



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF AMERICA



Building Economic Opportunity:

Youth Workforce Readiness



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF AMERICA





About Boys & Girls Clubs of America

As a leading youth development expert, Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) has the experience and scale needed to address the complex issues that youth face today. Since our doors opened over 150 years ago, more than 4,600 Clubs have been established across the country. From dense cities and sprawling suburbs to rural communities, Native lands and U.S. military installations worldwide, we meet the youth who need us most where they are, serving 4.7 million kids and teens each year.

Clubs provide a safe place, caring adult mentors, fun, friendship and high-impact youth development programs on a daily basis during critical non-school hours. Our goal is for every Club member to graduate with a plan for the future, demonstrating good character and citizenship and living a healthy lifestyle. We know Clubs make a difference based on the strong positive outcomes youth experience:

- 76% of low-income Club members ages 12 to 18 who attend the Club regularly reported receiving mostly As and Bs, compared to 67% of their peers nationally.
- The percentage of Club girls who express an interest in a STEM career (47%) is more than three times greater than that of their same-aged female peers nationally (15%).
- 70% of Club members in 12th grade volunteer monthly, compared to 38% nationally.

In addition to the outcomes above, young people need support and skill development to be ready to enter the workforce. Clubs are uniquely positioned to engage young people in building the skills they need to have thriving careers. We're harnessing our experience and leveraging our partnerships into best practices with wide-reaching impact. Together, we can close the opportunity gap for youth in America.

Real, lasting change takes collaboration, big ideas and bold action. For more info on partnering with us on the road to great futures, please contact us at partnerships@BGCA.org.



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Harnessing the Power of Partnership for the Workforce of Tomorrow



Communities across America face significant challenges in ensuring that our youth are adequately prepared to enter the workforce.

Young people increasingly feel ill-prepared for work, lacking the necessary skills and confidence to prosper on the job. At the same time, employers increasingly cite challenges finding sufficient talent as their greatest obstacle to growth. While more than 7.5 million jobs go unfilled, 5.9 million Americans struggle to find work.

Boys & Girls Clubs are uniquely positioned to play a key role bridging this gap, but nobody can tackle the workforce crisis alone. That's why we hosted the Great Think: Workforce Readiness on April 17,

2019, a convening of top leaders from the public and private sectors, including other youth-serving organizations, educators, employers, trade groups and government officials. We knew that a challenge this big called for a forum to establish partnerships among powerful allies. We are deeply grateful to our partners and contributors, including Charles Schwab Foundation, for their thought leadership on this important topic.

Our goal was to strengthen and amplify a national strategy to ensure every young person in America has the skills needed to graduate from high school and be well-prepared for life and work. This document chronicles the challenges and the recommended solutions that emerged from the Great Think, highlighting the power of partnerships to bridge the workforce skills gap on a national scale. This is a call to action.

We know it will take strong collaboration between community organizations, government and private industry to prepare young people for robust and vibrant careers. We all have a role to play in preparing all young people to be the innovators, leaders and problem-solvers who shape our world.

Jim Clark

President and CEO

Boys & Girls Clubs of America



A Call to Prepare Youth for a 21st-Century Economy

A skilled and robust workforce is essential to the future of America's economy. According to a 2019 LinkedIn study, the five skills employers are looking for most are creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability and time management.

Despite this, more than half of U.S. employers say that their biggest obstacle to growth is a lack of qualified candidates with these essential skills.ⁱⁱ Though there are 5.9 million out-of-work Americans,ⁱⁱⁱ **employers are struggling to fill more than 7.5 million jobs^{iv}** — a larger and more rapid worker-shortage deficit than the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce predicted just a few years ago. Although employers have the capacity to hire, the challenge lies in finding new workers who possess the skills necessary to be successful in the workplace.

