CAREER DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE TOOLKIT
COMPANION PIECE

Education Systems Center
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

This document has been created by Education Systems Center in partnership with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

This **Career Development Experience (CDE) Toolkit Companion Piece** is meant to be viewed in tandem with the Career Development Experience Toolkit from Education Systems Center at NIU. The CDE Toolkit guide and online resources released in Fall 2019 adhere to the framework of the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act for College and Career Pathway Endorsements. While these materials adhere to the CCPE Framework for high school students, they are also meant to serve any organization that seeks to provide rigorous work-based learning opportunities to youth. Career Development Experiences are part of Illinois' broader work-based learning continuum and refer to a broad array of experiential learning that address the components included in the statutory definition of the Career Pathways Dictionary.

The purpose of this extension is to explore Career Development Experiences and provide resources to address the needs of stakeholders outside of a traditional high school setting including: workforce development organizations, community-based organizations, and alternative high schools. This companion piece targets these organizations and employers in order to serve youth more inclusively.

ABOUT EDUCATION SYSTEMS CENTER

The mission of Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University (EdSystems) is to shape and strengthen education and workforce systems to advance racial equity and prepare more young people for productive careers and lives in a global economy. EdSystems leads and manages the Illinois P-20 Council's College and Career Readiness Committee, which drove the development and adoption of the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act. EdSystems is supporting communities across Illinois in implementing college and career pathway systems that incorporate high-quality Career Development Experiences.

Learn more about EdSystems at www.edsystemsniu.org.

ABOUT THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

DCEO's mission is to provide economic opportunities for businesses, entrepreneurs, and residents that improve the quality of life for all Illinoisans. They are laser-focused on improving transparency and accountability, enhancing customer service, increasing Illinois' competitiveness, advancing minority empowerment, modernizing Illinois' workforce, and elevating the state's promotional efforts. Learn more here.

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Why a Companion Piece?

TOOLKIT TERMINOLOGY

Participant
The individual who will participate in the CDE: high school student, opportunity youth, participant in a non-profit/community-based youth development program, etc.

Managing Organization or Organization
Lead entity working to organize and coordinate the delivery of CDEs to Participants: in this context, most commonly youth provider organizations. Also includes school, non-profit or community-based organization, chamber of commerce, other public private institutions, religious organization, etc. May also be a convening organization or intermediary in a community.
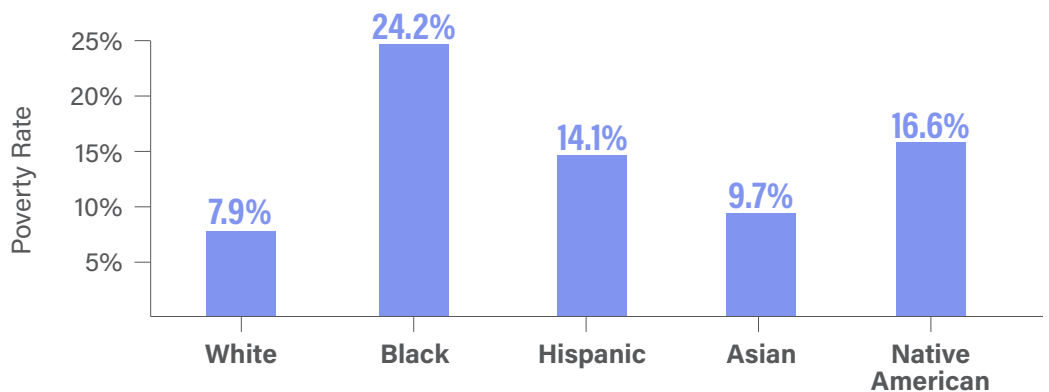
Host
Typically thought of as the employer, the company or Organization providing the workplace or authentic working conditions for a Participant to complete their CDE.

WHY A COMPANION PIECE?

Before moving forward with this companion piece, it's crucial to discuss why a Career Development Experience (CDE) Toolkit Extension is so important with an inclusion and equity lens. Across our Country, we are having more honest conversations about systemic racism and injustice. While our original toolkit is meant to serve any organization that seeks to provide rigorous work-based learning opportunities to Participants, Education Systems Center at NIU is committed to targeting our CDE resources with a focus on Opportunity Youth and underserved populations. In the United States and in Illinois, disparities in education and employment outcomes can't be discussed without considering racism and poverty. In order to build context and empathy, we want to start by highlighting systemic disparities.

DISPARITIES IN POVERTY

In 2020 there were 1.4 million people in Illinois living in poverty, which accounts for about 11.5% of the population. Poverty here is defined as living below the poverty line of $25,926 for a family of four in 2019, according to TalkPoverty, a project of the Center for American Progress.

Poverty Rate:
- White: 7.9%
- Black: 24.2%
- Hispanic: 14.1%
- Asian: 9.7%
- Native American: 16.6%

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT DISPARITIES

Grades 3 – 8 (Reading / Math):
- White: Reading 49%, Math 42%
- Black: Reading 19%, Math 12%
- Hispanic: Reading 27%, Math 21%
- Asian: Reading 67%, Math 68%
- Native American: Reading 32%, Math 25%
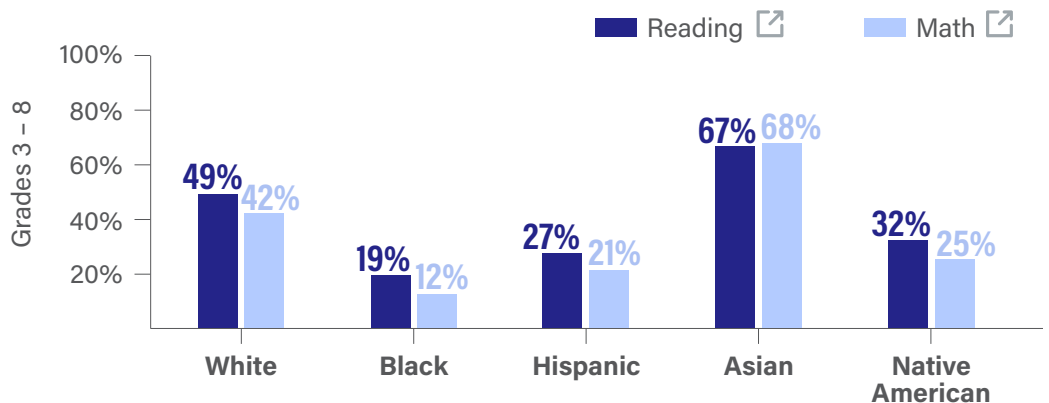
GRADUATION RATE DISPARITIES

