

Employability



How might we increase life opportunity and equity by preparing all youth to succeed in their chosen careers and employment?

Why Communities Value Preparation for Employability

1. **YOUTH ASPIRATIONS:** Communities want youth to not just be successful now, but to set long-term goals and hopes. As one Somali community leader shared, “Aspirations are the key to everything in life.” Youth need to believe they have a future, that they can open doors, and that they can start building it now.
2. **FAMILY ASPIRATIONS:** Strong parental and cultural value for good employment choices and opportunities. High priority to see children set up for self-sufficiency and success in job and career.

Building Internal Capacity: Encouraging a 21st Century Workforce Mindshift

From	To
I focus on growing my skills & knowledge.	I also focus on transforming my mindset.
I am competent in many areas.	I possess at least one world-class strength.
I look for a place to fit in at work.	I look for something to change or improve.
I work on fixing my weaknesses.	I work on growing my strengths.
I'm looking for a workplace where I'd fit in.	I'm looking for a workplace with great diversity.
I value comfort and familiarity	I value new experiences beyond my comfort zone.
I'm very good at following orders.	I'm very good at thinking outside the box.
I look to reinforce my way of seeing the world.	I seek people, ideas, and experiences that challenge my way of seeing the world.
I'm patient and accept inevitable delays.	I practice a healthy impatience (not willing to wait for others to make change happen).

Knowledge & Skills Supporting the Mindshift

Adapted from James Toole, 2010

Building External Capacity: Addressing Access, Quality and Purpose

1. **ACCESS:** Do all youth have access to participate?
2. **QUALITY:** Do all youth participate in high quality programs?
3. **PURPOSE:** Do existing programs focus on the authentic needs of all youth?

ACCESS EQUITY: *What is needed for all youth to be able to participate in employability experiences and programs?*

Issue	What Limits Life Opportunities and Equity?
Communication	Youth often don't know what is already available; improve communication in new ways; some don't have easy access to internet.
Aspirations	Youth need to believe there is path and a possibility for success (hope), and that that they possess the ambition to do something with their life
Program Availability	Need more viable opportunities for job training. (Twin Cities possesses some fabulous programs but need scale to reach all youth).
Summer Internships	Summer internships, especially helpful to youth. Ability to make money is a huge incentive for those whose families are on the edge. Youth would love more opportunities with Parks and Recreation Department.
Volunteering	Youth may start as a volunteer and then hired to work at the same place.
First Job	Find more ways to help teens get their first job experience and learn what it is like. Difficult to get a first job with no experience but youth say it can be transformative for how you see yourself and your future.
Targeting Specific Groups	Create and fund internships specially that target certain groups that might face prejudice (e.g. homeless and highly mobile) and that might need extra support, education, and safety to fit into the job market.
Funding	More funding for youth jobs (youth need early, hands-on opportunities that will transfer into later job success).
Role Models	Youth need to see successful people in diverse professions that are just like them (from the same cultural group). Need to know that it is possible for someone like me to be a success. Also need these people to help them network. Increase job shadowing.
Education Workforce	In terms of role models, youth need people they can identify with in the educational systems to support their learning and eventual careers.
Career Exploration	Create more accessible career exploration opportunities for under 16. Businesses are committed elsewhere or afraid (don't know how to do it). Create opportunities that aren't full internships like episodic volunteering.
Risk Taking	Encourage a mindset that values exposure to new experiences beyond one's comfort zone (e.g. summer camp, science museum, volunteering). Easy to stay in own family and group & not do anything different for the summer. Need value for stepping out; isolation can limit youth's future.
Mobilizing Parent Support	Education for parents about 21st century job skills and how they can be developed in and out of the classroom. Need to know that life skills are employability skills (e.g. sports, service-learning, leadership, etc. potentially teach much).
Teacher Recommendations	Allow teachers and other case workers / professionals to be references for youth to get a job. Removes a barrier to getting a good job for homeless and highly mobile and more.

