to look for in a sponsoring organization are:

- Strong fiscal capacity
- A commitment to the YouthBuild program model and its implementation for the long haul
- A board of directors that supports the organizing effort
- A positive community reputation and proven track record of impact
- Alignment with your organization's mission and target populations.

Some organizations are large and diverse enough that many YouthBuild activities can be handled in- house. Other times there is a need or desire to find operational partners. Finding such partners is a very strategic process. The organizations that you choose to partner with should have a vision and mission for the young people that is similar to your own. Partners need to be flexible and have a track record of engaging your population of youth. Each method of choosing partners has its own litany of pros and cons. It is a difficult process for a director to gain integration and seamless program operation when multiple partners are operating different programs. But, a great source of leveraging and community collaboration comes when there one or more operational partners. Programs need to find the balance that will work for them. All these issues require consideration as you design the structure of your program.

Build support for the program.

You are now ready for the first of several community meetings you will hold for the greater community. You can demonstrate this to the community in an open forum or organizational

meeting. Show videos, explain the YouthBuild model, brainstorm suggestions, and take names. It may be especially helpful to post newsprint or to hand out index cards so that folks can sign up to volunteer, receive a newsletter, join a mailing list, or play a role in the establishment of the program.

Phase 5: Outline the organizational structure for the program

Choose a sponsoring organization, partner agencies, and supporting agencies.

You are now at the juncture where you can begin to design the infrastructure of your program. Choose a lead organization committed to the program. Be sure there is investment from its board of directors and throughout the organization. Make sure the mission of the lead applicant encompasses the mission of YouthBuild. Finally, the organization needs to have the capacity to operate programs both fiscally and administratively.

Partner and supporting agencies need to share similar mission and values, and be flexible and serious about providing the leverage they have offered. Their commitments to provide resources should be treated as binding. Consider both cash and in-kind matches, as the U.S. Department of Labor grants will require both.

Agree on roles and responsibilities, and test the commitment of partnering agencies.

Roles and responsibilities of the operating partners can be handled through a memorandum of agreement. This is a clear way to delineate the role of the lead applicant and the role of the partner. Partners need to consider these partnerships as serious and binding because a funding organization will see them as such. Thus, partners need to be very clear about the commitment they make from the planning process forward. Programs will also need to document this leverage as it is provided.

Assemble the program design team.

The program design team usually consists of individuals from your planning committee who have strong program operations experience. Good guidelines to follow for program design can be found in the *YouthBuild Program Design and Performance Standards*, the *YouthBuild Program Manual*, or the Federal Register Listing of Department of Labor-YouthBuild most recent release. These will suggest the areas that you need to focus on and ask questions about to facilitate the process.

Develop a sustainability plan.

The initial sustainability plan should look at supporting the program for three to five years and should include a mix of federal, public, foundation, fundraising, and donor funds.

Phase 6: Design the program, draft the budget, and formalize partnerships.

Determine the program design.

So much of a YouthBuild program's success is in the basic design of the program. The program's design will answer some inevitable questions, such as:

- How many youth can be enrolled at a time?
- What is the ratio of instructors to students?
- What is the rotation schedule?
- How are the components covered?
- What hours per week will youth participate?
- What is the number of staff?
- How will the staff be structured?
- What training certifications will be offered?
- What construction activities will the youth complete?
- What education and placements will be available at the end of the program?
- How much money will go into work-site dollars (stipends) for the youth?
- How much money will go into supportive services?
- Will other vocational tracts be offered?

Visiting an existing YouthBuild can also help you understand and be inspired by solid program designs. The Department of Labor also has a wealth of training materials available through their electronic YouthBuild Community of Practice: https://youthbuild.workforcegps.org/.

Identify the staff configuration.

