

# *YO System Sustainability*

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to outline options and potential action steps for future sustainability of the Baltimore Youth Opportunity System (BYOS). The BYOS, as has been developed over the past five years, is a network of youth centers and community-based service provider partners that work together to provide holistic and long-term services to both in and out-of-school youth. As evidenced by recent reviews of the outcomes from the BYOS, the system has proven to be an effective mechanism for providing opportunity for young people to gain labor market success. This system has been primarily underwritten by a special U.S. Department of Labor demonstration grant that will end as of June 2006.

## **The Need**

The first issue is to determine if there is a need for a BYOS in the future. According to the 2003 American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 85,464 people between the ages of 15-24 in Baltimore City. Factoring in the current rate of school dropouts, approximately 50% of these young people have, or will, drop out of school without obtaining a high school diploma. That equates to more than 40,000 of Baltimore's youth who will be ill-equipped for the labor market, inadequately prepared for responsible citizenship and at high risk of failure to maximize their potential as parents and neighbors in our community.

During 2004, 9,865 people were released from the State Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to Baltimore City. Based on prison demographics, it is estimated that of the people released into Baltimore communities over 3,000 were under 24 years of age. When compared to the overall population, an even higher number of the inmates coming home to Baltimore lack educational credentials and the skills needed for success in the labor market and the community.

These statistics clearly point to the need for a comprehensive, city-wide, on-going BYOS effort to both address the needs of young people and to provide a more skilled labor force for Baltimore area employers. Based on these estimates and the input from our partners, it is recommended that the Baltimore Youth Opportunity System of the future should concentrate on out-of-school youth who are without a high school diploma. Moreover, the system should also focus on the segments of that population who typically have the greatest need, target groups such as youth in and aging out of foster care, teen parents and juvenile offenders.

## **Long-Term Sustainability**

Sustainability is more than raising money. In the case of a fully developed and productive youth service system like the BYOS, the sustainability process can be summarized as consisting of three interrelated parts:

- **Building/Maintaining Collaboration:** The first step requires strategically considering whose support or participation is needed, and ensuring that opportunities and encouragement for continued involvement in the BYOS Network are available.

- **Advocating for Support:** Next, we need to rally leaders from businesses, community and faith-based institutions, government and other parts of the community to use their power and influence to generate support and funds for the BYOS.
- **Finding Funding:** Determining the resources needed to continue the system and systematically developing a variety of financing strategies and funding sources to provide a stable base of resources over time will be critical.

This discussion paper has been developed to provide ideas and approaches that address an integrated strategy for addressing all three aspects of long-term sustainability for the BYOS System.

## Building/Maintaining Collaboration

From a systems perspective, our goal is to maintain and, if possible, build and expand the entire BYOS network so it can serve targeted out-of-school youth in all parts of Baltimore City. The BYOS is both an existing set of service centers *and* a participating group of partners who both collaborate with the centers and independently of the centers provide services to disadvantaged Baltimore youth.

An initial consideration that impacts both on maintaining the partnership and in finding funding is to determine *what* is to be sustained. Based on data and input of the current center staff we know what works with disadvantaged youth. Two future BYOS center operational models – one a large center and the other representing a small center – were developed that reflect the approaches and services that have proven to be effective. Attachment A to this discussion paper is a proposed budget and outline of the services those potential models would offer. The models that were developed are comprehensive ones that are built around the core philosophy that a holistic approach that includes education, training, support, and youth development is needed. However, they also reflect the reality of diminished resources. Thus, they are constructed with the assumption that community partners will also join with the centers to provide services to youth.

In summary, the information in the attachment indicates that to continue the type of services that have proven to be effective in the current BYOS system, the direct center cost is approximately \$4000 per youth per year. This is based on serving 500 youth in a large center model and 225 youth in the smaller center model.

The second and equally as important aspect of the sustainability issue is how to continue the comprehensive network of different youth service providers that participated and collaborated in the BYOS. While this part of BYOS sustainability effort is perhaps more difficult to define in terms of specific operations, dollars and cents, it is equally important for long-term success for a number of reasons:

- By maintaining a collaborative partnership of service providers as an essential part of the future BYOS a more effective advocacy effort, resource development system and, most importantly, services to youth can be achieved;
- A partnership network offers the potential for greater service capacity that could potentially better approximate and accommodate the scale of need that exists in Baltimore; and
- A partnership approach takes advantage of the fact that nearly all of the current youth service providers have a core of resources that they build upon, thus such a city-wide

network could effectively leverage resources and services which in turn offers the potential for cost efficiencies and enhanced service delivery.

Maintaining an effective network of service providers will require resources to ensure that participation in the network offers value for the community partners. The resources needed for sustaining a multi-partner network are variable, contingent upon the service providers that are a part of it, as well as the number of youth that it is constructed to assist and the services offered by the partners. Thus, while at this time in the planning effort, a specific estimate is not possible, we believe that a template for continuing the partners' network should be developed so that the collaboration that has begun under the BYOS effort can be continued.