Young people are beginning to experience challenges around workforce readiness, too. There are **4.5 million young people** who **aren't in school** and **don't have a job**. More than **75%** of youth **express concerns** about whether they have the **skills necessary to secure a job**.^v Only 34% of students strongly agree that they will graduate with the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in the job market.^{vi}

Essential skill development and the ability to be a continuous learner are critical competencies to being successful in the workforce of today and tomorrow because we know that many of the jobs young people will hold in the future have not yet been created — **85% of the jobs** that will be **available in 2030 do not currently exist**, creating an even greater need for skills that ensure employees are team players, adaptable and creative.^{vii}

The U.S. education system plays an important role in helping young people develop both essential and technical skills, but for young people to fully develop and practice the necessary skills that will take them into their future, they need support during out-of-school time, too. Out-of-school programs, extra-curricular activities and community involvement give young people the chance to build essential skills, but how those skills relate to career interests and opportunities remains a mystery for many youth.



Building a Diverse & Inclusive Future

McKinsey & Company reports that companies who are in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 33% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians.ⁱ Equipping young people of all backgrounds, especially those who have been traditionally underrepresented, with the knowledge, skills and experiences needed to be successful in school, career and life will help close the opportunity gap, expand the talent pool and increase productivity. That means purposefully including and supporting groups that historically have had less access to job opportunities, including women and minorities. These underrepresented groups account for the fastest-growing shares of the U.S. population.



The biggest challenge:

More than half of U.S. employers say their greatest obstacle to growth is a lack of qualified candidates.

The most promising solution:

Expand the reach and scope of the youth development programs that already are helping more than 10 million school-age children and teens develop essential life skills and support these programs in intentionally readying these young people for work. Through public-private partnership, youth development is well-positioned to support building a diverse and skilled workforce.

Our call to action:

Collaborate and invest to help our kids develop the skills and knowledge needed to ensure their future success and the prosperity of our country in the coming decades.

America's youth spend more time out of school than in school, making youth development and out-of-school time economic and national imperatives. By participating in out-of-school-time programs, young people gain autonomy, choice, real-world experiences and a connection to their local community. Youth development programs are already helping more than 10 million school-aged children develop social-emotional skills,^{viii} and this out-of-school time could be transformed into skills development opportunities that break down barriers to access, close the opportunity gap and create a more equitable and inclusive workplace and world for all young people in America. We can further the American dream, ensuring that where you're from or the circumstances that surround you don't determine your success in life. We can do this by engaging kids during out-of-school time using an approach that prioritizes early skill development and career exposure.

Providing a safe environment where young people are engaged and challenged to build and practice their essential skills is where Clubs fill a critical need. While proven results from more than 4,600 Boys & Girls Clubs demonstrate the potential of out-of-school time to be a key part of the solution, leveraging this potential to help solve the country's skilled worker shortage will require collaboration among and investment from business, nonprofit and government stakeholders.

More than
7.5 million jobs
went unfilled in the
U.S. during the first
quarter of 2019.

5.9 million
out-of-work Americans
say they are looking
for a job but can't find
anyone to hire them.

4.5 million
young people aren't
in school and don't
have a job.

Our challenge is to identify solutions to bridge the gap between a new generation of youth who feel poorly prepared for work and employers who say they can't find workers with essential skills.



Readying Youth for Life & Work: Our Workforce Readiness Framework

Boys & Girls Clubs teach young people about judgment, creativity, decision-making, communication and collaboration. Employers tell us these are the most in-demand competencies. The workforce of tomorrow will also require more people adequately prepared for STEM-based, healthcare and human service careers as well as skilled trade positions.

Our evidence-informed approach puts holistic skill development and career exposure at the forefront of young people's experiences from the time they are six years old through their teen years, emphasizing three components to provide youth with the knowledge, skills and learning experiences they need to succeed in life and work.



EXPLORE

Clubs provide career exploration for youth, including exposure to the world of work, career assessments to identify talents and interests and opportunities to learn about post-secondary pathways to careers.



DEVELOP

Clubs provide the people, programs and places that help youth build their essential and technical skills.



APPLY

Clubs offer youth opportunities to practice skills through real-life work experiences, such as service-learning, job shadowing, first jobs, internships and pre-apprenticeships. This allows young people to apply academic and technical skills that enhance their employability.

