



Collected case studies:

Youth skills training

- *Closing the skills gap between supply and demand*
- *Re-engaging young people*
- *Developing the skills employers want*

This paper brings together a number of case studies on how cities from the UK and beyond have made the most of youth skills training.

Being unemployed at a young age can have consequences that are lifetime long.

Youth skill training is essential to ensure young people are endowed with the skills relevant to the labour market. Cities are in a better position to address the needs of their young residents as they are more likely to have a good grasp of the specific barriers young people face, how to target the most disengaged and what training and employment opportunities are available.

To be successful, cities engage with employers and training providers, promote new initiatives and target interventions.

The case studies demonstrating how cities can improve youth skills training and what they are trying to achieve are split into four groups:

- **Closing the skills gap between supply and demand**

Best practice in youth employment support requires strong connections between employers and employment services providers.

- **Improving young people's work preparation**

Strong local leadership is a pre-condition for city-wide collaboration. Partnership can make individual organisations and initiatives more financially sustainable over the long term by allowing organisations to leverage multiple sources of funding.

- **Ensuring young people develop the skills employers want**

Strong partnership with employers means young people are more likely to develop the skills employers want and employers are more likely to recruit programme participants.

- **Re-engaging young people**

Tailored, continuous support can re-engage young people and help ensure they complete their qualification or course, or stay in employment.

Closing the skills gap between supply and demand

Best practice in youth employment support demands strong connections between employers and employment services providers.

Working with employers to create training that replicates real jobs

Lead organisation: After School Matters (formerly Gallery 37)

Location: Chicago, Illinois, US

Year: 1991 – to present

Keywords: Apprenticeships; Youth skills training; Employment prospects; International

Read the full report here: [Youth Opportunity: Lessons from the US](#)

After School Matters (ASM) provides over 22,000 internships and apprenticeships to school pupils in Chicago. It works with over 15,000 young people in the city, making it the largest programme of its kind.

ASM evolved from Gallery 37, which offered young people apprenticeships in the arts, and has expanded to include technical and employability training in science, sports, tech and communications. There are three different tiers within the apprenticeship model: pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships. The internships allow young people to apply the skills they have learnt (through attending at least three programmes) in corporate environments. All programmes seek to replicate real jobs in a number of ways, for example by interviewing potential participants, maintaining professional standards and paying stipends. The average student-to-instructor ratio is 15 to 1. ASM works with over 300 CBOs across the city, the Chicago Parks Authority, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and other city agencies, as well as corporate partners to deliver programmes. Four different regional managers and their teams are responsible for building relationships with partners in different parts of the city and assessing the suitability of different sites. ASM also pays existing school staff to act as liaisons within schools to recruit young people, provide real-time information on what is happening in different schools and assist with tracking programme participants. ASM collaborates with the city government (who part fund ASM's work) to establish the 'One Summer Chicago' portal which connects young people with summer job opportunities available across the city. Overall, 65 per cent of funding comes from government grants and support, and the rest from private sources – the team raised over \$4.5 million at their last annual event.

ASM has expanded its research and evaluation team to track the performance of its programmes, and partners with universities to evaluate their impact. ASM programmes have high attendance rates (87.6 per cent compared to the national average of 75 per cent).¹ The programme has also been found to lead to higher high school attendance and graduation rates.²

¹ After School Matters (2013) Annual Report 2013, ASM.

² Chaplin Hall (2007) After-School Programmes and Academic Impact: A study of Chicago's After School Matters, University of Chicago.

Working with employers to provide 'real world' work experience

Lead organisation: Youth Build Boston

Location: Boston, Massachusetts, US

Year: 1990 – to present

Keywords: Youth employment; Youth skills training; Employment prospects; International

Read the full report here: [Youth Opportunity: Lessons from the US](#)

Youth Build Boston (YBB) partners with local colleges, unions, construction companies and planning authorities to provide young people with 'real life' work experience and vocational training in the construction sector through career exploration and pre-apprenticeship programmes. It targets communities with high crime rates, unemployment, and a high number of young people who lack basic skills. It aims to integrate education and training with work experience, leadership development and community service.