Staff at a YouthBuild program is another key to overall program success. Usually a YouthBuild program's staff is a mixture of hired employees, in-kind organizational staff, partnered staff, and, possibly, volunteers. Experience has shown that two full-time employees, a project director and a construction manager, are absolutely critical to program stability and success. A construction manager is necessary even if you are partnering with another organization to complete your housing activities. Partnered staff, such as a counselor or education manager, is possible as long as they remain integrated in the staff team and program activities. Leadership development is an area that requires staff oversight of some degree, and can be provided in conjunction with an outside partner. Career development is often an area handled by all staff, but don't be fooled—someone must oversee all career development activities, for it does not happen randomly and it is a key area of outcome for the young people. The larger your program budget and enrollment of young people, the more you need to aim for a full staff complement to effectively cover all career-related services.

Outline the YouthBuild program budget.

The YouthBuild budget is a critical piece of planning, basically because *it is never enough*. What you can do is strive to make the best use of funds that you secure. A $500,000 annual budget can adequately serve 30 youth for between one year and eighteen months, depending on the area, with some leveraging required. A $1,000,000 budget can last approximately two years and follow-up for 60 plus young people with varying amounts of

leveraging. The bulk of your budget will likely address both staff-related and student-related costs. Other regional barriers, such as transportation, may also need to be addressed in the budget. There is a separate tool kit addressing budgeting for an effective YouthBuild program.

Draft a memorandum of agreement among all program partners.

For purposes of your grant application you can initially draft a memorandum of agreement (MOA)
that encompasses all operational partners and their agreed-to responsibilities. For example, one provision may read: *City K Adult Education will be responsible for providing daily education activities for 20*
young people with the goal of attaining a GED or its diploma program. Once the grant has been awarded, individual MOAs with each individual operational partner can be drafted. These will be much more comprehensive and task-specific. These MOAs will specify the accountability of the partner, the outcomes they need to reach, specific tasks to complete, time lines to adhere to, and invoicing instructions if money is to be exchanged. Sample MOAs are available through YouthBuild USA.

Phase 7: Cultivate funding and non-cash program resources.

Identify sources for cash and noncash program resources.

Throughout the planning process, you have been brainstorming possible partners for both *resource* and *recruitment partnerships*. Resource partners are generally those who provide you with a leveraging letter. These are the folks who add value to your program, such as the bank who comes four times a year to teach financial literacy training. Recruitment partners are generally not involved with the program on a daily basis, or any regular basis, but are involved when a young person can be referred to the program. This includes the court system, guidance counselors, alliances of churches, and youth-serving organizations.

Now is the time to compile this list of potential partners and think about who will be the best fit with your program design. Begin to solicit those partners, and give them the information needed for a strong resource partnership. You can turn this into a leveraging letter for grant application purposes.

Submit funding proposals.

The funding proposals you submit can include the request for public YouthBuild funds from the DOL. However, it should also include a list of corporate foundations, family foundations, community foundations, and other sources of non-federal monies. There should always be grants in the pipeline to fund some portion of the program or to enhance a component. There are many directories, Internet newsletters, and snail-mail newsletters available for review and ideas.

Secure agreements for noncash resources.

Earlier we looked at resource partners and recruitment partners. These are groups who commit to the program and are in it for the long haul. Many other noncash resources are available to support your program on a one-time or occasional basis. These should not be overlooked in your program design and sustainability plan.

Here is one scenario that involves noncash resources: *Orientation of the young people is usually a commitment by them to attend without a stipend or pay of any kind. Most sites will try to provide breakfast and/or lunch for the duration. While these costs can be billed to grant funds, it is much more useful and cost effective to seek local donations for food through fast food restaurants, restaurants, grocery stores, and catering organizations.* Don't overlook the community investment available for offsetting cash costs such as these.

Secure the cash necessary for start-up and one year of operation.

Before your YouthBuild program begins, you must secure a YouthBuild grant or be able to secure other funds that will allow you to operate the program for at least one year *plus* pay all start-up costs. This also means that, from day one, you also need to focus on future sustainability.

