

APPENDIX A: THE CORE YOUTHBUILD MODEL

It is not accurate to define YouthBuild as any of its particular parts. It must be understood as a comprehensive whole.¹

Designed to run on a 12-month cycle, the core YouthBuild model combines an alternative school, job training, and a community service program, with an equal emphasis on each. As part of the education component, young people attend a YouthBuild school full time on alternate weeks, studying for their high school equivalency diplomas or GED and for college entrance through a curriculum geared to their interests. The other half of their time is spent on community service and job training through which they build housing for homeless and other low-income people while learning construction skills. The two pieces of the model also serve as a job training and pre-apprenticeship program since YouthBuild trainees are exposed to a construction related curriculum and receive close supervision and training in construction skills from qualified instructors. While in the program, YouthBuild students are also given a modest stipend. Dorothy explained:

The equal emphasis on education and service and the fact that you're getting job training means that while you're in [the program], you're not feeling that this is a dead end. And you're not feeling used. You're feeling like, hey, they're opening doors for me that I didn't know existed, and I'm getting paid for it. And your heart is opening up.

YouthBuild complements this approach with other program elements embedded into the model, including leadership development, individual counseling, and graduate services. (See Exhibit A.1 for a graphical representation of the core elements of the YouthBuild Model.)

Diffused throughout this model are the underlying values of respect, love, responsibility, community, and knowledge. Dorothy emphasized the importance of these less tangible aspects of the program:

We have a program and we have some ideas. The philosophy underpinning the program of complete respect for young people, and of engaging them in the decision-making, is essential. If it turns into something which is just providing services and implementing a program, you lose what's qualitatively different from any other program out there. The program design is important -- but there's a set of qualities that have to infuse that design. If you can infuse those qualities and that culture into the program, you have a package that works.

The Value Chain

The YouthBuild model is implemented through a set of activities composed of recruitment, a mental toughness program, education, construction site work, leadership development, counseling and alumni services. (Exhibit A.2)

Recruitment. All YouthBuild trainees are between 16 to 24 years old. At least 75% of them, according to the HUD Youthbuild statute, must be young people who have dropped out of school, who come from very low-income families, and who do not have a high school equivalency

¹ YouthBuild Program Manual.

diploma. 25% of them can be young people who have a diploma or who are not low income but who need the educational program nonetheless. Beyond these stipulations, every local site establishes specific recruiting criteria that best fit their culture and goals. For example, sites make their own judgment calls about things such as whether a particular minimum reading level would be required or priority would be given to applicants with children. Once the criteria are determined, the sites reach out to the community via media ads, announcements in the newspapers, fliers, mailings or by building relationships with local high schools. Usually, after a program is in existence for a year or two, word of mouth among youth is a sufficient recruiting technique. The YouthBuild site then uses the established criteria to select among the applicants, usually through a mixture of methods such as evaluating written applications and conducting interviews. One of the important factors YouthBuild USA urges the sites to consider in this process is ensuring that young people are interested in leadership and seriously committed to 'changing their lives.'

Orientation. Mental Toughness is an orientation program which lasts anywhere from a week to a month and is aimed at introducing trainees to YouthBuild's culture, values, goals and rules, creating a team atmosphere, and establishing discipline. Trainees are asked to leave the program if they have an unexcused absence or a disciplinary problem during this time period.

Education. All trainees who successfully complete the Mental Toughness step start the core piece of the YouthBuild program, which consists 50% of classroom education and 50% of construction site work. The education half aims to weave academic, vocational, career, leadership, and life skills together. Composed of a reading, writing and mathematics curriculum, the academic program's goal is to offer an alternative to public schools and help the trainees work towards earning a diploma or a GED.² To tie the academic experience to the construction work and to make it more relevant for the trainees, YouthBuild USA recommends that construction related materials be used as text and mathematics lessons draw upon the measures and geometry of the work site. In fact, YouthBuild USA provides an extensive curriculum that ties math with community development. The weeks spent in the classroom also include construction related vocational education. Finally, counselors provide guidance to trainees as they plan for their future and also teach the career and life skills piece.

Construction Work. Simultaneously, the trainees spend the remaining half of their time (on alternate weeks) at the construction site. The goals of the construction work for students are two-fold: aiding the community through building housing for low-income people and learning the manual and technical as well as the personal and interactive skills to obtain employment in the construction field. This component of the program requires adequate staffing (i.e. a Construction Manager, a Site Supervisor and Site Trainers) to ensure proper coordination of construction activities, contract and cash flow administration, quality control, and the training and supervision of the youth participants. Implementation of this half of the model also entails diligent management of the construction projects. In managing these projects, the YouthBuild program may act as the general contractor or as a subcontractor. In many cases, the local sites gain access to abandoned housing or property by partnering with entities such as housing authorities or community development corporations. The management process consists of selecting a site (usually with the help of the city), determining the project architect, estimating construction costs, scheduling, gathering the tools and equipment, and the ongoing monitoring of the construction.