4-Year Graduation Rates in 2020

Category	Rate
White	92%
Black	80%
Hispanic	86%
Asian	95%
Native American	80%
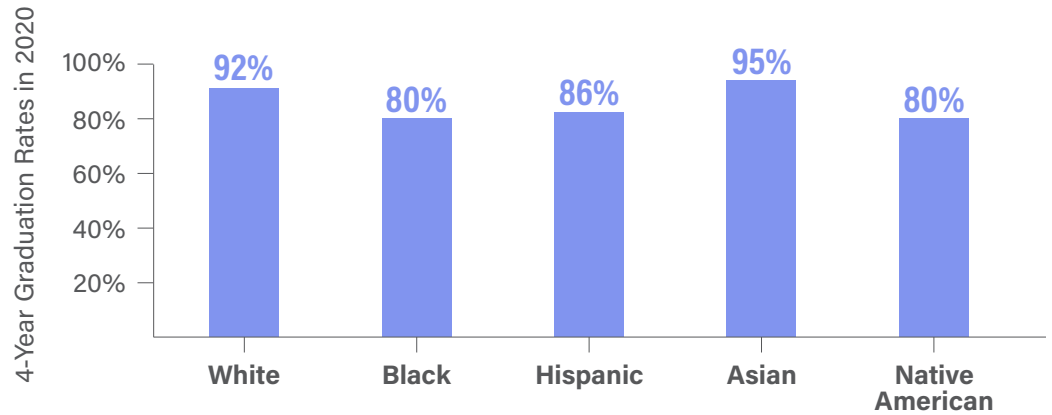
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

These inequities across race and ethnicity continue into the workforce. Unemployment is typically higher among Black and Latino or Hispanic young people. Existing inequities have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As of October 2020, the unemployment rate in the United States was 6.9%. Youth were hit particularly hard.

Legend:
- Teenagers (16–19)
- Young Adults (20–24)
- Adults (25+)

Unemployment Rate

2019:
	Teenagers (16–19)	Young Adults (20–24)
White	12%	6%
Black	21%	12%
Hispanic	15%	7%
Asian	8%	6%

2020:
	Teenagers (16–19)	Young Adults (20–24)	Adults (25+)
October	14%	11%	6%

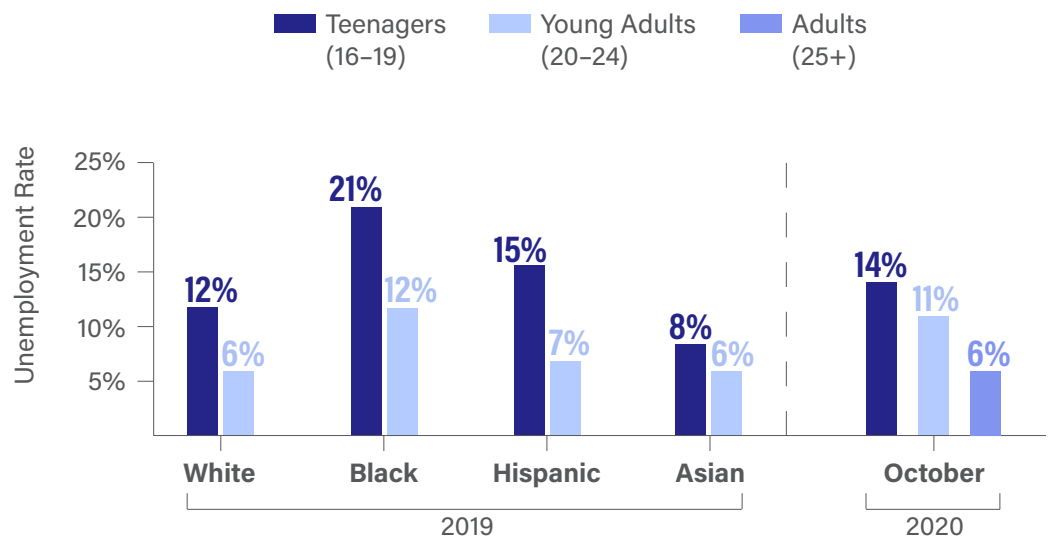Youth are more likely to work in industries with greater direct impact of COVID-19 restrictions, such as retail, hospitality, and food service. Despite new burdens that schools and organizations face from the pandemic, now is a critical time to expand career development opportunities. As this Brookings Institution report shares, "Given the contribution that work-based learning can make to greater equity in education, workforce development, and employment for young people from marginalized communities, it is particularly important at this time. It would be a mistake to shelve this tested vehicle for expanding career-related opportunity."

Learn more about this data and the implications of COVID on equity in work-based learning in the Brookings Institution Report.

After reviewing the data listed above, what does this make you wonder about the experiences of people in your community? What did you know already, and what do you want to learn more about?

For more detailed information about best practices for engaging with Hosts, check out the CDE Toolkit Host Engagament section.

OUR CONVICTION

This companion piece seeks to address disparities that are the result of systemic racism, which intentionally provides access and opportunities to white, affluent families while stifling the potential of low-income people and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Even more, the impacts of COVID-19 disproportionately affects young adults and young adults of color, aggravating these inequities. To that end, it is critical that nonprofits, employers, and education providers connect youth who have been historically pushed to the margins with meaningful connections to careers.

The Center for High Impact Philanthropy at the University of Pennsylvania finds, "of the nearly 40 million Americans between the ages of 16 to 24 in the U.S., approximately five million are neither employed nor in school. That translates to 1 in 8, more than double the rate of some Western European countries. In rural areas of the U.S., the number grows to 1 in 5."

High percentages of Opportunity Youth reside in rural and urban counties throughout the state of Illinois, as demonstrated by the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies. See the statewide map with the distribution of Opportunity Youth.

HOW CAN ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE HOSTS TO WORK WITH HISTORICALLY-UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS?

Hosts may have biases or misconceptions about Opportunity Youth, but Managing Organizations can utilize this information to encourage Hosts to hire Opportunity Youth and to dispel any biases within their own organization. The Career Development Experience Toolkit covers additional best practices for engaging with Hosts. The practices include details on "making the ask" to partner with Hosts, creating and growing relationships, and setting expectations with Hosts.

Research indicates that youth who fall in the Opportunity Youth category may be more reliable compared to their millennial peers who are attached to work and jobs. A Gallup study found that 21% of millennials changed jobs in the last year, at a rate three times higher than non-millennials. However, some organizations that employ Opportunity Youth find that they are more engaged and stay with their employer longer.

"Because we invest in them, they invest in us." ⬀
Ebony Frelix
Senior Vice President for Philanthropy and Engagement, Salesforce.org

How can a Managing Organization utilize this information to encourage Hosts to hire Opportunity Youth?