While many options could be deployed as the new paradigm for the BYOS partners network, one potential template is to move the system to the next level by creating a formal confederation of partners. One process for achieving this is outlined below:

### ***Potential Template to Institutionalize and Maintain A Formal BYOS Network of Partners***

Over the past five years, using the available federal grant funds, Baltimore had the luxury of creating a collaborative network with existing service providers and paying for their participation and contributions. Many partners essentially expanded their existing service system and were able to use the federal YO dollars to serve more youth. Now that these resources are depleted, the question is how to maintain this important aspect of the BYOS. We recommend that a new type of BYOS Network be created. A BYOS partners' confederation could easily form for purposes of advocacy, system fund raising and staff development and training. It would act as a united, provider organization. Without relinquishing individual organizational identities, it is suggested that by forming this confederation, the BYOS partners can act with greater cohesion, produce enhanced outcomes, as well as use the confederation as one source of securing both in-kind and cash resources. The following outline for a reconfigured BYOS Network Confederation is offered.

***Who is in the BYOS Network?*** As always, participation in the network would be voluntary. The new BYOS network would be a confederation of organizations operating in Baltimore and providing human resource development services to youth. Specifically, organizations that routinely provide education, employment and training and youth development services to out-of-school youth would be potential BYOS Network members. The service provided must also be designed to achieve specific BYOS outcomes that are jointly agreed to by the members of the Network -- for example increases in educational attainment, the acquisition of certified labor market credentials, job placement and retention, etc.

***Network Responsibilities:*** Members are required to follow collaboratively-developed, network guidelines and agree to use a centralized reporting and accountability system. Participants would work to achieve the outcomes identified by the network in terms of human resource development.

***Network Advantages:*** Participation in the network carries with it a number of advantages for the participating partners. Advantages such as:

**BYOS Certification:** Based on a set of mutually agreed upon service guidelines (which represent recognized best practices as they pertain to youth services) each partner would be certified by the Baltimore Workforce Investment Board Youth Council as a BYOS member. Participating organizations can use this designation in marketing efforts.

**Partnership Collaboration:** Via the network affiliation, partners will be able to join with other network partners to combine efforts thus allowing partners to expand their service capacity and expertise.

**Centralized Staff Development and Training:** An additional facet of the BYOS network would be the provision of staff development and training for the service and administrative staff who are a part of the BYOS network.

**Network Resources:** While not defraying the total cost of service delivery to youth, the Network, as a distinct organization, would develop incentive resources that all the partners would share based on a pre-determined allocation formula.

***How Will The Network Be Funded/Operated:*** Of course, the type of articulated and functional network envisioned here requires resources. Therefore, the issue is how to secure these resources. To initiate this new BYOS configuration the recommendation is to ask one or more private foundations to underwrite a three-year transition plan. A part of the plan would be the resources to establish the staff needed to provide direct support to and to manage the newly configured BYOS Network, to mount a development and advocacy campaign and to provide for a base-level of network incentives for the transition period. A more detailed outline of this approach is provided in the last section of this discussion paper. Following the three-year transition period, the continuation of the Network would be the responsibility of the BYOS partners who are a part of the confederation.

## **Advocating for Support**

In many ways the availability of the significant level of federal YO funds has hampered the advocacy efforts of the system. Absent the need to raise resources, the BYOS has not yet developed or implemented any systematic advocacy plan of action. Accordingly, a multi-part advocacy action approach is recommended, an approach designed to:

- Publicize and recognize the existence and success of both the BYOS and the specific partners who are a part of the system. The jumping off point for this ongoing effort can be the finalization of the BYOS outcomes and impact report and the distribution of this information to City, State, business and community leaders.
- Create and formalize the new template for the BYOS partners' network and assist the partners to better organize as a group to advocate for services for out-of-school, disconnected youth in Baltimore.
- Create and implement a strategic advocacy plan of action, which systematically touches all the required elements of the community to solicit their input and support.

With staff assistance, the partners group should make the overall development and implementation of this advocacy approach a top priority.

## **Developing Resources**

From a global perspective, resource development can be seen as consisting of two distinct tracks –public funding and private funding.

### ***Public Funding***

Essentially, there are three levels of public funding – federal, state and local government funding. The BYOS needs to pursue all three possible sources. Two approaches are

recommended. As noted in the outline above, as a part of the advocacy effort, the BYOS should present specific resource needs to the public officials they meet. The BYOS should be prepared to discuss and explain exactly how these resources – if allocated – would be spent and the outcomes/benefits that would ensue. Secondly, the BYOS needs to aggressively pursue tapping into existing public resources. This can be accomplished both by applying/competing for the various grant solicitations and RFPs that primarily come from the federal government. Additionally, BYOS would make it known how the BYOS could use existing public resources – if they are diverted to the BYOS system – to assist Baltimore City youth. For example, resources such as adult education dollars, high school education resources, federal funds such as but not limited to Vocational Education funds, Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds, TANF service funds, juvenile justice and city general funds could all be used to underwrite the BYOS effort.

***Private Funding:***

The BYOS will need to pursue grants and donations from private sources such as local businesses, civic organizations, foundations, faith-based organizations, associations and other such groups or individuals. Private fund raising can involve a combination of interrelated activities that span annual fund raising campaigns, fund raising special events, target solicitation of organizations, businesses and individuals to seek their financial support and formal requests to philanthropic foundations and organizations to gain their financial input.