Phase 8: Orient your board of directors; hire and train your staff

Orient the board to YouthBuild.

Boards of directors, especially of large organizations (such as colleges and housing authorities) need to understand that YouthBuild is not simply a service being provided but a team-oriented and team- driven program. The board should have a clear understanding of the model and never be kept in the dark about issues. Monthly updates should keep the board apprised of programmatic progress, movement toward stated outcomes, and financial revenue and expenditures. Board knowledge and support can make all the difference in whether a program is scrapped or maintained when hard times hit. When at all possible, young people need to play a role on the board, which is in turn a leadership and growth opportunity for them.

Hire the director.

A good director possesses an appropriate mix of skills including staff management, resource development, administration management, communication with youth, and envisioning and spearheading organizational growth. YouthBuild USA resource materials speak extensively to the hiring of a strong director.

When possible, have young people involved in the hiring process. Their input is exceedingly valuable, as is their investment in the person who is hired.

Hire and orient the program staff.

As does the program director, program staff need to be well-oriented to the program model and have an understanding of their role and how it fits with the whole. Staff should have a strong ability to interact with young people and have the skills required for their role. Staff need to be able to work well as a team, and therefore must have the capability for open-mindedness, creative thinking, and strong communication. There will be many times during program operations when staff will need to put aside personal motivations for the collective good

Phase 9: Organize facilities and systems.

Establish initial program policies and management systems.

The planning committee plays a role in policy and management planning by securing facilities and brainstorming program policies and management systems that must be developed in order to begin the program and integrate it as part of the larger organization. For example, housing authorities often consider students part-time employees and so their personnel procedures apply to them. But how would this arrangement affect a young person who fails a drug test? As a part-time employee of the housing authority, that student may be let go. However, that is not the intent of the YouthBuild model. Management systems and issues such as this will need to be discussed and resolved before a program begins in order to have smooth and consistent operations.

Organize classroom and work site operations.

While organizing classroom and work site operations will primarily be completed by YouthBuild staff and partners, it is important for the planning committee to set the tone and make recommendations that apply the mission and values that they have integrated into the program design. For each component area, program values need to be clearly stated and accommodated: Counseling needs to have space where confidential conversations can take place. Classrooms need to reflect inspiration for outcome attainment and reflect that this is a non-traditional school setting, not just a repeat of where they came from.

As it does with the student support and classroom components, the planning committee needs to share its intent as to the construction component and training-site work. What leeway will the young people be given as they learn skills? Will any activities be eliminated due to their risk level? Will the work site operate as a true job site, or will it operate more as a training site? What will be the process for construction and coordination with any partners?

Publicize the program.

The program's visibility is a critical piece of program design and ongoing program operations in terms of securing investment and support from stakeholders and the community. The planning committee, with the director, needs to set a process in place for ongoing visibility. Publicity is a big factor in becoming visible to the public, and includes more than just press releases and the news media—it can also include outfitting staff and students with branded uniforms or tee shirts, posting promotional signage at the work site, and organizing activities that the young people participate in such as area community service events.

Phase 10: Transition from an advisory or planning committee to a permanent staff team.

Switch gears from planning to doing.

Once it is time to recruit and enroll trainees, staff is beginning to take on the operations of the program. However, this does not negate the role of the planning committee in expressing to staff the proposed program, the ideas brainstormed through the community, and the wishes of the planners. This could encompass program direction, type of trainee to be sought, screening input and the selection process. All of these are areas that may or may not have made their way into the approved grant application, but they all need to be shared. It may be valuable to have an actual transition meeting that shares these thoughts and officially moves them from planning committee to staff. It may also be the forum for determining how the planning committee will continue to function. Possibly they will serve as a community advisory board, or they may dissolve altogether. If these areas are not reviewed and process agreed on at this juncture, then it will be the staff who ultimately interpret the grants, and the YouthBuild resource materials and determine how they wish to proceed. A more formal transition process will bring a nice closure to the planning aspect of the program and a welcome and **beginning** to a complete YouthBuild collaboration.