² Some YouthBuild sites have become charter schools or established partnerships with local high schools so that they could offer high school diplomas.

Leadership Development. The fundamental underlying theory of YouthBuild is that challenging and inviting young people to take responsibility to become leaders is the element that makes YouthBuild truly effective and valuable. It is the most dramatic contrast to the way that low-income young people have been disrespected and disempowered in other systems. Full engagement comes when the young people's ideas are respected and the adult staff are dedicated to being partners in making those ideas reality. This engagement is one of the conditions for personal transformation. Thus, the YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network makes it mandatory that every YouthBuild program has a policy committee of young people elected to represent their peers who meet on a weekly basis with the director and a staff representative to discuss all aspects of the program and make policy decisions affecting them. Young people are engaged in lobbying, fundraising, developing position papers on public policy issues, writing to their legislators, negotiating complex issues, hiring staff, and reviewing budgets. YouthBuild USA sustains a national Young Leaders Council that participates on an equal basis with directors in making policy governing the YouthBuild network, and one third of YouthBuild USA's Board of Directors are program graduates.

Counseling and Other Support Services. According to a YouthBuild publication, the counseling component of the program is the glue that holds it together. All staff participate in mentoring individual youth, acting as counselors as needed. All staff are expected to demonstrate their commitment to young people's success and well-being, creating an atmosphere of trust and caring. In addition, recognizing that many of the YouthBuild trainees have chronic problems, counselors are employed in each YouthBuild program. Although YouthBuild USA does not itself employ the language of "family," Dorothy observes that whenever the program is working well, the young people themselves say: "I came here looking for a job, and I found a family."

Trainees meet one-on-one with a counselor at least every other week. Counselors also coordinate support group meetings and make sure that life skills are integrated into the curricula in a consistent manner. In addition to this formal counseling system, trips, cultural events and weekend retreats are organized to build morale and to foster motivation and determination.

Graduation and Alumni Services. Each trainee completes a checklist of items in order to receive a graduation certificate. The graduation ceremony is an important event, planned largely by the students themselves. After graduation, all sites are expected to provide ongoing support and follow-up for graduates in a pro-active way, with the slogan "Once in YouthBuild Always in YouthBuild." Continuing counseling, job development, access to cash grants, support in managing crises, access to leadership opportunities, and membership in an Alumni Club that participates in community service are parts of the graduate resources prescribed. Graduates also have the opportunity to join the National YouthBuild Alumni Association and be elected to the National Alumni Council, which orchestrates leadership opportunities and civic engagement for graduates. One purpose of the YouthBuild program is to create a new generation of ethical young leaders for the low-income under-served communities in which YouthBuild programs are based. This leadership development is an ongoing process that is not expected to be fully complete in a year.

Questions:

- **Do you think the YouthBuild model is an easily scalable model? Why or why not?**
- **How open should the model be for local modifications?**
- **What kind of methods would you use to effectively communicate the model to parties interested in replicating it?**

