



Local Strategies for Youth Employment

Learning from Practice

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Introduction

The global economic crisis has had a hard blow on youth (aged 15/16 to 24) employment. In early 2013 in the OECD as a whole the youth unemployment rate was stuck at 16.5%, up from 12.1% just prior to the crisis, and two-and-a-half times the unemployment rate for those aged 25 and over and, worryingly, with a marked and continued increase in youth long-term unemployment. Moreover, the alarming figures do not account for those not in employment, education or training (NEET) many of whom do not appear in the official unemployment statistics. Youth unemployment rates are predicted stay high or rise still further in most of the countries as the haltering recovery remains too weak to provide sufficient job opportunities to the many young jobseekers (for up to date statistics visit www.oecd.org/employment/youth).

OECD Ministers at their meeting in May 2013 agreed to take a comprehensive range of measures as set out in the OECD Action Plan for Youth (Box 1). The first objective of these measures is to tackle the current situation of high youth unemployment and underemployment. The second objective is to produce better outcomes for youth in the longer run by equipping them with relevant skills and removing barriers to their employment.

Box 1. Key elements of the OECD Action Plan for Youth

Tackle the current youth unemployment crisis

- Tackle weak aggregate demand and boost job creation
- Provide adequate income support to unemployed youth until labour market conditions improve but subject to strict mutual obligations
- Maintain, and where possible expand, cost-effective active labour market measures
- Tackle demand-side barriers to the employment of low-skilled youth
- Encourage employers to continue or expand quality apprenticeship and internship programme

Strengthen the long-term employment prospects of youth

- Strengthen the education system and prepare all young people for the world of work
- Strengthen the role and effectiveness of Vocational Education and Training
- Assist the transition to the world of work
- Reshape labour market policy and institutions to facilitate access to employment and tackle social exclusion.

OECD 2013

The OECD work shows that even in the good times prior to the global economic recession, young people were more likely to be unemployed than adults (OECD, 2010b). Young workers are much more likely to hold temporary jobs and be concentrated in cyclically sensitive industries where jobs are the first

to go in times of contraction, such as construction and hospitality (OECD, 2010a). They also face large barriers for entering the workplace, and as competition for jobs rises they are increasingly expected to have work experience, even for entry-level positions.

Long periods of unemployment for youth have been shown to have potential “scarring” effects, which have a harmful impact in later life, particularly for NEET youth. It can lower future income levels, skills validity, future employability, job satisfaction, happiness and health levels. Bell and Blanchflower (2009) estimate that a six-month spell of unemployment at the age of 22 would result in an 8% lower wage at 23, and even at ages 30 and 31 wages would be 2-3% lower than they would have been otherwise. The lower the level of initial qualification, the longer these scarring effects are likely to last (OECD, 2010a).

Countries, regions and communities cannot afford to lose these young people from the labour market. With population ageing across OECD countries, it is increasingly important that all young people are mobilised to contribute their skills and talents to the labour market.

Three priority groups can be outlined presenting different features in terms of their entry and attachment to the labour market and necessitating targeted programmes. These include the so-called “poorly integrated new entrants” who often have qualifications but go in and out of temporary jobs, unemployment and/or inactivity, “good performers”, and NEET youth. In total, about 30-40% of all school-leavers in OECD countries are estimated to be “at risk” either because they face barriers to finding stable employment or because they experience multiple cumulating disadvantages. NEET youth are more likely to come from an immigrant background, lack a diploma and/or live in disadvantaged, rural or remote neighbourhoods. They face severe problems in making the transition from education to the workplace and risk being trapped in long-term unemployment and inactivity (OECD, 2010a).

Box 2. Three priority groups for the OECD

1. The so-called **NEET** (neither in employment, nor in education or training) at high risk of drifting into long-term unemployment and exclusion. Early childhood education and support with school-to-work transition can reduce the distance from the mainstream labour market. At the same time, adopting a wider approach by tackling multi-generational poverty, improving spatial planning to reduce isolation and strengthening local social capital, and bringing economic development and entrepreneurship to deprived areas can bring significant results.
2. **The “poorly integrated new entrants”** (young people often with diplomas but with difficulties in finding stable employment). Providing clearer pathways into employment, tackling the demand-side barriers but also working with employers on retention and progression schemes can help to address the specific needs of this group.
3. **Good performers** (university graduates who in normal times do not have particular difficulty in finding a job). They may now not have a job that matches their qualifications (low demand for high skills), or leave their region to look for better employment possibilities (loss of skills through talent flight). Broader skills and economic development strategies should address this demand/supply mismatch and provide opportunities to use the skills of graduates.

Even those traditionally considered to be “good performers” (university graduates who in the past did not have particular difficulty in finding a job) are now finding it harder to secure a job that matches their qualifications in light of low demand for certain high skills. Not only is unemployment growing but so too is underemployment as young people work in jobs for which they are overqualified, resulting in a waste of their talents and a poor return on the investment in their skills. As higher skilled applicants apply

for lower skilled jobs to get a foothold into the labour market, this forces those with lower skills further down the skills ladder. Higher skilled young people may leave their region to look for better employment possibilities, representing a “brain drain”. With rising mobility, and in certain countries youth emigration, localities need to be able to offer enough employment to their communities across the skills spectrum to retain their young people.

Ensuring employment success for young people is a policy issue of particular relevance locally. Barriers preventing young people from successful transition into employment are often multifaceted in nature and responses need to come from a wide array of policy areas. It is at the local level that government policies can be integrated and combined with place-based initiatives to provide multidimensional responses to complex problems. Yet, in practice, too often programmes are delivered in isolation from each other, with uneven degrees of coverage and limited capacity to reach out to the most in need. Rigid policy delivery frameworks, insufficient capacities, and a lack of strategic approach at the local level are often the reasons that undermine support for youth.

This document presents an assessment and lessons on successful local approaches to support youth into employment, education or training from a series of case studies commissioned by the OECD LEED Programme. A number of key themes have emerged from the analysis of these case studies. The first one concerns the **governance aspects of local youth employment strategies**, including ways to:

- put in place the right incentives and success measurement to support collaboration and target action on critical areas;
- improve data availability and understand the nature of local skills supply and demand mismatch as a starting point of the local youth employment strategy process;
- promote employer ownership and ensure that firms invest in their future workforce;
- support sectoral approaches to bring together educational institutions, industry organisations, employment agencies and other government departments to develop career pathways, articulating skills requirements and connecting youth to the local economy;
- adapt funding arrangements in the context of reduced public spending;
- monitor the implementation of programmes and evaluate success.

The second theme regroups **tools and approaches** implemented at the local level that seem **effective in addressing the NEET challenge and helping youth to progress in the labour market**. The tools described in the second section of this document include:

- addressing the NEET challenge:
 - investing in the earliest levels of education;
 - preventing school dropout;
 - personalised support to help youth progress into employment or training;
 - the value of informal and non-formal learning;
 - raising young people’s aspirations.
- improving employment prospects of poorly integrated new entrants:
 - creating pathways to successful careers;

- making available work attractive to youth;
 - ensuring decent work and sustainable employment practices.
- supporting good performers:
 - supporting young entrepreneurs;
 - transversal skills are increasingly important;
 - benefits of combining training with work experience.

Finally, two case studies are presented. The first one - Glasgow Youth Employment Partnership (YEP) initiated by the local authority and involving all of the key stakeholders - is an example of an integrated and comprehensive city strategy to tackle the NEET challenge. The second case study reviews the BladeRunners programme - one of the most successful programmes in Canada to support transition to employment of disadvantaged youth.

Annex 1: The case studies

Two groups of case studies undertaken in 2011-2012 have fed into this research: the first one was commissioned as part of LEED work on the OECD Skills Strategy and the second as part of the LEED project on Local Youth Employment Strategies. From the group of case studies commissioned as part of LEED work on the OECD Skills Strategy, a number of them had a particular focus on joining up service delivery to support youth transitions (Table 1).

Table 1. Case studies on local skills strategies with a particular focus on youth

Geographic focus	Study title and type	Study focus area
Berks and Lancaster Counties, Pennsylvania, United States	Industrial Maintenance and Mechatronics Industry Partnership: Case study	This case study looked at Industrial Maintenance and the Mechatronics Industry Partnership in Berks and Lancaster Counties, Pennsylvania, United States. The region is home to a large base of manufacturing companies. Leading clusters include food manufacturing, wood products and a snack food cluster. Local manufacturers have long faced major challenges in finding skilled workers in "mechatronics". Local education and training providers are collaborating with industry to create training programmes that begin in high school and which can lead to certification (two- and four-year degrees). A clear career pathway is laid out. It began with local dollars but has since attracted state and federal investment and has been expanded to other sectors as competencies closely align. It is seen as an example of good practice in the United States and the model has been applied to other states.
Central Finland, Finland	EduCluster: Case study	Central Finland has a long history of stakeholders building up interaction and entrepreneurship in a model called a Learning Region. The study examined the region with its dynamic structures and stakeholder relations to support continuous learning. Central Finland has based its regional development on this connection of learning for ten years in a region concentrated on natural resources and heavy industry. The Learning Region provides a platform to cultivate all capital to create innovation. The main impact has been the creation of a unique network of education and business, the EduCluster, which is a co-operation framework for labour models and matching business needs. It has created effective models for business development and is looking at creating learning clusters and business networks.
London, United Kingdom	Apprenticeships: Case study	This study examined the apprenticeships policy agenda in relation to skills in London. London has key strengths in high skills (graduate level) but shortfalls in intermediate and basic skills which labour market projections suggest will be crucial for the decade ahead. There is a more concerted joined-up approach to raising the number of apprenticeships in place with many new activities taking place, such as efforts to boost the number of apprentices in the public sector, public sector procurement and boosting apprenticeships in non-traditional sectors. It reviewed the governance process involved and the wide range of stakeholders involved, such as the GLA, London councils, sector skills councils, National Apprenticeship Service, employers groups. While discussing the positive developments, it takes into consideration recent criticisms relating to the apprenticeship approach.
Maryland and other states, United States	Case study	In the United States, local and regional government agencies have increasingly adopted industry cluster approaches to economic development and a similar approach is surfacing in the workforce development field. One of three initiatives examined in the paper is in Maryland on career sectors/career clusters. Three hundred fifty business executives in ten different sectors were brought together in 1995 to inform education policy makers about their bottom line – how they made money and what they needed to be

successful. The approach was very bottom-up: “we let 1 000 flowers bloom,” identified one state representative. “We looked at large clusters, mapped out what knowledge and skills are required and developed program[me]s around big chunks of skills.” Within each county, a Cluster Advisory Board (CAB) focused on different industry clusters. In Montgomery County, for example, where the third largest biotechnology cluster in the United States is located, they have a CAB which is focused on the Biosciences, Health Science and Medicine cluster. Administrators, counsellors and faculty members are using the system to develop programmes that extend from high school to two- and four-year colleges/universities, graduate schools, apprenticeship programmes and the workplace. Although the cluster framework was originally developed for high schools, it is now being adopted by workforce investment boards and other programmes serving adults.

New Jersey, United States	Talent Network: Learning model	The Talent Network (TN) in New Jersey has created “talent clusters” across six key industries, designed to drive forward an employer led approach by connecting businesses with educational institutions, workforce development agencies, government and community groups to identify skills and training needs. Established by a grant from the state’s Department of Labor and Workforce Development, it is designed to promote economic growth and move unemployed/disadvantaged workers into jobs. Each TN is taking a unique approach to addressing supply and demand factors by examining information from employers, identifying priority workforce strategies and connecting relevant programmes – it works significantly with young jobseekers and employees. It offers networking opportunities and uses industry experts to test new workforce strategies.
Prignitz and Luckenwalde, Brandenburg, Germany	Strengthen the Strength Strategy: Securing a skilled labour force: Case study	Both Luckenwalde and Prignitz have experience in securing a skilled labour force. This is done in part through a local development strategy in Luckenwalde, a regional economic development company in rural Prignitz and creating common action plans with all relevant actors. This is connected with the metropole region’s cluster strategy – Strengthen the Strength – which designated both localities as local growth poles. The study compared the approach to up-skilling in both regions and drew on the rich evidence base for skills which included statistical profiling, surveys of firms and students, and local networks to implement local action plans. It looked at additional activities such as innovation potential analysis and specialised skill services to help companies attract the required skills.
Queensland, Australia	Queensland Skills Formation Strategies: Case study	This study included a review of 52 Queensland Skills Formation Strategies. For example, the Health and Community Services Workforce Council established the Queensland Aged Care Skills Formation Strategy Supply Chain Project in Allied Health to address skill shortages, poor job satisfaction (recruitment and retention), long waiting lists in community health – possibly up to six months for podiatry – and training and professional development needs for allied health assistants and professionals. Participants undertook to enhance access for clients to Allied Health services by job re-design at the assistant level. The assistant role was re-defined and re-focused to support direct client care through undertaking base level skilled tasks (formerly undertaken by Allied Health professionals) to free up the professionals for higher skilled tasks. Training was tailored to the skill sets required by workers. A change management advisor was put in place and proved a critical strategy for success.

The second group of cases studies was selected as part of the LEED Project on Local Youth Employment Strategies (Table 2).

Table 2. Local strategies for youth employment case studies

Geographic focus	Study title	Study focus area
Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom	Glasgow Works Youth Gateway	Glasgow has re-engineered its approach to supporting youth employability since the mid 2000s. Despite the city's economy having been hit hard by the recession, NEET figures in Glasgow have not risen dramatically compared to Scottish and UK benchmarks. The study examined the reasons for this, particularly the role played by improving the ecology of interventions available, having far-reaching effects in terms of the delivery structures, use of resources, relationships between key players and effectiveness of monitoring. The study looked at the central involvement of employers and the establishment of clear leadership responsibility and shared targets amongst key players.
Quang Nam, Central Viet Nam, Viet Nam	Youth Employment through Local Economic Development project	Youth unemployment, under-employment and poor quality employment is a critical problem in Quang Nam. To date, the provincial authority support programme has mainly focused on vocational training and skill upgrading as the panacea. This study examined the new three-pronged approach adopted by Quang Nam local government and the ILO which included: <i>i)</i> the creation of a pro-employment business environment; <i>ii)</i> vocational training and entrepreneurial skills for youth; and <i>iii)</i> improved job opportunities through value chain development. It examined how the three areas are implemented in an integrated manner in parallel with other measures.
Argentina	Youth with a Future: A PP Initiative	The Youth with a Future (YF) Programme is part of an initiative for decent work promoted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, and involves young people aged 18 to 24 from low-income backgrounds who have difficulty in finding employment. In 2006, the government called on leading employers to develop sustainable labour practices as part of a triple alliance, resulting in an employability training programme, of which the YF is a part. The study examined how the programme provides incentives for finishing school, practical training in work-related competencies and work-based learning in leading companies, providing evidence of successful outcomes.
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada	BladeRunners	This study investigated the BladeRunners model. BladeRunners was conceived in downtown Vancouver in 1994 and a unique system of 24/7 support was subsequently developed. Although the programme has since expanded to more than 20 other communities in the province of British Columbia, the original Vancouver site continues to operate and offer the following: building and recognising skills, job retention and progression, and work-based learning. The target group is disadvantaged youth. The study also examines the strong partnership element and its transition to a PPP model in 2003, consequently increasing the importance of industry support.
Rotterdam, Netherlands	New Inflow into New Jobs Harbour Project	The New Inflow into New Jobs Harbour Project has been in place since 2008 and aims to revitalise the Port of Rotterdam. The port has a workforce profile of male, white and grey. The study examined how the project has offered 100 young people, mainly immigrants, the opportunity to secure paid employment by completing an apprenticeship with employers in the bulk and container shipping business. Over 40 weeks, it includes continuous learning, offers dual programmes and supports exchange with the main institutional bodies. After completion, candidates are offered a contract for at least 12 months and the programme can demonstrate successful outcomes.

GOVERNANCE OF LOCAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES

Removing barriers to joined-up approaches

Stakeholders operating in the area of youth employment and training are numerous and diverse, including industry groups and employers, schools, colleges and third-level education providers, trade unions, employment agencies, social economy organisations, local community groups. Developing joined-up strategies and governance mechanisms to tackle youth unemployment is a particularly important function for partnerships working within local labour markets. A partnership approach can better tackle entrenched barriers, create a more integrated service for young people and providers, and has a relatively strong impact on the degree of local policy integration. However, successful collaboration is not easy with common obstacles including ambiguity about roles, conflict, contested leadership and narrow institutional mandates (Froy and Giguère, 2010). Many local communities and NGOs providing employment supports for young people can be relatively isolated from mainstream institutions. They often operate on the periphery with little critical mass, reliant on short-term funding and duplicating services (Froy and Pyne, 2011). It is important that local organisations are well networked to share knowledge and emerging good practice. They can play an invaluable role as brokers or “linking organisations”, connecting clients to a number of follow-on programmes, thereby aiding continuous learning and development. Policies and approaches can also benefit from being “co-created” with local youth to create greater ownership and ensure that local initiatives are better adapted to their needs.

The Glasgow Works Youth Gateway model has sought to forge an overarching model that tackles fragmentation of funding and duplication of youth-related activity, involving genuine partnerships (Box 3).

Box 3. Tackling fragmentation and duplication: Glasgow, United Kingdom

The city of Glasgow has re-engineered its approach to supporting youth employability since the mid 2000s and since the recession has hit, NEET figures have not risen dramatically compared to Scottish and UK benchmarks. It is believed that one contributing factor to this is the shift from supporting individual projects to one where the emphasis is on improving the entire ecology of interventions available and joining these up. This has included establishing clear leadership responsibility in an area that has traditionally been “everyone’s problem but no one’s in particular”, introducing shared targets for the city, establishing a Youth Gateway model to promote information sharing and joint service commissioning, and embedding schools into the partnership model.

Young unemployed people were commonly in a “revolving door”, between publicly funded projects which rarely led to positive outcomes. Steps taken to address this have included action to promote improved joint working and bringing in a tracking system. A number of changes to promote genuine collaboration have also been introduced, including establishing a Service Level Agreement in 2009 outlining the roles and responsibilities of all key players and the introduction of youth employability groups to monitor progress on the ground – each chaired by a head teacher. Addressing structural difficulties at the departmental level is a long-term goal. Under the banner of Glasgow Works, a co-commissioning model was piloted where funders have adopted a more transparent approach to financing interventions.

Getting incentives and the way success is measured right

In many places, especially in dense urban areas where multiple service providers co-exist, competition amongst them can be a widespread feature, sometimes encouraged by funding environments. In Glasgow, a confused provider map was very much a product of the financial model in place in the mid-2000s. Since the late 1990s there had been many resources available to tackle employability. As a consequence, many existing providers grew, new ones appeared and others who specialised in other policy areas started providing employability support, because that was increasingly where the money was. At the same time, the available funding within the city came from many sources – some local, some national – and there was little or no collaboration between funders. These commissioning patterns, operating in the absence of any agreed city structure for investing in youth employment, contributed to this map of disconnected and duplicated services across the city.

Another factor that can explain competition between various service providers dealing with youth employment are the financial incentives. In Glasgow, for example, the outcome-related funding (ORF) model whereby providers obtained most of their funding once a young person had been supported into employment, was identified as partly responsible for competition between service providers. This mechanism had been introduced into most programmes including the national training programmes like Get Ready for Work and the UK New Deal programmes. However, it had two unintended consequences that adversely affected many clients.