Data collected from 300 employers in Year Up's national network, an organization that "seeks to close the Opportunity Divide by ensuring that young adults gain the skills, experiences, and support that will empower them to reach their potential through careers and higher education," reveal an important pattern about Opportunity Youth's dedication to their employer:

"Younger workers stay in their first job for about 18 months on average. But for opportunity youth, the figure is more than twice as long—40 to 45 months."

Opportunity Youth represent untapped potential for companies and organizations. Utilizing Opportunity Youth adds a robust, loyal, and talented pipeline to help your company grow and thrive.

The Commonwealth Corporation developed strategies to use when connecting with potential Hosts. In the "Pitching Your Service to Employers" section, this toolkit outlines two methods through which to encourage a Host to partner with you — the business-need pitch and community-service pitch — and recommends combining elements of both.

MODELS

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY MODEL?

A community model refers to a partnership between a Host and a Managing Organization. Usually, the Managing Organization identifies and trains Participants and the Host provides work-related tasks and oversight through supervision and mentoring by a designated Host Supervisor.

All CDEs should include a Host Supervisor, as outlined the CDE Toolkit. In addition to a Host Supervisor, a Mentor at the Managing Organization site can be an effective addition to support Opportunity Youth.

MENTORSHIP RESOURCES FOR MANAGING ORGANIZATIONS

Participant/Mentor relationships allow for more personal interactions than Participant/Host Supervisor relationships. In hopes of building meaningful relationships between Participants and Mentors, it is important to create space to check-in on a personal level. When organizations solicit specific ways their program can meet Participant needs, they are able to more sincerely serve Participants. Managing Organizations can utilize the Host and Participant Check-In Meeting Template and add in the questions below that further create opportunities for connection.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR MENTOR / PARTICIPANT CHECK-INS

For Current Participants	For Former Participants
• How is everything going? • What's one good thing that happened with the Host this week? • What's one thing that could have gone better with the Host this week? • Is there anything I/the Organization can do to help? • What are you thinking about next steps for after your CDE?	• How is everything going in your life? • What's one good thing that happened this week? • What's one thing that could have gone better? • Are you currently working or completing a training program? • Is there anything I/the Organization can do to help? Are there any specific topics or skills you want to work on? • What are your next steps?

TOOLKIT TERMINOLOGY

Community Model
A community model refers to a partnership between a Host and a Managing Organization. Usually, the Managing Organization identifies and trains Participants and the Host provides work-related tasks and oversight through supervision and mentoring by a designated Host Supervisor.

Mentor
Many Managing Organizations utilize Mentors when working with Participants. Mentors build individual relationships with Participants, provide ongoing tailored support, by building Participants' professional development and connecting them to needed resources and social services, and oversee Participant efficacy.

These check-ins do not need to occur in person. In order to respect the time and varied commitments of Opportunity Youth, can your Managing Organization offer these check-ins over the phone or through a virtual meeting platform?

Are you thinking about Participants beyond the scope of their engagement with your Managing Organization?

STAFFING CONSIDERATIONS

The Toolkit addresses staffing considerations to underscore what responsibilities must be taken on by the Managing Organization regarding Participants and Hosts. Additional Staffing Considerations for Managing Organization with equity in mind include:

Identify and train Mentors. This training should include cultural competency training.

- Cultural competence is "the ability to understand, navigate, and honor the language, rules, and behaviors of a subgroup or organization." You can read more about the importance of developing this skill through Jobs for the Future's report of How Intermediaries Can Help Black and Latinx Youth Develop a Strong Occupational Identity.

- The National Mentoring Resource Center hosts a library of resources with option for cultural competency training.

Provide Participants the option for training or office hours relating to HR procedures and paperwork.

Offer opportunities to connect or work virtually whenever possible. Offering phone or video meetings and webinars in place of in-person requirements keeps equity at the forefront of the CDE. This way, the various scheduling and transportation needs of Participants need not be a barrier to their participation. The financial burden and time commitment of commuting for Participants can be avoided with advancing technology, such as video conferencing and online shared documents. Consider as many opportunities as possible to offer virtual engagements. Organizations must confirm that Participants have a device and internet at home or other needed equipment. If they do not, can your organization offer them a device or stipend to meet these needs?

PARTICIPANTS MAY BENEFIT FROM MENTORS OR HOST SUPERVISORS OF SIMILAR RACIAL OR CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

When youth can choose their mentor, they tend to select mentors of the same race as them. Research finds that same-race mentorship, i.e. when the Mentee and Mentor are the same race, can be beneficial when both people are the same gender as well. In these cases, female and male mentees both reported increased self-esteem.

Cross-race matching can still be beneficial, but mentors must be culturally competent for these relationships to be of benefit for the mentees. Mentors can pay special attention to relational aspects and engage with both the strengths and struggles of Participants. Facilitating authenticity, empowerment, mutual engagement, conflict management, and empathy are all components of a quality mentoring relationship.

When staffing Mentors or Host Supervisors to serve Opportunity Youth in your Organization, it is important to consider diversity and representation of the Mentors and Host Supervisors. How are you understanding the identity of Participants, Mentors, and Hosts Supervisors and matching them with intention?

BUSINESS AND CAREER SERVICES INC ⬏

One effective organization serving Opportunity Youth in Illinois is Business and Career Services, Inc (BCS), which operates the North Suburban Cook County American Job Center.

Manufacturing Careers Internship Program
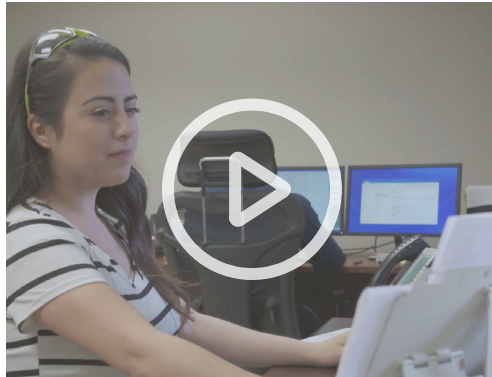
Watch Video ⬏

Watch Video ⬏

BCS has served over 900 individuals since 2011. Training for Participants lasts anywhere from two to nine weeks, including everything from using a forklift to workplace skills to financial literacy. Participants then complete a six to eight week paid internship with a Host. BCS sees promising retention and success rates for Participants: 75% of individuals complete the program and 85% of individuals who complete the program are placed in an employment opportunity. BCS attributes this success in part due to their mentorship model. Both relationship building and accountability are necessary when working with Participants. BCS team members case manage Participants from bootcamp, through the internship, and remain engaged even after the program. Team members visit Participants at their work sites, complete periodic checks on Fridays, and complete a final evaluation.