When every young person has access to quality out-of-school opportunities that intentionally support their workforce readiness, they are primed for great futures. By offering career exploration, skill development and opportunities to apply skills through real-life experiences, Clubs are helping to develop today's youth into tomorrow's scientists, doctors, nurses, civic leaders, teachers, engineers, programmers, entrepreneurs and the inventors of jobs and workplaces that we can't yet imagine.



Workforce Readiness in Practice: **Finish Line**

One Step Ahead, led by managers in Finish Line stores nationwide, provides Club kids with hands-on career exploration experiences that teach youth about working in a retail environment, sales, customer service, interviewing, employability skills and more. Each year, Finish Line stores raise funds to support Boys & Girls Clubs of America's efforts in developing workforce readiness skills for all Club kids.



Workforce Readiness Pillars of Preparation

BGCA's four workforce readiness pillars of preparation help young people to articulate and achieve their plans for the future. From the time youth enter the Club through graduation, programs and experiences focus on skill development and career exploration, providing opportunities for all youth to connect their passions and talents to careers, gain new skills and access real-life work experiences.

Essential Skill Development

A 2017 survey reported 7 in 10 employers look for employees who demonstrate strong teamwork, problem-solving and communication skills.^{ix} In another study, 60% of business decision-makers reported that they have more difficulty finding job candidates with adequate character skills (e.g., communication, problem-solving and perseverance) than candidates with adequate technical capabilities (e.g., reading, math, substantive knowledge).^x These critical foundational skills are not only in high demand with employers but are also transferable across occupations and industries.

Workforce readiness programs have long targeted adults and high school students who need jobs, often centering on remediation and career planning. Yet, employers know they can't instantly instill empathy, resilience and the ability to work on a team among everyone who comes to work for them. Research shows that skills acquired in one developmental period are required to build the skills in the next developmental period,^{xi} so starting early increases the likelihood young people acquire these essential skills and are able to build on them through adolescence and early adulthood.

At Boys & Girls Clubs, youth learn these essential skills through informal learning and formal learning experiences throughout the Club day to maximize the time youth spend on skill development and practice. Starting intentional skill development in early childhood increases the likelihood young people acquire these essential skills and build on them through adolescence and early adulthood, preparing them not only for career functions but also for healthy relationships and responsible decision-making in other aspects of their lives.

Essential skills are interpersonal qualities that are transferable across fields such as:

Communication

Collaboration

Creativity

Teamwork

Critical thinking

Problem-solving

Self-motivation

Adaptability

Persistence

Dependability



Workforce Readiness in Practice: Raytheon

Raytheon helped establish Centers of Innovation. In Centers of Innovation, youth work with dedicated Youth Center STEM staff and Raytheon employee-mentors to develop essential skills, like critical thinking, and discover real-world applications for science, technology, engineering and math. Centers of Innovation provide an inspiring backdrop for programming that focuses on creative approaches to STEM.



Career Exploration

The value of career exploration was summed up succinctly by one Great Think panelist who explained that “you have to see it before you can be it.” Research shows that introducing young children to the world of work helps them plan for future careers, motivates them to connect what they’re learning to future opportunities and builds self-esteem as youth feel equipped to set and achieve ambitious goals.

Through Club programming, members of all ages will explore a variety of careers. This early access to careers exposes youth to the breadth of opportunities while promoting and inspiring tangible career and educational aspirations for our Club members. Teens will learn about the skills and career pathways using the National Career Clusters™ Framework, which consists of six Career Clusters and 16 Career Pathways, and understand what type of education these entry-level career pathways require.

At Clubs, career exploration takes two forms: exposure and education. Exposure activities are for all ages and are intended to spark interest and shine a light on career opportunities that are often unseen by young people. Exposure can take the form of guest speakers, company visits, careers fairs and hands-on activities with career talks.

Career education is a deeper form of engagement for teens. This type of discovery supports teens in learning more about what it takes to be successful in an industry, including the required education and skills. These activities can take the form of targeted career programming and can also include job shadowing, mentorship and interviews. Giving youth the opportunity to explore careers is essential to help them with planning as they prepare for their transition into adulthood and become productive members of the workforce.