The first was that the ORF model encouraged service providers to cherry pick and to focus recruitment on those most likely to enter into employment with minimal support levels. Consequently, young people with complex support could be overlooked by these providers. In addition, the ORF model, which placed so much emphasis on getting clients across the line into employment, actively discouraged providers to refer clients to other agencies for support. In this way, the model discouraged a client-centred focus where the priority is to assess their needs and provide the best available service – regardless of the provider.

As financial incentives are usually set at the national level, local policy makers may have limited power to influence this agenda. However, ways can be found to support collaborative working among services providers. Glasgow's experience described in Box 4 provides a successful example.

Box 4. Supporting collaboration of youth service providers: Glasgow model

The Glasgow Youth Employment Partnership (YEP) reviewed the commissioning models across the city in order to identify where there was scope for improved joint working. A number of changes were introduced as a result of this. The first was an agreement amongst service commissioners to notify one another of their future plans in order to reduce levels of duplication and to promote the alignment of funds. The involvement of commissioners beyond education, training and employment provided a new opportunity as it brought health, justice and housing partners into the frame. This was a significant step, largely based on the trust established through collaborative work and the strengthening of relationships within the YEP. This dialogue between commissioners has brought a number of improvements. One of these has been the involvement of the city players in the procurement of Glasgow providers for the national training programmes. In practice this has involved other stakeholder agencies in the shortlisting and selection process – without compromising the sensitive procurement arrangements.

A second important step has been in relation to re-engineering the reward mechanism for providers with the aim of reshaping behaviours and attitudes to collaboration. The Glasgow Works commissioning model introduced a client pathway, which contained agreed progress points for all clients, including young people. These progress points acted as funding triggers which had a number of consequences. They encouraged providers to recruit young people with greater barriers because the system recognised and rewarded organisations supporting them to make progress. The model also encouraged providers to refer clients to others who are better placed to assist them, through spreading the rewards but also through acknowledging the “assist” role played by referrers. The Glasgow Works evaluation suggests that this funding model, again still under development, has had some success in starting to reshape the city’s referral map.

It is also important to understand the way schools’ performance is rewarded and recorded. Transparency around exam results is often promoted. Whilst schools could build their reputation on solid grade performance, at the other end of the spectrum, there is rarely a penalty for those schools whose pupils fail to complete. Changes in this field require a strong co-operation between local and national policy makers, as was the case in Scotland as described in Box 5.

Box 5. Rewarding school performance in Scotland

Developments within the education sector at a national level helped drive the change agenda in Scotland. The Scottish government had set out the importance it attached to pupils making positive progressions post school. To convey this message within the teaching profession, it introduced school leaver destinations and the way in which schools supported weaker pupils within the inspection regime. Consequently, it became a metric that mattered to head teachers, so increasingly even those who felt under threat realised that this issue would not go away.

Improving data availability and understanding the nature of local skills supply and demand mismatch***Data availability and data sharing***

Reliable data is a prerequisite for effective policy design. However, many localities are confronted with serious challenges when compiling data to diagnose the true nature of youth unemployment or evaluate the extent of school drop-out rates. This is often due to separate databases in use by schools, other education and training providers as well as career guidance organisations and employment services. There are also legal limitations on the scope to share client data. Data on school leavers’ destinations, essential for programme design to bring youth back into employment, education or training, is notoriously difficult to compile. Moreover, historically there is little pressure applied to schools in

relation to destination statistics and there was little incentive to pay attention to leaver destination. The experience of Glasgow in addressing these challenges is interesting in this context (Box 6).

Box 6. Skills Development Scotland work on closing data gaps

As part of the Glasgow Youth Gateway, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) was given responsibility to lead on addressing the data building and data sharing issue at both the national (Scotland) and city level. This required work on two related fronts. At a technical level, it required the development of a single shared management information system that could be used to track young people's progress through the school system and beyond. On a cultural level, this work required strengthening the relationship within schools to convey the message that improving the supply of intelligence mattered and that schools were central to that process. In particular, there was a concerted drive to reduce the number of "unknown" destinations, as this had been identified as a particular flaw in Glasgow's starting point.

SDS has now successfully developed and introduced data hubs across the city, which have led to a marked increase in the quality of data and partners' ability to share it. As part of this work there has also been a significant improvement in reducing the number of unknown destinations from city schools.

The SDS data hub has been central in improving the gathering and sharing of client management information. This has enabled partners to track the progress of young people more effectively and, critically, has tackled the initial challenge around the numbers of "unknowns". As a consequence, partners have a clearer picture of the patterns, as well as a better understanding of who is responsible for different aspects of the client journey.

In Brandenburg, Germany, there is continuous monitoring of the supply and demand of skills, as a result of discussions with local companies and schools. This monitoring informs local strategies and action plans, which are developed on the ground between the different relevant actors. The monitoring also includes forecasting of the supply of students graduating from schools over the next 10-15 years. The action plans are discussed annually with the Brandenburg government, and targets are set between the local and regional levels. The results of the monitoring are also published on a website for companies, schools, vocational institutions and the public.

Obtaining access to data was important for the Target to Opportunity initiatives in the United States, where officials obtained previously confidential data, carried out trend analysis and then discussed the findings with local employers. Through this process, they discovered that there were thriving businesses in need of skilled workers and a set of new industry sectors ready to be competitive in the global marketplace, which became the centrepiece of an economic development strategy, workforce training and educational pathway programmes.

Skills shortages should be analysed to determine their causes

Understanding the nature of skill shortages is another starting point for designing appropriate policies to support youth transitions and progression. Shortages can arise because of a genuine lack of workers with the skills needed, but they also arise for various other reasons, including working conditions and pay rates that are unattractive to workers (Box 7); a lack of workers in countries with very low unemployment rates (also referred to as a labour shortage); geographical imbalances in supply, where there are sufficient numbers of skilled people in the labour market, but they do not have easy access to available jobs (referred to as geographical mismatch); or a shortfall in the number of appropriately skilled individuals. Only some of these are reasons are associated with education and training.

Box 7. A co-ordinated approach to addressing skills supply

In Queensland, Australia, shortages are seen to be as much about work organisation and turnover as about problems with the supply of skilled people from education and training institutions. Rather than responding automatically to labour shortages by creating new training courses, policy makers first assess the causes of those shortages. The question is always asked: Is there a skills shortage because of a lack of training, or is it rather that local jobs are unattractive and therefore cannot retain staff? Three core features define the approach:

- Recruitment and retention problems are not defined as “skill shortages”, but rather treated as problems involving the structure of jobs on offer, and therefore often defined as a shortage of decent jobs.
- The response involves groups of employers accepting joint responsibility for overcoming the problem.
- The crucial factor behind successful innovation is the existence of highly competent brokers or facilitators capable of dealing with issues of business development and not just the development of the workforce.

On the basis of these principles, the state government in Queensland, Australia, has developed over 60 skills formation strategies in 20 different industry sectors, including the public sector. For example, in the health and community services sector, skills shortages and long waiting lists were reduced through a programme of changes to work organisation and definitions of roles, carried out in conjunction with local unions. The state government invested AUD 7 million over four years in this project.

Source : Froy and Giguère (2010). (2010), “Putting in Place Jobs that Last: A Guide to Rebuilding Quality Employment at Local Level”, OECD Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Working Papers, No. 2010/13,

Employer ownership: Ensuring that firms invest in their future workforce

There is significant potential for employers to play a larger role in leading local initiatives as public sector resources diminish and training systems move away from being primarily concerned with the supply side. LEED work has generally found that employment initiatives operating in the community without significant employer involvement are often not successful – this came through strongly in the Ensuring Labour Market Success for Ethnic Minority and Immigrant Youth project (Froy and Pyne, 2011), for example. However, at the same time, few of the initiatives examined can be described as being genuinely “owned” by employers in terms of design, development and implementation.

A study commissioned as part of the Local Skills Strategies looked at the North East Skills Initiative, United Kingdom, managed by Semta, the UK Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing. The North East Skills Initiative aims to eliminate the region’s skills gap by 2017 by increasing the number of companies taking on apprentices; promoting science, technology and engineering among young people; upskilling workers; and publicising activities to attract government support. The driving force behind the initiative was local employers’ across the North East of England response to critical skills shortages and a high number of retirees on the horizon, to ensure the region remained at the forefront of growth and job creation from new technologies. Employers brought together all of the regional stakeholders and challenged them to work together to send out a consolidated message on skills requirements in the sector. Although it is still in the early stages, the initiative has generated a number of follow on actions and other regions are planning to replicate this employer-led model.

Another example of an approach to local skills strategies with employer involvement is a public-private partnership (PPP) model. PPPs have the added advantage of reducing the dependency of support programmes on public sector funding. Industry support is vital to the success of the BladeRunners

programme in Vancouver, Canada, which transitioned to a PPP model in 2003. Employers play a key role in providing opportunities and training for participants. Programme funding comes partly from government and partly from community/industry and partners also show their support through cost sharing for courses, buying equipment and waving wage subsidies.

Working with employers is important in terms of understanding what skills are in high demand to bring about a better match between skills supply and demand. One example of re-orientation towards a more demand-driven approach can be seen from a Local Skills Strategies case study on apprenticeships in London. The Coalition government in the United Kingdom has adopted a more market-based approach to skills, with an emphasis on employers leading the system in a decentralised way with no additional compulsion or incentives. Apprenticeships are an example of a training sector which has become more employer driven (rather than previous employer training programmes such as Train to Gain, which were seen as centrally driven) and is seeking to boost individuals' skills as used in the workplace. London authorities have identified engaging employers to boost the quantity and quality of apprenticeships as one of their roles to promote skills, and have set up the Mayor's Apprenticeship Campaign to help deliver this (Box 8).

Box 8. The Mayor's Apprenticeship Campaign in London

London has one of the highest unemployment rates in the United Kingdom and, until recent years, a particularly low take-up of training opportunities, such as apprenticeships. London has an extremely service-based economy with relatively little employment in sectors such as manufacturing, where apprenticeships have traditionally been focused. Following, but accelerating, the direction of the previous Labour government, the new coalition government has adopted a more market-based approach to skills with an emphasis on employers leading the system in a decentralised way, but with no additional compulsion or incentives. This has included shifting funding to greater use of apprenticeships, which are seen as more employer driven and boosting individual's skills as used in the workplace. The London government has established the Mayor's Apprenticeship Campaign to boost engagement in this type of training through a joined-up approach that includes public sector leadership, the use of public procurement and business-to-business sales based on a clear business case. The campaign has included:

- a focus on boosting apprenticeships at ISCED Level 3 (A-level equivalent), where much previous growth had been at ISCED Level 2 (General Certificate of Secondary Education in the United Kingdom);
- ensuring greater coverage of apprenticeship frameworks in "non-traditional" sectors, such as finance, which dominate London's economy;
- setting targets for London's local authorities and the GLA Group to increase their use of apprenticeships, both to boost numbers and show leadership;
- supporting greater use of public procurement to cascade contractual requirements for a given number of apprentices, and engagement with non-public sector employers through a mayoral campaign jointly funded by the London Development Agency and National Apprenticeship Service.

These efforts have required joint working through a range of fora between stakeholders including: London Development Agency, Greater London Authority, London councils, a number of sector skills councils, Young Person's Learning Agency, Skills Funding Agency, National Apprenticeship Services and employers groups.

The campaign has resulted in an important increase in the number of apprentices in London, doubling in one year alone: from 20 000 in 2009/10 to 40 000 in 2010/11. Growth in the last few years has been significantly stronger than in England as a whole, with London rising from bottom of the league table to sixth out of the nine English regions. Critically too, there is evidence suggesting that quality has been maintained, if not improved: completion rates have risen from one in three to two in three, the fastest growth rate in England and the greatest rise has been in ISCED Level 3 (where evidence shows the greatest returns are) rather than ISCED Level 2. The emphasis on quality has been important, as there has been some criticism in the United Kingdom that the new types of apprenticeships being supported nationally have not always been as intensive or high quality as in the past, leading to concerns that the quality "brand" traditionally held by apprenticeships may suffer.

In Glasgow, the Glasgow Youth Gateway was keen to work directly with employers from the outset. The partnership was clear that without this strong relationship, and without jobs, there would be no chance to defeat the NEET challenge. The public sector partners were helped by a strong willingness amongst many employers to give young people an opportunity. Partners have engaged employers in a number of distinctive ways, such as through the “Get Into” programmes. Other notable features relating to employer engagement have been:

- **Strong, visible leadership:** Several of the city’s most prominent business people have actively campaigned about the importance of supporting young people into work. Jim McColl, Chairman of one of Scotland’s most successful companies, has given up considerable time and energy to contribute to the city’s approach – and to convince other employers of its importance. Another leading business figure, Lord Smith, has also worked closely with public sector figures to look at ways to increase opportunities for young people, leading the Smith Group review on youth unemployment for the government.
- **Mobilising iconic brands:** Glasgow partners successfully mobilised the iconic brands of the city’s two largest football clubs – Rangers and Celtic – to promote the employability of disadvantaged young people. Both clubs offer a wide range of activities – including training projects, pathways to coaching and homework clubs – to build relationships with young people who may be switched off from learning and from the world of work. Using their stadia and facilities as an initial point of attraction, the clubs work alongside education and training providers to provide career guidance and skills development support.
- **Capitalising on the Commonwealth Games:** Glasgow will host the Commonwealth Games in 2014. This will be a major sports event and a core part of the city’s youth employment strategy has been to use the games and its links with employers to create opportunities for young people. Through the Commonwealth Apprenticeship Initiative (CAI), 314 supplier companies have signed up to provide apprenticeship opportunities across a wide range of vocational areas. The initiative has been fully operational since 2009 and in 2011, despite the economic downturn, it provided the highest number of filled vacancies and supported 604 school leavers into an apprenticeship position as an employee. This was a 1.5% increase on the previous year. To build on this success, and in recognition of the difficulties young people face in the current labour market, the CAI model has been extended. The Commonwealth Jobs Fund offers a wage subsidy to employers willing to employ someone aged 18-24 on the Glasgow Living Wage – currently GBP 7.15 per hour. There is also a new Commonwealth Graduate Fund where a subsidy is paid for employers providing work for an unemployed graduate. Both of these new strands are in the early stages of operation.

While employer-led approaches provide potential, local strategies should also ensure that there is a long-term focus on the development of skills to ensure individuals are equipped for long-term labour force attachment. Employers tend to have a narrower vision of their skill needs, which is more short-term in nature. It is therefore necessary to ensure that strategies balance this priority with the long-term need to equip individuals with a broader set of transferable skills.

The Pennsylvania Mechatronics Industry Partnerships in the United States emphasised the importance of credentials. While employers may be interested in credentials, such as certifications, which prove that students have the skills and knowledge to perform a job, they often have little interest in students pursuing other credentials, such as a tertiary qualification. The programme attracted students by ensuring they could “learn a trade” while also obtaining a degree. The Mechatronics Partnership jettisoned traditional models and instead embraced an ethos of “any time, any place, any pace.” In others

words, the partners agreed to customise training for the needs of both workers and firms. They provided training according to any schedule and customised it to the needs of each individual or firm.

Trade unions can work together with employers on skills policies, particularly on curricula development and the provision of workplace-based training. While employers tend to prioritise short-term and narrow/specific skills, trade unions may pay greater attention to the future of the workforce and therefore be more concerned with broader, transferable skills and long-term developments. They also have incentives to protect the interests of existing workers, ensure that those in work use their skills adequately and have access to good quality training and see that investments in training are reflected in better-quality jobs and higher salaries.

Sectoral initiatives: The US Career Cluster model

An analysis of career cluster and career ladder systems in the United States carried out by the LEED Programme has identified that career cluster and similar sectoral initiatives can offer a good way of bringing together educational institutions, industry organisations, employment agencies and other government departments to offer: *i)* a mapping of job types in the relevant sectors; *ii)* comprehensive career guidance to young people and adults; and *iii)* a joined up and more flexible delivery of training geared towards working adults and relevant to local labour market needs. They can be effective in supporting young people as they transition into work, but also often help adults.

Local and regional government agencies in the United States have increasingly adopted industry cluster approaches to economic development and a similar approach is surfacing in the workforce development field. As partnerships between workforce and economic development agencies become more common, the role of education and workforce agencies in mapping and building skill pipelines for key industries becomes more critical to economic development practitioners. The concept of education and training focused on key industry sectors has been integrated into most states across the United States in the last ten years and a number of states have funded new structures to support their Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programmes, community colleges and high schools around regional sector strategies. For example, Michigan has established Regional Skills Alliances, Washington has seeded funding for Regional Skills Panels and Pennsylvania has developed Industry Partnerships.

Pathways and cluster models offer significant appeal to the main players involved but are resource intensive. They are a way for the public education and workforce system to make sense of, categorise and organise their work. For high schools and community colleges, establishing career pathway models helps to connect them to the economy and produce workers with the appropriate skills for jobs in the region. Setting out clear employment pathways can help young people in planning their own future careers and in linking their education with local employment needs. By training young adults in the skills needed in the local market, employers will be able to fill more current and future job openings and have their skilled workforce demands met.

Examples from selected states across the United States follow below:

- **Maryland** started working on career sectors/career clusters in 1995 under the School to Work Opportunities Act. Three hundred fifty business executives in ten different sectors were brought together to inform education policy makers about their bottom line – how they made money and what they needed to be successful. The original project was funded with USD 25 million of Federal School to Work funds, and the approach was very bottom-up: “we let 1 000 flowers bloom,” identified one state representative. “We looked at large clusters, mapped out what knowledge and skills are required, and developed program[me]s around big chunks of

skills.” Within each county there is a Cluster Advisory Board (CAB), focused on different industry clusters. In Montgomery County, for example, which is home to the third largest biotechnology cluster in the United States, there is a CAB focused on the Biosciences, Health Science and Medicine cluster. Administrators, counsellors and faculty members are using the career cluster system to develop programmes that extend from high school to two- and four-year colleges/universities, graduate schools, apprenticeship programmes and the workplace. Although the cluster framework was originally developed for high schools and young people, it is now being adopted by workforce investment boards and other programmes serving adults.

- ***The Oregon Career Pathways Initiative*** is an example of a collaborative, partner-based approach in which all partners are actively committed to the framework. The Pathways Initiative was designed to increase the number of Oregonians with certificates, credentials and degrees in demand occupations and to ease student transitions across all education spectra. It aligns with President Obama’s inaugural address in which he encouraged every American to have at least one year of post-secondary education. In contrast to other models which were focused on employer-based goals, this pathway was mainly aimed at addressing skills gaps and shortages. The initiative is “about innovation, collaboration and leverage that is student-centred and demand-driven”. Partners include Oregon’s 17 community colleges, the Career and Technical Education Network, Departments of Education, Employment, Human Services and WIB. Through a state-wide “Action Plan”, each partner has articulated how its agency will contribute to the Pathways Initiative.
- ***The Fresno California/PG&E’s PowerPathway™*** was initiated in 2008 by PG&E, one of California’s largest energy and utility companies. With the average age of its workforce reaching retirement age, the company saw an opportunity to engage the public education and workforce system in creating a new pipeline of utility workers – providing entry into an industry that provides good jobs, is tied to labour unions and has an average entry level wage of USD 76 000 a year. PG&E reached out to community colleges, WIBs and community organisations to develop an approach for workers. The WIB in Fresno joined the PG&E PowerPathway programme, seeing focusing on the energy and utility cluster as a smart investment in an economy with an 18.2% unemployment rate. According to Blake Konczal, Executive Director of the Fresno WIB, joining up required a major commitment to reengineer how they did business and a lot of political influence to get the programme up and running. Now working with its 5th cohort of students, all of the students who went through the 12-week programme were taken on as PG&E employees.
- ***The Industrial Maintenance and Mechatronics Industry Partnership*** in Berks and Lancaster Counties, Pennsylvania, was created several years ago to overcome persistent skills shortages in the “mechatronics” sector. The region is home to a large base of manufacturing companies and leading clusters include food manufacturing, wood products, etc. Local education and training providers collaborated with industry to create training programmes that begin in high school leading to two- and four-year degrees, and to lay out clear career pathways within the industry. To start with, the scheme was funded with local dollars but it eventually attracted state and federal investment and has been expanded to other sectors. Fifty companies are engaged in the scheme and more than 250 workers have been trained.

