

SkillUp Washington Generation Work Initiative

Kick Off Meeting Notes March 2, 2016

SkillUp Washington kicked off its Generation Work Initiative at the Tukwila Community Center, prior to the quarterly Opportunity Youth Advisory Group meeting hosted by CCER. Partners from CCER, Port Jobs, Seattle Jobs Initiative, South Seattle College, Seattle Goodwill, Pacific Associates, the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County, Puget Sound ESD, Seattle Education Access, Educurious, Pioneer Human Services, Highline Public Schools, the City of Seattle's Office of Economic Development, King County, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges were in attendance. The meeting focused on the following key questions:

1. What did the Seattle Generation Work proposal entail and what types of activities will the resources fund in 2016?
2. What major takeaways did the Seattle Generation Work team have from the national Generation Work kick-off meeting in Baltimore last month?
3. What about this work really excites you and what do you hope to see come out of these efforts?
4. What other questions do you have regarding the coming year's activities and your role in those efforts?
5. What's next?

Generation Work Overview

SkillUp Washington's Generation Work initiative is now officially underway. Generation Work partners will meet at least quarterly prior to CCER's Opportunity Youth Advisory Group, and work groups will meet more regularly to focus on specific activities related to the project.

SkillUp was invited by the Annie E Casey Foundation to apply for a multi-year, multi-site grant focused on connecting Opportunity Youth 18-29 to demand-driven employment and training opportunities. AECF's Theory of Change for the initiative is: "by scaling promising practices that include both demand-side and positive youth development components, we are likely to see improvements in the ability of low-income, at-risk youth and young adults to attain skills, enter into and succeed in the labor market." In December, SkillUp was awarded a one-year planning grant, which will allow local Generation Work partners to lay the foundation for additional years of funding over the next 5-8 years. Applications for the implementation stage of the grant (Years 2-4) are due in October 2016.

AECF is working with five sites across the country (Seattle, Indianapolis, Cleveland, Hartford, and Philadelphia) to document and learn what each site is doing to help young adults gain the skills they need to successfully find good jobs and for employers to develop talent pipelines that meet their needs. AECF is also very interested in how systems change is achieved at each site, and want to learn how sites scale their strategies through policy and practice.

The Seattle Generation Work goal is to strategically align services and resources supporting dropout recovery education providers and demand-driven industry partnerships serving multiple sectors. We want to capitalize on the Open Doors dropout recovery system-building efforts led by CCER, Puget Sound ESD, King County, United Way, and many others. We will be working over the next year to link two different demand-driven employment models to the secondary credential retrieval networks currently in place through Open Doors and High School 21+. The two demand-driven models are: (1) pre-apprenticeship opportunities in advanced manufacturing, aerospace, maritime, and construction/trades (and eventually IT); and (2) entry-level trades, transportation, distribution and logistics employment and contextualized

educational opportunities for young adult job seekers and incumbent workers at the airport (through Port Jobs' Airport Jobs Center and Airport University).

The Generation Work one-year planning grant will help our partnership develop and establish a strategic framework (see attached) that will guide us towards successfully accomplishing our goals. The Generation Work subcommittee will work to identify lessons learned, raise key questions, and outline next steps. Smaller work groups will be dedicated to the implementation of the following activities to lay the foundation of this work for the coming years:

- Establish MOUs supporting shared referral and recruitment protocols from secondary credential recovery programs to demand-driven programs;
- Establish an Open Doors-funded partnership at the airport between Highline Public Schools and Port Jobs;
- Engage and support young adults from secondary credential training to demand-driven training;
- Participate in national and local data collection, assessment, and documentation work;
- Interview employers to establish feedback loops and identify employer champions; and
- Develop shared communication strategies.

Anyone interested in participating in one or more of these work groups should contact Chris Pierson at SkillUp Washington.

Finally, Generation Work partners are interested in utilizing this table to elevate and connect to other related initiatives focused on youth employment, such as the WDC's youth employment systems mapping work, SkillUp's MAPP and TDL initiatives, the 100K Opportunity initiative, the Mayor's Seattle Youth Employment initiative, the Chamber of Commerce's Seattle Regional Partnership initiative, and many others.

Takeaways from the national Generation Work kick-off in Baltimore

In January staff from SkillUp, CCER, Port Jobs, and the Puget Sound ESD attended the national Generation Work kick-off meeting in January. Staff were introduced to key partners from the other Generation Work sites, as well as other key partners working with AECF to document the work. They include:

- Aspen Institute Workforce Strategies Initiative: Technical assistance and documentation related to demand-driven employment strategies;
- Child Trends: Technical assistance and documentation related to positive youth development;
- MDRC: National program evaluation.

AECF and its national partners will be connecting with local Generation Work partners to identify technical assistance needs and better understand the local landscape.

Other key takeaways from the meeting included:

- AECF is using a results-based accountability framework that might be useful for local partners to consider adopting into their own models;
- Having an opportunity to work together as a team to map the local youth employment system was a useful exercise to help people see how the work is viewed from other vantage points/systems. The next local Generation Work meeting on March 23 will provide this same opportunity for local partners who weren't able to attend the national meeting;
- Our model is very "systems" focused, compared to other sites that are looking to scale specific programs. This adds strength but additional complexity to the work we have before us.