The non-profit runs four programmes:

- **Career Exploration:** a paid 6- to 9-month programme for individuals interested in starting a career in the building trades. The programme combines academic instruction for a high school equivalency degree with occupational skills instruction, emphasizing hands-on methods and industry recognized credentialing;
- **Pre-Apprentice:** a 12-week intensive programme for youths who have a high school diploma or equivalent, but need further training and credentials for entry-level employment in the building and construction trades;
- **The Designery:** an afterschool- or college-readiness programme, run in collaboration with the Boston Architectural School, exposes secondary students to architecture and urban design. It specifically targets design education, using real-world-based projects to educate participants in all aspects of architectural design. Young people follow three different tracks with the third involving time in an architectural firm and 100 per cent graduate from high school;
- **Build Service Learning:** engages youths as volunteers who lead community rehabilitation projects for local non-profits. uBuild also provides opportunities for corporate employees to volunteer alongside the youths.

Collaboration with other local stakeholders is integral to the funding and delivery of these programmes. Partnership with local colleges provides a pipeline of participants who can benefit from the training and the direct involvement of construction companies and trade unions ensures participants receive relevant training and experience. It also ensures participants have access to job opportunities. YBB has established greater financial sustainability over time by diversifying its funding sources. Programmes are funded through city and state line-items, foundations and small grants from employers. Youth Build also provides additional revenue as new builds and renovations are sold for profit, which is invested back into the programmes.³

3 Interview.

Creating alternative routes into the professional service sectors

Lead organisation: Year Up

Location: 14 cities and HQ in Boston, US

Year: 2000 – to present

Keywords: Youth (16-24) employment programmes; Job creation; Youth skills training; Employment prospects; International

Read the full report here: [Youth Opportunity: Lessons from the US](#)

Since 2000, Year Up has worked with over 10,000 young people in 15 cities across the US, providing entry-level routes into professions such as finance and IT. These are jobs that have the potential to provide good wages and do not necessarily require a degree.⁴ Year Up students face barriers to employment and higher education. They work with young people that have been in foster care, for example, involved in the court system or in substance misuse. Among Year Up students, 70 per cent are black or Hispanic, 60 to 70 per cent have dropped out of college, and others are working in minimum wage jobs.

Students complete six months of intensive training, with mentoring and coaching, to improve their professional skills before going on to a sponsored internship with a company. Students earn an educational stipend during training and internship and can earn college credits. They are supported through their internships by their mentors and weekly visits to Year Up during their time with companies. Participants are largely recruited through word of mouth and referrals from high schools and community partners. Applicants to the programme firstly sign up online, attend an open day and complete an application with a two-page essay before being invited to group and individual interviews to test their dedication, attitude and motivation. Once onto the programme, students sign a behaviour contract, where they ‘fire themselves’ from the programme if they do not meet the professional expectations of Year Up. Year Up aims to change employer practices in developing and sourcing talent.

Beyond its core programmes, Year Up:

- Seeks to influence employer practices through the development of an online, digital employer platform to provide information, tools and resources for employers.
- Brings employers together to share their experiences in B2B forums.
- Aims to ‘Future proof’ its students by equipping them with transferrable skills and working “not just to understand where the job market is now but how it is changing”.⁵
- Identifies growing sectors using real-time labour market information provided by Burning Glass and has local advisory boards that advise on anticipated demand.
- Invests about \$25,000 in each of its students, which is substantially more than typical youth employment programmes.
- Uses a unique revenue model in which corporate internship partners cover a significant portion of this cost.⁶

4 Interview .

5 Interview.

6 Roder, A. and Elliott, M. (2014) Sustained Gains: Year up’s Continued Impact on Young Adult’s Earnings, Economic Mobility Corporation.

As the organisation has expanded to operate in 14 different cities across the US, it has had to ensure that there are a significant number of entry level job openings and that the local philanthropic community is large enough to support the launch of the programme and ensure it is self-sustaining.

The programme has achieved a number of positive outcomes, including: 100 per cent placement of qualified Year Up students into internships; over 90 per cent of corporate partners would recommend the Year Up programme to a friend or colleague and 85 per cent of graduates are employed or attending college full-time within four months of completing the programme. Initial results from a small-scale impact study conducted by Mobility demonstrate that Year Up students experience significant earnings gains after a year in the labour market, compared to a control group.⁷ Year Up participants earned about \$13,000 more than members of the control group over the three years after the programme and participants' earnings were 32 percent higher than those of the control group.⁸ Year Up participants who graduated and secured jobs in either of the programme's two target occupations, IT and finance, earned the highest hourly wages (\$17.42-\$18.89).