The main conclusions of the review of clusters and pathways in the United States are that:

- There is a tension between trying to respond to the needs of individual employers who might be key to a region on the one hand, and understanding the larger cluster and the foundational skills that are needed across occupations and industries on the other hand. Any approach will need to

balance the legitimate skill needs of particular employers with a more broad integration of technical and soft skills into the curriculum.

- Changes are needed in the private sector itself. Training to increase skills in a career pathway may only be effective if employers reward the acquisition of skills through wage increases or other benefits for workers. Pathways need to build in rewards for skills acquisition, including certificates, credentials and degrees.
- There is a need to invest in capacity building and the “intermediary” function that is required to develop pathways, work with employers, design new approaches, build networks of providers and align systems. Such capacity building support is resource intensive.
- Much work on careers clusters and pathways is small scale and episodic. There is a need for more mainstream system alignment at the federal and state levels to really have an impact, although regions and local communities must have the flexibility to develop their own partnerships, design their own cluster strategies and respond to local conditions.
- Greater investment in the evaluation of career clusters and ladders programmes will be critical for their transfer to other parts of the OECD.

Financing

In the current fiscal environment, most OECD countries are in the process of reducing public sector spending to counter deficits. This retrenchment in spending inevitability means that even though the conditions of some groups and individuals may have worsened, there will be less funding available to support new and/or existing interventions. Investment remains crucial and new, more flexible funding mechanisms need to be found with the recognition that actions today will save funds in the longer term through reducing benefit dependency.

In the context of reducing public sector funds at both the local and national levels in many OECD and non-OECD countries, there is a need for local interventions to move away from a traditional reliance on direct public sector financial support. Public sector resources will continue to be available in some way, but project implementers are increasingly expected to work with the private sector and the local community to secure alternative assistance, become self-financing or find ways of mainstreaming interventions after a fixed period of time. While this can place a greater burden on the agencies as they are forced to dedicate more time to fundraising and marketing activities, it can have the positive spin-off effect of creating stronger links with local employers, increasing their profile and engendering a more proactive, independent and innovative approach.

In Central Finland, EduCluster is an organisation specialising in education and development based on an alternative financing model. It is owned by two universities (the University of Jyväskylä and the JAMK University of Applied Sciences) and an educational consortium of Central Finnish municipalities. EduCluster collaborates with organisations to enable competence and capacity building, as well as with bodies responsible for the development of education systems. Its work focuses on educational policy, human resources and regional development. It collaborates with a network of employers and its mission is to combine the expertise of Finnish higher education, vocational education and educational businesses into economically successful learning and development services.

The social economy has a key role to play in addressing disadvantage, improving employment outcomes and fostering social inclusion. One type of social enterprise in particular, Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs), can play an important role in promoting social inclusion and employment. Such social enterprises focus on work integration activities, such as skills training, the provision of employment opportunities directly and/or through wider support activities in helping people access the

open labour market (Aiken and Spear, 2005; European Commission, 2009). Despite the ability to trade, the main objective of social enterprises is not profit maximisation but the satisfaction of socially relevant needs under the constraints of economic sustainability. Social enterprises are often based and embedded in local communities, contributing to the development of formal and informal networks, allowing them to engage with hard to reach people (OECD, 2007).

Evaluation

Evaluation and monitoring are particularly critical in times of financial constraints where competition for funding is greater and success needs to be proven. Putting in place personal incentives for programme implementers (e.g. including them in performance objectives) can have a positive impact. It must be stated, however, that “proving” success is not always easy, especially when interventions are qualitative and focus on the longer term building of participation and soft components such as level of motivation and aspirations.

An interesting evaluation methodology called the Most Significant Change (MSC) has been designed to monitor changes in communities resulting from local skills strategies in Queensland, Australia (Box 9).

Box 9. Most Significant Change Methodology in Queensland, Australia

The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation. It is participatory because many project stakeholders are involved both in deciding the types of change to be recorded and used in analysing the data. It is a form of monitoring because it occurs throughout the project cycle and provides information to help people manage the project. It contributes to evaluation because it provides data on impact and outcomes that can be used to help assess the performance of the project as a whole.

A panel of designated stakeholders discuss “significant change” stories emanating from the project participants and determine what the ‘most significant change’ is. The process helps to build industry and community ownership through participatory evaluation.

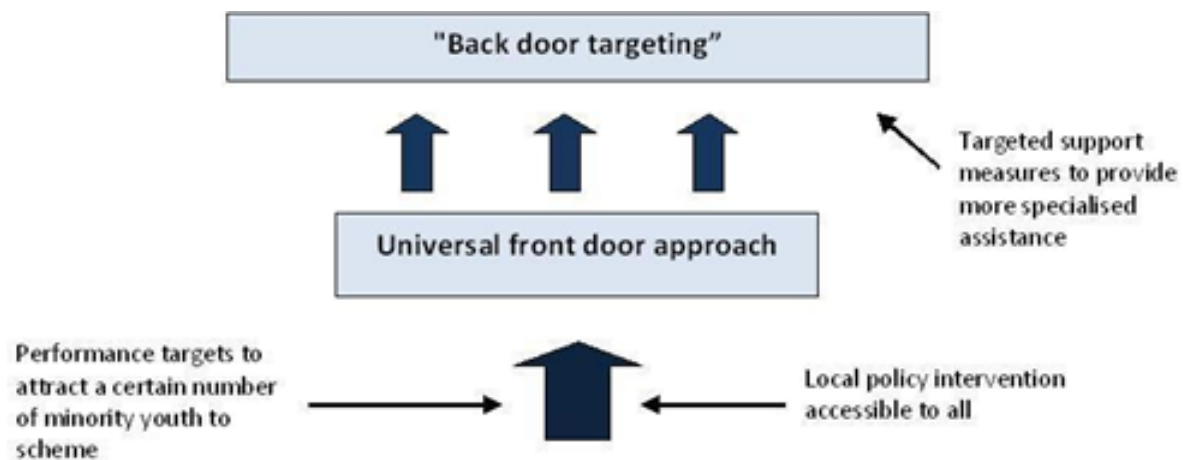
The process involves the collection of significant change stories from the operational level and the systematic selection of the most important of these by panels of designated stakeholders. These stakeholders are asked to search for project impact. Once changes have been captured, various people sit down together, read the stories aloud and have in-depth discussions about the value of the reported changes. When the technique is successfully implemented, whole teams of people begin to focus their attention on project impact.

LOCAL APPROACHES AND TOOLS

Targeting effectively

Local youth employment and skills initiatives target different user groups in different ways, either implicitly or explicitly. They may target spatially by focusing on a particular neighbourhood or community, often disadvantaged, or target by need. They may direct services at a particular gender, at a specific age category within youth, or at particular migrant and ethnic groupings – often overlapping with spatial targeting. The value of targeting youth services is that it can provide a more tailor made, individualised response which fits more closely with the needs of the young person, and in times of budget cuts is a less costly approach than offering universal services. In the case of ethnic targeting, it can make up for concurrent/past discrimination and can reach those not on the radar of mainstream organisations. It can attract more users to mainstream employment services which are typically underused by migrant youth, increasing uptake and improving outcomes.

Figure 1. Hybrid targeting



Source: Froy, F. and L. Pyne (2011), "Ensuring Labour Market Success for Ethnic Minority and Immigrant Youth", OECD Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Working Papers, No. 2011/09, OECD Publishing.

Targeting is used by the Youth with a Future (YF) Programme in Argentina. It involves young people aged 18 to 24 from low-income backgrounds who have difficulty in finding employment. Similarly, the BladeRunners programme in Vancouver, Canada targeted disadvantaged youth. Both programmes have seen success from targeting specific disadvantaged groups.

It should be noted that targeting must be applied with caution. Targeting by ethnicity can potentially racialise poverty and aggravate racial unrest if minority groups are perceived to receive special treatment by the wider community (Froy and Pyne, 2011). In the context of limited public resources, it may also be

difficult for local government to gain political and social support for programmes which target narrowly and are not seen to offer support for NEET youth more generally. One potentially effective model is a hybrid between universal employment support for young people while offering finer tuned actions for specific target groups through a “back door” targeting approach (Figure 1). Critical for any locally based initiative is carrying out an impartial local needs assessment of the needs, experiences and outcomes of the targeted youth group at the earliest stage. This will ensure that programmes are not introduced based on assumptions, perceptions and “common knowledge”, but on a clear understanding of where disadvantage lies and where “repair work” is required.

Addressing the NEET challenge

The importance of the early years

The early years of a child’s life play a fundamental role in laying down the foundations for their future skills acquisition and general employability. Children’s earliest experiences form the basis for all subsequent learning. Early learning confers value on acquired skills, which leads to self-reinforcing motivation to learn more, and early mastery of a range of cognitive, social and emotional competencies makes learning at later ages easier and thus more likely to continue (Heckman, 2006). What is more, a growing evidence base correlates the provision of quality early childhood services with longer term benefits for children from low-income and migrant groups, those most likely to be later classified as the NEET group. While generic skills are learnt early in life, not all children benefit equally from pre-school and school-age education. Children from disadvantaged and/or migrant backgrounds may need extra support in learning and language acquisition to rectify this.

Investment in the education of children has the highest rate of return when focused at the earliest levels of education: longitudinal studies show that the personal benefits associated with early intervention (social benefits, personal benefits, government savings, etc.) clearly outweigh the cost (Karoly et al., 2005 in Doyle et al. 2009). Thus, investing in remedial youth training and skills programmes later in life may be too late to make a significant difference and comes at a higher cost.

Box 10. Preparing for life: Dublin, Ireland

Preparing for Life is a five-year school readiness programme to transform the lives of Irish children born into disadvantaged communities over the coming years. The programme works with 200 families living in disadvantaged areas of north Dublin from pregnancy onwards and aims to support the healthy development of the child. The first of its kind in Ireland, it aims to provide evidence on the best practice for early childhood interventions. Evaluation is a key element of the programme. Such programmes have commonly been implemented in the United States, but evaluating them in an Irish and European context is an imperative in order to know if such interventions are effective and to provide much needed data on disadvantaged groups of society. The PFL programme is jointly-funded by Atlantic Philanthropies and the Office of the Minister for Children and run by the Northside Partnership. It is one of a series of early childhood interventions which have recently been initiated in Ireland with the ambition of changing the life outcomes for at-risk children.

Source: Geary Institute, University College Dublin.

Finishing school is a priority

Youth who drop out of school early, having acquired no or few qualifications, are at particular risk of becoming permanently disconnected from the labour market. In the past, the higher availability of

employment meant that those who had not completed compulsory education could pass easily into employment, albeit often poor quality and temporary, but the decreasing number of job openings has made this harder. To be most effective, policy makers need to improve mechanisms for identifying those at risk of dropping out, and prevent this from happening. However, there is also a need for programmes which work with young dropouts – even though this can be more challenging (often requiring a holistic approach to address personal issues, for example) and more costly.

The Glasgow Works Youth Gateway looked at evidence which demonstrated an established pattern where young people – particularly from the most deprived backgrounds – struggled in the education system beyond the primary levels. Steps were taken to address this issue through the early identification of “at-risk” pupils, offering a wider and more flexible curricula, involving employers and monitoring the school performance of these pupils closely.

Box 11. Glasgow Risk Matrix approach

The Glasgow partnership developed a Risk Matrix which is now applied to all pupils in their penultimate year of compulsory education. This identified those pupils who might struggle to make a smooth transition beyond school. In each secondary school, a multi-disciplinary team met to consider the support needs of the at-risk pupils, adopting a joint case management approach to ensure that they were appropriately advised and offered an appropriate range of provision. The model assigns pupils with a red, amber or green status, denoting their support levels and they are referred accordingly.

Personalised support to help youth progress into employment or training

When young excluded people start work, it is important that follow-up support is provided to ensure they are gradually building basic employability skills. Providing on-going support and training once young people are in work to help them retain their employment and secure on-going career progression is also important. This support will help ensure sustainable employment and the skills necessary to retain a job or re-enter the labour market if faced with a lay-off. The development of employability skills through workplace training opportunities is an important component of the BladeRunners programme in Vancouver, where youth receive health and safety training to help them build self-esteem and confidence.

Both the Glasgow Youth Employment Partnership and the Vancouver BladeRunners programmes provide interesting examples of approaches to support young people with multiple disadvantages who are too vulnerable to immediately progress beyond school onto a standard positive destination (in the case of Glasgow) or already being out of education, employment or training, as in the case of BladeRunners. In Glasgow, the city model was able to draw upon the piloting of the national Activity Agreements programme to meet the support needs of youngsters identified in schools as at risk by the Risk Assessment procedure. In practice, the Activity Agreements programme provides coaches who work on a one to one basis with these young people. In many cases – particularly at the start – it requires a proactive approach where the coach will go to the client’s home. This provides an opportunity to gauge the home setting, but it also recognises that the client’s low self-esteem may make them reluctant to attend a formal appointment. Coaches use the initial meeting to establish the relationship and follow up quickly with a second meeting which is used to set out and agree a negotiated Activity Agreement.

Another identified service gap centred around those young people identified as being too vulnerable to immediately progress beyond school onto a standard positive destination. These are youngsters whose

multiple and complex support needs have been identified in schools by the Risk Assessment procedure. The city model was able to draw upon the piloting of the national Activity Agreements programme to meet their support needs.

As part of this, the young person will set goals and establish a programme of participation to move them towards employability. Initially, this might involve small steps, but the aim is to move them into education, employment or training over a 24-week period. The young person draws down an allowance of GBP 30 per week against participation and completion of the agreed steps. The feedback and results of this initiative in Glasgow have been encouraging. The national evaluation of the pilots shows that the city has undertaken more agreements than any other area and with a higher rate of success – 48% of the city's 601 participants have achieved hard outcomes as a result.

Support from programme co-ordinators is a key defining feature of the Canadian BladeRunners model. Off-the-job support takes many forms: referrals to various health, education and social services; financial support for obtaining stable housing; support in the form of public transport vouchers and meals; informal counselling about further training and education; and financial support for additional training programme fees. The underlying and fundamental goal of all support is to make sure that participants are able to be placed in jobs and to maintain stable employment and long-term attachment to the labour market.

Box 12. BladeRunners 24/7 support

BladeRunners is an employment programme that helps youth (ages 15-30) with multiple barriers to employment build careers in construction and other industries throughout the province of British Columbia, Canada. The ultimate goal of the program is to develop skills and work experience that foster long-term attachment to the labour force and to support the social and community integration of young people.

All BladeRunners programme participants are paired up with one of the BladeRunners co-ordinators. This is not done through an assignment process, but rather follows the preferences of participants and their choice to engage with one or another of the co-ordinators. Co-ordinators provide support directly if possible, or through their network of contacts in community organisations. Most programme co-ordinators have a history in the community and have often encountered in the past some of the same difficulties faced by BladeRunners participants. Prior to placement, all work equipment (hard hats, boots, rain gear, etc.) is paid for by the BladeRunners programme and participants are accompanied by a co-ordinator in order to make this purchase. Then, on the first day of work, a BladeRunners co-ordinator will bring the participant to the construction site and introduce him or her to the foreman, contractor or tradesperson, and to other BladeRunners if any are already working on the site. Over the subsequent days, the co-ordinator will return to the site to ensure that the contractor, the tradespeople and the BladeRunners participant are satisfied with the placement. If required, co-ordinators will refer participants to other social service providers, assist with housing and transport needs and counsel young people about further training and permanent job opportunities. Funds are available to help stabilise housing (first month's rent and damage deposit), for transport (bus tickets) and food (lunches on site, if needed) – this support is offered because it is deemed essential to ensure employability.

Support is offered whenever programme participants need it, on or off the job. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. BladeRunners participants all have the mobile phone number of "their" co-ordinator who can be reached at all times. Although emergency calls are rare, they do occur and co-ordinators are willing to provide any useful assistance at these times. In the past, access to support from co-ordinators was offered only up to 18 months after placement. However, in practice, programme co-ordinators always maintained an open-door policy and continued to engage with any past BladeRunners participants who expressed a need for support in returning to employment. Today, no time limits are placed on the availability of support.

The value of informal and non-formal learning

Taking account of the full range of an individual's knowledge, skills and competences can be especially relevant when working with those marginalised in the labour market, especially when it comes to youth. This includes recognising the valuable role that informal¹ and non-formal² learning can play, as opposed to only taking into account learning that takes place in formal education and training systems. The City of Antwerp in Flanders, Belgium, has sought to become a laboratory for innovative practices in the validation and recognition of non-formal learning in youth work. Having attained no or a low level of formal skills and lacking recognised qualifications, these young people are often not aware of the competences they have developed in other ways, or cannot convince potential employers of them.

Youth competences centres employ work acquired counsellors to work with young people who are generally from disadvantaged, migrant communities and have dropped out of school, to give advice and information on applying for jobs, training programmes and returning to study. They meet them on their "turf" and encourage them to recognise and demonstrate their skills and competences. The municipality of Antwerp has supported the development of a digital portfolio called C-stick to aid competency development. A USB flash drive, the C-stick is a central database where young people can store relevant information such as personal development plans, create adjusted CVs and connect with their tutors. An easy reference interface was designed and it is usable in different settings such as leisure time activities, training and job counselling (Froy and Pyne, 2011).

A number of recent LEED studies have highlighted the value of cultivating skills through cultural and creative activities. This is a way to provide young people, often disadvantaged youth who can be difficult to reach through more conventional approaches, with new skills and allow them to pursue areas of passion such as music, theatre, literature and film. Young people may have interests not immediately regarded as relevant to the labour market, but if encouraged to develop and pursue these they can prove to be invaluable in giving young people more confidence and greater ambition as well as allow them to acquire new skills valuable in the world of work, or indeed to set up their own businesses.

The Information and Cultural Exchange community arts and technology organisation in Western Sydney, Australia, provides community programmes to local disadvantaged young people in areas such as filmmaking and music (Box 12). Similarly, the KomFlex module (part of the larger Network DYNAMO in Vienna) includes a strong emphasis on giving young people the space and support to develop their cultural interests. It caters to young people who have finished their elementary education but are not able or willing to go to secondary school or take up an apprenticeship. Participants are taught how to make films from the planning to completion stage, which are put on YouTube, and at the same time receive classes in languages, maths, IT and are helped to plan their next educational steps. The importance of culture for youth was also emphasised in the Glasgow Youth Employability Model. Part of the approach in Glasgow involved tackling the gang culture that had existed historically and included a sophisticated monitoring system to track the behaviour and activity of young people engaging in anti-social behaviour.

Box 13. Information and Cultural Exchange: Western Sydney, Australia

Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE) is a community arts and technology organisation in Western Sydney which has worked with young people from diverse cultural backgrounds for more than 20 years. It provides community programmes in areas such as filmmaking and urban music, enabling thousands of young people who are not in employment, education or training and those poorly integrated in the labour market to pursue their creative ambitions. Providing skills development, mentoring, networking opportunities and small business support, ICE programmes enhance the employability of participants and have built the career foundations of some highly successful Australian artists, particularly in the areas of filmmaking and hip hop.

