



# Youth Job Center

Getting a job. Launching a future.

## Strategic Plan

Approved Fall 2017

Amended Winter 2021



# Launching Futures

# To Our Community

Dear Friends,

Please enjoy this summary of Youth Job Center's (YJC) updated strategic plan. This adaptive plan, originally approved by the YJC Board of Directors in November 2017, is reviewed each year as we discuss contextual factors and envision upcoming changes, internal or external to our agency, to determine if we need to shift our work to stay true to our mission and goals. This process, although intensive, keeps our plan fresh and relevant.

YJC's purpose is to help young people enter the workforce through training and personalized support. One of the wonderful elements of being a small agency is that as we learn lessons, we can responsively integrate those learnings into our programs. As we continue to learn more about the young people we serve, the world around us, and the factors required for success, our work continues to evolve.

That being said, we'd like to share a few lessons we have learned in recent years:

- Our work must support a path to a meaningful career at a living wage, understanding that placement in a job is not enough
- YJC participants always come with strengths that we support and build upon
- YJC participants need to fully understand what career options exist for them
- Financial Health and Literacy is a necessary component to achieve equity through credit and wealth building
- We must help our participants build personal and professional networks for continued support
- All young people need the opportunity to grow, test, explore, build their sense of self, and increase their faith in their own ability to truly achieve their goals

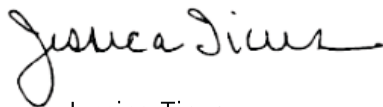
Incorporating elements of building upon our participants' strengths, supporting professional and personal growth, increasing financial health, and more into our programs will provide our young people with more equitable opportunities to a build strong and successful future.

We know we cannot do this without you. To our Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, donors, mentors, partners, and community, we thank you for working alongside us to build a community that equitably values every young person's contributions and potential.

Sincerely,



Karen Tollenaar Demorest  
Executive Director



Jessica Ticus  
Board Chair





## Mission

Success for young people in the workplace and in life



## Vision

All young people have the support to build a meaningful career and fulfill their potential.



# Youth Job Center's Commitment to Equity

Equity and inclusion are at the heart of YJC's work. YJC is committed to building a more just and equitable organization, both internally and externally, by increasing our clients' and staffs' employment and career opportunities while decreasing the predictability of poverty based on race, by taking an intersectional approach.



# Key Values

- YJC promotes and supports a healthy and inclusive culture where all current and future team members and clients thrive. We will do this in the following ways:
  - Develop and maintain a strong internal culture balancing support and high expectations, defined and measured in our policies and practices
  - Provide exceptional and individualized support for clients
  - Use our voice and presence in the community to influence positive change
- YJC staff and board embrace our individual and collective responsibility to support every person who enrolls in our programs, regardless of barriers
- We believe work has the power to shape futures and change lives
- Young adults are able to achieve employment success when the playing field is made equitable in access, skill-building, network building, and advancement opportunities



# Guiding Principles

At YJC, we:

- Strive to prevent young adults from becoming disconnected from work and school, through early support, information, and access
- Build upon the resilience, strengths, and assets our young people already have
- Support best practices for promoting diversity and equity in our agency, within the workplace and in the community
- Recognize that connecting a young person to a job is not enough, providing ongoing support for young people to successfully enter the workforce, maintain employment, and move into living-wage jobs with career advancement opportunities
- Treat each person as an individual, meeting them where they are on their personal journey
- Expand our participant's networks, promote relationships with mentors, agencies, and employers, building an ecosystem of support
- Advocate and influence policies and practices of ours and others' agencies to advance justice and economic opportunity

