

## **City of Minneapolis Employment & Training Program (METP) North 4 Youth Employment Program**

### **Overview describing the innovative best practice**

METP received Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Earmark Funds sponsored by Congressman Keith Ellison to implement a pilot project for youth employment, training and violence prevention services for at-risk youth.

Between June 1, 2010 and May 31, 2012, North 4 Youth Employment will provide employment and training opportunities and 12-month follow-up services for 30 gang involved Minneapolis youth ages 14-21. The overall goal of the project is to increase the number of youth in gainful employment thereby reducing the number of youth involved in gangs and violent behavior.

This program model was developed as part of a larger City plan entitled Blueprint for Action to Prevent Youth Violence. Included in this comprehensive plan are goals related to providing employment opportunities for the most difficult to employ youth.

The project will serve gang involved youth residing in four North Minneapolis neighborhoods (Folwell, Hawthorne, Jordan, and McKinley); neighborhoods that have accounted for over half of the 2010 homicides in Minneapolis thus far. The project will target youth who self-disclose membership in gangs or equally destructive gang cliques located within the four neighborhoods. Youth eligible for program consideration must be WIA eligible, complete information and orientation sessions, and a 30 minute panel interview with program staff. A cohort model is a unique characteristic of this program. The project will serve three cohort groups of ten youth each. Each cohort group will receive a 33 week intensive program experience that includes: a 20 hour training the first week to prepare youth for subsidized work experiences beginning week two; 24, four-hour cohort training sessions on Fridays (designed to promote leadership, team building, personal goal setting, learning how to deescalate tense situations, career exploration, anger management, budgeting and financial management); placement into unsubsidized employment, and; 12-month employment retention and follow-up services.

Cohort 1 started on June 14, 2010 with ten males ages 17-21. As of July 22, all ten are in the program and employed. A recent Cohort 1 survey yielded some of the following information:

- There are seven gang/cliques affiliations (Stick Up Boys (S.U.B.), Black Peace Stone, Cutthroat, Outlaw Blood, Tre-Tre, Gangster Disciples and Taliban).
- Seven participants have children; 13 total children between these fathers.
- 51 friends and family members have been lost via homicide.
- Six participants are currently on probation.
- All ten youth have served time in a juvenile detention facility.
- Six participants have served time in an adult detention facility.
- Seven youth do not have stable housing.

The North 4 Youth Employment Program will be evaluated on the following outcomes: 1) participant enrollments, 2) younger youth attainment of basic skills, work readiness and/or occupational skills, 3) older youth credential rate, 4) entered employment rate, 5) 90 and 183 day employment retention and 6) participant and employer surveys.

### **Jobseeker impact**

The project will provide skills training and/or employment placement in the targeted economic sectors of construction, manufacturing and wholesale trade because jobs pay a livable wage, have shown growth, and can be obtained by individuals who may have criminal histories.

In addition, when City staff conducted a comprehensive gang assessment with youth living in the four targeted neighborhoods, the most common response to the question of what it would take to leave the gang was to have a job. Besides providing income, a job provides an opportunity to occupy their time and begin to separate from other gang members. The guarantee of an immediate subsidized job is a critical program component that not only allows youth to earn paychecks and become tax paying residents, but also provides youth with structure, a safety net from the streets, increased self-esteem, opportunities to develop work and social skills and enhance their employment histories and resumes prior to placement into unsubsidized employment.

### **Community impact**

The project will benefit participant's families by providing additional income and positive role models who can instill hope and ideals of success for their siblings. On a larger scale, benefits include: reduced crime and violence, earned youth wages reinvested in North Minneapolis businesses and a reduction in tax financed criminal justice and incarceration costs. Two examples cited in the 2008 Blueprint for Action to Prevent Youth Violence regarding how the epidemic of youth violence costs us all are: 1) the average cost for a single incident of homicide is estimated to be \$3 million, and; 2) the cost for one non-fatal paralyzing injury from gun violence averages \$2-5 million over the victim's lifetime for health care, living expenses and lost productivity.

### **Identification of those involved, including collaborators**

METP is the WIA Earmark Fund grantee, fiscal agent and administrator of the project in partnership with the City's Department of Health and Family Support. Emerge Community Development (ECD) was selected as the youth service provider via the METP competitive Master Contract Holders - Request For Proposals. The City's Department of Health and Family Support provided ECD with funds for intensive pre-program job and curriculum planning, which included team members visiting Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, CA, a national leader in helping youth and adults leave gangs. ECD will submit cost reimbursement invoices to METP for program expenses, youth wages and payroll service costs. ECD will enroll participants into the WorkForce One Management Information System and METP staff will run reports and grade ECD quarterly. Additionally, the youth applicant interview panel is comprised of staff from ECD, METP and the City's Department of Health and Family Support.

Other collaborators include probation officers working with 16-21 year old Extended Juvenile Jurisdiction youth and staff from the Minneapolis Police Department 4<sup>th</sup> Precinct.

### **Leveraging/alignment of outside resources**

As the project evolves, it is clear that additional formal partnerships are needed to create a continuum of gang reduction services in Minneapolis. Services in the following areas have been identified as priority: mental health and substance abuse, tattoo removal, basic education, legal and community service placement opportunities. ECD is especially interested in developing at least one social enterprise that offers transitional jobs/work.

### **Ideas for replication/lessons learned**

The project model contains key elements that can be replicated and customized to meet program participants various needs. Since the first cohort group started in June 2010, ECD direct program staff meet weekly to discuss successes, challenges and to fine tune programming. We expect that the areas of priority will change continually based upon individual and group participant needs.

METP and the City's Department of Health and Family Support recognize the importance of identifying sustainable funding opportunities to enhance and expand employment and training programs that address the needs of gang involved youth throughout Minneapolis.