Programmes include Artfiles – an artists' resource and professional development programme that connects artists and employers through providing a comprehensive directory of more than 2 000 artists in Western Sydney. Create Media! provides work experience, training and business development in digital arts to young people from a refugee background. ICE is one of Australia's most successful community arts organisations, recognised as one of 11 "key producers" by the Australia Council for the Arts, demonstrating outstanding leadership and success in community arts. In 2010, over 1 700 people took part in ICE workshops, seminars and master classes.

Setting sights high – the importance of raising young people's aspirations

A factor which can often hinder young people in the labour market, and closely related to early school leaving, is low aspirations. The LEED Ensuring Labour Market Success for Ethnic Minority and Immigrant Youth project (Froy and Pyne, 2011) found that low self-esteem, lack of motivation and low aspirations are common among migrant youth and this is applicable to disadvantaged youth, the "poorly integrated" and "high performers" as many face unemployment for the first time. Low levels of motivation can be caused by difficulties in school, the effects of which follow them into later life, and has been entrenched by the rising youth unemployment rates. Additional contributing factors can be negative peer group pressure, the absence of positive role models, lack of parental support and interest, and involvement in crime, etc.

Motivating young people can help them to recognise their personal and professional strengths, break out of old patterns of thinking and realise that they can attain their goals. Mentoring programmes can play a part here. The King Movement Foundation/Hi5, Netherlands, seeks to transform the passivity and alienation experienced by young migrants into positive aspirations and ultimately to good careers. It puts jobseekers and local organisations in contact with role models and representatives from local companies. *"We make young people aware of all the possibilities that are available. The only thing is they have to grab the opportunities themselves and become self-reliant"* (Dionne Abdoelhafiezkhani in Froy and Pyne, 2011).

The Roadtrip Nation project in the United States is an example of a youth-led intervention which raises young people's aspirations and encourages them to expand their social networks and more actively plan their futures. Through a blend of multimedia and project-based learning activities, it helps youth gain access and exposure to life pathways they might not otherwise have known existed. Young people are encouraged to set up and film interviews with figures they find inspirational in their local communities or even further afield, such as well-known celebrities, designers, music producers, sports stars and film makers. They discover first hand their pathway to success and learn invaluable networking and filmmaking skills in the process. It has since introduced a new element to its programme, working directly in schools to challenge the lack of engagement with education through creating a more dynamic curriculum (Froy and Pyne, 2011).

Supporting poorly integrated new entrants

Creating pathways to successful careers

Along with having the required qualifications, young people are increasingly expected to have work experience, even for entry-level positions, partly as a result of greater competition for openings. What is more, potential employers also request “soft skills” such as communication, teamwork and presentation skills which young applicants may not have acquired in school or are not able to demonstrate.

Ensuring that young people invest in their skills and have clear routes from training into employment, is very much a local issue that requires place-specific cross-sector responses involving different local players as part of wider local development strategies. At the same time, it will be important for industry groups, colleges and employment agencies to work together to ensure that young people have accurate career guidance as to opportunities in the local economy. Successful “study-work” programmes train young people in transferable “soft” or generic skills, as well as giving them much needed job experience which also gives a realistic idea of what working in certain sectors entails. They seek to bridge the world of education and training and the world of work. Vocational education and apprenticeships are a suitable way to more closely match skills supply with employers’ needs, while also providing on-the-job experience.

The transition between education and work is smoother in countries with work-study programmes at upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary levels of education. The United Kingdom offers work-study programmes at these levels and programme participants are less affected by unemployment. However, compared to other countries such as Australia, the Czech Republic, Germany and Switzerland, the United Kingdom only has a small proportion of students. Whereas in Switzerland, for example, 36% of students in below upper secondary education are enrolled in work-study programmes, in the United Kingdom only 1% of students at the same level are enrolled in such programmes (OECD, 2011).

The Liverpool Workplace Learning Partnership in South West Sydney introduced initiatives to support young people at risk, in an area with high youth unemployment and poorer than average education attainment. Activities include addressing early years intervention and the transition from school to work through career advice, building and recognising skills, and workplace learning. It gives youth the chance to take part in accredited workplace schemes, with key outcomes being improved employability through raised self-esteem, greater job readiness and more awareness of job and learning pathways. It also seeks to overcome local barriers to employment in high growth sectors such as IT and the creative industry where there are few local opportunities for young people.

Need to make available work attractive to youth

Hands-on workplace training can also help to motivate disengaged youth to develop “hard” skills on modern equipment and “soft” skills such as teamwork, communication and negotiation, through real world experience. Hands-on workplace training can also help to motivate disengaged youth to stay in or reengage with the education system and make the transition from education into the labour market smoother. Workplace training also facilitates recruitment by allowing employers and potential employees to get to know each other, while trainees contribute to the output of the training firm.

The New Inflow into New Jobs: The Harbour Project, Rotterdam, was introduced in 2009 to combat youth unemployment among migrant youth and revitalise the harbour’s traditional labour force. It offers a 40-week dual “study-work” programme (4 days in work, 1 day in Shipping and Transport College) which trains young people to be operational assistants, after which they receive further, more specialised

training. They also receive “soft skills” such as communication and listening, reading, writing and simple mathematics, and problem solving. For 4 months candidates receive an apprentice fee, after which they are offered a contract for at least 12 months. From a yearly intake of 100, 75% complete the course and from these 80% proceed to a follow-up course and train as all round operators.

The Year Up Program in the United States is an intensive, year-long education and workforce training programme, which establishes effective career pathways for urban young adults who are “at risk.” Year Up focuses specifically on building skills and employment preparation skills in financial services and information technology. Over the past decade, it has placed 2 100 low- and moderate-income young people into internships with more than 100 employers across the country, including Fortune 500 companies such as American Express, JPMorgan Chase & Co. and State Street Corporation.

Ensuring decent work and sustainable employment practices

Young people looking for work need to balance the benefits of acquiring an immediate job with the need to secure a position which will offer good quality employment. The Quang Nam province in Central Viet Nam has designed a more integrated and multi-faceted approach to improving youth employment in response to very high youth unemployment and underemployment rates (estimated to be 76.4%). Local Economic Development (LED) is a new approach and has not been systematically implemented in any other project in Viet Nam. Adopted by the regional government and the ILO, it is a three-pronged approach which addresses three areas of intervention in an integrated, parallel manner: *i)* creation of a pro-employment business environment; *ii)* vocational training and entrepreneurial skills for youth; and *iii)* improved job opportunities through value chain development.

Similarly, the Youth with a Future programme in Argentina, operating as a part of a public-private arrangement, promotes quality job opportunities (see Box 13).

Box 14. Ensuring Decent Work: Argentina

In a country where 20% of young people neither work nor study, in 2006 the Ministry of Labour and Social Security called on 100 leading companies to work together to create sustainable labour practices (e.g. Peugeot, Nestle, Repsol – YPF, Telefónica). The Youth with a Future programme was designed for 18 to 24 year olds from low-income and unemployed backgrounds who have not finished secondary school and lack significant labour market experience, with 30 local companies involved to provide training. According to programme data, outcomes are widely positive. Sixty-eight per cent of participants hold quality employment and successful participants have an average monthly income about 2.7 times higher than that earned by contemporaries with no secondary school diploma in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security and participating companies co-finance training and tutorials as well as participants' monthly “stimulus” payment. The “triple alliance” between government as promoter, companies as operators and social organisations as the support base, creates a strong and legitimate social structure. It connects companies, the local administration, technical schools and social organisations.

Supporting good performers

Need to support young entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship can be a viable alternative for youth to the mainstream labour market. The critical role played by start-ups and young businesses (including non-profit) in driving economic development and job creation is increasingly understood. Consolidating entrepreneurial skills in young people can also

create a powerful cadre of future local business and civic leaders, laying down the foundations for future local economic growth. What drives business success among young people? Individual capacities, including personality traits, creativity, motivation and powers of persuasion are often considered to be key. However, success also requires investment in supporting entrepreneurialism as an alternative to regular employment and creating the base skills in young people including entrepreneurship skills, creation of entrepreneurial attitudes, as well as start-up and early-stage business development support.

Entrepreneurial activity among young people can be encouraged and supported by, for example, facilitating access to business advice, mentoring and finance, and making sure enterprise agencies expand their focus to include more young people. Schools can play a big part in developing an enterprise culture in partnership with other actors, e.g. teacher training to ensure that teachers are well placed to provide this type of education, early integration of entrepreneurship in school curricula. The LEED Programme created good practice criteria in “Shooting for the Moon: Good Practices in Local Youth Entrepreneurship Support” (2009). Directed at those who design strategies and infrastructure for youth entrepreneurship and who are active in entrepreneurship education and start-up support, it provides a tool to self-assess and re-orientate strategies, structures and practices. It groups skills into the following three dimensions:

- **Opportunity creation:** making places conducive to youth entrepreneurship. The higher the recognition for entrepreneurship in a place and the more entrepreneurial behaviour is embedded, the greater public support for creating the necessary framework conditions. This includes the availability of financial, human and physical resources and information, and makes it easier to recognise opportunities and turn them into business ventures.
- **Entrepreneurship education:** generating motivation, attitudes and competencies for entrepreneurship. Assisting the establishment of new firms is a key objective for entrepreneurship education, but not its only one. Creating entrepreneurial mindsets that drive innovation in existing firms is of equal importance, yet success is much more difficult to measure.
- **Start-up support:** providing a helping hand in business start-up without taking away the “do it on your own”. It is all about making entrepreneurship support systems accessible and attractive for young future entrepreneurs, and about rectifying market and system failures in financing and premises.

Box 15. Rewarding the entrepreneurial spirit: Paris

The Enterprising in the Neighbourhood Programme (*Entreprendre en banlieue*) in northern Paris aims to reduce youth unemployment, in an area where 45% of young people are unemployed, through encouraging disadvantaged youth to consider job creation as an alternative to job seeking. One feature of the programme is making the community conducive to youth entrepreneurship by rewarding the entrepreneurial spirit of young people through a Talent Revealers competition (*Révélateurs de talents*). Sponsored by leading companies, the competition is held annually and awards EUR 12 000 to the successful young entrepreneur, which along with extra money to invest in the start-up also brings social recognition, boosts self-confidence and creates a sense of local pride in a struggling community.

Source: Froy, F. and L. Pyne (2011), “Ensuring Labour Market Success for Ethnic Minority and Immigrant Youth”, OECD Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Working Papers, No. 2011/09, OECD Publishing.

Transversal skills are increasingly important

Working with employers on skills utilisation and skills development is important to ensure better utilisation of the human resources available to them, raising job satisfaction and income levels, and boosting local productivity. This is particularly important for youth, as having their skills harnessed effectively at a young age can be crucial to longer term employment trajectories.

Public sector organisations in the past were reluctant to “interfere” in work organisation, productivity and strategic planning in firms, this being seen as a purely internal matter. However, there is now more willingness to work in partnership to bolster the strength of local industries. Even before the economic downturn, research by the LEED Programme showed that businesses would be eager for more public sector support in maximising productivity (Froy and Giguère, 2010b).

Intermediary organisations can be well placed to act as a link between the public sector and business. While the public sector is very familiar with some of the themes under discussion relating to productivity, business management and technology transfer, to name a few, they may lack the required technological and increasingly specialised knowledge, which is where intermediaries can plug the knowledge gap. LEED has commissioned a study looking at the value of one intermediary organisations in New Jersey – the Heldrich Center, Rutgers University. Due to its long-standing research, knowledge and cutting edge data on the New Jersey labour market, the Heldrich Center was selected to lead the Talent Network division in the transport, logistics and distribution sector. The Talent Network has created “talent clusters” across six key industry sectors, and was established to drive forward an employer-led approach by connecting businesses with educational institutions, workforce development agencies, government and community groups to identify skills and training needs. The Heldrich Center acts as “matchmaker” between local employers in the transport, logistics and distribution sector and the public institutions (e.g. training providers, local authorities, educational institutions), ensuring that employers’ voices are heard by the relevant partners and that their labour force needs are quickly and flexibly met. Although it is still in the formative stages, it is expected that by connecting the dots, the actions of the Heldrich Center will have a visible impact on addressing skills needs and balancing supply and demand, which will have implications reaching far beyond the local economy.

Benefits of combining training with work experience

Apprenticeships and work-based training can be a means to promote up-skilling and allow young people to gain work experience, while at the same time providing a basic income. Promoting apprenticeships and work-based vocational training programmes is thus also a way of reducing financial barriers to staying in education. During the economic recovery, such apprenticeship programmes can also play a vital role in promoting access to jobs for youth (OECD, 2010a).

In Wales, shared apprenticeships are offered where more than one employer (often SMEs) offers a range of work experiences which in total meet the apprenticeship framework requirements but also enable the trainees to have a range of different experiences. Similarly, the BladeRunners programme in Vancouver, Canada and the New Inflow into New Jobs Harbour Project in Rotterdam both combine paid employment and work experience with training, enabling participants to build their skills and develop an attachment to the labour force.

NOTES

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1. “Informal learning results from daily activities related to work, family life or leisure. It is not structured and usually does not lead to certification. In most cases, it is unintentional on the part of the learner.” (European Commission, 2011)
 2. “Non-formal learning is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. However, it is intentional on the part of the learner and has structured objectives, times and support.” (European Commission, 2011)

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SELECTED CASE STUDIES

LEAVING SCHOOL BY THE RIGHT DOOR: THE GLASGOW YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY MODEL¹

The Context: Youth Exclusion in Glasgow

Glasgow's global reputation was initially formed through Atlantic trade and the city's tradition of engineering and heavy industry. However, like many other cities Glasgow has lost much of its old industrial base and during the past 30 years its economy has been transformed. Glasgow has reinvented itself from a rusting heavy industry metropolis to a renowned visitor destination based on a strong cultural offering. The city's employment base is now heavily reliant on the service sector with Financial Services, Retail and the Hospitality industry prevalent in this change process. The city's transition remains work in progress, however its trajectory has ensured the retention of its position as Scotland's principal economic driver.

However, despite Glasgow's success in economic reprofiling, the city has faced a long-standing challenge around youth unemployment. This predates the current crisis, beginning in 2008, and data shows that even during the boom years of the early 2000s one in eight of the city's young people were not in education, employment or training (NEET²), a higher proportion than the Scottish or UK rate (Scottish Government analysis of DWP and School Leavers Destinations data).

In the mid-2000s there was a focused effort to identify the root source of this endemic problem. Primarily, this came back to the city's schools, and in particular the relatively low rates of Glasgow school leavers progressing into positive destinations³. 72% of the city's 2005/06 school leavers progressed into a positive destination compared to the national average of 85%. This was in a period when the economy remained strong and when employers were struggling to fill vacancies.

Before looking at 'the problem with schools' a number of contextual factors are relevant to the Glasgow situation, relating to issues of supply and demand. With regard to the latter, the industrial changes in the city had resulted in a restructuring of its labour market. Over a generation, a combination of factors had provoked a drastic decline in the availability of entry-level jobs. As well as mechanization and digitization, this had included the decline of traditional industries aligned to the old apprenticeship model. The consequence was a drastic reduction in the proportions of young people leaving school and directly entering employment. In 1980, 65% of school leavers went directly from school into work but by 2008 the rate had fallen to 34%. The impact of the economic downturn means that this rate continues to decline.

Another important contextual factor is Glasgow's socioeconomic profile. Despite its relative economic success, the city retains some of the most economically deprived areas of the United Kingdom. The extent of this and its impact on young people is illustrated by the high proportion of the city's school pupils eligible for free meals, an established proxy for poverty. In Glasgow in 2010, 30% of the city's secondary school pupils were eligible for free meals, which was double the national rate.

There is a significant body of evidence demonstrating the correlation between deprivation, poor school performance and negative post school destinations (Raffo, 2007). In other advanced economies this link is less pronounced, and education provides a potentially transformative experience for disadvantaged young people. Although once a prevalent feature of the Scottish education system there is

¹ Fieldwork for this case study was undertaken in 2011 and the case study was finalised in early 2012.

² In Scotland, NEET refers to young people aged 16-19 not in education, employment or training

³ A positive progression means going into employment, volunteering, further or higher education on completion of secondary school

less evidence of this today. In its 2009 review in Scotland the OECD expert team identified low levels of social mobility linked to education, compared to a basket of comparator countries (OECD, 2009).

This then was the context and starting point for the city's concerted attempt to address youth exclusion and unemployment in 2006.

The approach: Youth Employability Partnership concept

In 2006 the Scottish Government published its NEET Strategy, *More Choices More Chances* (Scottish Government, 2006). This seminal document included detailed analysis of young people not in education, employment or training. Although it referred to the heterogeneous nature of the NEET population, it also identified types of young people amongst whom this situation was statistically more likely. This included young people leaving the state care system; those with poor health; those with caring responsibilities and those living in the most deprived areas. The Government research (Scottish Government, 2006) underlined the risk of long-term damage – what we now refer to as scarring (Scarpetta, 2010) – and noted that by the age of 21 a young man NEET who had been NEET for six months was:

- More than four times more likely to be out of work
- Three times more likely to have depression and mental health issues
- Five times more likely to have a criminal record
- Six times less likely to have any qualifications

The Scottish Government strategy also focused on the spatial spread of NEET across the country. It noted that Glasgow, despite its economic strength, had one of the highest NEET rates and that the city provided 1 in every 5 of Scotland's NEET youngsters.

In response to the government strategy, and as a consequence of rising concerns in the city around the NEET issue, Glasgow established its own *More Choices More Chances* (MCMC) Partnership. Initially, this comprised two related structures, one focused on the pre-sixteen age group with a focus on prevention, the other focusing on post-16 and addressing the consequences of the city's high NEET rate. However, it quickly became evident that these two issues were so interrelated that such a division was unhelpful. Consequently, a single Youth Employment Partnership (YEP) evolved, chaired by the local authority and involving the key stakeholders, including all relevant local authority departments, Skills Development Scotland, further education colleges, National Health Service, Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector and Glasgow Housing Association.

Starting point: in order to build on the government's strategic work, the YEP conducted further investigation to help explain Glasgow's position. Three important facts emerged at this early stage:

1. The first related to the way in which school performance was recorded and the rewarded. The Scottish system was heavily focused on academic performance, with government promoting transparency around exam results. Whilst schools could build their reputation on solid grade performances, at the other end of the scale there was no penalty for those schools whose pupils failed to complete or who progressed into negative destinations.
2. The second, related issue pertained to available data on young people. School leaver destination statistics were often incomplete and included relatively high levels of 'unknowns' in addition to those in negative outcomes. In 2005/06 the number of pupils leaving Glasgow schools with an unknown destination was 124, which was a rate of 2.4%. This was more than double the national average and incomplete destinations data made it difficult to track the experience of significant numbers of young people.

3. The third issue concerned the provision of post-sixteen education and training opportunities across the city. Mapping activity had demonstrated that Glasgow was reasonably well-served in terms of overall post school provision, with a rich mix of public, voluntary and private sector providers. However, the YEP's strategic review revealed a plethora of provision, but much of this was poorly connected. Competition amongst service providers was a prevalent feature of the supplier snapshot, largely encouraged by a funding environment focused heavily on payment by results. Consequently, there was often limited incentive for providers to refer a client on to another provider, even if that was in the client's interest, as the referring agency would lose funding as a consequence. From a client perspective, this environment made it difficult to assess the comparative merits of providers in order to make an informed choice.