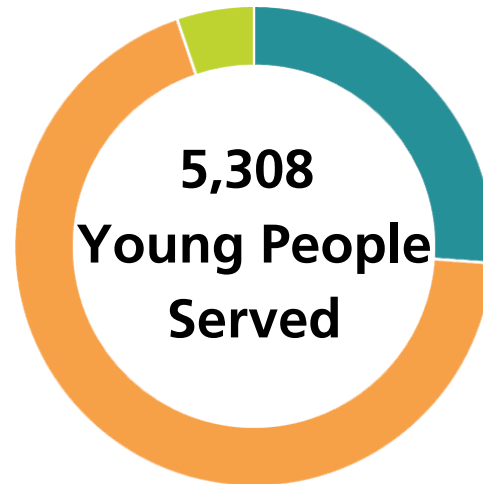
# YJC's Evolution

How many young people we've served since this plan was approved

1,387 EVANSTON RESIDENTS

3,645 CHICAGO RESIDENTS

276 RESIDENTS OF OTHER CITIES / SUBURBS



100% of Seniors Enrolled in YJC Seminar Classes graduate with a Senior Transition Plan

## 2018-2020

### Summer Programs

Paid work experiences coupled with work-readiness training & personalized support

138

### This Way Onward

Internship to employment program with The Gap, Banana Republic, or Old Navy

478

### Work Readiness Training

Builds the foundational skills required to be successful on the job and in the community

642

### Career Pathways

Combines skills-specific training & relevant credentialing.

168

### High School Partnerships

YJC staff embedded in five public schools, serving on the post-secondary planning team

3,737

### Transition Support At Graduation\*

Intensified support leading up to, through, and after h.s. graduation

88

### Financial Opportunities Center\*

Financial literacy training and coaching, budgeting, income supports, credit building

57

\* = New program in FY20



# Goal 1 - Provide Options Early

Youth Job Center introduces early career options and potential career paths to young people, making them aware of the range of opportunities available and the kinds of education and training required to pursue these options.

We will do this by:

- Being experts in job and career options
- With schools, providing equitable access and entry into the breadth of careers available
- Expanding YJC's role in career planning in partnership with high schools and partners
- Bringing employers into training programs
- Working with employers to influence change in equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Connecting young people to the many quality career pathways programs leading to meaningful careers at a living wage





# Goal 2 - Deliver Effective Training

Youth Job Center prepares young people to effectively enter the job market, helping them develop the skills and behaviors required to gain and retain employment and grow professionally.

We will do this by:

- Expanding pre-employment training, placement, and retention support
- With employers, advancing best practices in hiring, mentoring, developing, and retaining staff
- Advocating for equitable access to technology, tools, resources, and environment for all young people
- Improving data collection and analysis
- Addressing barriers to entry into meaningful careers



# Goal 3 - Strengthen Employer Relations

Youth Job Center facilitates relationships between youth and employers, builds success through trust, dialogue, and continuous learning, and fosters two-way conversation to provide insight into and understanding of job requirements and the challenges faced by youth job-seekers.

We will do this by:

- Promoting youth voice in sharing experiences, creativity, growth, and career goals, building on the strengths and resilience of young people
- Enhancing relations with employers through shared learning and cross training
- Prioritizing growth industries, aligning the needs of employers with effective ways to ensure success of hires
- Serving as a bridge between employers and clients to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace
- Identifying and mitigating barriers young people face through strengthened partnerships with other agencies



# Goal 4 - Become a Thought Leader

Youth Job Center bridges the worlds of education and employment by promoting collaboration around common goals and supporting mutual adaptation in approaches and expectations to respond to current economic and social realities.

We will do this by:

- Working with education partners to increase knowledge about all meaningful career options, promoting equitable access to information, resources, tools, and opportunities
- Serving as a leader among nonprofits in promoting equity in workforce development, advancing knowledge, access, and partnership among stakeholders
- Convening multiple stakeholders invested in a successful youth employment pipeline, including civic leaders, businesses, employment specialists, educators, and partners







At Youth Job Center, we work to position all young people to envision their adult life as interwoven experiences in work, education, and learning that happens everywhere: in the workplace, in our classrooms, in our relationships, and in our communities. It is more critical than ever that young people develop adaptive skills, build their self-efficacy, and know they can continue to learn and grow throughout their adult lives.

Thank you for being our friends, supporters, and partners in this important work as we support young people on a path in which they continue to learn, make a good wage, and take pride in their contribution to our society.

