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Coordination of Youth Employment and Training Programs in Oakland: Lessons from Recent Experience and Guidelines for Next Steps

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The University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum is a partnership of the University of California at Berkeley; California State University, Hayward; Mills College; Holy Names College; the Peralta Community College District; and the Oakland community.

University of California at Berkeley
Institute of Urban and Regional Development

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oakland has many valuable and effective youth employment training programs, and the community has made good progress in the early stages of organizing school-to-work transition initiatives. To realize their potential, these efforts will require much greater collaboration among service providers and more extensive partnerships among schools, community-based organizations, local government, employers, organized labor, higher education and other participants.

Oakland's leaders in government, business and the nonprofit sector recognize the value of improved coordination and collaboration. They report that the advantages would include more efficient use of scarce resources, less fragmented service to young people, greater employer involvement, improved curriculum and job placement, and stronger connections between employment training and economic development.

The participants in youth employment and school-to-work programs have begun to address the challenges of enhancing coordination and collaboration. Many new partnerships have been created during the last two years. However, these efforts have not yet resulted in an integrated service system or a common framework for making key decisions and implementing changes.

This report summarizes the state of collaborative efforts in Oakland and presents recommendations for advancing these efforts. The recommendations apply to a number of organizations, and identify the need for a continuing dialogue.

The recommendations, which are described more fully and with specific examples in the report, are as follows:

1. Conduct serious coalition-building and collaborative policy-making in its own right, outside the immediate pressures of writing proposals for funding.
2. Separate broad community policy-making and strategic planning from specific negotiations between any two agencies.
3. Be certain that an existing effort cannot do the job before starting a new partnership or collaboration.
4. Have each participating agency commit to maintaining one consistent voice, message, and messenger in collaborative efforts.
5. Clarify terms and goals for school-to-work transition programs and their relationship to other youth employment training and youth development activities.

6. Develop distinct responsibilities for citywide and regional school-to-work collaborations.
7. Create a citywide method for measuring the overall number of young people served by different programs and for sharing the information.
8. Settle, as a community, on one approach, technology, and sponsorship for a clearinghouse of youth employment and training information, and see that selection through to completion.
9. Encourage the business community to target its youth jobs so as to reward a system which produces job-ready applicants.
10. Encourage employers to view youth employment and school-to-work programs as an integral human resources strategy, not merely as philanthropy or community service.
11. Ensure that Oakland's economic development strategies and projects are considered in designing and implementing the youth employment and school-to-work system.
12. Make high-quality, up-to-date labor market information available for the design of the youth employment system.
13. Respect the developmental differences within the ages covered by youth employment services, which begin at early adolescence and run through young adult years. Design a specific community-wide strategy for young adults, ages 18-24, who are often eligible for both youth and adult job services.
14. Get collaborative agreements in writing, with full approval of decision-makers. Establish specific memoranda of understanding and contracts among partners which define every organization's commitments and responsibilities. Ensure that the chief executives and boards are aware of the commitments and responsibilities and have budgeted the necessary resources to carry them out.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Employers need a simpler and more coordinated process with which to work. We get so many different job developers coming to our offices, sometimes even looking for jobs for the same kids."

-- local business leader

"Oakland has institutions and leaders with tremendous capacity in employment training, youth services, and community development. But there's not enough follow-through on initial ideas or enough coordination, so it doesn't work as a system. I liken the situation to a weight-lifter with great upper body strength but puny legs."

-- author of a national comparative study of the connections between training and economic development efforts at the local level

"Every city needs some organization which can manage the connecting activities among all the parties involved in school-to-work transition programs. It's a different type of group in each city, depending on the circumstances. But we still don't know who it will be in Oakland, despite all the great work underway there."

-- staff member of a national technical assistance center

"It would be much easier to raise funds for Oakland's youth employment programs if we could really show that they were all working together effectively."

-- local grant-writing consultant

The comments above suggest some common threads to the ways in which many different people assess local efforts to prepare young people for jobs and careers. There are many valuable and effective programs, and Oakland is a national leader in new approaches being developed to serve youth, both in schools and in community-based organizations. Yet the community is not yet sufficiently organized to take these innovative approaches to scale, so that most young people could benefit. Nor have the diverse agencies mastered the art of

collaboration, and employers, service providers, and young people are the worse off for that. Often the sources of support for these programs, including foundations and the state and federal government, will require evidence of collaboration, but may fail to provide the necessary resources or may even create barriers to achieving it.

This report assesses the efforts to improve coordination and expand collaboration among employment and training programs for young people in Oakland. Some important steps have been taken in recent months, but virtually all the parties to these efforts see the need for some new, different, and more effective actions. This report is intended to guide the participants as they take those steps.

Our report describes many of the current partnerships, agreements and coalitions. We derive some lessons from these current efforts and from analyses of previous youth-focused partnerships in Oakland written several years ago.

Although Oakland is distinctive, and perhaps unique in many respects, cities across the country are struggling with similar issues. We reviewed the national literature on partnership-building and collaboration in urban services, particularly policy papers about "seamless systems" and "blueprints for coordinated action" for youth development in other cities. A bibliography of some pieces we have found useful is included.

The report concludes with preliminary recommendations for improving the local system of youth employment and training. Assuming a sufficiently encouraging response, we envision developing the recommendations more thoroughly with all the parties involved.

This report was brought about by the authors' involvement in two parallel efforts to improve coordination and collaboration. The Quality Workforce Action Project, chaired by Councilmember Sheila Jordan at the request of Mayor Harris, sought to build on its February 1994 conference and briefing book about school-to-work programs and youth employment.

The project members agreed that they needed a more detailed understanding of the various local efforts in relationship to each other, as a precursor to joint action, and asked the University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum to prepare this analysis and recommendations. This work was supported by a grant to the Forum by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Also during 1994, the board of directors of the Oakland Mayor's Center for Youth Employment conducted a review of its structure, mission and programs. This has resulted in a redesign of the Center, which is underway as this paper is being completed. Victor Rubin, director of the Forum, was an advisor to the OMCYE in its strategic planning. Seth Kaplan, development consultant to OMCYE, was asked by Kaiser Permanente to analyze the youth employment scene to in order to assist the OMCYE and to lessen duplication and improve coordination. The Quality Workforce and Kaiser analyses were combined, with this paper being the result. The authors wish to thank Kaiser Permanente and the Hewlett Foundation for their generous support, and the many persons with whom we have spoken or whose meetings we have attended for their cooperation, candor, and patience.

We do not view this report as the end of anything, merely a step along the way in the collaborative process. If the analysis is appropriate and at least some of the recommendations are worth pursuing, we hope that the parties to the various collaborations will reconvene to develop them further.

2. THE CONTEXT FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS

Reasons for the Interest in Coordination and Collaboration

The high level of interest in improving coordination of local youth employment and career education activities is not based on abstract notions of the ideal system. Rather, it

grows out of specific problems and opportunities which have arisen in Oakland recently. In some cases, Oakland institutions are being asked, or even required by outside funders to collaborate, while in other instances the motivation to collaborate has been strictly self-generated. The result has been a whirlwind of activity during 1993 and 1994. These committees, task forces, symposia, proposal-writing work groups and conferences have been ambitious and well-meaning but also often rushed, tentative, unfocused, and, thus far, mostly inconclusive. In our view, progress is definitely being made, although not smoothly, and the current awkwardness may be a necessary part of growth.

Some of the most significant questions of how to coordinate youth employment and career education have arisen from the following seven situations:

- **The federal School-to-Work Opportunities Act, related State School-to-Career activities, and foundation-sponsored support for school-to-work programs.** The 1994 legislation requires not only that school districts and community colleges work together on articulated curriculum leading to certificates of mastery of work-related skills, but also that a wide range of local partners form a collaboration. Employers and business groups, unions, local government, job training programs, universities and other interests are encouraged to participate, and the resulting work plans should specify how "connecting activities" among them are carried out. By the summer of 1994 Oakland had responded to three requests for proposals, two from the federal government and one from a foundation-sponsored technical assistance group--Jobs For the Future--with preliminary descriptions of this new school-to-work collaboration. These have been organized under the name of EBCOP, the East Bay Career

Opportunities Program. More funding opportunities are scheduled to be offered in 1995.