This confused provider map was very much a product of the financial model in Glasgow in the mid-2000s. There were a number of features to this. The first was that since the late 1990s there had been increasing resources available to tackle employability. As a consequence, many existing providers grew, new ones appeared and others who specialized in other policy areas (including Housing, Justice, Health and Care) started providing employability support, because that was increasingly where the money was. At the same time, the available funding within the city came from many sources – some local, some national – and there was little or no collaboration between funders. These commissioning patterns, operating in the absence of any agreed city structure for investing in youth employment, contributed to this map of disconnected and duplicated services across the city.

A key development in Glasgow addressing these issues was the establishment of the YEP as the strategic partnership responsible for improving the NEET figures. This was coordinated from within the local authority's economic development function⁴ but, critically, it also involved the Education Department who provided the bridge into schools. Other principal stakeholders in this group were Jobcentre Plus, Skills Development Scotland (the national skills and guidance agency), local regeneration agencies, the NGO sector and the colleges. This group reported to the city's Community Planning Partnership (CPP), which in turn was accountable for Glasgow's performance against Government targets, as part of the historic Concordat Agreement between local authorities and the government agreed in 2007. One of the key targets was "To increase the proportion of school leavers moving into positive destinations."

This strategic group has been responsible for setting performance targets relating to the key indicators relating to the NEET problem in the city. To achieve this, it has overseen a series of structural and operational developments with the latter now become collectively known as *The Glasgow Youth Gateway*.

Implementation of the model

Following the initial investigative research, seven operational themes were established which had a series of linked objectives. These have provided the structure for addressing the weaknesses identified at the partnership's starting point. The seven operational themes included:

1. Data Sharing
2. Early identification
3. Provision, including:
 - redrawing the commissioning map; widening the vocational offer in schools
 - strengthening the outreach model;
 - tackling the gang culture
 - Mobilisation the NGO sector

⁴ Development and Regeneration Services (DRS)

4. Transition and progression
5. Employer engagement
6. Aftercare
7. Monitoring and evaluation

On the ground, the responsibility for implementing these activities was led by local Youth Employment Groups (YEG). Originally there were five of these, but recently this has been streamlined to three. Critically, these groups – which assembled all local stakeholders – were chaired by high profile local Head Teachers. This sent out a clear message that the NEET issue could not be tackled without the active commitment of schools.

Each of the seven themes, and activities undertaken within them, is considered below.

1. Data sharing

The issue: Scrutiny of the core problems underlying Glasgow's high NEET figures identified a number of significant weaknesses around client management information. First of all, there were two separate databases in use, one in the education system and the other by the Careers and Guidance team within SDS. There was no connection between these two systems. There were also limitations on the scope to share client data, largely based on professionals' interpretation of the UK Data Protection Act.

Furthermore, historically there had been very little pressure applied to schools in relation to destination statistics. Consequently, there was little incentive to pay too much attention to leaver destinations – particularly those which were negative or unknown – which in any case were notoriously difficult to accurately compile. The schools which did recognise this as being important, usually did so in line with the views of the Head Teacher.

Action: At both the national and city level, SDS was given responsibility to lead on addressing these issues. This required work on two related fronts. At a technical level, it required the development of a single shared management information system that could be used to track young people's progress through the school system and beyond. On a cultural level this work required strengthening the relationship within schools to convey the message that improving the supply of intelligence mattered and that schools were central to that process.

In particular, there was a concerted drive to reduce the number of 'unknown' destinations as this had been identified as a particular flaw in Glasgow's starting point.

Results: SDS has now successfully developed and introduced data hubs across the city, which have led to a marked increase in the quality of data and partners' ability to share it. As part of this work there has also been a significant improvement in reducing the number of unknown destinations from city schools.

2. Early identification

The issue: An early recommendation for the Glasgow partnership was to investigate and develop ways to improve the availability and quality of early intervention for young people struggling in schools. Consultation with schools, guidance staff, providers and young people indicated that too often the support and guidance they needed was provided too late in the day. Rather than waiting until their final year of compulsory schooling, a strong argument was made to develop a model which identified problems upstream and brought partners together to address these.

Action: This was a big step for schools to take. It meant acknowledging that there were children in their schools with undiagnosed support issues. In addition, it was a confession from schools that they perhaps lacked the competence to support them appropriately. Across the city, schools responded differently to this shift, largely taking their cue from the Head teacher. While some welcomed the offer of additional resources and professional input, others saw it as an admission of weakness and as a result were defensive and slow to engage.

Developments within the education sector at a national level helped drive this change agenda. The Scottish Government had set out the importance they attached to pupils making positive progressions post school. To convey this message within the teaching profession they introduced school leaver destinations and the way in which schools supported weaker pupils within the inspection regime. Consequently, it became a metric that mattered to Head Teachers, so increasingly even those who felt under threat realized that this issue would not go away.

To take this part of the agenda forward, the Glasgow partnership developed an innovative Risk Matrix which is now applied to all pupils in their penultimate year of compulsory education. This identified those pupils who might struggle to make a smooth transition beyond school. In each secondary school, a multidisciplinary team met to consider the support needs of the at risk pupils, adopting a joint case management approach to ensuring that they were appropriately advised and offered an appropriate range of provision. The model assigns pupils with a red, amber or green status denoting their support levels and they are referred accordingly.

Results: For some, applying this in the penultimate year is still too late. However, there are resource limitations which constrain how far upstream such measures can be applied, particularly if the support needs are to be properly provided. It is also noticeable that those working in schools report that the early intervention model has raised awareness of this issue throughout the establishment, carrying a clear message that everyone in school has a role to play.

3. Provision

3.1 Redrawing the commissioning map

The issue: Early review work revealed that Glasgow was reasonably well served in terms of the scale and availability of employability support for young people. However, a number of drivers had created a situation where much of this was poorly connected and where services competed with one another. One of these was the outcome related funding (ORF) model whereby providers obtained most of their funding once a young person had been supported into employment. This mechanism had been introduced into most programmes – including the national training programmes like Get Ready for Work and the UK New Deal programmes – to drive efficiencies. However, it had two unintended consequences that adversely affected many clients.

The first was that the ORF model encouraged service providers to cherry pick and to focus recruitment on those most likely to get into employment with minimal support levels. Consequently, those young people with complex support needs – often the ones identified by MCMC as being the most vulnerable – could be overlooked by these providers. In addition to this, the ORF model, which placed so much emphasis on getting clients across the line into employment, actively discouraged providers to refer clients onto other agencies for support. Why would a service provider pass a client onto another agency in order to lose their ‘return on their investment.’ In this way the model discouraged a client-centred focus where the priority is to assess their needs and provide the best available service – regardless of the provider.

Action and results: Service commissioners in Glasgow were aware that they could not control this entire agenda. Although they had devolved responsibility for a proportion of youth employment funds in the city, the majority was beyond their control. However, the group identified two specific areas where

they could collaborate to start alter commissioning patterns and to influence behaviours amongst service providers.

In the first instance the YEP reviewed the commissioning models across the city in order to identify where there was scope for improved joint working. A number of changes were introduced as a result of this. The first was an agreement amongst service commissioners to notify one another of their future plans in order to reduce levels of duplication and to promote the alignment of funds. The involvement of commissioners beyond education, training and employment provided a new opportunity as it brought Health, Justice and Housing partners into the frame. This was a significant step, largely based on the trust established through collaborative work and the strengthening of relationships within the YEP.

This dialogue between commissioners has brought a number of improvements. One of these has been the involvement of the city players in the procurement of Glasgow providers for the national training programmes. In practice this has involved other stakeholder agencies in the shortlisting and selection process – without compromising the sensitive procurement arrangements. In 2011 for the first time YEP partners were involved in the procurement of the national Get Ready for Work programme (managed by SDS) in the city. There has also been joint commissioning between employability partners and those active in Health, Care Housing and Justice.

Although these are positive steps, attempts to align commissioning remain work in progress and development has been uneven. At the UK level it has proved impossible to articulate this local agenda with the DWP procurement process. As a consequence, the city had little say in the letting of the significant Work Programme contract let in July 2011. Addressing the consequence of the mismatched governance arrangements remains a challenge for Glasgow partners.

A second important step has been in relation to re-engineering the reward mechanism for providers with the aim of reshaping behaviours and attitudes to collaboration. The Glasgow Works commissioning model introduced a client pathway, which contained agreed progress points for all clients including young people. These progress points acted as funding triggers which had a number of consequences. They encouraged providers to recruit young people with greater barriers because the system recognised and rewarded organisations supporting them to make progress. The model also encouraged providers to refer clients to others who are better placed to assist them, through spreading the rewards but also through acknowledging the ‘assist’ role played by referrers. The Glasgow Works evaluation suggests that this funding model, again still under development, has had some success in starting to reshape the city’s referral map.

3.2: Widening the vocational offer in schools

The issue: Although the provision map looked quite healthy, it did identify a number of gaps as well as aspects which young people did not rate highly. Consultations with the city’s NEET population revealed some key reasons why they disengaged early from school. One of these related to the treatment they perceived to have experienced there. Young people consistently talk of not being treated like young adults, or with respect, and as consequence their experience was deemed to have been very negative. The other was the limited opportunity to engage with subjects which were practical and which might lead to employment.

Action & results: An important strand of the Glasgow model has been the growth of vocational pathways in a range of subjects. These are offered within the mainstream curriculum in S3 (second year of secondary school) and cover a wide range of vocational subject areas. Over 70% of pupils take accredited qualifications in these courses, which include a mainstream modular version as well as a full time version for young people with additional support needs. There has been significant growth of this offer in recent years so that 2,000 places per annum are now available across the city. Two of these programme models are aimed at particularly vulnerable groups – young people with additional support needs and those who are in the care system.

Another important strand of this programme is that it is delivered off site in colleges, rather than in schools. This has provided a logistical challenge, as it has required bussing young people across the city. Glasgow retains marked divisions between some neighbourhoods so ‘territoriality’ is an issue and many young people are uncomfortable travelling to other parts of the city. Enrolling them on modular college programmes can help challenge some of their perceptions, but it can also require a major effort to persuade them to participate.

On the plus side, young people report that in a college environment they feel more ‘grown up’ and the attitude of teaching staff contributes to this. Young participants routinely report that they are treated more respectfully and that they have a more positive learning experience as a consequence. As a result, many pupils who might not otherwise see college as ‘being for them’ have been encouraged to apply there.

3.3: Strengthening the outreach model

The issue: Another identified service gap centred around those young people identified as being too vulnerable to immediately progress beyond school onto a standard positive destination. These are youngsters whose multiple and complex support needs have been identified in schools by the Risk Assessment procedure. The city model was able to draw upon the piloting of the national Activity Agreements programme to meet their support needs.

Action: The Activity Agreements programme provides coaches who will work on a one to one basis with these young people. In many cases – particularly at the start – it requires a proactive approach where the coach will go to the client’s home. This provides an opportunity to gauge the home setting, but it also recognises that the client’s low self-esteem will make them reluctant to attend a formal appointment. Coaches will use the initial meeting to establish the relationship and will follow this up quickly with a second meeting which is used to set out and agree a negotiated Activity Agreement.

Results: As part of this, the young person will set goals and establish a programme of participation to move them towards employability. Initially, this might involve small steps, but the aim is to move them into EET (Education, Employment of Training) over a 24-week period. The young person draws down an allowance of UK£30 per week against participation and completion of the agreed steps. The feedback and results of this initiative in Glasgow have been encouraging. The national evaluation of the pilots shows that the city has undertaken more agreements than any other area and with a higher rate of success - with 48% of the city’s 601 participants achieving hard outcomes as a result.

3.4 Tackling the gang culture

The issue: Glasgow’s historic challenge relating to territoriality places restrictions on the city’s youth by discouraging mobility and limiting their horizons. A very serious related issue is the problem of gang culture which Glasgow has addressed head on since the mid 2000s with some success. One of the keys to this has been the close working relationship between the key players – the Police, Social Services and employability providers including colleges and the NGO sector.

Action: Facing a long-standing gang problem, the city embarked on a radical new approach in the mid 2000s after key personnel witnessed the success of US city models. At the heart of the approach is a sophisticated monitoring system which tracks the behaviour and activity of young people engaging in anti-social behaviour. This controversial approach involves an extensive network of fixed and mobile CCTV cameras through which the Police track anti-social behaviour.

On a regular basis data is compiled which classifies young offenders’ risk levels. Those at the top of the risk list receive a spontaneous home visit from two members of the Glasgow Community Safety Services (GCSS) team. The purpose of this visit is to let the young person know that they are on the police radar as an active gang member and to offer them options to help move away from this lifestyle pathway. These included a range of youth diversion activities as well as education and training

opportunities. At this point it is made clear to the gang members that if they choose to continue their current pathway they are likely to end up in custody.

Results: The programme has been remarkably successful in the pilot areas of the city in which it has operated. A focal point is to take gang members into “call in” sessions held in the courts where family members, police and medics explain the human cost of gang culture. The gang members are encouraged to give up weapons, work with the programme and share the message with their fellow members. Since 2008 there have been 10 “Call Ins” and 400 of the 473 participating gang members have signed the non-violence pledge. The model continues and is now being extended to other parts of the city.

3.5 Mobilising the NGO sector

Why it is important: The initial review of provision in Glasgow identified the value of the NGO sector in engaging and supporting disaffected young people in the city. Avoiding the stigma attached to some public sector organisations, and well-established in local communities, voluntary sector organisations can often support young people in ways that public-sector agencies cannot.

Action and results: Although there was little additional provision developed on the basis of the initial scoping work, much of the new activity that did emerge was delivered by voluntary sector organisations. Funding for a number of these activities came through Inspiring Scotland, a joint fund created by a national bank in partnership with the Scottish Government.

One NGO funded through Inspiring Scotland is Prince’s Trust, which has worked with major employers in the city to establish a range of job access programmes for the most-disadvantaged young people. Operating under the ‘Get Into’ brand name, these programmes targeted sectors where there were available employment opportunities and where there were high levels of interest amongst young people. For example, ‘Get Into Cars’ was established in partnership with the city’s biggest car dealership whilst ‘Get Into Retail’ was co-hosted with a number of Glasgow’s best-known stores.

The research indicated a strong desire amongst young people to find work in the creative industries sector. Another NGO supported through Inspiring Scotland is Impact Arts which has developed a wide range of interventions in response to this, aimed at unemployed youth. One of these is the *Fab Pad* project. Here, participants work as a team to design and decorate an empty social housing apartment prior to it being resettled. The work involves them doing everything from the initial design and planning, purchase of materials and to doing the actual redecorating. As part of this they acquire core skills like planning, team working, budgeting, communications and time management.

4. Transition and progression

We have already discussed the importance associated with the key transition points for young people – in particular leaving compulsory education. We have also focused on the growing political importance attached to positive post school progression, and the alignment of city and national level priorities around this.

The SDS data hub has been central in improving the gathering and sharing of client management information. This has enabled partners to track the progress of young people more effectively and, critically, has tackled the initial challenge around the numbers of ‘unknowns’. As a consequence, partners have a clearer picture of the patterns, as well a better understanding of who is responsible for different aspects of the client journey.

5. Employer engagement

From the outset, the Glasgow Youth Gateway was keen to work directly with employers. The partnership was clear that without this strong relationship, and without jobs, there would be no chance to

defeat the NEET challenge. The public sector partners were helped by a strong willingness amongst many employers to give young people an opportunity. Consequently, partners have engaged employers in a number of distinctive ways, such as through the ‘Get Into’ programmes already discussed. Other notable features relating to employer engagement have been as follows:

- ***Strong, visible leadership:*** Several of the city’s most prominent business people have actively campaigned about the importance of supporting young people into work. Jim McColl, Chairman of one of Scotland’s most successful companies, has given up considerable time and energy to contribute to the city’s approach – and to convince other employers of its importance. Another leading business figure, Lord Smith, has also worked closely with public sector figures to look at ways to increase opportunities for young people, leading the Smith Group review on youth unemployment for the Government.
- ***Mobilising iconic brands:*** Glasgow partners successfully mobilised the iconic brands of the city’s two largest football clubs – Rangers and Celtic – to promote the employability of disadvantaged young people. Both clubs offer a wide range of activities – including training projects, pathways to coaching and homework clubs – to build relationships with young people who may be switched off from learning and from the world of work. Using their stadia and facilities as an initial point of attraction, the clubs work alongside education and training providers to provide careers guidance and skills development support.
- ***Capitalising on the Commonwealth Games:*** Glasgow will host the Commonwealth games in 2014. This will be a major sports event and a core part of the city’s youth employment strategy has been to use the Games and its links with employers to create opportunities for young people. Through the Commonwealth Apprenticeship Initiative (CAI), 314 supplier companies have signed up to provide apprenticeship opportunities across a wide range of vocational areas. The initiative has been fully operational since 2009 and in 2011, despite the economic downturn, it provided the highest number of filled vacancies and supported 604 school leavers into an apprenticeship position as an employee. This was a 1.5% increase on the previous year. To build on this success, and in recognition of the difficulties young people face in the current labour market, the CAI model has been extended. The Commonwealth Jobs Fund offers a wage subsidy to employers willing to employ someone aged 18-24 on the Glasgow Living Wage – currently UK£7.15 per hour. There is also a new Commonwealth Graduate Fund where a subsidy is paid for employers providing work for an unemployed graduate. Both of these new strands are in the early stages of operation.

6. Aftercare

Initial analysis of the Glasgow NEET data showed that retaining the initial positive post school destination could be a problem for some young people. Two notable steps were taken to address this. The first was that the Glasgow Works funding model paid providers a retention bonus at two trigger points beyond the initial job entry stage. Although this is now commonplace – for example in the UK Work Programme, the Glasgow model significantly predated this, shifting the focus away from the job entry points. The Glasgow Works evaluation indicated that this shift had an impact on the way in which providers deployed their support to young people.

Subsequent to this, the partnership has commissioned a separate stand-alone aftercare service provided by a third party NGO. The role of this organisation is to work closely with training providers, employers and the young person to ensure that their post job-entry support needs are met.

7. Monitoring and evaluation

Establishing an agreed baseline, identifying targets and measuring progress against them have been core features of the Glasgow approach. In terms of monitoring, this has been approached at three related spatial levels.

At the city level, a central part of Glasgow's agreement with the Scottish Government has been a high level document (the Single Outcome Agreement) which identifies how the city will use its resources to contribute to the achievement of the national targets. One of these relates to the increasing number of school leavers moving into positive destinations. Glasgow is required to report these figures annually to the Government, via the Community Planning Partnership (CPP), which oversees the allocation of resources. The Youth Employment Partnership has lead responsibility for gathering and circulating these figures.

In addition, the Scottish Government MCMC team has monitored Glasgow's performance over time and has regularly met with partnership stakeholders to consider progress against targets.

Below the city level, Glasgow is divided into a number of administrative areas, each of which was set targets and responsibilities around the position destination and youth unemployment statistics. Initially, this level translated into five areas across the city, but recent structural changes have led to it being consolidated into three. In each of these, the Youth Employability Group (YEG) is responsible for the gathering and sharing of performance data at the local level, against the agreed indicators.

One of the most significant steps has been the move to hold individual schools to account for their school leaver destination data. For the first time, all of this information is now in the public domain, which has ensured that school management staff take the results seriously. Through this change, a number of schools which had previously failed to engage with this agenda are now fully signed up.