Are you planning for continued support and engagement with Participants beyond the CDE?

"Our goal as an agency is not only to help participants obtain employment, but to retain employment. We don't want to give participants access to just one job, but rather the tools to remain gainfully employed through retirement."

Eddie Perez
Youth Services Manager, Business and Career Services, Inc

Keeping Participants engaged in CDEs or pursuing their next opportunity can be a challenge. The Supports and Services for Participants After the CDE section of this toolkit contains more information about how to further support Participants and keep Participants engaged, both with your Organization and with CDEs.

WHAT IS A HOST-LED MODEL?

Are you a Host-led Model?
How can you engage the community, including and beyond schools, to include Opportunity Youth and underserved populations in training your future workforce?

For Host-led Models, it is also important to consider if virtual engagements for Participants will work. This equity-based approach considers the varied transportation and scheduling needs of Participants. The financial burden and time commitment of commuting for Participants can be avoided with advancing technology, such as video conferencing and online shared documents. Consider as many opportunities as possible to offer virtual engagements. Hosts must confirm that Participants have a device and internet at home, or other needed equipment and provide resources for internet at home, or other needed equipment.

Companies that create internal programs usually employ the following:

Internships

An internship is any official or formal program to provide practical experience for beginners in an occupation or profession.

Illinois workNet ↗

Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship is an employer-driven, earn while you learn model that combines structured, on-the-job training with job-related instruction in curricula tied to the attainment of industry-recognized skills standards and leading to an industry credential.

Illinois Career Pathways Dictionary ↗

Leadership Rotations

Rotation programs offer in-depth experiences, ongoing mentorship, and targeted training across a range of business areas within a company. They help Participants understand an organization's many moving parts and determine where their skills and interests best fit.

Columbia University's Center for Career Education ↗

Partnering with Local Education Providers

Hosts can partner with K-12 schools and community-based organizations to help recruit Participants. Other Hosts partner with community colleges to develop tuition-reimbursement programs or opportunities for Participants to earn a degree during the program.

Caterpillar utilizes partnerships with schools to build up the skills of incoming Participants and ensure their future talent pool is ready. Caterpillar communicates with schools about the necessary competencies and skills required, which are connected to the State's recommended Technical Competencies for Manufacturing, Engineering, Technology & Trades.

CATERPILLAR

Caterpillar ↗

A high-quality example of a Host-led program is Aon's Apprenticeship Program, which includes an apprenticeship and a partnership with local education providers.

AON'S APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM ⬏

Aon launched an apprenticeship program in partnership with City Colleges of Chicago in 2017. High school graduates have the opportunity to take part in this two-year program, through which they will develop necessary skills and earn a salary with full benefits while they learn. Participants are provided on-the-job training, an individual mentor, and the opportunity to earn their associate's degree during the program. At the completion of the apprenticeships, Participants are offered full-time positions with Aon.

Aon, Accenture, and Zurich Insurance partnered in 2017 to create the Chicago Apprentice Network, which now has over 40 participating organizations. The Chicago Apprentice Network created an apprenticeship playbook and starter guide for other companies interested in starting their own apprenticeship program.

NATIONAL MODEL

National, federally-funded efforts are underway to support Opportunity Youth's reconnection to education or employment. We can learn from these models for local implementation of CDEs.

THE OPPORTUNITY YOUTH FORUM ⬈

The Opportunity Youth Forum seeks to support communities to design and implement postsecondary and career pathways for Opportunity Youth to create sustainable community change. The Forum is now comprised of over 30 organizations nationwide.

The Forum found that most organizations involved youth in planning organizational, programmatic, and pathway systems. For example, two Del Norte and Detroit used human-centered design processes to engage youth in re-envisioning programs and pathways.

Key lessons from the Forum encourage Organizations to:

Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3
Design intentional pathways that clearly link steps from recruitment and engagement to retention and alumni supports for Opportunity Youth.	Include youth voice to garner user insight on the structure and content of pathways for CDEs.	Include Host input so that pathways prepare Participants to fill high-demand and well-paying jobs in the local labor market.

💡 HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Hartford devised a strategy to create programming based on young people's level of job readiness. Hartford seeks to meet youth where they are. They created two separate pathways, one for Participants seeking education and one for Participants seeking employment. Regardless of the pathway, the Hartford program provides personalized guidance and support including social support, support for pregnant and/or parenting youth, career and academic advising, learning communities, and civic engagement and leadership opportunities.

Through their Youth Leadership Program, Hartford included youth voices by inviting youth to meet with state leaders and other decision makers to discuss key issues affecting Opportunity Youth in the region.

Hartford also created a survey for youth seeking services. The Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative Training and Employment Navigation Tool directs survey respondents to various programs and services based on their response.

ENSURING SUCCESS FOR OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

DEFINING EQUITY

What is equity? Every organization and community may have a different definition of what equity is and what it looks like. In this Companion Piece, equity means providing differentiated supports and services for Participants based on what they need to be successful.

In order to recruit, retain, and support Opportunity Youth, organizations must consider key factors in developing or refining CDEs.

The following are some key components of the evidence-based practices for serving Opportunity Youth for both Managing Organizations and Hosts:

Utilize youth voice/Participant voice throughout the CDE process

Connect Opportunity Youth Participants with alumni resources and explicit access to education and/or employment

Provide robust wrap around services for Participants

Include social and emotional learning development in CDE opportunity

Create space for meaningful relationships between Mentors or Host Supervisors and Participants

Consider a two-generation approach

Look out for the icons later in this section to understand how other organizations have implemented these practices in their support of Opportunity Youth.

COMMON BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS FOR ENGAGING OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

It's important for organizations and employers to be cognizant of potential challenges that different historically marginalized groups face. In order to commit to equity, it's crucial that we redress these challenges and barriers to ensure all potential Participants have access to job opportunities and development. These challenges are not meant to be exhaustive, nor discouraging. Rather, we can only truly serve youth with equitable access when we are considering and addressing these challenges.

EXAMPLE SOLUTION-ORIENTED MODELS AND KEY SUPPORTS

TARGET YOUTH POPULATION

KEY SUPPORTS & MODELS

BIPOC

Enhance survivor support of vicarious racial trauma through Participants' relationships with Mentors or Host Supervisors. This YouthBuild guide encourages organizations to build a growth mindset, develop social and emotional learning skills, offer dialogue and collaboration, practice mindfulness, and implement other cognitive strategies.