- **Other school-to-work and integrated curriculum partnerships.** Apart from the new federal law cited above, the School District and the Peralta Community College District are engaged in several other city-wide and school-specific efforts to build partnerships with each other, with employers, and with four-year universities, particularly California State University, Hayward. The School District is reorganizing its Career and Continuing Education Division to bring academies, vocational education, and career exploration for younger students closer together. The School District and Peralta are creating joint curriculum through the Tech Prep program. These changes at OUSD and Peralta are partly motivated by the federal Perkins Act of 1990, which provides funding for vocational education, but they are also driven by each district's internal planning processes.
- **Oakland Mayor's Center for Youth Employment.** Two years ago the Center was established to coordinate youth employment activities and expand the Mayor's Summer Jobs Program into a year-round operation. The Center has operated under a general memorandum of understanding among various educational, training, business, government, and community entities, with the Oakland Private Industry Council as fiscal agent. The Center's mission, operations, and finances have been under continual reexamination from the start, and although it grew quickly it has never had a stable source of funding. Over the last year the Center administered two complex projects--New Ways Workers and Family Employment Program--each of which is a

collaboration of many agencies in its own right. The instability of the Center and its funding has led to its restructuring during the last several months. That process, as we noted above, is not yet complete, but it appears the Private Industry Council will take a more direct administrative role.

- **New Ways Workers Oakland replication.** New Ways Workers, a San Francisco-based organization, has foundation support to create a system for administering youth employment programs in partnership with the local school district and business community. The system is designed to simplify the hiring process for employers, develop more job opportunities for students, and support the training efforts of schools and community-based organizations. The Oakland replication of the system, which has been started in several Bay Area communities and elsewhere, has been undertaken by the Oakland Mayor's Center for Youth Employment. The start-up of NWW-Oakland has been slower than planned, and, after a year, the responsibilities of several key institutional players are still not resolved.
- **Family Employment Program.** In response to the Lifeline Initiative of the San Francisco Foundation, the OMCYE won support to establish the Family Employment Program. This would be a collaboration of community-based organizations which would provide training, case management, and supportive services to low-income Oakland youth and to their family members. The foundation grant was augmented during 1994 by a contract with Community Service Block Grant funds from the City's Community Action Agency. Like New Ways Workers, the FEP also had a long and challenging start-up period. Now, while services are being provided to 45 families, the

CSBG grant period has ended and FEP has not engaged many of the multitude of agencies who were part of the initial Lifeline collaboration.

- **Employment training clearinghouse.** The concept of a clearinghouse through which employers could make arrangements with training programs in order to meet their future hiring needs was first raised shortly after Mayor Harris' election in 1990, and preliminary plans for it were designed in subsequent years. Youth employment training programs were to be part of the project. Responsibility for the project shifted throughout the City for several years. By 1994, the City's Office of Public Works had gained responsibility for a number of projects through which employers, under contract to the City, would hire more Oakland residents. The clearinghouse concept was being implemented through OPW at the end of 1994, although some questions remained about its relationship to other projects.
- **Quality Work Force Action Project.** The fragmented state of employment training and the perceived lack of a well-trained workforce led to a request in 1993 from the Mayor's Economic Emergency Task Force to convene a panel tasked with recommending ways to improve the delivery system. The project, chaired by City Council Member Sheila Jordan, became a venue for reviewing the issues, and soon chose to focus on youth employment and school-to-work transitions. The Project put on a conference in February 1994 at which the various programs were described and critical issues of coordination discussed. Despite the name of the effort, the parties were not ready to take concerted action, but agreed that the details of collaboration

needed more careful examination. This paper, then, is in part an outgrowth of the Quality Workforce Action Project.

The Importance of Coordination

All the service providers, government officials, and employers with whom we talked were committed to finding ways to improve the overall system of youth employment training and education in Oakland. Following are some of the reasons they gave for why this is important, reasons which echo the national literature.

- 1. Coordination is critical to maximizing employer involvement.** The lack of coordination is widely perceived by providers and business leaders as undercutting efforts at securing funding, obtaining placements, communicating clearly with business, and identifying useful roles for employers to play. Coordination is especially seen as critical to increasing the involvement of small and medium-sized firms in youth employment and school-to-work activities.

- 2. A "seamless" system, or as close to it as we can get, is still needed by young people and their families in order to benefit from the available services.** The providers have countless examples of how services could have more impact if the barriers to institutional cooperation and client eligibility were lowered. Youth would be able to find the right program more easily, and make the transition from one educational program to the next more simply, gaining greater benefit from a continuum of services. Young people from families with different incomes could more readily be integrated into similar orientations and training activities. Support services

and money for ancillary expenses, such as child care, counseling, transportation costs, and clothing allowances, could be more readily available to those who need them.

3. **Coordination can mean greater efficiency.** More services may be provided for less money if certain functions are shared. Development of common office and classroom facilities, information systems, intake procedures and other features may support all participating programs and simplify procedures. Job development and marketing would be simplified, require less staff time, and cost less if the many youth employment programs successfully evolved into a youth employment system.
4. **Stronger linkages between education and workplaces are needed to create effective programs.** To better infuse the curriculum with career-related issues and experiences, students and teachers need more regular contact with industry. These partnerships have to become more multi-faceted and permanent, not simply periodic placements of students. Many of these connections could be established and maintained more effectively, for example, if there were city-wide coordinators for given fields, such as health care or engineering, rather than each program and each employer seeking partners independently.
5. **Employment training and career education need to be more directly tied to Oakland's economic development efforts.** The closer the working relationship between local job creation and retention efforts and training, the greater the likelihood of preparing the right numbers of young people for growing occupations and of placing them in those jobs. At the same time, a better trained work force supports

economic development efforts by improving the climate for business development and retention.

6. **Coordination and collaboration are essential if innovations are going to be "taken to scale."** The majority of Oakland youth are not yet served by model programs in or out of school, and reaching all of them will not simply be a matter of multiplying the funding. It will require infusing the goals, content, and methods of innovative programs throughout the system: at the schools and training agencies and at the workplace. This will require collaboration beyond the current level.

In short, there is a local consensus that it is important to work together, and we have some experiences from which lessons can be learned. The partnerships being developed at this time may provide a basis for moving ahead.

Assets of the Youth Employment and Career Education System

Oakland has significant assets for youth employment, and excellent prospects for implementing progressive programs which reach a large number of young people. These assets give Oakland a relative advantage compared to many inner cities. These include:

1. **Existing programs in the schools and in community-based organizations which are national models and which frequently attract outside resources.** The examples are numerous. The career academies in the Oakland Unified School District, especially the older programs such as Health and Bioscience, have received grants and citations from the US Department of Labor, the Department of Education, and many foundations which attest to their innovations. The East Bay Conservation Corps provides a widely praised model through

its remedial education, community service, environmental education, and other programs.

Many other community-based organizations and projects in the educational system have risen beyond purely local stature and funding.

2. An abundance of technical resources in youth development and employment programs from universities, independent research centers, foundations, experienced staff, and other sources. Groups and individuals who can assist the development of a more coordinated system are frequently available. Jobs For the Future, the Center for Law and Education, the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, California Tomorrow, New Ways to Work, and the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research are some of the state and national organizations which have been working on youth employment and school-to-work in Oakland this year, in addition to several locally-based specialists. We have not done a precise comparison, but we guess that there is more technical support per capita in Oakland than in most cities.

Barriers to Greater Coordination

Despite these advantages, there are also some substantial barriers to rapid development of an effective system.

One set of limitations arises from the fragmentation and bureaucratic complexity which characterize the public sector. Coordination and collaboration are challenging because so many aspects of our service delivery system work against their success. Oakland's educators and trainers have told us why the effort can be frustrating.