Exhibit A.1
The YouthBuild Model

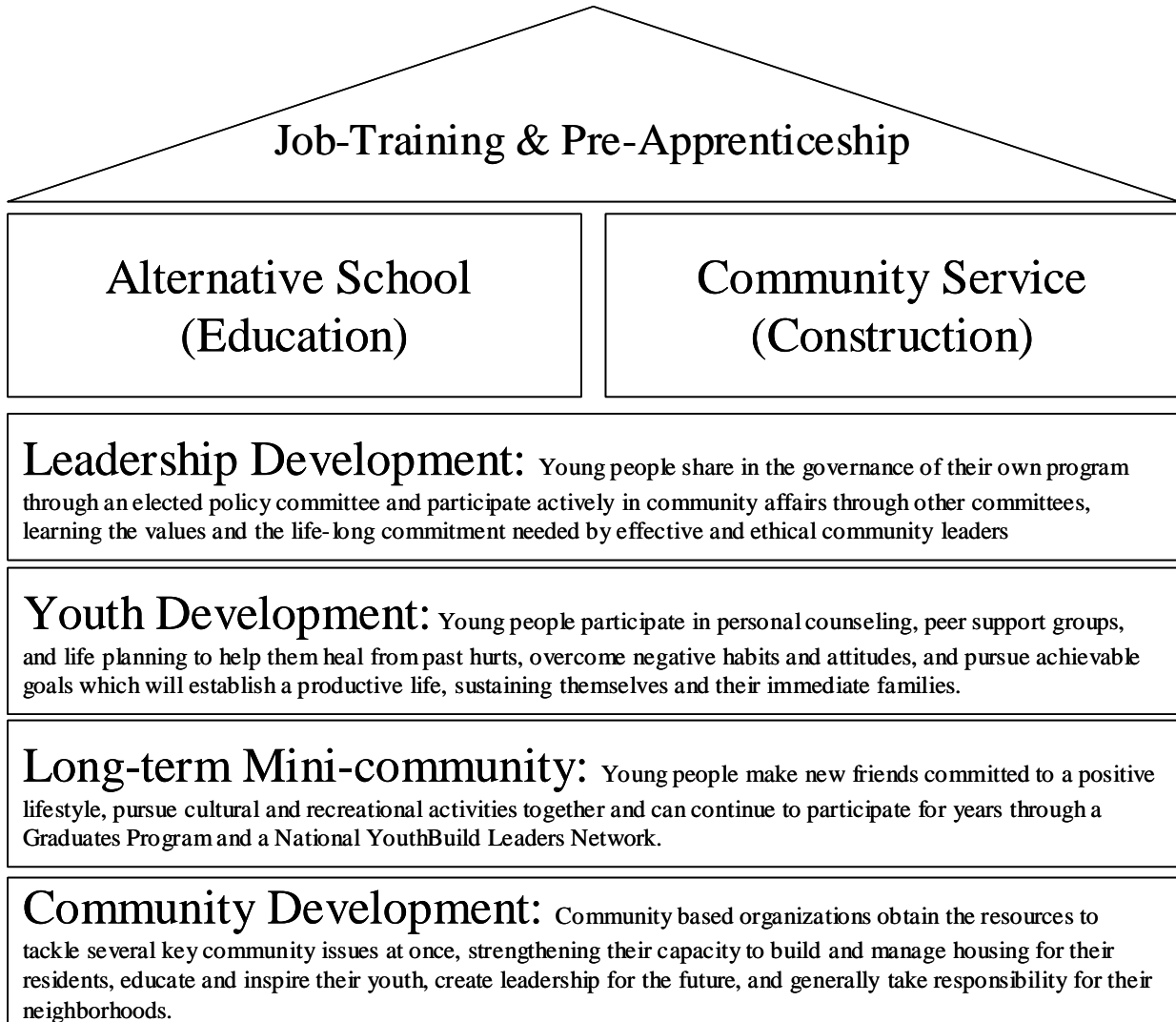
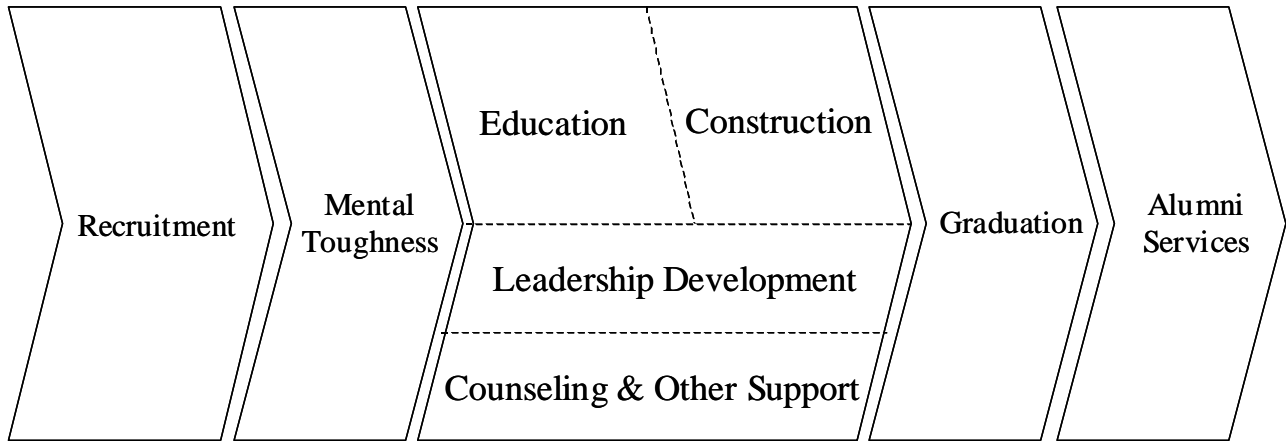


Exhibit A.2
The YouthBuild Value Chain



Source: YouthBuild Program Manual & Case Writer's Analysis.