Employers' incentives for working with Year Up go beyond corporate social responsibility. Year Up offers a recruitment pipeline to employers seeking to fill middle-skilled jobs that do not necessarily require a degree. With over 300 corporate partners, Year Up has established a strong network of private-sector employers by building a trusted brand. It widens its network of employers by "getting in the door with small asks" and "consulting with employers to understand their needs".⁹

The programme's reach remains limited, however. Year Up estimate there are six to seven million young people not in living-wage jobs or education, and that they serve less than one per cent of Opportunity Youth. Staff estimate that due to the limited number of spaces available, they have to turn away at least 50 per cent of eligible applicants. In an effort to widen its reach and build sustainable financial models, Year Up has begun to collaborate with community colleges and develop bespoke models for individual companies. Year Up Providence and Hasbro worked together to develop a curriculum to prepare young people for 250 permanent jobs at Hasbro, with Hasbro investing more than \$1 million to launch the programme. The company has committed to hiring 75 per cent of those who graduate from the training and to helping the remaining graduates into sustainable employment elsewhere in Providence. The Professional Training Corps is a community college based model that provides an opportunity for students to engage in meaningful workforce training. In this model, students are dual-enrolled in the community college and Year Up; technical skills are taught by college faculty, while Year Up staff provide professional skills and other wrap-around services. Year Up is also sharing lessons and best practice with others to help improve ways of working.

Improving young people's work preparation

Strong local leadership is a pre-condition for city-wide collaboration. Partnership can make individual organisations and initiatives more financially sustainable over the long term by allowing organisations to leverage multiple sources of funding.

7 Roder, A. and Elliott, M. (2011) A Promising Start: Year Up's Initial Impacts on Low-Income Young Adults' Career, Economic Mobility Corporation.

8 Roder, A. and Elliott, M. (2014) Sustained Gains: Year up's Continued Impact on Young Adult's Earnings, Economic Mobility Corporation.

9 Interview.

Bringing cross-sector leaders together and keeping them engaged

Lead organisation: Manchester Bidwell Corporation

Location: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, US

Year: 1968 – to present

Keywords: Youth skills training; International

Read the full report here: [Youth Opportunity: Lessons from the US](#)

Bill Strickland is the founder and CEO of the Manchester Bidwell Corporation, an arts and vocational training centre in Pittsburgh. It is founded on the following principles: every human is valuable, environment influences behaviour and creativity fuels enterprise. Managers aim to instil a culture of ‘learn, create, and celebrate’. And there is a recognition that schools can’t do everything.

The centre has an annual budget of \$10 million and receives funding from the Department of Human Services, corporate sponsorship (including the donation of equipment) and foundation grants. The Corporation also partners with schools, other CBOs and universities to recruit young people and provide teaching staff. It offers vocational training programmes, working with Heinz in food tech, Bayer in chemical testing and University of Pittsburgh Medical Centre (UPMC) in primary care.

There is a sense among partners that they “are doing something well”, which is evident in the outcome measures the Corporation collates. The graduation rate is currently 98 per cent and the approach has been replicated in five other cities to date. The experience of cities that have established centres highlights the importance of leadership in maintaining the highest standards and working with others in the local community: “the most difficult element to replicate is the culture. In areas where it hasn’t worked it has been due to lack of leadership and ownership rather than money or resource. Local communities also need to have ownership of it”.¹⁰

Ensuring young people develop the skills employers want

Strong partnership with employers means young people are more likely to develop the skills employers want and employers are more likely to recruit programme participants.

Local training paths for vocational training

Lead organisations: County and municipal representative organisations; the state employment office

Location: North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), Germany

Year: 2011

Keywords: Youth skills training; Youth employment; International

Read the full report here: [Delivering change: Cities and the Youth Unemployment Challenge](#)

Local partners in NRW, including unions, employer umbrella organisations, chambers, ministries, the state employment office, and county and municipal representative organisations, agreed a ‘Training Consensus’

¹⁰ Interview

for vocational training in 2011.¹¹² The aim was to offer a training contract to every school leaver with the necessary general skills looking for an apprenticeship.

Partners work together to:

- Provide training in a recognised qualification for those who do not find an apprenticeship
- Improve career guidance in schools
- Provide internships for pupils
- Offer competence assessments to school leavers
- Offer the possibility of acquiring university entrance qualifications in vocational schools

The aim of the ‘Training Consensus’ is to use existing programmes more effectively. Because of this there is no additional financing for the pact. A regional consultancy agency, financed by the state, advises and monitors the pact. It is viewed as a good way to involve unions and employer representatives, and to ensure strong employer representation.