First, training and education providers are divided by long histories of different funding sources and regulations, organizational culture, institutional rivalries, and plain lack of mutual understanding of their respective missions. One prominent cultural divide is that

between Oakland's high schools and its community-based youth employment programs. The concepts of "youth employment" and "school-to-work transition" are obviously related in many ways, but they also represent some very different priorities and approaches to working with young people. Lack of appreciation of those differences has contributed to the awkwardness of Oakland's collaborative experiences.

Second, a certain amount of competitiveness is built into the funding system, especially the JTPA system, with training organizations counting on key employers for job placements, and not necessarily wanting to share access to them. A certain wariness accompanies most collaborators in the early stages, as they weigh any possible risks to their own domains.

A third factor is that coordination takes significant staff time, which is increasingly hard to come by given the lean staffing of most projects. This lack of time has not prevented the providers from taking on new collaborative responsibilities, it just keeps them from doing these as well or as thoroughly as they would like.

There is also a very fragmented system of government-supported employment and training. Funding derives from at least four federal departments and three state agencies. Eligibility criteria, program goals, credentialing, and almost every aspect of management are distinct from one program to another. Even when local providers want to combine groups of clients, staffs, or funding streams they are often prevented from doing so.

Finally, collaboration is too often intertwined with the chase for new funding. If the partnership is externally defined by the grant-maker, rather than the organic result of the long-time work of local partners, the short-term outcome can be unsatisfying, or can at least create an environment in which key issues do not get thoroughly aired.

These facts of bureaucratic life are also a problem for those local employers who are the most earnest and involved with youth programs and education. Often, business leaders who want to help are frustrated by the fragmentation of the system, which results in duplicative requests for jobs or financial support, or unreasonable restrictions upon their operations, or inadequate preparation of the would-be employees. It is reasonable to expect employers to place a high value on efficiency in the system. After all, whether they are directly seeking a productive workforce or primarily making a philanthropic contribution, they expect their time and money to be well spent. We have noticed that when the employers do take the time to understand the reasons why the training and education system is so inflexible or fragmented, they often become among the most radical exponents of change.

Other Contextual Factors

The context in which collaboration and partnership-building can take place is affected by several other broad factors which merit brief mention. They include the overall levels of government funding, the changing nature of jobs in the local and regional economy, and the prior education and preparation of young people.

Funding: The revenues through which local government might support new or innovative projects have never been adequate to meet the need, and may undergo substantial cuts in the near future. The presence of so many foundation grants and special projects masks a long-term decline in the dollars spent on core educational and training activities by the public sector at all levels, with more cuts possibly in store. The federal School-to-Work Opportunities Act, despite its importance as a platform for new practices, will actually appropriate only a very small amount of money to states or communities. Even though the high school academies have more than doubled their enrollment in the past two years they

serve only 15 percent of the high school population. Perkins Act federal funding for vocational education in high schools and community colleges is an important source for innovative programs, but also far short of what the two Districts will need to serve all of their students. Also, less than five percent of JTPA eligible persons can be enrolled in Oakland programs.

Job Creation and Retention: In absolute numbers the job situation in Oakland is better than in many US cities. In many metropolitan areas, inner city young people are far more isolated from the labor markets, and those markets have produced far fewer jobs, than in Oakland. Other than the prolonged recent recession, the regional economy has produced significant numbers of new jobs over the long term, and the Oakland economy has roughly held its own--producing new jobs at the rate at which old ones are lost. (For example, the number of private sector jobs was virtually the same--154,000--in 1981 and 1988.) The East Bay as a whole has grown at a faster rate than has Oakland, and some of those positions are also held by or within reach of Oaklanders.

Despite the often decent numbers of total jobs, there are serious structural problems looming ahead in both the number and quality of jobs. A growing problem is the downsizing or dissolution of many large Oakland corporations. In step with national trends, many of Oakland's larger employers are restructuring, re-engineering, contracting out operations, and otherwise reducing their existing staffs and cutting back on new hiring. Some companies, once locally owned, are now owned by outside interests, which are less committed to the education and hiring of the local workforce. The recent growth in employment in Oakland has tended to be in small and medium-sized business and in government. The government net job growth, largely the result of regional offices moving to Oakland, may also be at an end for the foreseeable future.

For young people entering the labor market, the number of new positions and the turnover rate of entry level jobs are more relevant than the absolute number of jobs in the economy. We appear to be in for a long period where there is much less hiring than normal, even in a period of economic recovery, as employers stretch their existing workforces rather than take on new obligations.

Preparation: Another set of problems arises from the poor preparation of young people before entering the workforce. A large percentage of Oakland's teenagers and young adults have inadequate basic academic skills, so that by the time they are of high school age and beyond, they are unable to handle even many rudimentary jobs. Many specialized training programs are based on an assumption of basic skills, which are beyond some Oakland students' or drop-outs' current levels of performance. Most young people with these academic deficiencies do not have adequate opportunities to overcome them. Many employers, frustrated with the failure of many applicants to complete even the simplest tests or succeed during their probationary periods begin to look elsewhere for new employees. Since there has been a decline in the number of entry level and summer jobs which can be managed without a strong basic education, large numbers of Oakland youth are not "job-ready" even if they have advanced through high school.

Employers also frequently speak of many young people's lack of adequate preparation for being in the workplace. Socialization to the norms of the workplace, something taken more for granted in the past, is said by employers to be seriously lacking among many young people, and discourages the employers about the local youth labor market.

We realize that employers' perceptions are not the only perspective that should be brought to bear on this issue: there are ways in which the culture of many workplaces should also change. However, where there is a widespread dissatisfaction with the performance of

young people, it cannot help but reflect on employers' future expectations of the education and training system.

3. DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF SELECTED PARTNERSHIPS

If we are to improve the practice of creating and maintaining partnerships and collaboratives, we must first understand what is already underway. Toward this end, the authors have compiled two sets of tables and charts. The first set, shown at the back of the report as Appendix 1, presents information in a standard format for nine varied joint entities concerned with job training or career education for young people. Some of these are permanent organizations, while others are new and/or temporary collaborations. The nine projects are:

- The Oakland Mayor's Center for Youth Employment
- The East Bay Career Opportunities Project
- The Quality Workforce Action Project
- The Oakland Public Schools' Career Academies
- The Tech Prep partnership between Oakland Public Schools and the Peralta Community College District
- Project 4000 of the Oakland Chamber of Commerce and the Oakland Public Schools
- The Port of Oakland's Employment Resources Development Program
- The Oakland Private Industry Council
- The Oakland Employment Training Coalition

Each entity is represented by a chart on which fourteen active partners in the youth employment and career education scene are placed. Each entity has its membership portrayed

by having each partner's name shaded with one of five levels of intensity of involvement: key participants, other active participants, board or committee representatives, supporters, or not involved. On each chart is a capsule description of the partnership. The Charts are Appendix 1.

The memberships portrayed by the set of charts are summarized in Table 1, which is a matrix of the partners crossed with the projects.

The second set of tables matches these same fourteen local organizations with the range of activities typically associated with a youth employment system. Table 2 lists policy and coordination activities. Table 3 lists direct service activities. Accompanying narrative describes each heading.

These are admittedly very basic tools, but nonetheless we can draw some basic conclusions from these schematic representations.

The first finding is simply that there is a lot going on. These are hardly exhaustive lists, but even this collection shows that there is a great deal of activity intended to coordinate the relationships among various service providers and enhance their connections to employers and state and local government. The activity includes both policy and direct services, though the distinctions are not always so clear in practice. Many different groups have been assembled for "strategic planning" or "coalition-building." There are both multi-group collaborations and two-party partnerships, such as where individual firms connect with particular programs of the school district or a community-based organization, in order to provide opportunities for young people.

The second conclusion is that no two partnership activities are covering exactly the same ground with the same people. However, while no two joint ventures are the same, there are substantial overlaps of mission, purpose and memberships.