There has been no single comprehensive evaluation of the Glasgow Youth Partnership activity and impact. However, a number of evaluation studies have reviewed key aspects of the model and drawn conclusions about its overall effectiveness. Significant studies in this respect have included:

- The evaluation of Glasgow Works: The external evaluation of Glasgow Works considered the impact that had been made on commissioning models and on the city's supply chain through the innovations that were introduced. The report commended Glasgow Works for helping to positively shape supplier behaviours through the introduction of a new funding model with multiple trigger points. The evaluation also praised the progress that had been made in relation to joint service commissioning.
- The national evaluation of the Activity Agreements Pilot (Scottish Government, 2011): Glasgow was one of ten areas where the Scottish Government Activity Agreement model was piloted. The city received UK£1.5m to develop and deliver the pilot, representing 14% of the overall budget. During the pilot Glasgow supported 500 young people into an Activity Agreement and of these 278 progressed into a 'hard outcome' (Further/Higher Education, employment or national training programme). Glasgow's hard outcomes represented over a third of the national total.

The funding model

Aspects of the previous financial arrangements contributed to Glasgow's ability to adopt a coherent shared approach to tackling youth unemployment. One of these related to governance layers, where public sector investment decisions were made at different levels – most notably at the national and city level – with limited alignment. Another was the existence of sectoral fault lines whereby the incentives for key actors – most notable schools – did not entirely fit with the policy priority of reducing youth unemployment. A third was a funding environment where public sector partners encouraged service providers to compete, rather than collaborate. A final consideration was the presence of trust funds whose agendas might not always align with those of the strategic public sector partnership.

Consequently, across the city the principle funding sources available to the Glasgow Youth Partnership have included:

- Scottish Government
- Glasgow City Council (Education and Regeneration Departments)
- European Social Fund (ESF)
- UK Department for Work and Pensions
- Inspiring Scotland (Government/Trust combination)
- Charitable Foundations (Big Lottery Fund etc)
- NHS Scotland

Glasgow has made considerable progress against each of the issues set out at the start of this section. City partners have worked closely with the Scottish Government to align the allocation of resources assigned to the city through More Choices More Chances. This remains work in progress, as collaboration between Government Departments (Health, Justice, Regeneration etc) can be harder to achieve. Also, on the national level, Glasgow has been able to assume part in the procurement process for the national youth training programmes managed by Skills Development Scotland (SDS).

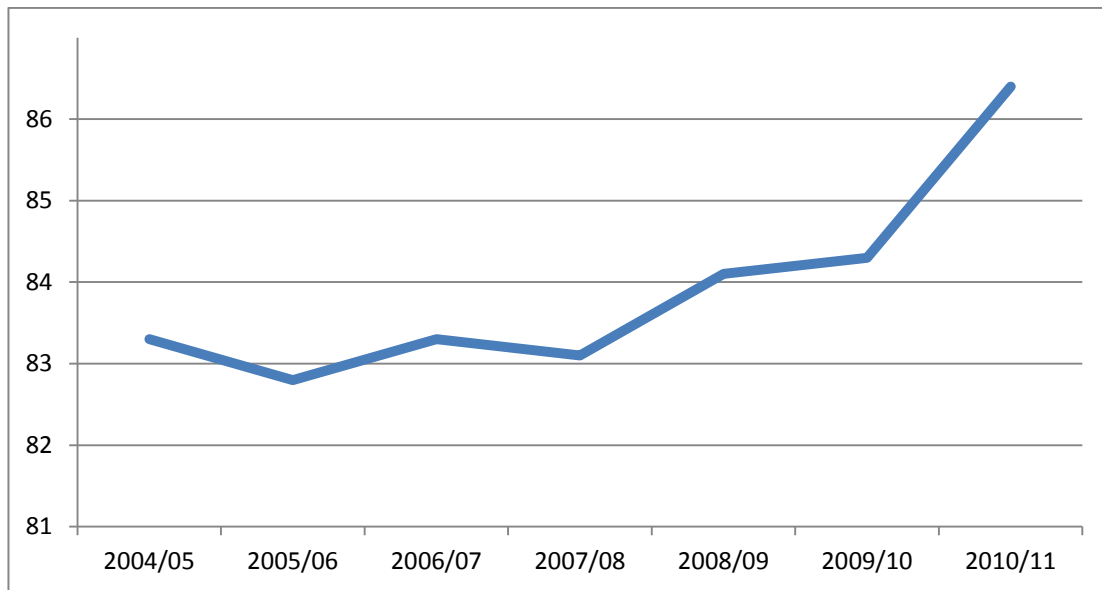
Glasgow's relative scale in Scotland helps the city in its dealings with the Scottish Government. However, at the UK level the city's ability to influence and shape decisions is significantly less. So although Glasgow has a reputation for being active and innovative in relation to employability issues, the DWP procurement approach operates on a regional level and allows limited scope to take account of local landscapes. This was most recently exposed when Glasgow had little input into the contract award making process for the Work Programme.

In terms of aligned investment at the city level, Glasgow's locus of control has enabled important progress to be made in relation to the development of a shared commissioning model. As a consequence, there is a much-improved strategic dialogue between agencies whose primary focus is youth unemployment and other public policy areas such as Justice, Health and Care.

Results, impacts and lessons learnt

Glasgow's primary focus on tackling youth unemployment has been to reduce the flow and to ensure that initial positive post school destinations are sustained. The city's approach was developed in response to a better understanding of the data and a decision to address the problem upstream. An important driver for this approach has been the recognition that this is one practical step city partners can take in an environment where much else is beyond their control.

The Glasgow partners do not claim to have solved this issue by any means. However, there is statistical evidence which suggests that the structural changes they have introduced have had profound effects on the decisions made by many young people leaving school in the city. For example, it is striking that to note that in 2010/11, when the city's economy continued to struggle, a record 86.4% of the city's school leavers progressed to a positive destination.

Figure 2. Glasgow school leaver positive destination rate, %

Source: Skills Development Scotland

Beneath these figures, the data shows that since 2006/07 there has been a steady drop in the proportions going into employment, from 25% to 18.4% in 2010/11. This decline has been compensated by steady growth in the proportions going into further and higher education in the city, as the figure below illustrates:

Figure 3. Glasgow school leaver destinations, %

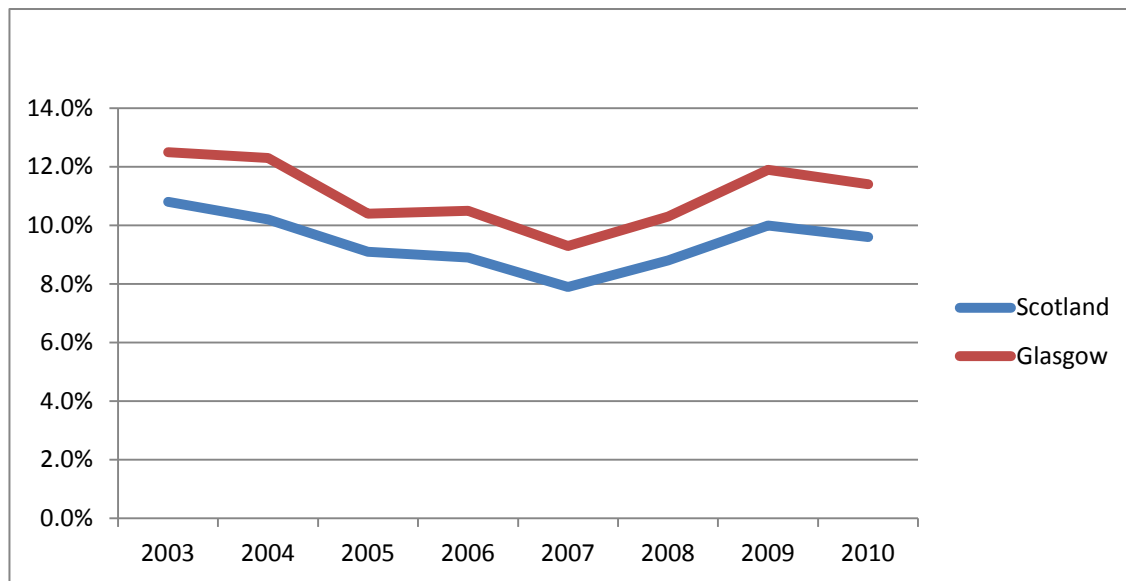
Source: Skills Development Scotland

An important contributory factor to these positive developments has been the severe reduction in the proportion of 'unknown' school leaver destinations. In 2003/04 this rate stood at 4% for the city but

in 2010/11 it had dropped to 0.5%. This reflects the investment made by the partnership in tackling the issues set out in this paper.

Looking at the bigger picture, Glasgow's NEET rates have shadowed the national figures over the past decade, as Figure 3 below shows. In 2010, the city rate was below that of 2004 when the economy was in a stronger position. Critically, although Glasgow has not managed to narrow the gap with the national rate over this period, it has prevented it widening at a time of economic difficulty. The preventative work conducted with those leaving the education system has made a contribution to this, with a record proportion leaving for positive destinations in 2010/11 despite the stagnation in the economy.

Figure 4. NEET rates: Scotland and Glasgow



Source: Scottish Government

Lessons learned

The Youth Employment Partnership experience has provided a number of key lessons for the city of Glasgow. The key learning points have included the:

- Importance of clear leadership and direction
- Value of establishing a shared set of targets and assigning responsibility for the delivery of them
- Need for exemplary intelligence relating to clients and data sharing agreements between the key partners
- Effectiveness of early-intervention systems which identify young people with additional support needs
- Importance of effectively engaging with employers – particularly through respected business leaders, iconic city brands and through high profile events
- Value of investing in cross cultural working in order to shape behaviours across policy areas like Education, Employment, Health/Care, Justice and Housing

This remains work in progress for the city. In the current conditions partners are reluctant to assume that this work has been completed and that future progress will be smooth. In particular, some of the culture change work being undertaken with schools is still at relatively early stages. Partners are also mindful that there are elements of their work in this area which can be significantly improved.

One of these is in relation to promoting youth enterprise. The partnership recently announced the establishment of a new “Youth Enterprise Zone” which is under development in response to the city’s low business start up rate amongst young people. Another is the need to promote more effective ways of engaging young people directly in decision-making processes and in the development of provision across the city. Through the URBACT programme, Glasgow has been working with Rotterdam, Antwerp and other cities to take this forward.

However, within the city there is a view that significant progress has been made. A strong partnership model which involves all of the key stakeholders is now in place. Much of the initial focus has been on determining the exact nature of the city’s NEET problem and putting changes in place to address this. As a consequence, Glasgow is adopting a proactive model in schools aimed at supporting young people leaving their compulsory education on a positive note

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THE BLADERUNNERS PROGRAMME: SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT OF DISADVANTAGED YOUTH IN VANCOUVER, CANADA⁵

Socioeconomic context in Vancouver and underlying factors of youth exclusion

BladeRunners is an employment programme that helps youth (ages 15-30) with multiple barriers to employment build careers in construction and other industries throughout the province of British Columbia (BC), Canada⁶. The Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation is the lead sponsor of the program, which is now run in 32 locations across the province by 19 different local service delivery organisations. The program's core funding comes in part from the BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation (60 %) and in part through the Canada – British Columbia Labour Market Agreement (LMA) (40 %). The overall goal of the LMA is to support the labour market participation of unemployed and low-skilled individuals. The BladeRunners program provides participating youth a three-week training course, including instruction in both soft and hard skills, and then facilitates direct job placement for program graduates. The program also provides extensive support services for participants and graduates 24 hours a day, seven days a week for an undetermined period of time after placement. The ultimate goal of the program is to develop skills and work experience that foster long-term attachment to the labour force and to support the social and community integration of young people.

The BladeRunners Program began in 1994 in the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood of Vancouver, BC, with a focus on employment in the construction industry. The model has since expanded and been adopted in other locations and industries. It is administered by a variety of service delivery agencies, such as the John Howard Society, the Métis Nation British Columbia, the Sto: Lo Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training, and the Aboriginal Community Career Employment Service Society (ACCESS). ACCESS also serves as the contracted program manager overseeing 11 delivery agents for the Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland regions; it also operates the original BladeRunners program in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) neighbourhood of Vancouver. The DTES program is the focus of the current case study. BladeRunners is widely regarded as a highly effective employment training model for young people with multiple barriers to employment. It advertises an overall 77 % post-training job placement rate, has won several awards and recognitions for its achievements, and is funded by a diverse group of public and private supporters.

The Vancouver and Downtown Eastside contexts⁷

The City of Vancouver is located on Canada's West Coast, in the Lower Mainland region of the province of British Columbia. Over the past decades, Vancouver has seen its economy change from an essentially service oriented center for the provincial economy founded on natural resources to an urban knowledge-based economy with major trade links to Asia and the Pacific Rim countries. Until the global economic downturn in 2008, Vancouver profited from a higher than national average economic expansion in the 2000s. Over the past decade, it has had the fastest pace of employment growth of the three largest cities in Canada (Vancouver Economic Commission, 2012).

Vancouver has a highly educated workforce and an enviable employment situation. Census data from 2006 shows that in the Greater Vancouver area, 31 per cent of the working age population has a

⁵ This case study was prepared in early 2012.

⁶ The name "BladeRunners" was chosen because the first construction project involved building an arena for the Vancouver Canucks hockey team. At the time, youth involved in the program reasoned that hockey players need skates with blades and that street involved youth run, thus the name "BladeRunners".

⁷ Although the BladeRunners programs operate in many locations throughout British Columbia, the focus of this case study will be on the original BladeRunners program in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) neighbourhood.

university degree (Canadian average: 23 per cent) and a full 59 per cent has a university or college education or has a trades or apprenticeship diploma or certificate (BC Stats 2010). The unemployment rate in Vancouver dropped from 7,7 % in 2002 to near 4 % from 2006 to 2008 (BC Stats, 2012a). After the recession, that rate rose but remained below the national average; since 2009, the rate has been hovering at a little over 7 % and, in 2011, it was of 7,3 %. Annual labour market participation rates have remained steady (between 66,2 and 67,8 per cent) over the past ten years (*ibid*).

The services-producing sector represents the greatest proportion of employment in the Vancouver Metro area (83 % of all employment in 2011) and will continue to be a major source of jobs in the coming years. However, the construction sector of the Vancouver economy is of particular interest to this case study because participants in the BladeRunners program in the Downtown East Side (DTES) have been placed in construction jobs since 1994⁸. This sector of the Vancouver economy experienced exceptionally strong growth in the 2000s.

Box 16. Facts about the Vancouver Metro Area Labour Market

- In 2011, employment in the goods-producing sector of the economy represented 216,900 jobs or 17 % of total employment.
- Construction industry employment in 2011 was at a new all-time high of 105,000 jobs or 8,4 % of all those employed. This represents a complete post-recession employment recovery in this sector.
- The number of manufacturing industry jobs declined markedly after the 2008 recession, down to 88,900 or 7 % among all industries. This proportion was of 9 % in 2007 and of 11 % in 1996.
- The strong tourism sector is reflected in 8 per cent of all jobs being in accommodation and food services – a higher proportion than in other Canadian cities.
- The professional, scientific and technical services sector employs 120,300 people, reflecting the region's strong orientation to the export of knowledge, particularly related to resource industries, engineering and sustainability.
- The financial services sector employs 92,100 people.
- Vancouver is a global gateway toward China and the Pacific Rim. This role is evident in the high proportion of people working in the trade (16 %) and transportation industries (6 %).

Sources: BC Stats (2012b) and Vancouver Economic Development Commission website.

Almost all BladeRunners participants live in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) when they first come into contact with the program. This community is among the most socio-economically disadvantaged of all urban communities in Canada. It is located between Burrard Inlet (North) and Hastings St. (South) and between Main St. (West) and Clark Dr. (East). The DTES is Vancouver's oldest neighbourhood and was Vancouver's city centre in the early 1900s, boasting at that time the city's best theatres, concert halls and shops. Today, drug and alcohol addiction, crime, and prostitution are prevalent in the neighbourhood. Much of the housing in the area is made up of small and unsafe one person units, often referred to as SROs (for "Single resident occupancy"), although there have been some notable efforts to increase the availability of decent and affordable housing through community projects providing various forms of social housing and support for residents.

⁸ In February and March 2012, the BladeRunners program in the Downtown Eastside began placing participants in building maintenance, tourism and warehousing jobs. The program has focused on construction industry jobs since its inception.

A special compilation of the 2006 Census data for the DTES (Brethour 2009) gives a clearer idea of the socio-economic problems faced by local residents⁹. In terms of education and employment, the percentage of those without a high-school diploma was of 38 % (more than double the Vancouver average) and more than 60 % of those 15 years of age and older were not participating in the workforce, i.e. working or looking for work. This situation has an obvious effect on income: among those over 15 living alone, the average income was \$14,024, with more than half of this amount coming from government transfers such as social assistance payments. Finally, it is worthy of note that 14 % – or about one-seventh – of the population is Aboriginal, a rate seven times higher than for Vancouver as a whole. Indigenous youth moving from reserves to Vancouver are often attracted to the DTES by lower housing costs and the presence of an Aboriginal community.

Despite these bleak figures, it is very important to realize that the people who live in the Downtown Eastside have a very strong sense of community and tend to look after each other. Today, a key contribution to the strong sense of community comes from the many local community activists and community programs. Bearing testimony to both the social problems in the community and the willingness of people to deal with them in a humane manner, the first safe injection drug site in North America was set up in the DTES. This community program has significantly reduced the transmission of HIV and the number of overdoses in the community since its foundation. It recently won a case presented to Canada's Supreme Court for continued government funding of its operations. To a large extent, BladeRunners also bears the hallmarks of original programming tailored to fit local needs and issues.

Factors underlying youth exclusion from the labour market in British Columbia and the Downtown Eastside

In British Columbia, the employment situation of young adults shows that recently they have not been faring quite as well as the general working age population. The unemployment rate of 15 to 24 year olds has been rising since the recession, from 7,7 % in 2007 to 14 % in 2011 (16,3 % for men and 11,9 % for women) and currently shows no signs of dropping off. Aboriginal youth living “off-reserve”¹⁰ (such as those living in the DTES) faced a yet higher rate of 19 % in 2011. This trend of high unemployment rates is not explained by lower levels of educational attainment among youth in general, although the differences in unemployment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth reflect differences in the educational attainment of these groups.

⁹ This data is excerpted from a special compilation that restricted the size of the DTES to a more homogeneous community by excluding the residential and commercial districts to the south of the core of the DTES.

¹⁰ Off-reserve Aboriginals are identified by Statistics Canada as those who self-declare as having an Aboriginal identity and who do not live on a reserve. In British-Columbia, off-reserve Aboriginals make up roughly three quarters of all Aboriginals.

Box 17. Labour Market Exclusion of BladeRunners participants

According to BladeRunners program managers and coordinators, almost all program participants are unable to rely on their families for support. Most of them left home in situations of conflict with their parents or, at age 18 and sometimes earlier, became emancipated from child protection services. Furthermore, almost none have completed secondary education and most lack the basic skills needed to look for, obtain and maintain employment. Literacy issues, contact with the justice system, substance misuse, dependence on social assistance and homelessness are other barriers to employment of the young people served by BladeRunners.

Finally, Aboriginal origin is considered by the major funders of BladeRunners (the provincial and federal governments) as a major barrier to employment among young people in British Columbia. This observation is supported by available statistical data, as will be shown below. It is important to note that BladeRunners serves both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people, whether programs are delivered by Aboriginal organisations or not. According to the program managers, typically about 70 % of all participants in BladeRunners across the province are Aboriginal.