Group discussion on key strengths and challenges for this work and other related issues

The group was asked to share what about this work excites them, what they would like to see come out of these efforts, and what, if any, concerns they had regarding the initiative.

Participants shared the following thoughts about what excites them regarding Generation Work:

- Having all of the “players” in the same room, and the ability for them to connect with each other and build their networks;
- Connecting with new people who can offer a new perspective, along with many people who have been involved in this work for many years;
- There are lots of things going on with young adults, this gives us all a chance to connect them and focus on employment;
- This a great time to connect young people to jobs because of the strong labor market;
- In order to accomplish our goals we will have to work together to leverage each other’s resources;
- We can build off past efforts to create alternative pathways for young people. We can also build larger networks to make the existing pathways more explicit/easily understandable for young people;
- The possibility of reducing the time that young people are disengaged from school or work;
- Intentionality/energy around what comes “next” after training;
- There is a confluence of resources and attention on youth employment. These resources are very timely and will allow us to build off the momentum from the Roadmap Project, and allow us to focus more explicitly on youth employment;
- Getting employers on board who will be vested in supporting young people;
- There is not enough money in the grant to accomplish the goals, which is a good thing. The right people are at the table to think creatively about how to braid/leverage our resources that can collectively help us accomplish our goals, sustain the work, and build something that is systems-focused.

The following thoughts were shared about what participants would like to see come out of these efforts:

- Real certifications with value in the labor market for young people to attain/utilize in order to get good jobs;
- Identifying/working with employers who truly value these trainings/certificates;
- Structured pathways to employment for young people;
- Accelerated pathways that accommodate different learners who may thrive in more applied learning settings;
- An ability to more easily connect with other resources (individual grants as well as larger initiatives) that could be used to help move young people along a pathway (e.g. South’s new American Association of Community Colleges grant supporting an online badging pilot);
- Codifying how to bring systems and initiatives together;
- Standardization around work readiness/soft skills that is recognized by numerous industries and employers, and customized for young adults;
- Ensuring communication about youth programming is consistent;
- Developing a competitive young adult employment pool and skillset that allows young people to get jobs;
- A shared understanding/mindfulness about living wage jobs and careers, and ensuring young people don’t get stuck in “dead-end jobs”;
- Multiple pathways to employment for young people in different sectors and occupations;
- Identifying a strong group of employer champions.

The following concerns were shared about Generation Work:

- That our model(s) don’t have the necessary skills and/or connections to employers that can lead to good jobs;

- Employers aren't a part of the conversation – what should that look like? How should they be brought to the table? Should they be brought to this group? If so, who? This has to (and will be) included in our strategic framework;
- We need to get true buy-in from employers. Are we identifying the correct industry associations/groups to properly bring them into the conversation?
- Pathways must be clear to students, and for the navigation/case management staff working with them. This needs to include potential wages, training options, career pathways, etc. Should be clear and concise;
- Not all youth are interested in the typical “high demand pathways – other options are needed;
- Are we being purposeful in terms of our recruitment, and not “creaming” to get people who don't really need these services/support? We need to be sure we are looking at different populations and disproportionality associated with their participation in the labor market (e.g. African American men);
- Young adult voices need to be heard regarding these pathways. Focus groups should be a part of the strategic plan/framework;
- Pathways need to be fully supportive – we need to ensure we are all connected and understanding their needs to properly respond and ensure that they are getting the support that they need to succeed;
- Be inclusive of all students, and be sure that pathways work for different populations;
- Include possibilities for a recession in the strategic framework;
- Be mindful of the fact that the growth in the workforce is in older populations and immigrant/refugee populations. We need to be able to make a strong case for why employers should consider hiring our young people and be able to articulate the value proposition;
- How do you respond to goals that don't align with the available career pathways? Be mindful that many young people won't be interested in the pathways available through our partnership, and we should have options available for them as well;
- Programs come and go and don't follow young adults long enough to help them get stable
- Having standards for engaging employers, including common messaging and aligned/coordinated efforts;
- How do we also build a sense of independence with these young people, and to ensure that they don't become dependent upon the support systems being created through all of these programs?

What comes next?

The next meeting is at South Seattle College's Georgetown campus on **March 23rd, from 1-4 pm**. Be prepared to do a “deeper dive” on the different systems which will need to be engaged to accomplish this work. We will also identify the different work groups and devise next steps/timelines for each. If you know already that you want to work on a particular Generation Work-related activity, please let Chris at SkillUp know (chrisp@skillupwa.org). Also, if there is anyone who should be participating in these meetings who was not here, please reach out to them and invite them to the next meeting.

SkillUp will begin drafting Memorandums of Understanding, related data sharing agreements, and other documents that will need to be in place by the end of the year to accompany our strategic framework for the next round of AECF funding. More information will be shared about these items at the next meeting.