Table 1: Youth Employment Collaborations
(See Appendix 1 for details)

	OMCYE	EBCOP	QWAP	Academies	Tech Prep	P-4000	ERDP	OPIC	ETC
OUSD	A	K	B	K	K	A		S	A
Public Works	S	B	B	S				S	
Mayor's Office	A		K					B	
Chamber		B	B	S		K			
Kaiser	A			S				S	
Port of Oakland	A			S		A	K		A
Rotary Club		B	B						
Other Employers	S			S	S	A	A	S	
Labor Council		S							
SEIU			S						
OMCYE	K	B	B					S	S
OPIC	K	K	B					K	A
EDD	A	B	B						
Training CBOs	A		B				A	A	K
Other CBOs	S	S							
CSU Hayward		K		S					
Univ/Oak Forum	S	A	K	B					
Peralta	A	K	B	A	K			B	

K = Key Participant A = Active B = Board/Committee Member S = Supporter

Table 2A: Description of Policy and Coordination Activities

Vision/Planning. Includes creating and implementing an Oakland Youth Employment Plan as well as examining the short-term and long-term needs of youth, employers, and the greater community.

Curriculum Development. Includes linking work experience to education and personal growth, both within and outside the OUSD.

Needs Assessment. Includes periodic surveys of the youth employment community to assess changing needs. A by-product of needs assessment should be "resource mapping," or developing a services matrix to identify gaps in the system.

Business Support. More than employing youth, this includes introducing speakers, mentors, internships, career days, job shadowing opportunities, as well as preferential hiring commitments to the available resources.

Employer Awareness. Includes marketing youth and the services supporting youth to the business community. This activity helps employers identify services they need as well as those they can support.

Youth Awareness. Includes marketing services to youth and making it easy for them to enter the youth employment system.

Coordination. Includes creating, introducing, and implementing a synergistic system which enables individual entities to more effectively meet the youth employment needs of Oakland.

Fund Development. Includes raising money from the greater community to support youth employment activities.

Innovative Projects. Includes creating and piloting innovative approaches to youth employment which can be implemented within the greater youth employment community.

Table 2B: Policy and Coordination Activities

	Vision/ Plan	Curriculum Develop.	Needs Assessment	Business Support	Employer Awareness	Youth Awareness	Coordination	Fund Development	Innovative Projects
OUSD		x			x	x	x	x	x
Public Works				x			x		
Mayor's Office							x		
Chamber		x		x					x
Kaiser		x		x					
Port of Oakland		x		x					
Rotary Club				x					
Other Employers				x					
Labor Council									
SEIU									
OMCYE					x	x	x	x	x
OPIC		x	x		x	x	x	x	x
EDD									
Training CBOs		x	x		x	x		x	x
Other CBOs						x		x	
CSU Hayward	x	x							
Univ/Oak Forum	x		x						
Peralta		x				x			x

Table 3A: Description of Direct Services Activities

Youth Orientation. Includes introducing youth, individually or within groups, to the "world of work" and to the services available.

Youth Assessment. Includes assessing the personal, academic, and vocational skills of a youth.

Employer Assessment. Includes assessing perceived and real barriers to employing youth.

Job Market Information. Includes analyzing the short-term and long-term opportunities for employment and careers within the region and making this information available to youth, youth providers, policy makers, employers, and others.

Support Services. Includes services needed by youth to succeed in employment. May include child care, transportation, GED preparation, tutoring, and other services.

Job Preparation. Includes skills needed to be ready to work, such as interview skills, resume preparation, and "work place socialization" skills, among others.

Skills Training. Includes vocational skills, such as computer literacy, business math, business communication, engine repair, health services training, and many others. Also includes developing and enabling youth to meet minimum standards for employment in specified fields.

Job Development. Includes identifying employment opportunities for youth. Also includes creating new employment slots specifically for youth in meet identified standards.

Placement/Follow-Up. Includes getting a youth a job, supporting the youth and/or employer in maintaining and strengthening the employment relationship, assessing the youth's and the employer's attitudes about the arrangement, and correcting the system as necessary.

Table 3B: Direct Services Activities

	Youth Orientation	Youth Assessment	Employer Assessment	Job Market Information	Support Services	Job Preparation	Skills Training	Job Development	Placement/ Follow-Up
OUSD	x	x			x	x	x	x	x
Public Works								x	
Mayor's Office									
Chamber									
Kaiser									
Port of Oakland	x		x					x	x
Rotary Club							x	x	
Other Employers									
Labor Council									
SEIU									
OMCYE	x	x	x		x	x		x	x
OPIC	x	x				x		x	x
EDD	x	x		x				x	x
Training CBOs	x	x			x	x	x	x	x
Other CBOs	x	x			x	x		x	x
CSU Hayward						x			
Univ/Oak Forum									
Peralta	x	x				x	x		

A third finding is that there are many linkages among the activities and the participants. In fact, most of the partnerships are in turn frequently partners in other partnerships! For example, the Mayor's Center for Youth Employment is a collaboration of many of the agencies listed on the charts, and the Mayor's Center is then represented in its own name on the committees of several other collaborations, mostly along with the signatories to its own memorandum of understanding. It is common for the same people to see each other at many of these meetings, and for some of the business of one collaborative to merge into that of another. It also is not uncommon for one member of an organization to attend one collaboration's meetings and for another member of that same organization to attend related but different meetings, and for there to be less than complete communication between them.

Here are some more specific observations based on our participation in and observation of the activities and organizations, and the comments of participants.

1. Youth employment and school-to-work transition programs are not the same, but they should be closely related. The school-to-work concept is most fundamentally about creating new curricula, articulating pathways between levels of education, and blending work experience with classroom experience. If taken to its full expression it is nothing less than a restructuring of high school education for most students and a redefinition of the relationship between high schools and many other institutions.

Most youth employment programs have more immediate and self-contained objectives. They can mostly function outside the framework of the public schools, though with high school students as one of their principal client bases. They are primarily concerned with socializing young people to work, improving their academic proficiency, and imparting

sufficient skills to result in placements in seasonal or entry-level positions--often described as an alternative to spending non-school hours on the streets.

Both types of activity need strong partnerships with employers. Both need support from the city government, and both should include linkages between community-based organizations and public schools. Both types of programs need to develop jobs, internships, and other relationships for youth with local employers. And many of the same young people will need the services of both a school-to-work program and a community-based job program during their teen years, sometimes in the same year.

Some of the awkwardness in Oakland recent collaborative efforts results from a lack of understanding of both the innate differences and the points of mutual interest between youth employment and school-to-work. The Oakland Mayor's Center for Youth Employment has been especially vulnerable to this misunderstanding. OMCYE has had responsibility for coordinating information and services for youth on behalf of community-based youth employment programs, and for establishing a link between employers and the school-to-work programs of the School District and community college district.

2. It has been hard to avoid "reinventing the wheel" despite everyone's best intentions. Collaborative efforts to promote youth employment often repeat the same initial planning steps over and over, often with little evidence of considering past experiences. Most of these efforts result in similar goal statements, but not in enough concrete action to prevent another group from starting almost from scratch.

If in each new collaborative setting additional people learn something valuable from these efforts, the repetition is not entirely wasted effort. School-to-work transition concepts and practices, in particular, are relatively new, so a considerable amount of community

education is needed. But if the goal is action, the repetition of preliminary discussions will not be sufficient, and can dilute the energy of the participants.

3. The detailed designing of new systems and approaches has not taken place.

Many collaborative efforts have been held up at the starting gate, having agreed upon ambitious goals and objectives of varying specificity, but not very much in the way of working agreements, shared staff, blended funds, or other ways of putting the ideas into action. If "the devil is in the details" then Oakland is so far pretty safe from the influence of the netherworld. Most local organizations promote and support collaboration on a very general level, but have not yet created the productive, candid, mutually supportive working relationships and coalitions which they know they will need. That is not to say they will not get there, but that they are not there yet.