Social Emotional Learning

2X

White POC

LGBTQ people of color (POC) are at least **twice as likely** as white LGBTQ people to say they **have been personally discriminated against** because they are LGBTQ when applying for jobs and interacting with police.

YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

Provide a stipend for a career readiness training before Participants begin a paid CDE. One program through Foster Forward offers a $100 incentive for completion of a full training and 12 weeks of one-on-one career coaching. This organization also provides financial literacy training and seed money for a personal savings account for youth impacted by foster care.

Wrap Around Services

24% of youth in the foster care system are ages 13-20.

YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Practice persistent outreach to Opportunity Youth, as Opportunity Youth who could greatly benefit from a CDE but do not seek them out can be one the most challenging components of equitable recruitment practices. Heartland Alliance recommends employing street outreach teams that "canvass the service area in vans to engage young people, offer help or rides, and educate them about available services."

Resources and Explicit access to Education and/or Employment

As of January 2019, Illinois had an estimated **10,199 experiencing homelessness** on any given day, as reported by Continuums of Care to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Of that total, **1,105 were family households**, **609 were unaccompanied young adults** (ages 18-24).

EXAMPLE SOLUTION-ORIENTED MODELS AND KEY SUPPORTS

TARGET YOUTH POPULATION	KEY SUPPORTS & MODELS	
YOUTH INVOLVED IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM	Develop a referral system with the juvenile justice system (this practice can be used with other systems as well, such as foster care) to ensure Opportunity Youth have connections to meaningful opportunities. One successful initiative, which partnered the Department of Youth Services and the Collaborative for Educational Services in Massachusetts, required that transportation be provided to program participants.	**9,014** youth were arrested in Illinois in 2018. Wrap Around Services
LGBTQ+ YOUTH	It is up to the Participant to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity. However, as an organization, you can provide students with the opportunity to identify themselves if they wish. Examples provided by The National Association of College and Employers include having optional fields on forms and name tags to designate a preferred name or personal pronoun. Personal pronoun examples include he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/them/theirs, and ze/hir/hirs. Organizations can ask Participants how they would like to be addressed when in individual sessions, and you can start by sharing your name and pronouns.	At least one in five surveyed LGBTQ people—**20%**—reported that they had **experienced discrimination** when applying for jobs because they were LGBTQ. Youth Voice + Meaningful Relationships
YOUTH PARENTS	Create connections to local childhood education centers, such as Head Start or Early Head Start. Some dual-generation programs, such as the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, recruit cohorts of parents and children for workforce training and childhood education, respectively. These programs offer additional support through peer cohorts and parenting education workshops.	Currently only **50.1%** of Illinois residents have a high-quality post-secondary college or career credential. Wrap Around Services + Two-Generation Support

WHAT ARE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR EMBEDDING EQUITY AND INCLUSION INTO MY CAREER DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES?

Equity in Career Development Experiences: A Guide for Hosts ↗

This resource can serve as a tool for Hosts to think through the importance of serving Participants with equity in mind. This resource highlights the importance of payment/stipend, access to transportation, flexible scheduling, childcare responsibilities, and other considerations that Hosts must plan for when employing Opportunity Youth.

VIRTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

With a rapid shift toward remote opportunities, organizations must ensure that the principles and standards from the CDE Toolkit and this Companion Piece are upheld. With that in mind, virtual work-based learning is one equity-driven practice your organization can utilize when possible.

RESOURCE

A Framework for Virtual Work-Based Learning - Education Systems Center at NIU

↗

Transportation

Providing authentic, high-quality work-based learning in a remote environment can increase the number of Participants able to access opportunities in a way that doesn't require transportation.

Distance, Size, and Type of Partner Sites

Through virtual work-based learning, Participants can engage with Host sites across the state, nation, and even internationally! Virtual work-based learning also provides the opportunity to engage with Hosts with small teams, or Hosts who don't have a physical location.

Diverse Student Needs For Support and Access

Virtual work-based learning should be structured to support and address the cognitive, emotional, physical, and sensory needs of Participants to engage in high-quality work-based learning. Managing Organizations can also be intentional about matching Participants to Host staff that reflect the diverse identities of Participants to better support relationship building and mentoring.

To ensure virtual work-based learning is just as robust and authentic as it is in-person, communities should consider the following factors when designing experiences:

- How are Participants intentionally engaged in opportunities for self-reflection and supported to work independently?

- What is the guidance for Hosts to communicate safely and provide intentional mentoring to Participants? (Resource: Guidance for Host and Participant Check-Ins)

- How are expectations for work products and outcomes being communicated to Participants?

- Are virtual platforms being utilized to maintain as much interactivity and targeted engagement as possible? (Use of polls, working in small break-out groups, etc.)

- Do the opportunities provided address multiple levels of technology access and ability to interact remotely? (Resource: Education Pathway Work-based Learning Continuum Example)

- Do Participants have stable internet access and a high-quality device? Can your organization offer stipends to provide these needed tools? If not, how can your organization partner with local libraries or other companies to offer needed technology to Participants?

SUPPORTS AND SERVICES FOR PARTICIPANTS DURING AND AFTER THE CDE

When working with Opportunity Youth, there must be an explicit connection to further resources, education, or employment throughout the program so that Opportunity Youth leave with clear next steps in their development towards a career and/or further education. Managing Organizations and Hosts can take steps to ensure Opportunity Youth are continuing successfully along their career pathway.

Participant input is essential for organizations to understand how to build Participants' professional skills and support their transition to the next opportunity along their career pathway.

The best way to assess what Participants will find meaningful is to ask them. Using alumni engagement surveys, you can invite Participants to identify areas they could use additional information and support.	Oftentimes, the requests may be to cover topics that might not feel as directly connected to work, but rather workforce participation. For example, How do I file my taxes? Where can I find childcare? How can I access emergency housing? How do I make the most of my bank account?	Addressing the potential challenges identified by Participants increases organizational credibility and Participants' access to continued CDEs and education.

Social Capital
Social capital is most easily understood as, "it's not what you know; it's who you know." More specifically, social capital is an individual's resources gathered through relationships, which include information, insight, and connections, that may lead to educational opportunities or employment. Increasing social capital is an equity-focused practice; it can help combat lived experiences of Opportunity Youth that have prevented them from building these resources previously.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development is essential to provide to Participants during and after the CDE. Continuous CDE allows Participants to continue to build general and industry-specific skills. A critical component of professional development for Opportunity Youth is building social capital. Professional development for Participants can take place through offering support with:

Updated Portfolios

The CDE Toolkit provides suggestions for how to help Participants build a professional portfolio to showcase their competencies and experiences. This portfolio can include a LinkedIn Profile, Resume and Cover Letter, and Business Cards. These materials may be developed before the start of their CDE but should be refreshed and edited throughout and after their CDE to incorporate their experience.