Developing strong partnerships with employers

Lead organisations: Rotterdam’s port, DAAD, Shipping and Transport College

Location: Rotterdam, Netherlands

Year: 2008 – 2011

Keywords: Youth skills training; Apprenticeships; Youth employment; International

Read the full report here: [Delivering change: Cities and the Youth Unemployment Challenge](#)

Rotterdam’s port provides jobs for approximately 90,000 people and due to growth and an ageing workforce demand for new personnel is rising. Employers foresaw a significant problem in recruiting young people equipped with the necessary skills to do the job in coming years. In response, the port in partnership with DAAD (the regional employers service desk) and the Shipping and Transport College, developed a training scheme in 2008.¹³

The training offers young people without any qualifications the opportunity to secure paid employment by completing an apprenticeship. Over 40 weeks, candidates work four days a week, and spend one day a week attending the Shipping and Transport College. Candidates receive an apprentice fee from the employer for the first 16 weeks (which is higher than social welfare payments), after which they are offered a contract for at least 12 months. The companies involved pay for the necessary equipment and provide guidance on the work floor. The project is funded by the stakeholders involved, with 60 per cent provided by the City of Rotterdam, 20 per cent by employers and 20 per cent by the Shipping and Transport College.

On average, 75 per cent of participants successfully complete the course and of these successful candidates, 80 per cent proceed to train as all round operators. The project resulted in around 500 young people being employed in the Rotterdam port in 2010 and 2011.

11 North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) in West Germany is the country’s most populous state and contains four of Germany’s largest cities – Cologne, Dusseldorf, Dortmund, Essen.

12 Evans, S. and Bosch, G. (2012) Apprenticeships in London: Boosting Skills in a City Economy with Comment on Lessons from Germany, OECD.

13 Ivaes, B. et al (2012) Report from Rotterdam: ‘Revit, Stockholms stad.

Re-engaging young people

Tailored, continuous support can re-engage young people and help ensure they complete their qualification or course, or stay in employment.

Offering flexible vocational training schemes for young people

Lead organisation: Third Way in Vocational Training Initiative

Location: North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), Germany

Year: 2006

Keywords: Youth skills training; Youth employment; International

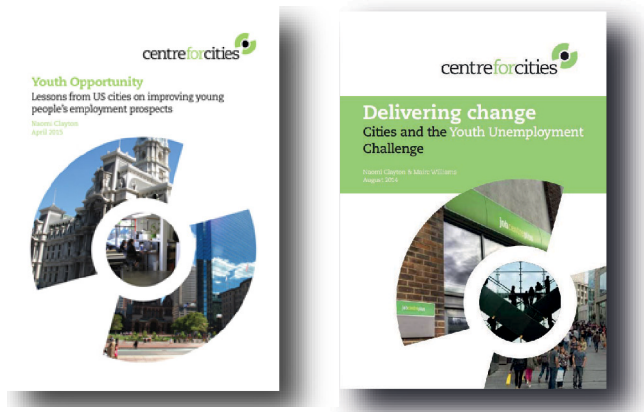
Read the full report here: [Delivering change: Cities and the Youth Unemployment Challenge](#)

A growing number of youths in NRW with no or poor school qualifications were failing to complete vocational training courses and acquire recognised qualifications. The Third Way in Vocational Training Initiative (TWVTI) began as a pilot in 2006 involving 800 youths, offering a more flexible vocational training scheme.¹⁴

The scheme worked with local colleges to adapt their traditional vocational training courses into a series of flexible modules. Under the trial, all youths who withdraw from their training are able to re-enter the learning process within a period of up to five years and to acquire a recognised certificate for the competencies gained successfully up to that point. The initiative has identified that it is necessary to work continuously in very small groups in order to achieve noticeable learning progress. Integration in higher performing groups within vocational colleges usually ends in failure after a short while.

14 Froy, F., Giguère, S. and Hofer, A. (eds) (2012) Designing Local Skills Strategies, OECD

More information



The case studies in this document come from the reports:

'*Youth opportunity: Lessons from the US*' published in 2015. Read it at: www.centreforcities.org/publication/youth-opportunity-lessons-from-the-us-on-improving-young-peoples-employment-prospects/

'*Delivering change: Cities and the Youth Unemployment challenge*' published in 2014. Read it at: www.centreforcities.org/publication/delivering-change-cities-and-the-youth-unemployment-challenge/

You can find more case studies on our website across key areas of economic growth policy such as housing, transport, business growth and innovation.

Go to our website at www.centreforcities.org for more.

August 2017

Centre for Cities
Second Floor
9 Holyrood Street
London SE1 2EL

020 7803 4300

info@centreforcities.org
www.centreforcities.org

© Centre for Cities 2017

Centre for Cities is a registered charity (No 1119841) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England (No 6215397)