4. Collaborative projects are largely limited to being demonstration programs rather than the core activities of any organization. Activities spawned by partnerships, and innovative ways of serving youth in general, are often held at the stage of being demonstrations or models, even after their value is universally acknowledged. Two reasons often advanced for this phenomenon are that the demonstrations are supported by outside grants of limited duration, and that because when they are truly innovative they represent a threat to established interests. It is a much greater challenge to institutionalize a change system-wide than to create it at one site. This is hardly a problem specific to Oakland. Much of the literature on school-to-work and youth development concerns the possibilities for taking innovations to scale so that most young people would benefit.

These four shortcomings are not primarily the result of random events or the influence of particular personalities. They are a reflection of the political, organizational, and economic system in which we operate. The participants face significant obstacles to effective

collaboration, some external and others internal to the city or to institutions. The growing awareness of these obstacles is in itself an asset in the attempt to overcome them.

The four problems are closely interrelated and can lead to a kind of stalemate:

- Inadequate planning leads to insufficient program design, which then undercuts the argument for more resources.
- Lack of depth and follow-through in past or existing partnerships, and a lack of concrete results, breeds cynicism and resistance to the next attempt.
- The proliferation of new model activities while core budgets are being cut leaves organizations without a clear path by which to implement change.

Given these challenging circumstances, how can greater collaboration and more effective coordination be achieved? How can partnerships achieve their goals?

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered in a constructive spirit to the community as a whole, and should not be construed as a response to problems faced by any one particular program or collaborative. Indeed, an issue has to be relevant to more than one project to merit inclusion here. The goals for collaborations around youth employment are widely agreed upon; it is the means of getting there which require most of the attention. The literature on partnerships and collaboration provides some good general conditions which must be met if such efforts are to succeed. Following are some Oakland-specific guidelines, admittedly easier to say than to do, for effective collaboration in services for youth.

1. Conduct serious coalition-building and collaborative policy-making in its own right, outside the immediate pressures of writing proposals for funding. Planning should be continuous and locally driven. The critical relationships, priorities, and issues need to be worked out on their own, Oakland-specific terms, away from the distortions imposed by RFP's and external deadlines. We should not expect partnerships cobbled together for purposes of attracting funding to have addressed the critical issues. They can, however, be used as starting points for serious discussion. The three School-to-Work Opportunities Act RFP's responded to by EBCOP are a good example of the difficulties posed by simultaneously writing a complex proposal and trying to develop the coalition and the work program. Now that the time pressure is temporarily off, EBCOP stands a better chance of clarifying the roles of each partner and the focus of the overall effort.

Similarly, it will be possible to raise funding for the New Ways Workers Oakland Replication, in part because that effort can support the school-to-work endeavor. However, the formal, specific relationships between NWW-Oakland and the high schools and the School District as a whole need to be completed in a way which is consistent with EBCOP and other school-to-work plans, before the fund-raising proposals can be effective.

2. Separate broad community policy-making and strategic planning from specific negotiations between any two agencies. The youth employment and training scene in Oakland requires partnerships at two levels: effective agreements between two organizations (e.g., the School District and a community-based trainer serving OUSD students) and citywide collaborations (e.g., OMCYE.) Sometimes difficulties in specific relationships spill over unnecessarily into the system-wide planning. With careful facilitation and clear objectives for collaborative activities, this can be avoided. Two parties can even maintain a principled

difference of opinion on a specific issue and remain productive partners in a broader collaborative, if they are careful about keeping the two aspects separate.

3. Be certain that an existing effort cannot do the job before starting a new partnership or collaboration. Since there are so many nascent efforts, the first rule when collaboration is being sought should be a check of the appropriateness of existing efforts. As of this writing, for example, there are some unresolved questions about the relationship of new clearinghouse activities to be run out of the Office of Public Works to other organizations, including the Mayor's Center for Youth Employment and the Career Information Resource Center of Oakland (CIRCO). Will they use any of the information bases or staffs? Will agencies have to duplicate their reports to several clearinghouses? These should be resolved before the new project is in operation.

The question of whether two or more bodies are deliberating over the same decisions pertains to the policy level as well as the level of direct services and information sharing. A small but important step forward was made last month when OUSD merged its vocational education advisory committee with its academies joint advisory committee. How will decision-making by the New Ways Workers Steering Committee merge with policy decisions made by EBCOP, for example, assuming EBCOP remains the overall city-wide umbrella collaborative?

4. Have each participating agency commit to maintaining one consistent voice, message, and messenger in collaborative efforts. A certain amount of confusion has unintentionally resulted from the dispersal of responsibilities among several different staff members. The Office of the Mayor, for example, has had four staffers concurrently engaged

in youth employment planning and projects: one working on the clearinghouse, another on the Mayor's Center, one on the Quality Workforce Project, and a fourth on school district / community partnerships. They do not always have the same information or reporting relationships. Similar fragmentation has been observed within the School District. OUSD has a particularly difficult time because central office staff, such as the Magnet Programs Office, and the staff at local schools have different reporting structures. The recent situation at Fremont High School, which is the site of a number of concurrent fund raising and program design efforts, showed where there is room for improvement.

Even in relatively small organizations, like OMCYE or the PIC, staff from the various unconnected youth programs can find themselves unintentionally presenting mixed messages or missing out on opportunities to collaborate.

5. Clarify terms and goals for school-to-work transition programs and their relationship to other youth employment training and youth development activities.

School-to-work is a powerful collection of concepts, as well as a hot buzzword, and by any definition Oakland has made much progress. However, the concepts mean different things to different organizations and people, and the divergent expectations are hindering constructive dialogue and planning.

All the parties should make a serious effort to see school-to-work transition as a community issue based in the schools, rather than a school program. Local efforts would benefit from ongoing participation in the planning process by youth employment agencies, youth development agencies representing the diversity of the community, as well as by broader and more direct participation from the business community.

6. Develop distinct responsibilities for citywide and regional school-to-work

collaborations. This is a delicate issue which the recent discussions have not fully resolved. Some influential participants have argued that the fundamental unit of school-to-work efforts should be broader than just the city of Oakland. There are important economies of scale and organizational and employer linkages to be gained from collaboration among the six northern Alameda County cities that comprise the Peralta District, or County-wide, or even among the communities of the new East Bay Safety Corridor, which includes part of Contra Costa County.

At the same time, most of the day-to-day work of a school-to-work program will inevitably be at the individual school district, at least in a city the size of Oakland. There is no guarantee that adjoining districts or cities will want to take the same approach to the programs.

There are specific important tasks which a multi-city, or county-wide group could do, and we recommend that these be the province of a regional group. These could include initial liaisons with large employers who may want to work with many school districts or community college districts, technical assistance with program planning and fund raising, and regional labor market analysis. The County Office of Education has started to do some of this work.

By the time the next opportunities to apply for state or federal school-to-work funds have arrived, the hierarchy of tasks will hopefully have been clarified. If EBCOP is intended for Oakland alone, is "East Bay" the proper name for it? Or, if EBCOP becomes the regional entity with many cities and school districts, Oakland will also need another partnership for strictly local work.

7. Create a citywide method for measuring the overall number of young people served by different programs and for sharing the information. Every program training and placing youth in jobs--particularly those receiving JTPA funds--counts the number of youth they serve. However, no one organization is counting the number of youth served through all programs citywide. This is not as simple as calling each agency and adding their totals since it is not clear whether there are duplicative counts or even similar methods of counting.

To plan for the community as a whole we need a consistent measurement over time of how many youth were eligible for the range of employment services, how many sought them, and how many received them. We are not prepared at this point to recommend exactly how this should be done or which entity should be responsible, but we see it as a good issue to be resolved in the next several months among the PIC, Employment Training Coalition, the restructured Mayor's Center, the School District, City clearinghouse, community college district, and other parties. Success in this arena could lead to other helpful information sharing and joint reporting.

8. Settle, as a community, on one approach, technology, and sponsorship for a clearinghouse of youth employment and training information, and see that selection through to completion. At present, there are still a number of competing or potentially duplicative proposals extant, none with the resources to be fully implemented. These were alluded to above.