Industry Knowledge

In addition to those portfolio suggestions, Managing Organizations and Hosts can offer insight on how to stay connected in the field.

Are there relevant newsletters Participants can subscribe to in order to stay current on trends in the field? Are there networks or communities Participants can join to grow their knowledge and network? What job boards are most important to consider when Participants want to look for their next step? Having conversations with Participants about how to stay involved in the field, and providing concrete resources, will allow them to stay engaged.

Participant Networks

Keeping former Participants engaged in the program is another way to support their growth, as well as the growth of future Participants. Organizations can create mentorship opportunities and formal or informal ways for Participants to stay engaged with the program or with other Participants.

Some Managing Organizations and Hosts already engage with former CDE Participants. Exemplary models include:

URBAN ALLIANCE ⬈

Urban Alliance levels the playing field for young people of color by equipping them with the tools to overcome the systemic barriers preventing them from equitably accessing economic opportunity.

Practice

Urban Alliance employs a full-time staff member to serve as the director of alumni services, acknowledging that youth still need support even after completion of the program. This director offers continued, individualized follow-up with Participants and helps create ongoing professional development workshops for former Participants. One component of alumni services includes the Alumni Advisory Board. Board members serve in one-year terms and must attend monthly meetings. Board members benefit in three ways, by (1) connecting with current Participants, (2) supporting other alumni, and (3) tailoring professional development opportunities for themselves.

Consideration

Participants do not need to worry that support ends with the completion of the CDE. By offering opportunities to engage through ongoing programming or continued Mentor or Host Supervisor relationships, Participants have continued support on their pathway. Building Participant networks also offers a community of individuals with similar experiences to Participants. Staying connected to former Participants is another valuable way to provide mentorship to current Participants and anticipate necessary changes to programming based on challenges they face after their CDE.

BJC HEALTHCARE ⬈

BJC Healthcare offers CDEs through internships for students in East St. Louis.

Practice

One of their summer interns created a blog to document their path in healthcare and provide guidance and inspiration for younger students hoping to pursue careers in nursing.

Consideration

Building opportunities for Participants to stay engaged can help promote awareness of your Organization and its CDEs as well as provide leadership opportunities, one form of professional development, for Participants. Alongside Participant networks, former Participants can serve as ambassadors to provide support and guidance to current and former Participants. Opportunity Youth can benefit from seeing individuals just like them succeeding in CDEs and continuing along their career path.

YEAR OF FOLLOW-UP

Participants benefit from continued check-ins after their CDE to support in progression along their pathway. Following the completion of a CDE, organizations can implement a protocol for a year of continuous follow-up between Host Supervisors or Mentors and Participants. The Year of Follow-Up Check-In template provides a guided, equity-focused checklist for Host Supervisors or Mentors and Participants to engage in purposeful two-way communication to address challenges, brainstorm resources, and ensure continued high-quality, meaningful experiences for Participants.

What opportunities can you create to allow current and former Participants to support each other?

CONCLUSION

How will
you create
opportunity
and access for
youth in your
community? How
will you ensure
the opportunities
are equitable and
inclusive?

Thank you for using our CDE Toolkit Companion Piece. **We hope that this resource promotes equity, inclusion, and access for Opportunity Youth across our State.**

The CDE Components and Equitable Practices template provides an overview of components of a CDE that are covered throughout the Toolkit and this Companion Piece. You can brainstorm and fill out the template to see where your organization provides equitable practices and where you can create new, equitable programming.

As you plan for high-quality CDEs that support Opportunity Youth, consider the sustainability of the program. Funding is an essential factor for its long-term success. To ensure sustainability and potential scalability, JFF's Opportunity Works program recommends organizations build strong connections to local workforce systems, secure federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding, and work with county or city offices to invest in college and career pathways for Opportunity Youth. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity provides a sustainability plan template which encourages organizations to identify the key components of a program that will continue over time so they can be adequately planned for.

In order to build our individual equity skills and framework, we have to complete internal work on a personal level. This deepens our ability to dive in with our organizations. Developing a collective understanding allows us to move forward and address equity intentionally by first knowing our own implicit biases. The Appendix contains more information on the types of Implicit Association Tests available and where to learn more.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

Racial Equity

Restructure Your Organization to Actually Advance Racial Justice by Evelyn R. Carter ↗

How to Promote Racial Equity in the Workplace by Robert Livingston ↗

Collection of Resources from Racial Equity Tools ↗
This site offers tools, research, tips, curricula and ideas for people who want to increase their own understanding and to help those working toward justice at every level, in systems, organizations, communities and the culture at large.

Equity Audit ↗
A comprehensive benchmarking tool that assesses diversity, equity, and inclusion for schools, nonprofit organizations, and companies from Beloved Communities.

CDE COMPONENTS AND EQUITABLE PRACTICES

When serving Opportunity Youth, it is crucial to consider the major components of their CDE. How will your organization embed equitable practices into all the components of the participant experience? How will you provide the necessary training to prepare Participants?

COMPONENTS OF THE CDE	HOW YOUR ORGANIZATION ALREADY SUPPORTS OPPORTUNITY YOUTH	HOW YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN TAILOR PRACTICES TO SUPPORT OPPORTUNITY YOUTH
Recruitment and Engagement *This includes how you conduct outreach and the organizations or education providers with whom you partner.*		
Training and Participation *This includes orientation, establishing Mentor and Host Supervisor relationships, and providing feedback.*		
Connecting with College and Career Pathways *This includes understanding the goals of the Participant and offering guidance and clear connections to next steps.*		
Retention and Supports *This includes listening to Participants and providing the support and resources needed for them to be able to fully engage in the CDE.*		
Ongoing, Individualized Support *This includes Participant networks and follow-up after the CDE.*		

It is crucial to consider how Hosts and Managing Organizations can work together to support participants in remaining connected to work and/or education opportunities.

How will these considerations build on each other to promote equity in workforce readiness and job and educational access?

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN EXAMPLE

A sustainability plan identifies the key components of a program that will continue over time. Statewide activities funds received as part of this grant are intended to seed pilots that rather than fund existing programs. For example, it is expected that the grantee establishes a relationship with the Local Workforce Innovation Board and staff that ensures successful pilots or components of the pilot integrate into the larger service delivery model. This may include partnerships, program activities, or outcomes.

This planning should occur from the beginning and not once the grant ends. When drafting a sustainability plan, it is important to establish whether the entire innovation will be sustained or selected components. In the plan below, the "Grant Component" column should describe a high-level example of what is proposed in the application. The "Sustained Component" column outlines how the grantee anticipates continuing that component.

