



Resources for Youth Programming and Policy

DESCRIPTION

- Conversion from YouthBuild program to YouthBuild Public Charter School
- Engagement of out-of-school youth ages 16-24 in educational and vocational activities
- Job skills development through construction and renovation of housing for low-income residents of the District of Columbia
- Students paid stipend for participating; \$7.00 per hour for vocational training work and \$10 per day for classroom instruction
- Five-year plan to grow from 55 to 100 students

Latin American Youth Center's YouthBuild Public Charter School

Accessing Education Dollars

Overview

Seeking to transform the lives of vulnerable youth through educational, community service, and skill-building opportunities, the Latin American Youth Center's (LAYC) YouthBuild program¹ is falling in step with the burgeoning charter school movement. As of September 2005, LAYC's YouthBuild program officially converted to the LAYC YouthBuild Public Charter School (YB PCS) – an alternative, vocational senior high and adult education school. The Latin American Youth Center, which founded the school, is a well-established nonprofit organization based in the District of Columbia that supports youth and their families through diverse programming. With the success of its long-running YouthBuild program, LAYC saw the opportunities for programmatic growth in terms of serving greater numbers of young people and improving educational offerings that charter school conversion could bring.

Targeting youth ages 16-24 who have dropped-out, aged-out, or been expelled from regular D.C. public schools, the YB PCS provides students with an educational curriculum that combines academics with vocational training, employability skill-building, and community service to prepare them for college or the workplace. Over the

course of their nine-month school year, students spend alternating weeks in the classroom and on a construction site helping to build or renovate housing in the community for low-income residents. Students receive a stipend of \$7.00 an hour for the work they do as part of their vocational training and \$10 a day for classroom instruction, a key incentive for the school's target population.

History and Development

The Latin American Youth Center began running a YouthBuild program in 1995. Since its inception, the YouthBuild program has built a strong track record of success in preparing students for their GED, teaching job readiness skills, providing support services, and engaging youth in community service. For the last three years, 98 percent of YouthBuild graduates have either secured employment or gone on to college or further training. Even with this level of success, however, the program at times has struggled to secure adequate funds.

Prior to becoming a charter school, the YouthBuild program was supported by a mix of federal, city, and foundation funds. YouthBuild funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have been a key funding source yet one that has

¹ YouthBuild programs offer educational and job training services, leadership training, counseling and other support activities, as well as on-site training in housing rehabilitation or construction work. For more information, visit YouthBuild USA at <http://www.youthbuild.org/site/c.htIRI3PIKoG/b.1223921/k.BD3C/Home.htm>

Financing Strategies

- Making Better Use of Existing Resources
- Maximizing Federal, State, and Local Revenue
- Creating More Flexibility in Existing Streams
- Building Public/Private Partnerships
- Generating New Dedicated Revenue

engendered challenges in terms of sustainability.² HUD YouthBuild funds have been awarded competitively on an annual basis, requiring an extensive grant-writing process each year with no guarantee of funding. With a constant turnover of HUD grantees, many YouthBuild programs have gone without HUD funding – as was the case in two separate years for LAYC's YouthBuild program. Additionally, the program has received Workforce Investment Act youth funds from the D.C. Department of Employment Services for its youth employment programming as well as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds for adult literacy services. The program has also received private funds from foundations such as Fannie Mae for the provision of adult literacy services.

The need to create a more stable funding base along with a desire to improve program quality and serve more youth were key reasons for seeking charter school conversion. LAYC's YouthBuild program is not alone in this approach. The National YouthBuild Network as a whole is beginning to establish itself as an important part of the charter school movement; to date 23 YouthBuild programs have become charter schools and 10 more are in the conversion process. YouthBuild USA, a national resource organization for YouthBuild programs, is supporting these efforts with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to provide targeted educational assistance and training for YouthBuild charter and alternative schools.

LAYC was well-positioned to transform its successful YouthBuild program

into a charter school due to its prior experience launching and operating two other charter schools. Despite this history, the conversion process required substantial time and effort. It took a year to develop the charter school application during which time LAYC covered the salary of the YouthBuild program's director as well as the costs for an outside consultant hired to help write the application. Additionally, LAYC received invaluable support from FOCUS, a D.C. based nonprofit organization that provides advocacy and free technical assistance to organizations on charter school start-up or conversion. Though the charter school conversion process was demanding, charter school status is providing new opportunities for LAYC's YouthBuild program to access private and public funding, allowing the program to grow and become more financially stable and sustainable.