QUALITY EQUITY: *What is needed for all youth to experience high-quality employability experiences and programs?*

Issue	What Limits Life Opportunities and Equity?
Career Education	Youth want more help with the “how” of getting a job (the basics). Not know where to apply, how to apply, what need for a job, how to get the right fit with your skills and experience, and how to complete an online application.
Self-Awareness	People think of career development as learning skills and knowledge. But career education also includes identifying your passions, strengths, values, and goals. It is identifying and growing your unique strengths that will make you hireable.
Drop-Out Outreach	Need more programs for students that have not finished high school and possess few skills. No clear path for these youth to succeed in a job or life.
Practical Education	Need schools to provide more practical and relevant education that prepares youth to job market.
Networking Skills	Many youth not understand networking. Give more opportunities and skills for networking that could lead to career opportunities. Some youth tied most in family and clan and not have outside conacts to open opportunities.
Parent Tech Skills	Need more support for parents’ knowledge and access to technology so they can help their children navigate careers and the future.
People Smart	Some students are book savvy but not good with people (an essential part of most careers). Need training in interpersonal social skills and EQ.
School Credit	Offer Educational credits for “experiential” learning such as service-learning, internships, outdoor education and more. Such experiences can not only be educational, but may fit the learning style of many youth (including those that haven’t done well in traditional school).
Educational Experiences for Employability	Provide more educational experiences that are relevant and targeted to youth gaining employment. May need to help educators to know how to make the connection between the educational experiences and how they translate to the work world.
Best Practices	There are great model programs that can be models and teaches to others that want to do this work. Need to find ways to capture their work and share.
Poverty	Some hurt by family instability from immigration status (undocumented residents), transportation, survival mentality versus setting goals. Popular employability programs like Achieve Minneapolis and Step Up require legal residency that denies access to some that need those experiences most. .
Specialization	Having a specialization gives youth confidence and marketability. For instance, The airport commission needs firefighters that have different training than those that work for the regular fire department.

PURPOSE EQUITY: *Do the purposes of existing employability programs address youth's authentic needs and desires?*

Gaps	What Limits Life Opportunities and Equity?
Global Careers	Need to prepare our youth for global careers. We don't discuss with them the job opportunities with companies like 3M and Cargill to work abroad. Many Twin Cities youth are already bi-cultural and bi-lingual.
Self-Awareness	Many youth don't know what they want to do as a career because they don't know their own like, dislikes, talents, and strengths.
Job Coach	Youth generally lack skills and awareness of job market; need help from job coaches. Someone to assess their capabilities and interests and give them ideas of where to apply for a good fit,
Professional Internships	Create more opportunities for youth to work in an office environment; big businesses can inform youth on steps to being successful. Youth don't see themselves in these environments (want understanding of how corporate America works).
Service-Learning	Youth need more service-learning/ project-based learning that powerfully integrates employability skills.
Leadership Development	Offer more leadership training (e.g. self-initiative, problem-solving, creativity) that is foundation for many careers. Youth held back sometimes because of lack of confidence and voice (girls especially).
Thinking Like an Entrepreneur	Support education for and exposure to thinking like an entrepreneur (entrepreneurial thinking is relevant in all jobs; it is not exclusively about starting a business).
Being an Entrepreneur	Some youth are natural entrepreneurs but need some coaching, support, encouragement and experience. Teach entrepreneurship and opportunities for youth to either create or invent or participate in a small business or start-up. (People are much more likely to be an entrepreneur if their parents were. Give this type of advantage to more).
Career Goals	Sometimes conflicts between parents and youth about career goals. How do you balance money and personal fulfillment?
Educate Businesses	Develop education for employers through the Chamber of Commerce to break down stigma and stereotypes.
21st Century Skills	Train youth in 21st century skills and job market. Provide educational experiences that are relevant to youth gaining employment in today's markets.
Financial Literacy	Teach financial literacy to youth and families. Help stabilize family household.
Peer Educators	Need ways that youth that have had summer work go into classrooms and share lessons learned with classmates (the power of hearing a message from someone your age).
Career Future	Youth are not just interested in a job; they are interested in a career (jobs that may lead to some long-term possibilities and employment)