9. Encourage the business community to target its youth jobs so as to reward a system which produces job-ready applicants. Employers should make specific

commitments to hire from programs which are doing a good job of preparing young Oakland residents for work. It defeats the purpose of a citywide system if a youth who has committed a year or more to preparing for a job stands no better chance for that job than the first youth who comes off the street. Business organizations like the Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Clubs can make a contribution to the system by helping members understand these concepts and then pledge their participation and support. These organizations can be particularly helpful in working with small businesses to develop strategies which will enable them to more fully participate in the youth employment system.

10. Encourage employers to view youth employment and school-to-work programs as an integral human resources strategy, not merely as philanthropy or community service. They should become involved in curriculum development and working with teachers for the sake of their own quality workforce. Educators should reciprocate by providing a climate into which employers can participate effectively.

11. Ensure that Oakland's economic development strategies and projects are considered in designing and implementing the youth employment and school-to-work system. Precedent has been set by using redevelopment funds to support OUSD academies. In addition to providing funding to the youth employment system, redevelopment officials could use the redevelopment and business retention process to create stronger mutual incentives for business, educators, and others concerned with long-term employment trends.

12. Make high-quality, up-to-date labor market information available for the design of the youth employment system. A quiet revolution is underway in the manner in

which data about jobs are collected and analyzed. There is a new awareness that emphasis should be placed on understanding transferable skills rather than traditional, fixed occupational titles. Organizations like the Cal State Hayward HIRE Center, University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum, and EDD can be used to design a process for projecting the number and content of jobs and using information more effectively to make choices about which fields to train, in what numbers, and using what curricula.

13. Respect the developmental differences within the ages covered by youth employment services, and design a specific community-wide strategy for young adults, ages 18-24, who are often eligible for both youth and adult job services. Depending on the program, youth employment services may be available from ages 14 through 24. The range of needs for job preparation, training, and placement within this age group are tremendous and cannot be measured by how many participants get a job. For youth in high school, internships or job shadowing in a desired field may be more valuable than a minimum wage job six hours a week. For a single mother in her twenties, a living wage or adequate support services may be of greater immediate value.

14. Get collaborative agreements in writing, with full approval of decision-makers. Establish specific memoranda of understanding and contracts among partners which define every organization's commitments and responsibilities. Ensure that the chief executives and boards are aware of the commitments and responsibilities and have budgeted the necessary resources to carry them out. This last recommendation pertains to action on all the previous issues. Many of Oakland's collaborative efforts are characterized by very general agreements which have not proved to be functional when the time comes to

act. We have also seen instances where the written agreements are specific, but the key decision-makers have not been familiar with them and subsequently ignored much of what was written. Once the issues have been clarified and the roles of various parties are mutually agreed upon, all parties should feel a strong obligation to complete their parts and concern for the welfare of the collaborative effort as a whole. A little clarity will go a long way in this regard.

5. CONCLUSION

Our primary objective in presenting this document is to present as accurate a description of the current state of the youth employment system in Oakland as possible. Having offered our view of current conditions, we then presented our recommendations for creating a more effective youth employment system.

While the observations and recommendations presented here are extensive, those readers who have struggled with these issues know that we have barely scratched the surface. We want to urge all readers to correct information which you feel is inaccurate, to educate us where you feel more should be said, and to engage in healthy dialogue. This report is a living document and its final chapter will not be written until a comprehensive youth employment system is in place in Oakland.

Appendix 1

Youth Employment Collaboration Charts

- Legend
- East Bay Career Opportunities Project
- Employment Resource Development Program
- Oakland Mayor's Center for Youth Employment
- Oakland Private Industry Council
- OUSD Academies
- Project 4000
- Quality Workforce Action Project
- Tech-Prep Educational Consortium

**Youth Employment
Collaboration:**

Legend

Key Participant

Used for fiscal sponsor and/or project manager

Active Participant

Used for significant responsibilities and activities

**Board/Committee
Member**

Used for board members or regular attendees of collaboration meetings

Supporter

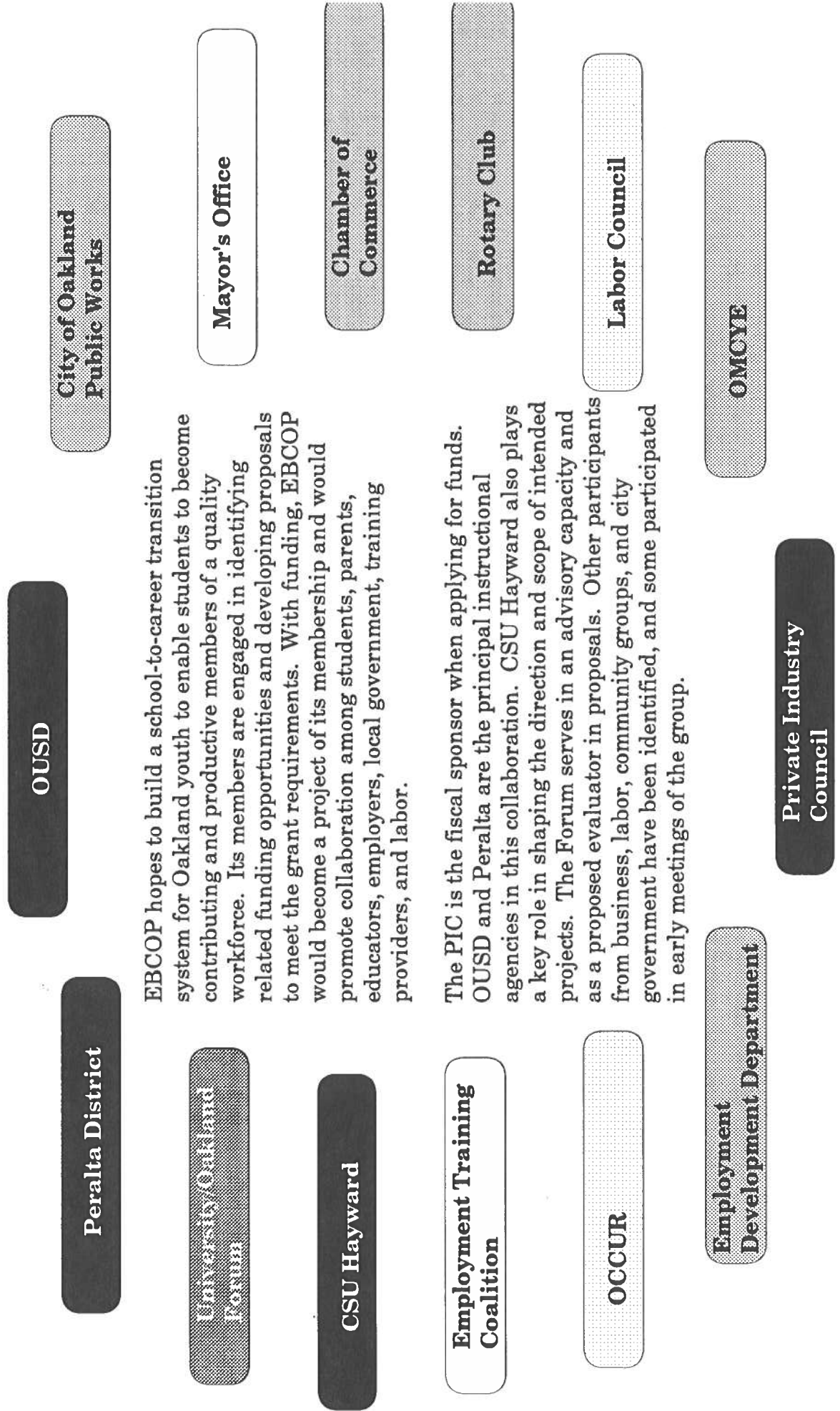
Used to designate limited or informal role

No Involvement

Used to designate no role in collaboration

Youth Employment Collaboration:

East Bay Career Opportunities Project



Youth Employment Collaboration:

Employment Resource Development Program (ERDP)

OUSD

Port of Oakland

Peralta District

University/Oakland
Forum

Universities

Employment Training
Coalition

Other Community
Organizations

Employment
Development Department

Private Industry
Council

OMCPE

Labor Unions

Part Employers

The Port of Oakland's Employment Resource Development Program is a support service for Port tenants and for employment development providers. ERDP is a member of the Employment Training Coalition (ETC) and, through its membership, can match the needs of Port tenants with pre-screened job seekers. Job seekers are participants or graduates of employment training programs, and not necessarily youth.