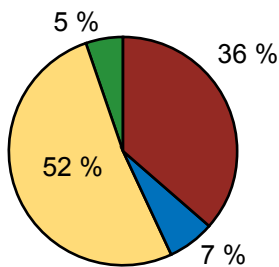
Financing

- Maximizing Federal, State, and Local Revenue

Transforming the YouthBuild program into a public charter school has opened the door to new sources of public and private funding. While LAYC has been successful in accessing federal YouthBuild dollars, charter school conversion has enabled program leaders to tap into additional public funding sources. Most importantly, charter school status provides access to local education dollars in the form of per pupil funding for public school students. Approximately half of the school's funding is now provided by District of Columbia per pupil public school dollars. These per pupil funds provide the YB PCS with a stable source of funding as per pupil funds are

² The YouthBuild Transfer Act, enacted on September 22, 2006, transfers the YouthBuild program from HUD to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). DOL will run its first YouthBuild competition for funds in fiscal year 2007.

Funding for LAYC's YouthBuild Public Charter School FY 2006-2007



Total Budget: \$1,735,933

- YouthBuild
- Perkins
- DC Per Pupil Revenue
- Private

LAYC YouthBuild Public Charter School FY 2006-2007 Budget	
Federal	
YouthBuild	\$634,000
Perkins	\$114,000
Local	
DC Per Pupil Revenue	\$897,933
Private	
Foundations, Individuals, and Corporations	\$90,000
Total	\$1,735,933

Fiscal year 2006-2007 runs from July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007.

distributed year-round on a quarterly basis.

Federal funds still provide a significant source of revenue to the program even as it has transformed into a charter school. The school continues to receive HUD YouthBuild dollars, 75 percent of which must be used for low-income or very low-income youth. Additionally, program leaders have been able to access for the first time federal Perkins funds which support vocational education programming. Combined, Perkins and HUD YouthBuild funds provide around forty percent of the school's revenue.

Becoming a charter school has also allowed program leaders to apply for new sources of private funding such as funding provided by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for the National Schools Initiative (NSI) through YouthBuild USA. Under this initiative, YouthBuild USA works with selected YouthBuild schools and programs to help strengthen their education capacity, improve program quality, and increase rates of college entry. The LAYC YB PCS is using

NSI resources to support professional development activities for its teachers.

✓ Building Partnerships

Along with creating opportunities to access new funding, charter school conversion has given program leaders the chance to bring new partners on board who can help to expand the fiscal base for the school. In particular, LAYC was strategic in creating the YB PCS founding board by engaging community members from key sectors including real estate development, education, housing, nonprofit management, the D.C. City Council, the Council of Latino Affairs, as well as parents and youth. These members each bring valuable expertise to the school's board, as well as serve as a network of advocates and fundraisers for the school.

The school also benefits from a partnership with a local nonprofit low-income housing developer, Manna, Inc., that supports the hands-on construction training that YouthBuild students receive. Manna is a leading developer of affordable housing, turning abandoned buildings or vacant property into new homes for low and moderate-income families. Manna provides the construction sites, equipment, and materials that the students use as a critical part of their vocational training.

Next Steps and Future Challenges

Though charter school conversion provides access to additional resources, it also brings with it additional costs. Charter schools can incur substantial facilities costs, as is the case with the LAYC YB PCS. As a small school of around 55 students, it has not been able to benefit from economies of scale that larger schools can enjoy. While the District of Columbia per pupil funds have become a critical resource,

they still only provide about half of the necessary funding. Program leaders are continually challenged to find additional funding and develop new partnerships that can expand the school's resource base. Over the next year, the school's executive director will seek to build partnerships with local construction companies and real estate developers to create an employment pipeline for YouthBuild graduates and leverage financial support for the school. Program leaders would also like to build a reserve fund to provide additional financial security.

Leaders continue to work on expanding enrollment in order to reach the five-year goal of growing to 100 students. Additionally, beginning in the 2007/2008 school year, the school will start offering a high school diploma in addition to the GED currently offered. This will require the school to meet stricter standards in order to comply with No Child Left Behind provisions, but will provide access to Federal Entitlement dollars.

Keys to Success

- **Document results and concentrate on outcomes.**

Throughout its history, the LAYC YouthBuild program has been focused on creating positive lasting outcomes for participants. By striving towards best possible outcomes and documenting programmatic progress and results, the LAYC YouthBuild program, now charter school, is able to grow and improve consistently. Having documented results was critical to achieving a successful application for charter school status.

- **Focus on issues of financing and sustainability.**

Given the vagaries of public and private funding sources, programs leaders have maintained a constant focus on identifying and accessing available funding. The executive director of the YB PCS serves as the school's dedicated funding point person, spending considerable time and energy working towards sustainable financing sources and strategies.

- **Make use of technical assistance resources.**

Program leaders have shown a pattern of bringing in technical assistance at critical junctures. At the inception of the YouthBuild program, LAYC brought in technical assistance to help develop the initial HUD grant application. To support the charter school application process, LAYC hired a consultant to help prepare the application as well as took advantage of the free technical assistance provided by FOCUS which facilitated the process.



The **FINANCE**
PROJECT

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