Using Employability to Increase Life Opportunities and Equity

Issue	Limiting Life Opportunity	Expanding Life Opportunity
Passions	Youth sometimes are caught between what their culture expects them to do in terms of education or a career and their true passions and dreams; don't see careers in areas of passion.	Youth are in conversation and relationships with others who share their interests and passions and have made a job/career of it; there are parent forums to help everyone. Parents and others in the culture understand why it is good for the youth to pursue the dream and the youth have skills on how to navigate these differences.
Expectations	There are different expectations between youth and the employers about: salary, hours of work, responsibilities, level of commitment, appearance	Employers are more willing to do more education, orientation, and teaching to get youth "up to speed" because they see the value in that investment; employers honestly reassess the expectations and requirements and make changes where possible; youth are better prepared and have more realistic expectations because of role models, stories from peers, conversations, etc.
Parents	Parents sometimes have different expectations about what their children should pursue than the children have; parents don't know how to help their youth navigate the systems; parents sometimes don't have the time to help their child in this arena; don't always value the youth's participation in extra curricular activities (that can lead to good employment opportunities)	Parents have access to resources (mentors, transportation, support services) and now value careers or education that align with their child's interests, know how to navigate the systems and see the value of having the child involved in extra curricular activities as a potential career path. Parents are engaged in the school system.
Diversity	Some workplaces and employers don't see the value of hiring for diversity, having an inclusive workforce.	Employers value, see and understand the great value of having a diverse workforce; stop hiring people "just like them;" employers see the business case for this; have avenues to diverse, talented and qualified employees and a workplace that is welcoming to all elements of diversity.
First Job/ Work Opportunity	Youth don't know how to find that first experience - volunteer, part time job, internship; some don't know how to leverage that experience when applying for other jobs	There are many choices for these "first opportunities," the opportunities are brought right to the youth (rather than expecting them all to find them), flexibility, there are episodic opportunities to volunteer (not a big commitment); we see how social media can be a path to job opportunities; there are specific classes on how to leverage these experiences for future jobs.

Issue	From: Old Story	To: New Story
Culturally Specific Role Models	Youth don't see people "like me" in the roles or jobs that they want; the cultural representative is too busy to mentor or role model other youth	Youth are "trailblazers" - deciding to be the first one to do this; spaces are created that allow for the cultural representative to role model/mentor others; employers actually give their employees time to do this; "when you go through the door of opportunity it is your job not to slam it behind you."
Professional	Youth don't always present themselves well in the job search process; don't always see the value of a personal and professional "brand"	Youth have learned business etiquette, understand what matters to employers and they are willing to adapt; employers use creative wisdom and discernment of what really matters and what doesn't; "blind" interviews are used when possible.
Criminal Background	Employers can't or don't want to take the risk to hire; once convicted, youth maintain that identity	Employers are willing to appropriately give second chances; youth positively leverage their criminal past and experience to help others; employers take the time to really hear the story and fairly evaluate that past against the current job requirements.
Networking and People Skills	Youth don't know how to network, don't see the value in it, can be book smart but not people smart	Youth care about gaining these skills; youth pursue the opportunities that are out there (classes, mentors, role models) to develop those skills; there are several ways and channels to get these skills and opportunities
Mobility	Modes of transportation don't always get youth to the location and home; they are expensive; schedules don't line up; sometimes spend a lot of time on that transportation	There are ways to get to and from the job and those ways are efficient (don't take an hour one way) and are affordable; employers are intentional location of work, place people locally, and are cognizant and flexible with schedules