

Success of the 2010 TANF Summer Youth Program

OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND OF THE PROGRAM

The Iowa General Assembly appropriated money from TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) Emergency Funds to administer a Summer Youth Program in 2010. This program provided an opportunity for youth to find employment during a period with high youth unemployment. The month of July is typically the summertime peak in youth employment, but in 2010, the share of young people who were employed in July was 48.9 percent, the lowest July rate on record for the series, which began in 1948ⁱ. The program came at a crucial time, when youth needed another avenue to get summer jobs, as many opportunities were either cut or given to adults looking for work.

The TANF Emergency Funding was provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. Program oversight was provided by the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS), and it was administered by Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) and workforce regions. This year's program differed from the previous year's summer youth program, in that private sector employers were included. Private sector, for-profit businesses made up 51 percent of the work sites in 2010.



SUCCESS OF THE SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAM

In total, 689 youth participated in the Summer Youth Program. More than 50 percent of the students were minorities. After the program ended, 10-11 percent of students were either hired on at the work site or received employment as a result of the work experience after it was done.

Employers noted the following about the program:

- "We really appreciate the program and hope it will continue."
- "We had the ability to mentor young adults and give them a taste of this work environment. I was able to give one participant a trade to help her find employment anywhere in the world."
- "We really enjoyed working with the participants and hope to again in the future. The program offers additional staff during the months when we need them most, and for that, we are thankful!"
- "This program was a success. It helped not only us, but the individual's potential in the workforce as well."

Of employers in Region 9 (Davenport area), 95 percent were satisfied or very satisfied with the program. Eighty seven percent indicated that they would like to participate in a future summer youth program.

Success Story

Autumn is 20 years old and receives FIP (Family Investment Program) and food assistance. She was hired as a customer service representative assistant. Her smile and cheerful attitude set a great tone for interactions in the office. She caught on very quickly to the insurance business as well as to her duties, and always took the initiative to stay busy. She did things without being asked, which both supervisors greatly appreciated.

Her supervisor stated, "Autumn relieved a lot of my stress. She is very good at what she does and has been very efficient. She always took the initiative to find something to do. She gets to the things that we would never think of, such as putting tabs on the files so we know what is where. All these things are a great help. I know Autumn would be capable of much more with a few lessons."

When asked to sum up how she felt about her current placement, Autumn stated, "I absolutely love it. I'm glad I came here, and I would love the opportunity to be hired."

FUTURE STEPS

For future summer youth programming, AIWP recommends the following:

- Resources should be devoted to a summer youth program each year. This would give workforce regions an opportunity to plan for an annual program. Ensuring that youth are work-ready contributes to the economic vitality of the state. Youth are trained in soft skills (i.e. communication, attendance, professionalism), which employers view as key skills for the workforce.
- Expand eligibility to include those who qualify for free or reduced school lunches. This would allow workforce regions to serve students with high-need who are not currently eligible. (The program currently requires two risk factors to participate.)
- Create direct connections with older youth and the Career Readiness Certificate to demonstrate capacity for hard and soft skills in participants. There is already an established Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) program being utilized in Iowa.
- Include partnerships with the private sector to provide financial literacy and mentoring opportunities in career pathways. Financial literacy is a crucial life skill that is necessary for success.
- Restructure performance measures for Workforce Investment Act summer youth programming to reflect outcomes associated with employment and skills advancement.

ABOUT AIWP

The Association of Iowa Workforce Partners (AIWP) is an assembly of direct workforce service providers. AIWP strives to enrich Iowa's economic development through the delivery of innovative workforce services. AIWP works to provide the link between people, communities and industry. AIWP was established in 2000 and currently has 17 member organizations. Current members include Workforce Investment Act providers, Iowa Workforce Development, and agencies serving special populations.

ⁱ Department of Labor. 2010. *Employment and Unemployment Among Youth Summary*.

