Youth Ambassadors for Peace

Transcript of Webinar

YouthBuild Webinar Series

Meet the Workforce Innovation Fund Round Two Grantees:
Grant Project Presentations

Wednesday, February 24, 2016
PATRICIA MAGUIRE: I'd like to introduce Terri Gallardo and Bobby Jaurigue from the Monterey County Workforce Development Board and the project manager and project coordinator, respectively, for Youth Ambassadors for Peace. Terri and Bobby?

TERRI GALLARDO: Good morning. Of course, as Patricia stated, the name of our project is Youth Ambassadors for Peace. The target population of Youth Ambassadors for Peace is disengaged, disenfranchised youth and young adults ages 16 to 21.

The focus of our outreach is just as gang involved individuals, and the ultimate goal of Youth Ambassadors for Peace is to end the cycle of violence that has historically plagued Monterey County and continues to result in a loss of life of our young people. Our funding level is $3 million. Our evaluation type is implementation, outcomes, and cost analysis, and the name of our evaluation firm is Social Policy Research Associates out of Oakland, California.

And with that, I'm going to turn over the discussion of strategies that we hope to -- that we are implementing and hope to alleviate the issue of gang violence and loss of life in Monterey County to Bobby Jaurigue, our project coordinator.

ROBERT JAURIGUE: Thank you, Terri. Good morning, everybody. My name is Bobby, as you already heard. And I just came on board about three weeks ago to this project, and it's very interesting. I believe that this is a project that can actually benefit and will benefit the community and a lot of the disengaged youth. And I believe that Terri had mentioned the age range is 16 to 21, but it's actually 16 to 24.

MS. GALLARDO: Oh, thank you.

MR. JAURIGUE: -- because we had requested a change in that, and the DOL allowed us to increase the age from 21 to 24.

Monterey County is a very diverse county and is a very large agricultural county, very wealthy. However, there is a lot of poverty in our county, and a lot of the youth in our communities are disenfranchised and get involved with gangs. Due to the nature of the gang structure, they look to these gangs to develop some support and a feeling of belonging to something because their parents are working or a lot of them come from single parent families.

And because of the influence of gang activity, recruitment is real high, and unemployment and school dropout rate is real high. The Ambassadors for Peace program is an innovative approach to try and stem the growing problem we face with our youth. Utilizing many different strategies, Ambassadors for Peace will help move our youth out of the unemployment lines, back into school, and deterred from the gang life, which is very appealing to a lot of our youth because of the direction that our youth are going.

I don't know what you guys can see on the screen right now, what slide. We have no visual. All we have is the audio. So if --
MR. KEATING: Right. Right now, we're on the innovation slide, Bobby. So if you just let us know, we can move your slides for you.

MR. JAURIGUE: OK. Great. If you can move it to the overview, the participants will be assessed by our youth advisors. We have -- we right now currently have two youth advisors, and we are going to be increasing that to four. And these youth advisors will be doing outreach and going out to different agencies and communities that do have resources for kids, whether it be schools, probation, juvenile hall, detention facilities, and other programs and other agencies that deal with youth. We're going to provide workshops for them through the California Career Zone, which allows sustainability of the program and it's actually going to be no cost to the participants at all.

What we're trying to find are career pathways that these youth want to go, and we're not going to put them in just any job because work experience is part of our innovative process. We're trying to find them -- through the workshops what we're trying to do is find out what the youth actually want to do and try to hook them up in the community with programs and jobs that will help them achieve their goals.

For instance, right now we have one individual who's working at the -- one of the hospitals, one of the community hospitals, and his goal is to become a pharmacist. Now, this kid is a kid who is an ex-gang member who is a survivor. He has been -- actually was shot and wants to change his life and came to Ambassadors for Peace for assistance to help him redirect his goals and his life. So these are the types of kids that we're also -- we're looking to assist.