Workforce Readiness in Practice: Microsoft

Boys & Girls Clubs of America is proudly partnering with Microsoft to provide girls and young women opportunities to become the big thinkers, coders, explorers, engineers and problem-solvers we need. These are the faces of STEM's future.

Since 2015, Microsoft and BGCA have teamed up to power our Computer Science Pathway, a series of programs that meet Club youth and staff at their respective levels of ability, from coding basics to app development. Our partnership with Microsoft has contributed to sparking interest in STEM among Club youth – especially girls.



Workforce Readiness in Practice: SunTrust Foundation

The SunTrust Foundation invested in Boys & Girls Clubs' Workforce Development Effectiveness Project, aimed to position local Clubs in the Southeast as great places to explore careers and hone workforce skills. The project challenges Clubs to assess their current workforce programming, participate in training that focuses on strategic organizational planning, draft goals and create action plans. Ultimately, the teams present a story of their workforce program implementation and lessons learned to a panel of SunTrust Bank executives.



Workforce Readiness in Practice: Charles Schwab Foundation

Financial literacy supports workforce readiness, lifelong financial stability and overall success – a win for workers, employers and our communities. Since 2004, Charles Schwab Foundation has helped 1 million Boys & Girls Club teens gain critical money management skills such as goal setting, budgeting and saving through the Money Matters: Make It Count program. In fact, Club youth who completed the program had a 35% average increase in their saving and investing smarts. Equally important, the program teaches essential skills: responsibility, self-confidence, communication, problem-solving and decision-making, equipping them for life overall.



Workforce Readiness in Practice: National Association of Realtors®

The Coastal Carolina office of the National Association of Realtors® helps teens from Boys & Girls Club of Myrtle Beach learn the basics of getting a job through its Summer Career Development series of classes. Session themes in the series include “Careers in Real Estate,” “Dress for Success” and “Mock Interviews.” At the end of the series, teens know how to prepare for an interview and present themselves professionally.

Employability and Certifications

Building on essential skill development, teens need to acquire additional skills that will prepare them for success in their first work experiences. Through targeted programs, Clubs teach young people employability skills to support first-job readiness such as résumé writing, interview skills, public speaking, presentation skills and dealing with workplace challenges.

BGCA will also provide Clubs with the resources necessary to curate job training and certification opportunities that are specific to jobs in their communities. Clubs will seek out local partnerships for training and certification for in-person learning experiences and real-world industry connections. Training and certifications will be offered for older teens to help them develop and demonstrate trade-specific skills that match their interests, their plans for the future and jobs available in their local communities.



Workforce Readiness in Practice: Toyota Motor Corporation

Toyota’s partnership with Boys & Girls Clubs of America centers on workforce readiness and developing the leaders of tomorrow. For more than a decade, Toyota’s financial muscle has allowed Club kids to build the skills they need to become resilient leaders prepared for an ever-changing workforce. Toyota is a signature sponsor of the Youth of the Year program, BGCA’s premier leadership initiative for Club members, which helps young people develop essential skills, including self-awareness, advocacy, social and civic responsibility, and problem-solving. In addition to hundreds of Toyota employees serving as volunteers at local Clubs, Toyota has also generously provided scholarships to Club teens and hired Club members who participated in its internship programs.



Work-Based Learning

Through real-life work experiences like community service, job shadowing, internships and pre-apprenticeships, Club youth acquire and apply academic and technical skills that improve their employability. Work-based learning opportunities occur in the workplace, providing structured experiences for youth through exposure to a range of job responsibilities over time. These experiences can be paid or unpaid, while their value can be immense.

Well-structured work-based learning experiences can benefit both young people and businesses. Participating youth get real-life exposure to the adult world of work. The business has a hand in developing future employees in their field and gains the opportunity for community recognition.



