

Sector Strategies

Sector strategies offer effective ways to create pathways to sustainable careers for young people through job placements linked to postsecondary education and career ladders with opportunities for growth.

What is a Sector Strategy?

According to the Aspen Institute, a sector strategy involves a dual customer approach that meets the needs of employers while also taking into consideration the types of supports that YouthBuild graduates need as they transition out of the program and into entry-level employment and post-secondary education. It is an approach that:

- Targets a specific industry or cluster of occupations;
- Works through a set of credible organizations to craft workforce solutions tailored to the needs of the targeted industry; and
- Supports YouthBuild graduates in improving a range of employment-related skills.

Key Components:

- The common mission of the YouthBuild program and the employer involves meeting the needs of employers by filling the “skill gap” between what employers are looking for and the skills that potential employees have and a commitment to providing opportunities for low-income young people.
- Partnership with employer which involves employer participation in the design of the program, and a commitment to offering placements to students.
- Skill development and training during the program that is targeted at the particular occupation or industry.
- Supports throughout the program in addition to transitional supports after completion of the program to help students move successfully into initial placements and related postsecondary education, and to help them retain their placements and move towards advancement within the sector.

What to look for in a Sector:

- It is adding workers and/or is large and has significant replacement needs due to turnover or retirement (Consider the numbers. A company with 5 employees that increases to 10 employees will show a 100% increase.)
- It has advancement opportunities (increased pay for increased skills)
- It has particular skill and workforce needs that are a potential match for YouthBuild students.
- Occupations within the sector are attainable for YouthBuild students and are in demand and will continue to be so. It is worthwhile for YouthBuild students to spend their energy obtaining the skills and credentials required for the profession.

What to look for in Employers:

- They are willing to share information about the industry and their particular hiring practices and requirements, including information about the kinds of postsecondary credentials they look for and the postsecondary programs from which they hire employees.
- They have workforce needs that can be met by partnering with your organization.

- They are willing to partner with your organization and provide input on program design and supports, and will commit to offering placements to YouthBuild students.¹

Possible Elements:

The supports that your program can offer will vary depending on the capacity of your program and the nature of the industry. You should consider the capacities of your program when approaching potential employer partners and these capacities should shape your strategy.

- High-quality pre-employment training;
- High-quality incumbent worker training;
- Counseling/case management;
- Transportation, child care and other supports for workers;
- Industrial development strategies and technical assistance to employers;
- Organizing workers, conducting advocacy campaigns and lobbying for policy change;
- Operating social enterprises/alternative business models;
- Mapping career ladders and lattices;
- Including business leaders in the management and decision-making structure of the initiative.
- Providing postsecondary supports through partnerships with community colleges in collaboration with the employer.²

Resources:

[Finding Employer Partnerships](#)

[Labor Market Research](#)

Workforce Strategies Initiative: The Workforce Strategies Initiative (WSI), a project of the Washington, D.C.-based Aspen Institute, seeks to identify and advance strategies that help low-income Americans gain ground in today's labor market. WSI's projects have been designed to evaluate and advance *sectoral employment development* approaches to connecting low-income workers to both employment and advancement opportunities within targeted industry sectors. <http://www.aspenwsi.org/index.asp>

National Network of Sector Partners (NNSP): NNSP promotes the use of sector initiatives and strategies that support them in order to improve employment and economic opportunities for low-income individuals and to strengthen industry sectors that are important to regional labor markets. <http://www.insightcced.org/index.php?page=nnspp>

State Sector Strategies: A collaboration between the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA), the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW), and the National Network of Sector Partners (NNSP). <http://www.sectorstrategies.org/>

¹ Adapted from "Sectoral Employment Programs" Rebekah Lashman, Commonwealth Corporation. Available on YouthBuild USA Knowledge Bank.

² Source: "What Sector Initiative Do," Workforce Strategies Initiative. <http://www.aspenwsi.org/WSIsector-initiatives.asp>