Our hope is that Monterey County youth will become engaged in their own future, and we'll lose the need to want and get involved in illegal activities and/or gangs. Hopefully, the youth will begin to feel better about themselves and change their thinking and become open-minded to other options such as education, employment, and even mentorship. Eventually what we'd like to see is some of these kids who have completed and become successful in their lives come back and mentor those that are just beginning. If you can change the slide again for me to partners -- to partnerships.

As you can see, we have partnered with many, many agencies in Monterey County and we have a tremendous amount of support for being so new in the community because everybody in Monterey County who lives here understands the problem that we have with the gangs and everybody is willing to assist us. So we have developed some partnerships. We have -- our youth advisor is going to be doing outreach to a lot of these agencies and trying to drum up business by having kids referred to us.

If you can change the slide to outcomes, the outcomes of the Ambassadors for Peace would like to see is a greater service delivery system and more efficient use of community resources and that would help our participants be successful in obtaining work experience and higher education. The targeted outcome would be jobs that pay higher wages with benefits, civil involvement, avoidance of gang and criminal activity, increased GED and/or high school diplomas, and reduce recidivism. This would be the ideal outcome and is what Ambassadors for
Peace strives to accomplish for our youth in Monterey County. If you could change the slide one more time to -- well, actually twice to success and challenges.

Ambassadors for Peace would like to identify sustainable, effective tools to assist the youth in fostering new and innovative relationships with community-based organizations that can build support through untraditional outreach strategies. We are also prepared to meet the challenges such as eligibility parameters, realistic guidelines, consistency with staff, and staff training and having staff address target populations that -- and the issues associated with that process.

So far we've -- like I said, I just came on board, and the staff that we have, including Terri and myself, are very committed. I come from a background with many years of -- about 30 years of helping people that are -- that start in this area in poverty and low education. So this is not something new to me, and I believe that this program can really benefit our youth in the community. There's an old adage that says, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make them drink it." Well, I believe that this program will allow us to help these individuals become thirsty so they can start drinking and start changing the future of their lives in a way they probably never dreamed of before. So that's about it for me right now.

MS. MAGUIRE: Hi. Thank you. Thank you, Bobby and Terri. And, Bobby, congrats on doing such a great presentation just three weeks into your new role. Nothing like jumping right in.

MR. JAURIGUE: Thank you.

MS. MAGUIRE: And, Terri, did you want to go over some of the challenges that you've faced?

MS. GALLARDO: Sure. Some of the challenges that we have encountered include staff consistency. We have -- because of funding limitations, we are unable to hire permanent staff, and so we have had an entourage of great staff who have come and left us. So it's a constant time. It is constantly a matter of training new staff. We have on board, as we continue to see, a wonderful coordinator, Bobby Jaurigue, and Bobby is committed to helping us see through the Youth Ambassadors project to the end. But that's one of the biggest challenges.

The other challenge has been outreach. Although we are making end roads and developing -- there is a positive to that. We have developed relationships and found entities, grassroots agencies where we are starting to receive more and more referrals as the word gets out there, parents who have lost children to gang violence, faith-based community organizations. As Bobby mentioned earlier, I believe one of our partners that is new is through the community hospital.

So although outreach has been a challenge, we believe that that challenge has resulted in a success of increased partnerships with, as I said, agencies that don't advertise, that we don't normally hear about. And so those are the two main challenges I would say, and moving forward I think that the challenge with staffing or the challenges with staffing will be less and less because, as Bobby had mentioned, we are solidifying our group and hoping that folks that come on board who are committed to our program will stay.
MS. MAGUIRE: Great. Thanks, Terri and Bobby, again. I'm always inspired by the approach of Youth Ambassadors for Peace to tackle both the under and unemployment issues but also trying to end the cycle of violence and make them real changes in the community.

And I know if you have some really great -- you have some really great, as you mentioned, grassroots partners in the community that are just full of committed, passionate people that are great role models and mentors for the students as well that have grown up in the same communities and faced the similar challenges but have changed their kind of life path. So very inspiring and very exciting. Thank you again.

MS. GALLARDO: Thank you.

MR. JAURIGUE: Thank you.