Workforce Readiness in Practice: The Hartford

College and Career Centers powered by The Hartford bring career exploration, skill-building and real-world experience to thousands of teens at Boys & Girls Clubs to prepare them for the world of work. At their College and Career Center, Club members participate in mock interviews and career fairs and get help with job applications. Clubs connect members to work-based learning experiences, allowing teens to leverage the essential skills gained at the Club with practical opportunities. For many teens, it is their first job.



Workforce Readiness in Practice: Gap and Old Navy

Boys & Girls Clubs of America's national partnership with Gap Inc. has allowed the company to significantly expand its This Way Ahead program at Clubs, driving a talent pipeline and scaling the company's ability to offer first jobs to youth. Gap Inc. started This Way Ahead in their stores in 2007 to give teens and young adults facing barriers to employment their first jobs. Young people gain the experiences and skills they need to succeed both in work and in life, and local Old Navy, Gap, Athleta and Banana Republic store employees volunteer with Clubs to help support training and making connections with youth. Gap Inc. shared that 70% of This Way Ahead participants increased their confidence a lot, particularly their confidence that they will be able to get a job in the future and their confidence in themselves overall. Findings from program evaluations show that This Way Ahead also benefits Gap Inc. as a valuable talent pipeline of future employees while helping to build stronger relationships with its communities and customers.



Recommendations for Action

Youth learn across an ecosystem of people, spaces and programs. From national to local partners, everyone plays an essential and unique role in building youth workforce readiness. Here's how you can help youth explore, develop and apply their workforce readiness skills.



Businesses & Employers

Create opportunities for young people to gain exposure and experience with your company or industry. Opening opportunities for job shadowing can provide valuable insight into a career path and what it takes to get started on it, and work-based learning opportunities allow young people to apply their skills in a real-world setting. Through internships and apprenticeships at your company, youth can gain and practice skills and acclimate to workplace environments.

Partner with local Clubs to build youth workforce readiness. Employee volunteers spend valuable time with Club members, supporting them with mock interviews, career fairs, help with job applications and teaching technical skills necessary for a variety of industries, such as computer coding. In addition to volunteering, consider supporting the training, certification and scholarship needs of Clubs.

Support public policies that invest in youth development and out-of-school time. Youth development organizations that prioritize essential skill development and employability skill building are powerful partners in building our nation's workforce readiness. Industry leaders can amplify the work of youth development organizations and serve as important validators for the continued need for public investment in this issue.

Parents, Teachers & Youth Development Professionals

When parents and other caring adults talk to youth about career opportunities, they help young people feel motivated to learn. Caring adults at home and in the community can help young people explore employment possibilities, and with a clear picture of what a specific career entails and support from adults, they'll be better prepared to set career goals and make plans to achieve them.

- **Parents & Caregivers:** Ask your child about their interests and what sparks their curiosity; connect these interests to potential careers. Share with your child the various roles that you have observed in the companies where you have worked, focus on showing the breadth of careers that can be found in any industry. Encourage career conversations at gatherings of family and friends so young people can hear about different entry points and pathways to careers. Enroll your child in a youth development or out-of-school-time program that incorporates career exploration and skill development at an early age. Read "In Support of How Children Learn: A Family Call to Action" at nationathope.org to learn more about how to advocate for high-quality skill development programming for your child.^{xii}
- **Teachers, Educators and Youth Development Professionals:** Name specific essential skills young people are developing and recognize them when they demonstrate those skills. Talk about real-world careers that relate to what students are learning, applying them to potential careers that the skill supports. Encourage young people to apply the skills they've gained through work-based learning opportunities, including internships, apprenticeships and first jobs. Read "Building Workforce Skills in Afterschool" at afterschoolalliance.org to learn more about how to leverage afterschool time to offer students a step up for future success.^{xiii}



Policymakers

Invest in youth development and out-of-school time.

The federal government plays a vital role in public-private partnership, and Congress should provide federal investments for national organizations serving youth in out-of-school time to bolster workforce readiness programs and work opportunities. There is a need for more workforce readiness opportunities for youth starting at an early age, including essential skill development and practice, career exploration and exposure and on-the-job work experiences including internships, first jobs and pre-apprenticeships. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative through the U.S. Department of Education supports afterschool and summer programs and provides youth with valuable resources such as tutoring, academic support and STEM programming. High-quality programs like 21st CCLC help youth see significant gains in their social, emotional and academic development that will prepare them to be ready for life and work.