Program Element	Grant Component What is the proposed strategy?	Sustained Component How will the element be sustained?
Alignment with Workforce Plans (State, Regional, Local)		
Local Workforce Innovation Board Commitment		
Business Engagement & Targeted Industries		
Partnerships		
Target Populations/Youth		
Disproportionately Impacted Areas		
WIOA Participant Eligibility, Assessment & Career Plan (Individual Service Strategy)		
Data Collection & Analysis		
Fiscal Strategies and Resources for Sustainability		

Source: Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

IDENTITY CONSIDERATIONS

Opportunity Youth may hold identities that require specific resources in order for them to be set up for success. Be sure to understand their identities and consider if your organization can provide the needed support and resources for each one.
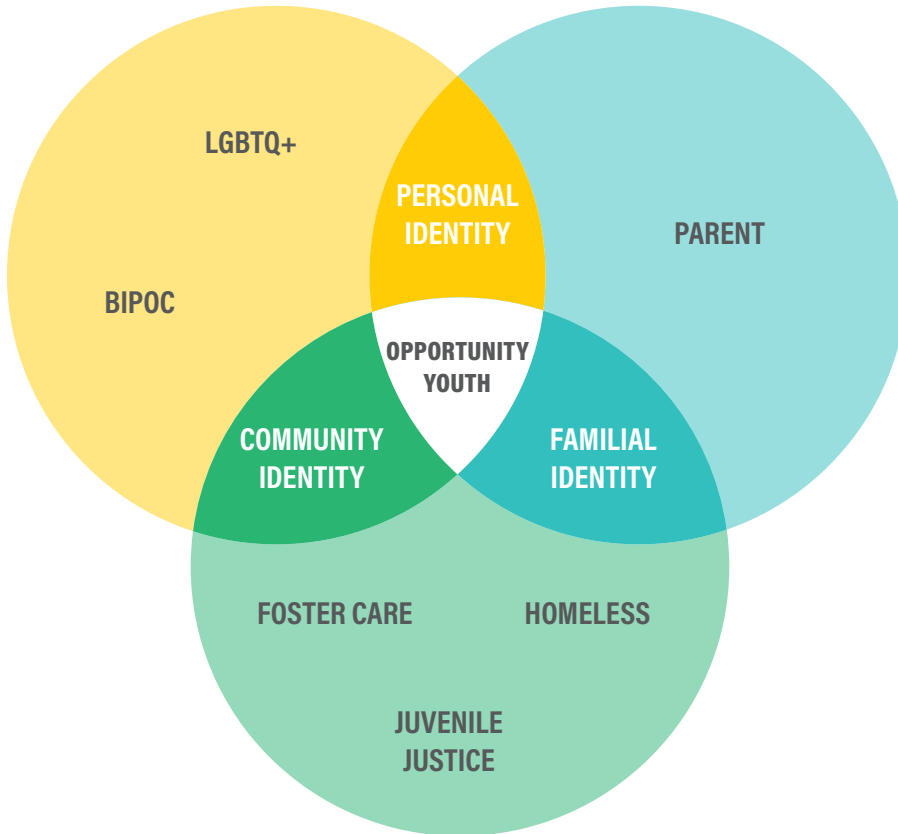
PERSONAL IDENTITY

LGBTQ+
- Accessing physical and mental health resources

BIPOC
- Accessing physical and mental health resources

FAMILIAL IDENTITY

Parent
- Connecting to childcare resources
- Accessing public benefits

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Foster Care
- Accessing important personal documentation
- Accessing physical and mental health resources
- Securing safe housing
- Accessing public benefits

Homeless
- Meeting basic needs (access to food, showers, laundry)
- Securing safe housing
- Accessing public benefits
- Accessing physical and mental health resources
- Accessing transportation

Juvenile Justice
- Connecting to legal services (potential expungement)
- Connecting to community service hours
- Accessing physical and mental health resources

EQUITY IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES

Now more than ever, employers (Hosts) are eager to diversify their workforce and undo systemic injustice in their companies. One important way Hosts can contribute to a more equitable United States is looking at hiring, training, and retaining for diverse job applicants, including opportunity youth.

Opportunity Youth are defined as youth age 16–24 who are not connected to education or the workforce. The Center for High Impact Philanthropy at the University of Pennsylvania finds, "of the nearly 40 million Americans between the ages of 16 to 24 in the U.S., approximately five million are neither employed nor in school. That translates to 1 in 8, more than double the rate of some Western European countries. In rural areas of the U.S., the number grows to 1 in 5."

Opportunity Youth represent untapped potential and a key group of prospective talent for Hosts.

When considering hiring and supporting Opportunity Youth, it is crucial to keep in mind some of the barriers associated with lived experiences.

The Need for Payment/Stipend
Without payment or stipend, Participants may be forced to pick between a meaningful CDE experience and a job that covers essential costs.

Access to Reliable Transportation
Transportation is often a barrier to equitable access, especially in smaller cities and rural communities without public transportation.

School Credit
Participants who are enrolled in school may not be able to take courses, work a part time job, and complete a CDE experience. Providing school credit can allow participants to work towards academic requirements while gaining a CDE.

The Need for a Flexible Schedule
Participants may have many competing priorities, depending on their circumstances. Assigning work that can be completed around their schedule increases capacity for participation.

Childcare/Family Support Responsibilities
When participants are parents or an older sibling in a family with many working adults, they may have childcare responsibilities. Providing support around childcare may increase their availability.

Stable, Consistent Housing
Opportunity Youth are more likely to be experiencing poverty and homelessness than their peers. When a participant doesn't have access to stable, consistent housing, it can impact their ability to participate in CDE fully.

Food Insecurities
Opportunity Youth are more likely to be facing barriers associated with poverty, including access to food. Individuals must have their basic needs met in order to engage in a CDE.

EQUITY IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES

Checklist/resources for employers on how to make a CDE happen with youth who might have these barriers and how they can make it work in their space.

EQUITY CHECKLIST FOR HOSTS

Yes or No	Support	Notes	Organization(s) to Partner with for Support
	Transportation	Is there reliable public transportation accessible to the participants? Can your company provide a bus/train card? When can you utilize virtual engagements?	
	Stipend/Wage	Are participants earning a comparable amount to a job that might require less skill development?	
	Childcare	Is your company able to provide childcare or a stipend to help offset costs?	
	Technology Access	Is your company able to provide a device and internet access?	
	School Credit	Are you working with schools and certifying agencies to ensure participants receive credit for participation?	
	Uniforms and Supplies	Are you able to provide any mandatory uniforms and supplies?	