YOUTHBUILD

CORE ELEMENTS

Leadership Development
- Community Service
- Social Justice Awareness
- Civic Engagement

Support Services
- Case Management
- Mentoring
- Career Counseling
- Stipends
- Life Skills

Alumni Success
- Job Placement
- Transition Assistance
- Alumni Engagement

Education
- Secondary
- Post-Secondary
- Credentials

Construction and Other Career Pathways
- Affordable Housing
- Technical Training
- Soft Skills

YB

The Five Core Elements of the YouthBuild Model

No two YouthBuild programs are exactly alike. Locally, programs may vary in scope, focus and duration, according to local community needs, funding, and partnerships. Each and every YouthBuild program, however, is built on the five core elements of our model:

EDUCATION

At YouthBuild, young adults spend roughly half of their time working toward their high school diploma or its equivalent, and the balance of their time doing hands-on learning. In supportive, individualized learning environments, they gain the skills and obtain the certifications or credentials needed to pursue a diverse range of careers, apprenticeships, and postsecondary education. Outside the United States, the education component is adapted to local circumstances.

CONSTRUCTION AND OTHER CAREER PATHWAYS

All young people who enter a YouthBuild program, anywhere in the world, pursue a dual mission: to create a meaningful and productive life for themselves and their families, while giving their best energies to improve the world around them. At the core, students learn job skills in construction and in other high-demand careers such as manufacturing, healthcare, retail, and information technology. They also learn and refine soft skills such as teamwork, problem solving, communication, and adaptability.

By doing the right thing for themselves, their families, their communities, and their world, economically disadvantaged opportunity youth discover their responsibility to give back and pay it forward. And they do it all while rebuilding their neighborhoods, together.

To date, more than 180,000 YouthBuild students worldwide have built more than 35,000 units of affordable housing and other community assets such as community centers and schools. YouthBuild students have also dedicated 50 million hours of service to improve their local urban, rural, and tribal communities.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Many young people have to manage family circumstances and conditions within their communities that present significant barriers to their success. Some are forced to choose between pursuing their education and working to survive. At YouthBuild, – participants benefit from services that support them in managing and addressing these barriers, allowing them to pursue their education and their dreams.

They receive a stipend for participating full-time in a YouthBuild program for six, nine,

twelve months or more. Additional guidance and resources help them better understand themselves, problem solve, and meaningfully contribute to society along the way. Support services include case management, mentoring, career counseling, mental wellness resources, and life skills coaching.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

At YouthBuild, opportunity youth develop the skillsets and mindsets required to grow into community leaders. They find stability in their lives and gain an appreciation of lifelong learning. They discover confidence – both in themselves, and in others – and in their ability to succeed. Students are called to play active service and leadership roles in their local communities. And they learn that leadership, accountability, collaboration, diversity, and love hold the power to reclaim lives and communities, one person and one project at a time.

YouthBuild programs develop ethical leaders who take responsibility for their families and communities. Our young people gain a deeper awareness of their personal role in addressing ongoing social justice concerns. They change the conditions of poverty through civic engagement and community service. YouthBuild works to build and sustain pathways into national and international leadership for outstanding young leaders.

ALUMNI SUCCESS

YouthBuild is not a one-and-done job training program. We teach young people the tools for professional success and lifelong learning. At YouthBuild, they develop the skillsets and mindsets needed to become truly employable, including market-relevant technical skills, networking skills, professionalism, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial habits that foster the adaptable mindset they need to thrive in future careers.

When young people join YouthBuild, they form bonds that extend beyond graduation. They become part of a movement, a community, and a family. YouthBuild helps place graduates in the careers they seek and helps with transition placement at key moments in their lives. With guidance from and collaboration with our national support center, YouthBuild maintains a strong focus on alumni engagement and alumni services, so that a sense of community remains an essential part of our young people's journeys.