



Collective Impact: 2015 Two Year Fall Grant Cycle

Challenge Workforce Solutions



The Basics...

- Who are we?
- What is the project?
- How much did the grant award?

Who?

- Challenge is an organization that works with people with disabilities and other barriers to employment find meaningful work in their community.
- Disabilities and other barriers can include: developmental, physical, legal, economic, emotional, learning, etc.

What?

- The Youth Employment Training Program Initiative
- Our focus: youth 2 years from graduating, school personnel, families and partner agencies like Workforce NY.
- Working to close the gap around transition from school to work
- \$20,000

So...what is our objective?

- Create infrastructure that brings school personnel, partner agencies, students with disabilities and their families together around available community and employment resources.
- In doing this, we can develop a post-graduation plan during the last two years of school instead of at the time of graduation.

Why is there a need?

Lack of comprehensive planning and services for students:

- With more significant barriers
- Students who require more intensive support (job coaching or long-term support)
- Or who don't fit into traditional employment or training programs (pre-employment training, interpersonal development, etc)

Positive Results thus far...

- Challenge has expanded it's outreach efforts to include Groton and Newfield schools.
- Outreach to guidance counselors and ACCES-VR Counselors connected to these schools has resulted in referrals for both our Supported Employment and Summer Youth Employment Programs.
- For students this has meant accessing employment services sooner via assessments, soft skill training programs and the Summer Youth Employment Program. Giving them an opportunity to develop a resume, have a first work experience and references, and increasing their success at a post-graduation plan.

Positive Results Cont.

- Challenge managers have joined the working group YERT (Youth Employment Resource Team)
- Our Summer Youth Program has been featured on our Facebook page and Annual Report.
- The exposure for these youth highlights the contribution and hard work ethic displayed by a population that might not have an opportunity to be engaged in community employment otherwise.

Positive Results Cont.

- Continued collaboration with community businesses/organizations (Ithaca Bakery, YMCA, Coddington Community Center)
- New relationships with community businesses/organizations (TC3 Farms, The Hilton Garden Inn, Cayuga Ridge, Sodexo @ Longview & Fingerlakes ReUse, Tompkins County Public Library)

Collaborators

- Workforce NY: pre-existing relationship. This grant has the focus of braiding services between WFNY's JobLink program and Challenge's Summer Youth Employment Program
- Ithaca High School: ongoing outreach with CSE Chair, work readiness curriculum instructed by Challenge staff, and work experiences offered during school year
- TST BOCES: provide support to teachers, students, families, CSE Chairs in regards to transitional and employment services

Shared Measures

- Employability Assessments (Profiles): Challenge & Schools use when evaluating internships, work experiences and short-term assessments
- Tracking time spent in schools, with families, at outreach events
- Common theme: shared responsibility.
- More family involvement and more networking with case managers and community agencies around resources for each student.

How are we reaching the public?

- Monthly meetings/communication with key partners including WFNY, IHS and TST BOCES
- Expansion of outreach meetings to include YERT, Subcommittee Meetings with both WIB and OPWDD, CSE Chair meetings and specific outreach to programs such as Turning Point at TST BOCES.



Hear our Youth

- This past year: Development has highlighted our youth program, participants and supportive employers in the community
- Cayuga Radio Group has run ads & interviews highlighting our programs/services and clients
- Youth & Employers complete evaluations at the end of the Summer Youth Program giving us valuable feedback for changes and growth.
- Youth share experiences throughout the summer as a part of the job readiness course.



Hear our Youth

- “It teaches me about responsibility”
- “I made lots of friends and got a workout”
- “Gave me experience working with older people”
- “When I first got here, I wasn’t sure I would even like working or being here, but I do”

Youth in Action



What have we learned?

- Services for youth with disabilities are in high demand but limited (and not just in Tompkins County – Seneca, Tioga, Schulyer)
- Changes in regulations means more time needed to assess and offer transitional services pre-graduation and more face time in school settings
- School personnel are on board and ready to work together.
- One student at a time is the best approach
- Support for students with behavioral health issues is lacking vs. those associated with OPVDD
- Job Coaching is a key component in making both the employer and youth understand their roles and responsibilities during work experiences.
- And we've learned that outreach does produce results. As a result of our Summer Youth Program, 2 youth have been hired in one of our businesses and 5 youth have been referred back to us via ACCES-VR for Employment Services.

What now?

- Hosting a workshop addressing employment needs for individuals on the Autism Spectrum. Open to collaborative partners, families, individuals, service providers and community members
- Enhance our outreach to Groton and Newfield offering job readiness training, information nights, and meetings with school personnel
- Continued meetings around changes in regulations that effect youth with more significant disabilities so school personnel know where to go and what to do.
- Expand outreach to include individuals with economic barriers by bringing staff within our DSS programs to school for Open Houses, meetings, presentations, etc.
- Expanding assessments/work experiences to students during the school year and not just during the summer