In fact, young adults in British Columbia generally have high education levels. Among 25 to 34 year old non-Aboriginals in 2006, nearly two-thirds had completed their post-secondary education (BC Stats n.d.). Among off-reserve Aboriginals in this age group, less than 50 % had the same level of schooling. In the 20-to-24 year age group, rates of high school non-completion among non-Aboriginals were of only 9 %, while 51 % had completed high school and a further 40 % had completed post-secondary education or training. Comparatively, over one-quarter of off-reserve Aboriginals of the same age had not completed high-school (27 %), while 47 % had completed high school and a further 26 % had finished their post-secondary education. Educational attainment has a clear effect on the employment income of youth, but Aboriginal youth almost always have lower average incomes than non-Aboriginal youth, regardless of education levels (see Table below).

Table 3. Average employment income according to educational attainment, Aboriginal Peoples living off reserve and Non-Aboriginal Peoples { TC \f t \l 2 "Table 3. Average employment income according to educational attainment, Aboriginal Peoples living off reserve and Non-Aboriginal Peoples" }

15-24 years, 2006

	Aboriginal Peoples – Off Reserve (\$)	Non-Aboriginal Peoples (\$)
Average employment income	21,196	23,613
• Males	24,306	23,632
• Females	17,399	17,068
• Less than high school	18,571	20,676
• With high school graduation	20,790	22,245
• With apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	23,594	26,738
• With college or other non-university certificate or diploma	24,258	26,142
• University certificate, diploma or degree	27,134	26,714

Source: BC Stats (n,d)

In the DTES, a large number of factors contribute to young people's exclusion from the labour market. The indicators of "youth at risk" presented in Table 2 give a good idea of some of the challenges faced by young people living in this neighbourhood. According to interviews with program personnel and participants, almost all Bladerunners participants are faced with multiple problems related to these and other issues, such as access to affordable and appropriate housing, access to financial support for food and transportation, health and addictions problems, financial literacy, personal skills and self-esteem. Therefore their needs are often varied and not always directly linked to the fields of education or work.

Table 4. Some Indicators of Youth at Risk, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and British-Columbia

	Vancouver - DTES	British-Columbia
% of 15-24 yr olds receiving income assistance (sept. 2010)	6,3	2,2
• % 1 year or >	3,2	0,9
• % <1 year	3,1	1,3
% of 15-24 yr olds receiving income assistance and employable (sept. 2010)	3,1	0,9
% of 18 yr olds who did not graduate from high school (avg. 2007-2010)	58,8	29,0
Total serious crime rate, avg. 2007-09 (all ages, offences per 1,000 Pop)	15	12,3
Non-cannabis drug offenses (all ages, offences per 100,000 Pop)	408,7	227,2
Non-cannabis drug offences (juvenile – 12 to 17 yrs, per 100,00 Pop)	124	49,7

Source: BC Stats (2011)

BladeRunners Program: the approach

BladeRunners is an employment program that helps youth (ages 15-30) with multiple barriers to employment build careers in construction and other industries throughout the province of British Columbia, Canada. The Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation is the lead sponsor of the program, which is now run in 32 locations across the province by 19 different local service delivery organisations. The program is funded through the Canada – British Columbia Labour Market Agreement that has the overall goal of supporting the labour market participation of unemployed and low-skilled individuals. The BladeRunners program provides participating youth a three-week training course, including instruction in both soft and hard skills, and then facilitates direct job placement for program graduates. The program also provides support services for participants and graduates 24 hours a day, seven days a week for an undetermined period of time after placement. The ultimate goal of the program is to develop skills and work experience that foster long-term attachment to the labour force and the social integration of young people.

The BladeRunners Program began in 1994 in the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood of Vancouver, BC, with a focus on employment in the construction industry. The model has since expanded and been adopted in other locations and industries. It is administered by a variety of service delivery agencies, such as the John Howard Society, the Métis Nation British Columbia, the Sto: Lo Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training and the Aboriginal Community Career Employment Service Society (ACCESS). ACCESS also serves as the contracted program manager overseeing 11 delivery agents for the Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland regions; it also operates the original BladeRunners program in the DTES. BladeRunners is widely regarded as a highly effective employment training model for young people with multiple barriers to employment. It advertises an overall 77 % post-training job placement rate, has won several awards and recognitions for its achievements, and is now funded by a diverse group of public and private supporters.

The initial BladeRunners program was launched in 1994 during the construction of General Motors (GM) Place in Vancouver. It was founded when a group of local community advocates (including Vancouver community activist Jim Green), began to express concern about the need to include marginalized street-involved youth from the DTES in the building developments that were sprouting up next to the neighbourhood. They obtained some start-up funding from the provincial government and urged contractors involved in the GM project to reserve some employment opportunities for local youth. Several participating contractors agreed, and program coordinators then recruited participants from the DTES. They underwent some very basic training over a two-week period, were provided with work gear and were placed onto construction job sites. According to program managers, of the 25 young people initially placed on the original GM site, 20 are still working in the construction industry. This initial experiment was regarded as a success, and was later built upon and expanded to other projects and other areas.

From the beginning, the coordinators realized that although the training and placement processes were working well, many of the participants were having problems maintaining stability on the work site. They also very quickly realized that other issues than job-specific knowledge or training were having an effect on their lives and causing problems with work. As a result, a 24 hours a day / 7 days a week support service was implemented. The “24/7” system allowed participants to contact coordinators whenever they needed support, whether to deal with problems on the construction site or to find help for adequate housing, to address substance abuse or addiction issues, to recover from relapses or physical injuries, and to provide general counselling about work habits and routines, and careers. Along with the training and placement components, the ‘24/7’ long-term extensive support system is one of the key pillars the BladeRunners model. Program managers and coordinators identify it as one of the major reasons why the program has been successful, and participants describe this feature as an important form of support in their transition from living with problems and in situations of financial vulnerability, to greater stability and labour market integration. Although support from coordinators is more intense around the training and initial placement periods, program coordinators follow the motto, “Once a BladeRunner, always a BladeRunner.” According to coordinators – and as witnessed through some meetings with return participants – many past BladeRunners reach out to, and receive support from program coordinators months and sometimes years after their initial training and placement. This is a defining feature of the BladeRunners model, and adds to the substantial demands on program staff to be able to provide ongoing counselling and support services.

In 1996, the Province of British Columbia began supporting the program and took on a stewardship role. In 2002, ACCESS became the province-wide manager and major funder of the BladeRunners program because it looked like it was about to flounder as a result of lack of interest from the newly formed provincial government. More comprehensive cost-sharing arrangements were established with local program delivery agencies, and this funding model is now regarded as a key factor in the ongoing expansion of the program.¹¹ The BladeRunners program is now delivered in 32 locations in British Columbia, by 19 different service delivery agents, many of which are Aboriginal organisations. Core program funding continues to come from the provincial government, the federal Government of Canada (including Indian and Northern Affairs and Service Canada), the City of Vancouver, ACCESS, and many other private funders. Following the Canada – British Columbia Labour Market Agreement that came into effect in 2009, BladeRunners program funding was significantly bolstered throughout the province by a commitment of \$14 million over three years.

The BladeRunners model advocates building the program around the availability of local employment opportunities in whatever industries are most appropriate. The focus of the original BladeRunners program was related to the construction industry, and this remains a core industry for BladeRunners. However, as the model has been adopted in other locations, delivery agencies have diversified into a wide variety of industries: security, childcare, residential care, energy efficiency, multimedia, film and stage.

Objectives

The overarching objective of BladeRunners is to provide unemployed marginalized at-risk youth with ongoing support, job readiness skills, and work-place training so that they can overcome their barriers to employment and achieve long-term attachment to the workforce.

This is achieved through five key actions:

1. Identify and recruit candidates aged 15 to 30 who have multiple barriers to employment.

¹¹ According to interviews with BladeRunners administrators, the local delivery agencies for a BladeRunners program are required to match the “foundation” funding supplied by the BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation. This funding represents approximately 60 % of the core program funding (the other 40 % of the core funding stems from the BC-Canada MLA and is called “enhancement” funding).

2. Prepare participants for job placement with job readiness skills through a short, structured and standardized training program.
3. Provide participants with local meaningful work experience through on the job training to enhance their long-term employment prospects.
4. Create ongoing support for participants to ensure long-term attachment to the workforce, and where possible, ladder individuals into further training and/or apprenticeship positions in the trades.
5. Identify, create, maintain and strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders such as youth, community organisations, employers, trade unions, post-secondary institutions, and various levels of government.

Target groups

The BladeRunners program in Vancouver is generally targeted to young people (age 15-30) with multiple barriers to employment. Approximately 100 participants have been trained every year, with a peak of 140 in 2011-2012. According to program managers and coordinators, the average age of participants ranges between 24 and 26, and the construction program almost always recruits individuals aged 19 or older because it is difficult to guarantee the safety of younger participants on construction sites. From April 2010 to March 2012, the construction training programs took in 122 participants, of which 89 % were Aboriginal and 16 % female¹². The original BladeRunners program focus was on Aboriginal youth living on the streets, but has since been expanded to include young people who are generally marginalized and at-risk. Figures (see Table 4) show that unstable housing, emotional issues (often related to family and partner relationships), substance misuse and having a criminal record are common problems faced by program participants. Most participants possess more than one of these barriers to employment upon entering the program. The participants we interviewed often had life stories where these problems overlapped and compounded each other. It is worthy of note that, for many, finding stable, safe and affordable housing was a key component of program success because it allowed them to deal with other issues, and for life routines including work to set in.

¹² Note that at the time of the case study visit three non-construction training program intakes (Building maintenance, Tourism and Warehousing) were scheduled before closing out the 2011-2012 fiscal year.

Table 5. Characteristics of BladeRunners Program Participants, Vancouver Downtown Eastside Construction Training Program

April 2010 - January 2012

	Apr 2010-Mar 2011	Apr 2011 – Jan 2012	Total	%
Aboriginal	68	40	108	89
Non-Aboriginal	4	10	14	11
Male	62	40	102	84
Female	10	10	20	16
Barriers to employment when entering program*				
• Unstable housing **	16	24	40	33
• Substance misuse	62	43	105	86
• Health – Physical	2	4	6	5
• Health – Emotional	10	30	40	33
• Low literacy / numeracy***	10	11	21	17
• Single parent	4	3	7	6
• Criminal record	29	27	56	46
Placed into employment	51	37	88	72

Source: ACCESS, 2012

*Most participants present more than one barrier to employment

**Unstable housing includes homelessness, living in a shelter, couch surfing, single resident occupancy housing, etc.

***Low literacy/numeracy rates are based on self-reporting but are in reality much higher.

Program instruments

BladeRunners program instruments can be categorized into the following four dimensions:

1. Initial assessment

The BladeRunners program in the DTES signed up participants for 8 construction training sessions this year and plans to have completed 12 intakes for 2011-12. Intakes are comprised of 10 to 15 participants who have demonstrated an interest in the program and in obtaining employment in the construction sector. The program no longer advertises its services because it is so well-known in the community. Currently, participants either show up by themselves or are referred to BladeRunners by other community services or by past participants. Participants need to show genuine interest for the program and some motivation to work. As a result, the coordinators conduct screening interviews and orientation sessions that allow them to evaluate whether the youth are ready and motivated to enter the program. Some are then referred to other services in the community if the coordinators realize that the timing is not right because other issues have to be dealt with first. One frequent problem is substance abuse and some participants reported having had to follow a drug or alcohol rehabilitation program before beginning the BladeRunners training.

2. Training

BladeRunners does not provide intensive training geared to a specific trade. Instead, the courses cover the basic safety skills and certifications relevant to the construction industry, on the assumption that the majority of skills training and development received by participants occurs on the job. BladeRunners administrators and coordinators frequently expressed the view that the main barriers to success for their trainees are related to off-the-job issues rather than to what happens on the job. As a result, the training period for the program is kept relatively brief. And program resources, through the work of the coordinators, are heavily allocated towards ongoing support and mentoring of trainees for an extended period after placement.

Following the initial assessment, BladeRunners offers a three-week training program for which participants receive a \$ 25 per day training wage, as well as breakfast and lunch. The training starts out

on the first day with paperwork and testing for basic comprehension skills. If serious comprehension problems are identified, participants are immediately referred to support services outside the organisation. The training is then built around the following components of “foundation training” (weeks 1 and 2) and “enhancement training” (week 3):

- *Training Week 1. Life skills and cultural education.* This part of the training is usually covered in the first week. It includes sessions on cultural awareness given by Aboriginal facilitators from Metro Vancouver Urban Aboriginal Support, as well as sessions on financial literacy, work ethics, goal setting, communication skills, health, wellness, time, and anger management. Trades mathematics are also usually covered in a session during the first week (i.e. how to measure, to cut to length, differences between imperial and metric measurements).
- *Training Week 2. Employment skills development.* This is dealt with in the second week of training and is covered through certified courses: Workplace Hazardous Material Information System training, Health and Safety / WCB Awareness, Fall protection, Confined Space Awareness, Ladders / Scaffolding Safety, Respirator Awareness, Heat Stress Awareness, First Aid Level 1.
- *Training Week 3. Enhancement Training.* This currently consists of hands-on carpentry training at the Squamish Nation Trade Centre, located nearby. The Squamish Nation Band Council rents the facility, and BladeRunners hires the tradesperson who will offer the training. The training gives program participants the opportunity to learn the rudiments of carpentry while integrating some of the skills learned in the previous weeks of training. During the case study visit a group of participants had just finished building wooden frames for reduced-model size homes and were learning to build stairs.
- *Further enhancement training* is made available after the third week, if needed. This can include two-day certificate courses in forklift operation and traffic control. However, the majority of skills training and development occurs on the job after the third week of training and is delivered by employers. Although most participants are placed in employment after their third week, at any time following the second week of training participants can begin working on a job site if they are deemed ready to do so.

3. Placement on construction sites

Program coordinators play an important role in ensuring the availability and smooth functioning of all placements. One of their most crucial tasks is to work on employment demand with local employers on construction projects in the Vancouver area. In this respect, coordinators continue to follow the model set at the inception of BladeRunners, by persistently identifying placement opportunities for participating trainees and by maintaining equilibrium between the number of trainees and available placements. All personnel described the importance of good relationships with employers and the care they needed to take to not overburden them. A few different strategies are adopted in this regard: 1) direct communication with employers about prospective trainees and the nature of their skills; 2) explicit recognition of the full rights of the employer (up to and including termination of employment, which BladeRunners coordinators described as part of the learning process for some participants); 3) frequent visits by BladeRunners coordinators to work sites to check on trainee progress and ensure that there are no unaddressed problems at the workplace (see below sections); 4) placement of “star” trainees with employers that are new to BladeRunners.

From the interviews with program managers and coordinators as well as with some employers, it is clear that BladeRunners coordinators have an extensive network of contacts in the Vancouver construction industry that includes some of the major development companies and the British Columbia social housing corporation (BC Housing). The BladeRunners program does not appear to collect data on labour market demand or trends in the local construction industry. It rather has an ear to the ground through its network and is able to quickly identify short and mid-term construction activity that would

be conducive to placements. In addition, the relatively short training period allows the program to make slight adjustments in response to changes in demand for trainees – either through reductions in the size of an incoming cohort or changes in the training schedule. Finally, as previously noted, BladeRunners participants may be pulled from training to fill in a placement when appropriate.

As a result, the program achieves consistently high placement rates for participants (often in excess of 80% throughout all BladeRunners programs, but of 72 % in the past 2 years for the DTES location). A higher placement rate would appear difficult to achieve due to attrition during the training program: some participants drop out or are screened out during training and referred to other services, while a few refuse a placement at the end of training. In essence, the BladeRunners model strives for full placement and in many cases comes close to achieving this goal.

4. Support from program coordinators – a key defining feature of the BladeRunners model

At the time of study, three coordinators were assigned to the construction training program, and one new coordinator was developing a building maintenance training and placement program. The support provided by coordinators to the participants is tailored to meet the specific needs of each individual youth, is extremely varied in nature, and extensive. The underlying and fundamental goal of all support is to make sure that participants are able to be placed in jobs and to maintain stable employment and long-term attachment to the labour market.

All program participants are paired up with one of the BladeRunners coordinators. This is not done through an assignation process, but rather follows the preferences of participants and their choice to engage with one or another of the coordinators. The relationships with coordinators are valued by BladeRunners participants. The latter often say of the coordinators that “They get it”, i.e. they have a deep understanding of the challenges the participants face in their daily lives and are able to communicate with and support them on a wide range of sometimes very sensitive issues. On any of these issues, coordinators will lend an attentive ear and provide support either directly if possible, or through their network of contacts in community organisations. It is important to realize that most program coordinators have a history in the community and have often encountered in the past some of the same difficulties faced by BladeRunners participants. In this sense “getting it” also means they have “experienced it” (one of the coordinators was once a BladeRunners participant himself). And many participants and coordinators expressed the view that BladeRunners needs to preserve the “non-judgemental” aspect of the relationships between coordinators and participants.

Prior to placement, all work equipment (hard hats, boots, rain gear, etc.) is paid for by the BladeRunners program and participants are accompanied by a coordinator in order to make this purchase. Then, on the first day of work, a BladeRunners coordinator will bring the participant to the construction site and introduce him or her to the foreman, contractor or tradesperson, and to other BladeRunners if any are already working on the site. Over the subsequent days, the coordinator will return to the site to ensure that the contractor, the tradespeople and the BladeRunners participant are satisfied with the placement. These visits allow issues to be raised with coordinators, and are appreciated by participants who do not interpret these as a form of supervision or control, but rather of support. Coordinators use these visits to discuss problems that may have been noticed by supervisors on site or that participants choose to raise with the coordinator. Many times, lateness in arriving at work is a sign that something is not going quite right for participants. Problems can be varied, and range from the time and cost of transportation, to family and spousal conflict, and from housing instability to substance misuse, among many others. Coordinators will refer participants to other social service providers, assist with housing and transportation needs and counsel young people about further training and permanent job opportunities. Funds are available to help stabilize housing (first month’s rent and damage deposit), for transportation (bus tickets) and food (lunches on site, if needed) – this support is offered because it is deemed essential to ensure employability.

Support is offered whenever program participants need it, whether it be on or off the job. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. BladeRunners participants all have the cell-phone number of

“their” coordinator who can be reached at all times. Although emergency calls are rare, they do occur and coordinators are willing to provide any useful assistance at these times. In the past, access to support from coordinators was offered only up to 18 months after placement. However, in practice, program coordinators always maintained an open-door policy and continued to engage with any past BladeRunners participants who expressed a need for support in returning to employment. Today, no time limits are placed on the availability of support.

Implementation arrangements

Multisector partnerships are a key feature of the overall BladeRunners model. The program stresses partnerships between participating youth, community, employers, trades unions, post-secondary institutes, and various levels of government as an important factor in the success of the program model.

Currently, the general stewardship of BladeRunners comes from the provincial government of British Columbia. The BC government funds the program through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Agreement (LMA). This Agreement came into effect in 2009 and will continue on until March 2014. Under the Agreement, the province receives \$394.2 million over six years. The LMA stipulates that the BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation, working in cooperation with the federal government, is responsible for the oversight and management of skills development programs funded through the Agreement. The overall goal of the LMA is to support labour market participation and specifically identifies two groups of eligible beneficiaries: 1) unemployed individuals who are determined to be non-Employment Insurance clients; and 2) employed individuals who are low-skilled, in particular employed individuals who do not have a high school diploma or who have low levels of literacy and essential skills.