Mayor's Office

Chamber of
Commerce

In addition to job referrals and placements, ERDP provides Port tenants with employment and training updates, and serves as a consultant concerning skills assessment, task analysis, and training. Services are free to Port tenants.

Youth Employment Collaboration:

Oakland Mayor's Center for Youth Employment

OUSD

Peralta District

Port of Oakland
& Public Works

At this writing, an OMCYE organizational review may result in a closer relationship with the PIC and a name change. Changes in goals or programs are not expected.

University/Oakland
Forum

Mayor's Office

OMCYE is a bridge between youth employers and organizations preparing youth for employment. Board representation includes OUSD, the Mayor's Office, key employers, EDD, ETC, Peralta District, and the PIC as fiscal sponsor. Other community organizations and employers participate on several steering committees.

Universities

Chamber of
Commerce

Employment Training
Coalition

Employers

Other Community
Organizations

Labor Unions

OMCYE evolved from the Mayor's Summer Jobs Program, which continues to receive significant business support. Recently OMCYE became the East Bay replication site for New Ways Workers, which links OUSD students and curriculum to employment. This may become the OMCYE year-round program. OMCYE also operates a family employment program, which now provides 45 low-income youth and their families with a network of support services designed to enhance self-sufficiency and employability.

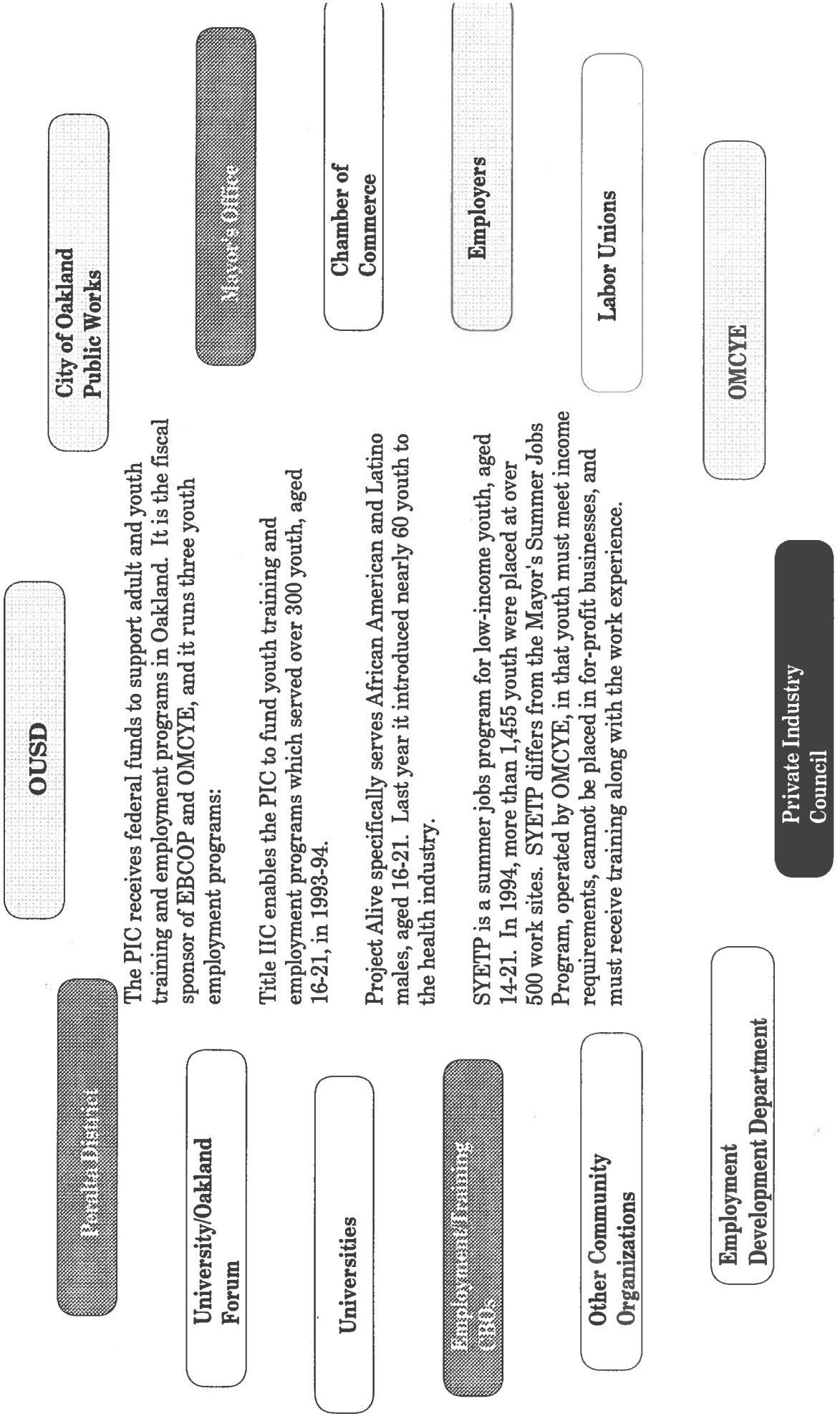
Employment
Development Department

OMCYE

Private Industry
Council

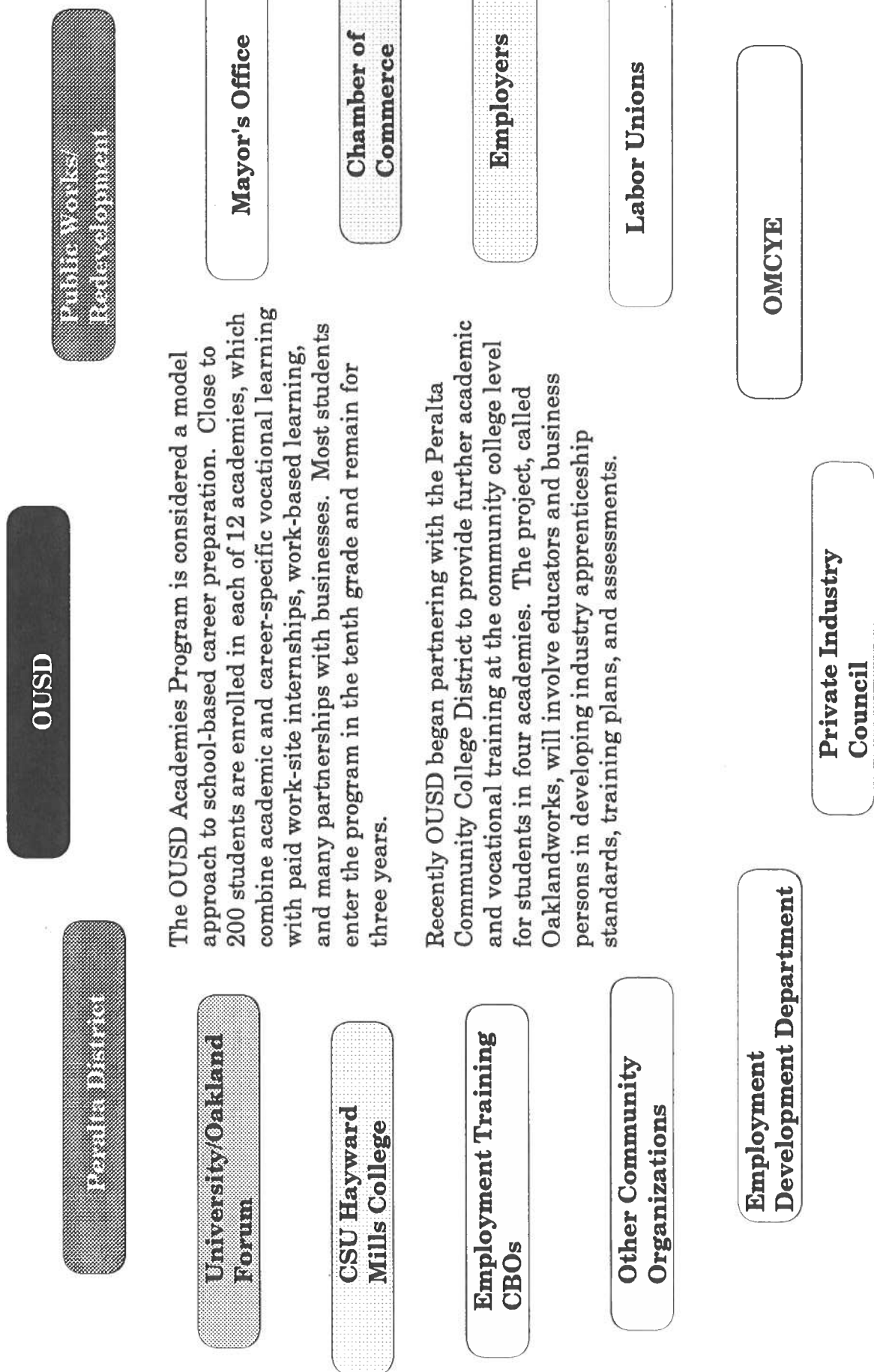
Youth Employment Collaboration:

Oakland Private Industry Council (PIC)



Youth Employment Collaboration:

OUSD Academies

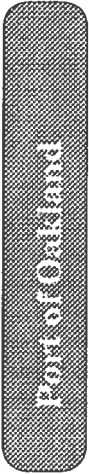


The OUSD Academies Program is considered a model approach to school-based career preparation. Close to 200 students are enrolled in each of 12 academies, which combine academic and career-specific vocational learning with paid work-site internships, work-based learning, and many partnerships with businesses. Most students enter the program in the tenth grade and remain for three years.

Recently OUSD began partnering with the Peralta Community College District to provide further academic and vocational training at the community college level for students in four academies. The project, called Oaklandworks, will involve educators and business persons in developing industry apprenticeship standards, training plans, and assessments.

**Youth Employment
Collaboration:**

Project 4000



Peralta District

**University/Oakland
Forum**

Universities

**Employment Training
CBOs**

**Other Community
Organizations**

**Employment
Development Department**

**Private Industry
Council**

The Oakland Chamber of Commerce Job Committee developed Project 4000 to acquaint students in the OUSD with employment opportunities in the transportation field. It is expected to be integrated permanently within the sixth-grade curriculum. Approximately 1,000 sixth graders participated in the program in 1993-94 and another 4,000 sixth graders are expected to participate in 1994-95. Participating employers include AC Transit, BART, Federal Express, Pilot's Computer Aviation Tech, Port of Oakland, Sea-Land Services, Southern Pacific Lines, United Airlines, and United Parcel Service.

Mayor's Office

**Chamber of
Commerce**



Labor Unions

OMCYE

Youth Employment Collaboration:

Quality Workforce Action Project

OUSD

City of Oakland
Public Works

Peralta District

The Quality Workforce Action Project (QWAP) was established in response to the Economic Emergency Task Force recommendation that a quality workforce be developed to revive the local economy. QWAP meets to consider ways to build and sustain partnerships among educators, trainers, employers, labor, and the community. Councilmember Sheila Jordan chairs the project meetings with support from the University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum. QWAP convened a Quality Workforce Summit in February of 1994 and intends to follow that up by recommending strategies to improve community partnerships, link programs with jobs, and enhance coordination among agencies and funders.

University/Oakland
Forum

Mayor's Office
Councilmember Jordan

Universities

Chamber of
Commerce

Employment Training
Coalition

Rotary Club

Other Community
Organizations

Labor Unions
(SEIU)

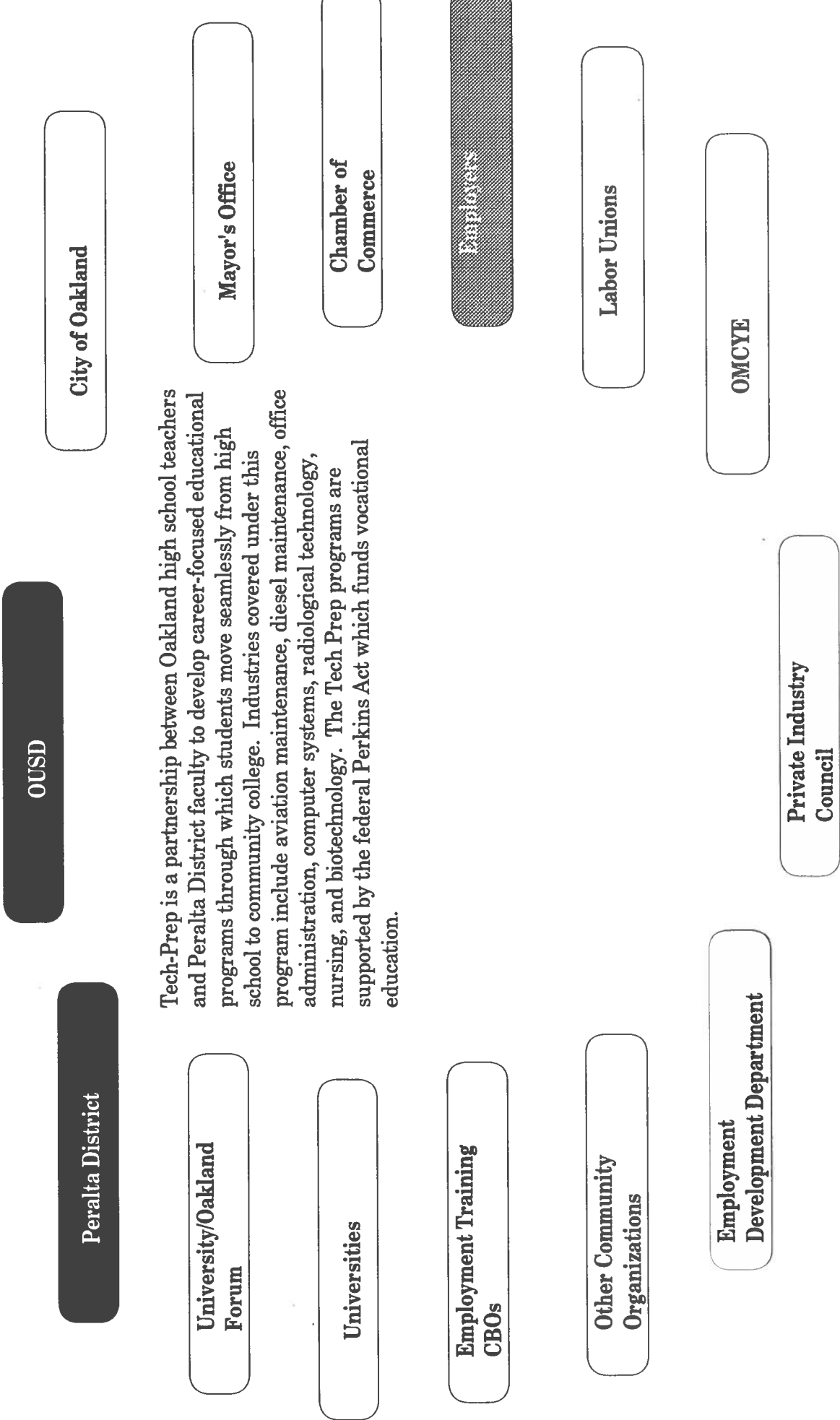
Employment
Development Department

OMCYE

Private Industry
Council

**Youth Employment
Collaboration:**

Tech-Prep Educational Consortium



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