PUTTING RESEARCH IN TO PRACTICE ↗

How can employers, partners, and nonprofits work to redress these obstacles? Research-based models of how others have worked with and supported youth through these barriers to be successful.

YEAR OF FOLLOW-UP CHECK-IN

Participants benefit from continued check-ins after their CDE to support in progression along their pathway. Following the completion of a CDE, organizations can implement a year of follow-up protocol between Host Supervisors or Mentors and Participants. The following template provides a guided, equity-focused checklist for Host Supervisors or Mentors and Participants to engage in purposeful two-way communication to address challenges, brainstorm resources, and ensure continued high-quality, meaningful experiences for Participants.

Many of these questions are adapted from the New England Secondary School Consortium's report "Creating Equitable Pathways to Ensure Civic Engagement and College and Career Readiness for All Students."

Question to Cover with Participant	Need Expressed from Participant	Follow Up from Mentor or Host Supervisor (resources or guidance)
Participant IS currently in meaningful education or career opportunity		
Does this opportunity cause additional strains or challenges for you or your family? For example, do you have to pay to participate or provide your own transportation?		
Do you have an ally at work or school to report or resolve any roadblocks or challenges you are facing?		
Has this program given you what you need so that you can feel successful?		
Are the learning outcomes of the program clear and challenging enough for you?		
How does this experience align with quality work and life opportunities in your future?		
Participant IS NOT currently in meaningful education or career opportunity		
Do you know where to go to find out what opportunities are available to you?		
Do you know how these programs would align with quality work and life opportunities in your future?		
Do you know what the process is for applying for those opportunities?		
Do you know what the process is for applying for those opportunities?		
What roadbacks are you running into as you search for or apply to opportunities?		
What can you do to build your professional portfolio right now? For example, who in your network can you reach out to and connect with?		

HOST & PARTICIPANT CHECK-IN MEETINGS

A regularly scheduled check-in meeting between Host and Participant is important to provide a space for all questions and needs to be addressed in a proactive and productive manner. These conversations should not focus solely on the tasks a Participant is completing, but extend to reflection and consideration of how their experience is informing their career goals. Hosts can also use this time to ask for feedback and insights on their current personal/organizational practices and systems.

Check-in meetings should be approximately the same length and at the same time each week. Participants and Hosts are encouraged to take notes to refer back to at subsequent meetings.

The following is a list of guiding questions and prompts to assist in the check-in meeting conversation.

	For Hosts	For Participants
Tasks Check-In	• How are the assigned tasks coming along? • How can myself and/or another team member assist you? • Are you on track to meet your deadlines?	• What feedback do you have for me on my task completion and quality? • Discuss areas of needed assistance. • Provide updates on meeting deadlines, or need for extended time on a task/project.
Skills Check-In	• Have you been able to practice or witness any new skills? • How can we provide opportunities to assist in development of these? • Discuss any areas in need of further development.	• What is something that has gone really well for me since our last check-in? • What additional opportunities are available for me? • What goal am I working towards? What do I need to get there?
Time for Reflection	• What is something that surprised you recently? • What are some lessons learned and challenges experienced? • How do you think you have informed your educational or career goals?	• Provide feedback on any thoughts or insights regarding Host practices/systems. • Discuss areas of challenge and what was learned. • Is there anything I should know or anyone I should talk to about my career goals?

For discussions on skill development and reflection, it is helpful to have the Recommended Technical and Essential Employability Competencies document to refer to.

EDUCATION PATHWAY VIRTUAL WORK-BASED LEARNING CONTINUUM EXAMPLE

Career Awareness	Career Exploration	Team-Based Challenge	Career Development Experience
• Read books and articles on Education (Level 0+)	• Set up phone call(s) with Education professionals (Level 0+)	Project Ideas	• Review previous school year materials and lesson plans to offer and produce suggestions for improvement (Level 0+)
• CareerOneStop Education and Training videos (Level 1+)	• Informational interview questions sent via email to gather responses (Level 1+)	• Explore solutions to enhance e-learning	• Develop online activities to engage students (Level 1+)
• Virtual College Tours (Level 1+)	• Organize a panel that represents a variety of roles in Education (Level 2+)	• Address equity and access concerns in e-learning	• Co-teach classes and support on platform (Level 2+)
• Meet with HS Alumni on Education path (Level 2+)	• 1-1 Informational Interview via video call (Level 3+)	• How to support hands-on engagement when learning at home	• Tutoring and mentoring students (Level 3+)

Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
No access to technology & limited interactions	Limited access to technology and interactions	Increasing access to technology and interactions	Technology and interactions highly accessible

RESOURCES FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION

As you continue to work individually and with others on the design and implementation of meaningful Career Development Experiences, it is important to reflect on how you are bringing yourself to the space and unpacking any biases or assumptions you may hold. The following resources are provided as a starting point for your reflection and to spark critical conversations with others about any perceptions, feelings, and biases that may be impacting your work to serve youth in an equitable and intentional manner.

IMPLICIT ASSOCIATION TEST (IAT) ⬀

Gender-Career IAT
This IAT often reveals a relative link between family and females and between career and males.

Disabled-Abled IAT
This IAT requires the ability to recognize symbols representing abled and disabled individuals.

Gay-Straight IAT
This IAT requires the ability to distinguish words and symbols representing gay and straight people. It often reveals an automatic preference for straight relative to gay people.

Black-White IAT
This IAT requires the ability to distinguish faces of European and African origin. It indicates that most Americans have an automatic preference for white over black.

Religions IAT
This IAT requires some familiarity with religious terms from various world religions.

THE OPPORTUNITY SURVEY ⬀

The Opportunity Survey: Understanding the Roots of Attitudes on Inequality examines public perceptions about and support for expanding opportunity across a range of issues including jobs, education, criminal justice reform, immigration, and housing. Within this report you will find details about how support for social justice issues is related to attitudes, personal experiences, and values. Actionable information in the report includes recognizing triggers that affect an individual's willingness to become personally involved on behalf of various groups.
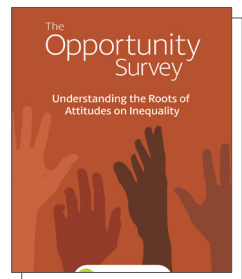
NATIONAL EQUITY PROJECT ⬀

This Constructivist Listening resource from the National Equity Project provides guidance on how to engage in conversations that are both intellectually demanding and emotionally challenging. Protocols within this resource focus on giving full attention to another person and hold space for them to encourage self-expression and emotional release. Practicing constructivist listening supports safe spaces for conversation and creates opportunities for relationships and alliances across racial or other social differences.