Clear a path for youth to make the most of higher education opportunities. The Higher Education Act (HEA) was enacted to help community service programs of colleges and universities address community problems such as housing, poverty, recreation, employment, youth opportunities, transportation, health and land use. HEA is due for reauthorization, and Congress is currently working on draft bills. Reauthorization provides opportunities to update provisions that support students from disadvantaged backgrounds and create increased pathways to college and career. New investments and updates to grants under the Federal TRIO Program, which provides services for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, could create broader access for community-based organizations that work with high-need students and increase supports and educational opportunities, such as academic tutoring, career exploration and advising, and college exposure.



Support youth workforce readiness through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA is the primary federal workforce program for youth. WIOA Youth Programs serve eligible 14 to 24 year olds who face barriers to education, training and employment. Given WIOA's pending expiration in 2020, reauthorization can seize on the opportunity to create a federal investment in national organizations leveraging out-of-school time to provide youth who are enrolled in school with the essential skill development, career exploration and on-the-job training needed to be successful. Reauthorizing WIOA also provides Congress with the opportunity to reinstitute pilots and demonstration programs that foster innovative ways for organizations to collaborate with federal partners to close the widening skills gap.



Great Think Attendees

This white paper was informed by the Great Think: Workforce Readiness, a convening of top leaders from the public and private sectors hosted by BGCA on April 17, 2019. Attendees included the following youth-serving organizations, educators, employers, trade groups and government officials. Young people from local Boys & Girls Clubs across the country also attended and shared their insights, stories and most pressing workforce needs.

Afterschool Alliance	Cox Communications	National 4-H Council	Office of U.S. Senator Roy Blunt
America Succeeds	Democratic Governors Association	National Association of Counties (NACo)	Prosperity Now
American Hotel and Lodging Association	Direct Selling Association	National Association of Manufacturers	Sanford Harmony
American Petroleum Institute	Electronic Software Association (ESA)	National Association of Realtors	Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)
America's Promise Alliance	Ernst & Young (EY)	National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service	Stanley Black & Decker
Annie E Casey Foundation	F.B. Heron Foundation	National Restaurant Association	STEM Next Opportunity Fund
Association for Chamber of Commerce Executives	FedEx Corporation	National Retail Federation	STEMconnector
Associated Builders & Contractors	Fiat Chrysler Foundation	Office of U.S. Representative Bobby Scott	SunTrust Foundation
BioNutritional Research Group Inc./Power Crunch	Finish Line Youth Foundation	Office of U.S. Representative Brad Wenstrup	Synchrony Financial
Boys & Girls Club of Greater Oxnard & Port Hueneme	FinRegLab	Office of U.S. Representative James E. Clyburn	The Coca-Cola Company
Boys & Girls Club of Lawrence, KS	Florida A&M University	Office of U.S. Representative Jason Crow	The Hartford
Boys & Girls Club of Salem, Marion and Polk Counties	Fluor	Office of U.S. Representative Jesus Garcia	The Lozick Foundation
Boys & Girls Clubs of Broward County	Forum for Youth Investment	Office of U.S. Representative Kendra Horn	Totoya Financial Services
Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland, OH	Girls, Inc.	Office of U.S. Senator David Perdue	Toyota Motor Company North America
Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Green Bay	Google	Office of U.S. Senator Josh Hawley	Turner Construction
Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Memphis	Grads of Life	Office of U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand	U. S. Department of Education
Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford	HMSHost Corporation	Office of U.S. Senator Patty Murray	U.S. Department of Commerce
Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta	Independent Sector		U.S. Department of Treasury
Bridgestone Retail Operations, LLC	L Brands		Verizon
Charles Schwab	Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights		Wayback Burgers
	Lowe's		YearUp
	MENTOR		YMCA of the USA
	Michaels Stores, Inc.		
	Microsoft		

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