To enable BladeRunners programs to run in different localities across the province and to ensure that they are attuned to local labour market demands and community contexts, the BC government has “contracted out” BladeRunners to community organisations. A first step in this direction occurred in 2002 when ACCESS was mandated to manage all BladeRunners programs in the province. This arrangement was modified over the years to include smaller contracts in different locations, and was then revised in a 2009 agreement with the province that included funding from the MLA. Since then, ACCESS has been contracting out to agencies and managing the delivery of BladeRunners programs on Vancouver Island and in the Lower Mainland region including Vancouver. The BladeRunners programs in other areas of the province have been contracted out directly by the provincial government to local delivery agencies.

At the local level, BladeRunners’ partnerships with industry are generally informal or structured along a site-specific or project specific basis. In the DTES program, the coordinators rely primarily on a network of relationships with local contractors and employers rather than defined, formal arrangements. Program coordinators and administrators work to develop specific placement opportunities for trainees on an ongoing basis. The program may from time to time develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a business or employer regarding a particular project. For example, in 2008 ACCESS developed an MOU with Building Opportunities with Business to train and place 12 youth on Olympic and other Vancouver worksites. ACCESS also has a formal MOU with BC Housing specifying that on any new construction sites, BC Housing will ensure that contractors will hire BladeRunners participants for the projects. There is an actual obligation to write this into the trades and subtrades contracts. Finally, another MOU is currently being developed with BC Housing to allow BladeRunners program graduates to work as building service workers within housing projects.

Program coordinators for the Vancouver program also maintain a wide array of informal relationships and associations with other service providers in the Downtown Eastside, including facilities for substance abuse counseling and rehabilitation, subsidized housing, and educational institutions. However, rather than develop official partnerships with these organisations, program coordinators serve a role analogous to that of a case manager for their trainees and work to refer them to services or other organisations in response to their needs and aspirations.

The program's educational partnerships have generally operated in a similar way. BladeRunners programs have typically not maintained any formal partnerships with local educational institutions such as community colleges. BladeRunners program coordinators work with trainees to place them in local educational programs once those trainees have indicated the interest and capacity to pursue further education. Likewise, BladeRunners program personnel maintain relationships with local unions and work with unions to place program participants in relevant apprenticeship programs once they've demonstrated the relevant skills and developed some on-the-job experience.

Financial arrangements

As stated previously, core program funding comes in part from the BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation (60 %) and in part through the Canada – British Columbia Labour Market Agreement (LMA) (40 %). In essence, the province funnels down these funds either to organisations that oversee the implementation of BladeRunners by local delivery agents (this is the case of ACCESS), or to local delivery agencies directly. The provincial government sets yearly targets for the number of participants and funding is adjusted accordingly. Since 2009, the BladeRunners programs across British Columbia have been receiving \$3.5 million per year, which has allowed expansion into new communities and the doubling of program participants. In 2009-2010, the BladeRunners program expenses in the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island regions were of approximately \$2.6 million. This allowed for the operation of 11 local BladeRunners programs, including the DTES site, and the training of over 550 participants.

The main funding for the BladeRunners program is allocated by the government in two distinct categories. The first represents approximately 60 % of the main funding and is called "foundation" funding. It comes directly from the BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation and is to be devoted to building the basic skills that participants require to join the labour force. This includes life skills training, health and safety training, as well as the other skill sets and the cultural awareness training that are covered in the first two weeks of the program (see section 2.5.2). This funding needs to be matched by local delivery agents through other government subsidies, in-kind contributions, private contributions, fundraising, etc. For the DTES BladeRunners program, matching funds come from all of these sources, and include an important grant from the Metro Vancouver Urban Aboriginal Strategy. The second category is "enhancement" funding and represents approximately 40 % of the main funding. This financial support flows from the LMA and allows delivery agencies to offer any additional programming or support that enhances employability. Further training can be offered. Interviews with participants indicated that BladeRunners can also pay for specific individual training after an initial placement, in accordance with the needs and interests of participants. Many other participants had received financial support for transportation and food, all of which comes from the "enhancement" funding. Employee salaries are not paid through enhancement funding, but rather through various streams including foundation funding.

It is important to note that the funding that allows the organisation to provide housing support is not part of the province's BladeRunners funding or of the LMA funding. Instead, the financial support for helping youth with housing comes from funds obtained through the Vancouver Foundation and money stemming from Raising the Roof. Raising the Roof is a national non-profit organisation dedicated to long-term solutions to homelessness through partnership and collaboration with stakeholders, investment in local communities, and public education. BladeRunners uses these funds to augment their program in an effort to respond to participant needs in terms of housing, since the province does not allow either foundation or enhancement funding to be used to this end.

BladeRunners also offers a wage subsidy to employers for the initial employment period for a trainee. This offers a partial incentive to employers to compensate for the risks of taking on a worker with limited experience. The wage subsidy currently has a limit of \$3 per hour, and an overall budget of \$1300 per participant. However program personnel affirmed that very few employers take advantage of the wage subsidy because of the administrative hassle it creates and because many employers choose to directly support the program by waiving wage subsidies. All of those involved with the program, as well

as the employers interviewed, maintained the view that the wage subsidy was not a significant factor in securing job placements for participants.

Not surprisingly, the resources required to run the DTES BladeRunners program are relatively modest compared to other youth employment training programs with more extensive training components. The overall program expenditures for the DTES BladeRunners program in 2010 to 2011 were \$550 000, with the majority of those expenditures going to training and supports (\$200 000), salaries and benefits (\$275 000), and overhead (\$115 000). According to interviews with program administrators, the overall cost of delivery per program participant was estimated at between \$4000 and \$8000.

The office and training space requirements for the program are also modest. The DTES BladeRunners program has a small office and training space, with a small conference room that also serves as a training classroom for participants. This space does not provide tools and equipment for direct construction skills training, as this is currently done through the Squamish Nation Trade Center.

The Vancouver BladeRunners program has one full-time director, one senior program coordinator, three coordinators and one administrative assistant. It should be noted, however, that the demands on the program coordinators are high, as they are expected to provide round the clock support services for their trainees. These individuals need to have a well-developed network of connections with employers and service providers, a depth of knowledge about their trainees, and a high level of personal dedication to their work to be effective.

Results and impacts

Overall, the program is informally viewed by all those involved as very effective at achieving its goals. The program has expanded considerably since its inception, and particularly since the Canada – British Columbia LMA was signed in 2008. It has been successful in competing for additional funding from the provincial and federal governments and private sources, and is well-known and respected in the Vancouver construction industry. In 1999, BladeRunners won a Promising and Effective Practices Network (PEPNet) Award from the National Youth Employment Coalition in the United States (this was the first time a non-US program was recognized in this way).

BladeRunners programs generally have high job placement rates that often surpass 80 %. This positive result is a core objective of the program. As is described above , there is a very controlled approach to admitting participants into a training program, as coordinators want to ensure that they will be able to effectively place program participants into a job. Participants must be motivated from the start, and coordinators line up a number of potential placements before training begins. BladeRunners advertises a general 77 % job placement rate of all those who sign up for training. The rate for the DTES program from 2010 to 2012 was slightly lower (72 %) but can be attributable to the greater complexity and severity of problems faced by young people living in this neighbourhood. According to program administrators, BladeRunners as a whole has a two-year retention rate of 80% (i.e. 80% of program *graduates* remain in the construction trades); a further 30% of program graduates continue on to a journeyperson status in the trades.

The table below provides performance data for 2010/2011 for the BladeRunners programs that are overseen by ACCESS. Overall, the data show a 75 % job placement rate for all programs. In addition, over 70 % of trainees were aboriginals, another 3 % were visible minorities, and 44 % were women. These percentages vary according to location of programs (there is more recruitment of aboriginals on First Nations territories or in other areas where their numbers are higher), the administrating agencies, as well as the nature of the programs. For example, the DTES construction program generally recruits more men than women while one of the Stó:Lō Nation's programs focused on family and child care recruits more women.

Table 6. BladeRunners Participant Data (ACCESS managed programs) April 1, 2010 - March 31, 2011

	ACCESS Vancouver (DTES)	CSETS	FTS	IMOY	JHS Victoria	LFLS	MNBC	NTC	NYSA	SNHRD	W2	Total	%
Total # of Youth Trained	120	66	12	24	79	24	72	54	146	97	8	702	
Aboriginal Men	84	49	0	2	8	7	32	28	41	30	2	283	40,3%
Aboriginal Women	32	17	0	0	10	17	20	25	31	65	4	221	31,5%
Visible Minorities, Men	0	0	1	2	2	0	1	0	4	0	0	10	1,4%
Visible Minorities, Women	1	0	2	2	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	11	1,6%
Other, Men	2	0	6	6	27	0	11	1	44	2	0	99	14,1%
Other, Women	1	0	3	12	27	0	7	0	26	0	2	78	11,1%
Total, Men	86	49	7	10	37	7	44	29	99	32	2	392	55,8%
Total, Women	34	17	5	14	42	17	28	25	57	65	6	310	44,2%
Unstable Shelter	42	0	3	4	24	0	15	5	29	0	3	125	17,8%
Placed in Employment	91	50	10	15	69	15	53	39	110	69	6	527	75,1%
Entering apprenticeship after programme completion	5	4	0	0	3	1	3	2	4	2	0	24	3,4%
Employed after programme Completion, %	76%	76%	83%	63%	87%	63 %	74%	72%	75%	71%	75%	75%	

CSETS: Coast Salish Employment and Training Society; FTS: Firehall Theatre Society; IMOY: Intersections Media Opportunities for Youth Society; JHS: John Howard Society; LFLS: Laichwiltach Family Life Society; MNBC: Métis Nation British Columbia; NTC: Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council; NYSA: Nanaimo Youth Services Association; SNHRD: Stó:Lō Nation Human Resource and Development; W2: W2 Community Media Arts Society

A perhaps fuller picture emerges through the brief recounting of a few stories of the participants who were interviewed for the preparation of this report. They show that the impacts of BladeRunners are directly tied to these young people's inclusion in the labour market, but also touch upon many aspects of their lives. In this sense, the BladeRunners model of training and support serves not only to favour the labour market participation of disadvantaged and excluded young people, but their social integration in terms of housing, relationships and ability to plan for the future.

Success factors and considerations for adoption in other regions

From the above program description and analysis, the following 6 success factors can be identified:

1. **Multisector partnerships** are essential to the success of the BladeRunners model. The original BladeRunners' advocates were successful in obtaining start-up funding for the project from government, with a buy-in from a few key employers in the construction industry who guaranteed employment placements for program graduates. This original partnership model based on formal and informal agreements continues today. Some partnerships need to be formal, especially those that are tied to the funding received from various levels of government when service delivery is expected. Others are based on memorandums of understanding (MOUs) whereby an organisation such as BC Housing (the government funded and administered social housing builder and provider in British Columbia) accepts to take-in BladeRunners program participants. However, almost all other BladeRunners partnerships are informal. Employers in the construction industry seem to prefer this type of arrangement, which gives them the flexibility they need when preparing submissions for contracts and dealing with employees. Employers do however hire on BladeRunners at market rate, and do not pay them less than they would other employees in the same job. Partnerships with local community and service organisations and, to a lesser extent trade unions and post-secondary institutions, have also been essential to the success of BladeRunners, but here again these are informal and relied upon on a "as-needed" basis according to each individual participants' situations.
2. **Local delivery of programming** is another key element of success of the BladeRunners model. BladeRunners managers and coordinators in the DTES have developed an impressive network of contacts in the Vancouver building industry and can now count on a number of employers who are willing and interested to take on program graduates. This network is essential to finding out which projects are about to start up or in phases when BladeRunners participants with different skill sets can be integrated. This network also allows the organisation to become known by different employers who may be approached to hire on BladeRunners graduates. According to the DTES BladeRunners managers and coordinators, the program is so well known locally that some of the major building developers are interested to know whether their contractors and subcontractors are taking in BladeRunners participants. The local aspect of program delivery also allows BladeRunners coordinators to refer participants to services, programs and housing in their community so that they are able to positively identify with their community while avoiding unnecessary efforts to access services elsewhere.
3. **Short-term training that is tailored to the participants needs and abilities**, and that offers the basic skills needed to rapidly enter the workplace. Many training programs for disadvantaged young people are first geared to sending them back to school to complete their secondary education. The BladeRunners model advocates labour market integration as soon as basic skills have been acquired, with the view that it is feasible to acquire other skills on the job and that more specialized training can be undertaken when participants have had a chance to gain experience and observe various trades people at work. According to all those involved, from program managers to coordinators, to employers and youth, this design allows participants to

quickly gain confidence in their employment abilities and to realize that working for a living wage is within their reach.

4. **Support.** The BladeRunners model would not work without the support that is offered to program participants. Off-the-job support takes many forms: referrals to various health, education and social services, financial support for obtaining stable housing, support in the form of public transportation vouchers and meals, informal counselling about further training and education, and financial support for additional training program fees. Program coordinators are always available for young people when they need it and it is hard to overstate how much this is appreciated by participants. BladeRunners managers and coordinators come to develop an in-depth individual knowledge of program participants' needs and desires. They also have a very high level of dedication to their work. As the participants we interviewed frankly put it: "They get it" or "I wouldn't be here [at work] without them".
5. **Contacts with employers.** As already stated, it is essential that BladeRunners have a well-developed and extensive network of employers and contacts in the construction industry. This allows for assessing individual placements and adjusting the size of the incoming trainee groups. Maintaining good relations with employers is essential to both strengthening this network and ensuring employment placement success for employers and participants. It is therefore essential that coordinators maintain direct and frequent communication with employers about prospective trainees and follow through on placements with regular site visits. Coordinators must accompany participants to the site on their first day of work and drop by the work site every two or three days during the first weeks of employment to check on progress and to make sure that no issues are arising that may hamper punctuality or productivity at work. BladeRunners program coordinators also make clear to employers that they do not expect differential treatment for BladeRunners participants. Furthermore, BladeRunners program coordinators and employers both indicated that the support offered to participants by the coordinators helps to maintain worker productivity, and is an important component in reducing the risk of placements for employers.
6. **Program proponents.** BladeRunners would have never started up without the dedication of community activists and the help of project supporters within government and industry. Some of those activists who were closely tied to the initial BladeRunners program had ties to influential members of the provincial government of the day and networks that allowed them to pressure some developers into agreeing to offer placements for participants. These networks and pressure were essential to the first years of BladeRunners, and again when provincial government funding was threatened in the early 2000s. Although BladeRunners has today gained wide acceptance as an effective and essential organisation for some of the most disadvantaged young people in society, it is clear that some of the original project initiators and supporters are keeping a supportive and interested eye out on the development of BladeRunners.

Considerations and challenges for adoption in other countries

As stated at the outset of this report, the BladeRunners program is now delivered in 33 locations across British Columbia, by 19 different service delivery agents. A number of challenges are inherent to the BladeRunners model and should be taken into consideration when implementing the program in different regions. BladeRunners program personnel identified the following four key areas of challenges that the program has faced:

1. **Funding – an ongoing challenge.** Securing funding that makes the organisation sustainable over a four to five-year period is viewed as one of the most significant challenges that BladeRunners has been faced with over and over again. Funding became a major challenge in the initial years

after a new provincial government came to power in 2001. The sources of government funding that had been the program's primary basis of funds came to disappear. It was at this time that ACCESS stepped in to ensure the continued existence of BladeRunners through its own funding. The signing of a new funding agreement with the province in 2009 that included the BC-Canada Labour Market Agreement (LMA) was another significant step, in that it allowed BladeRunners to access a stable funding base, and for the Bladerunners model to be implemented in a number of localities in British Columbia. In response to pressures from the BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation, the program now has a matched funding model where local delivery agencies for BladeRunners programs are responsible for matching the "foundation" portion of their funding for program delivery in their area. As a result, the program has developed a greater diversity of local funding sources, expanded its base of partner organisations and supporters, continued to expand operations to new areas, and encouraged more local 'buy-in' from delivery agencies. This approach to the funding model was developed before resource constraints on the program eased with the grant from the LMA, but this cost sharing mechanism is being maintained despite the additional pressure it places on local programs.

2. **Maintaining dedication to the original model.** The BladeRunners model is essentially based on a short-term training program, employment placements in decent jobs and long-term extensive support. But it is also at the core a model that attempts to foster ties between disadvantaged young people and their communities, and to favour their general socio economic inclusion. Many of the personnel and project proponents shared the view that as the program grows and is implemented elsewhere, it risks "straying" from this more grassroots and community oriented perspective.

Basically, this view holds that the success of the model lies not only in the "what" but also and perhaps more importantly, in the "how". As a result, it is deemed essential that program coordinators tailor their training to the participants (for example, cultural awareness sessions can be given when Aboriginal youth are being trained), maintain positive relationships with supportive employers, obtain employment possibilities for program graduates before a new group is trained, ensure follow-up of participants on job sites, maintain networks with health, housing and social services in the community, develop quality and in-depth relations with trainees, ensure that supports are put in place locally for housing, transportation and food if required, and be available to offer support on a wide variety of issues 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Coordinators should always be ready to offer support and to frequently help participants with personal challenges before, during and after training and job placement. This feature of the model is a key factor to success, according to all those interviewed for the case study. It places very high expectations on program coordinators and it is clear that they must be able to establish effective boundaries with participants, while at the same time helping them find their place in the world and in their community. The model thus depends on coordinators who have the right mix of interpersonal and supportive skills, and the ability to develop and maintain contacts and networks in their communities, with employers, and with service providers.

In addition, program personnel were clear that community roots, as well as public sector and private sector partnerships, are crucial to the success of the model. It would not be sufficient to have only good relationships with government agencies or with the private sector and potential employers, or to only have community backing. All three are key to the success of the BladeRunners program.

3. **Adapting to local labour markets.** BladeRunners program administrators expressed the view that the partnerships with local employers have been an important factor in its success. The program has continually had to develop and expand these partnerships as it has grown of the past

few years. In many British Columbia communities, the construction industry is not a major employer or does not have building projects scheduled continuously over many months and years. As a result, many of the new BladeRunners programs have developed partnerships in different sectors where low-skilled workers can be employed, such as multi-media production, entertainment, forestry and fishing, automotive service, tourism, warehousing, and building services. This ensures employment placements for program participants, but also requires some modifications in the content of the training program.

4. **Ensuring a better gender balance.** The DTES construction training program attracts an overwhelming proportion of male youth. According to the latest data available, more than four out five program participants are male (see Table 4). One of the strategies to increase young women's participation has been to diversify training programs. At the time of the case study visit, the BladeRunners at the DTES location was within a few weeks of starting a new building service training program. The training program is built on the parameters of the BladeRunners construction training program, but includes sessions covering areas such as custodial and chemical safety, carpet cleaning and floor care techniques, washroom maintenance and window washing, and general housekeeping practices; this leads to the granting of a "Building Service Worker Certificate". According to program managers, previous experiences with similar programs yielded higher female participation, in the vicinity of 40 %.

As a final note, it should be added that new developments are being planned for the BladeRunners' Vancouver location. BladeRunners' personnel and program proponents indicated that a project was being planned that would add a new housing dimension to the BladeRunners model. This project is currently being developed in partnership with BC Housing in the context of a planned new residential development in the DTES. In essence, this development project would not only ensure work placements for BladeRunners' training program graduates but, upon completion, it would offer approximately 40 residential units for BladeRunners participants. By providing supportive and affordable housing to participants, BladeRunners would thus not only contribute to stabilizing the lives of participants and making them more "employable", but also bring a greater sense of community, inclusion and belonging to the Downtown Eastside.

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