MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

State of Youth and Youth Services

April 2015

Montgomery County Workforce
Investment Board Youth Council

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Introduction

In order to advance the Montgomery County Workforce Investment Board's Strategic Action Plan, the Youth Council has commissioned a comprehensive study surrounding youth resources and services in Montgomery County. Thomas P. Miller and Associates (TPMA), an Indianapolis, IN consulting firm, was hired to lead a process of gathering data and facilitating input from stakeholders and Youth Council members to assess the state of youth and youth services in the county, laying the basis for further coordination and collaboration among organizations serving youth.

The goals of this project include:

- Gaining an increased understanding of the services and resources available to youth in Montgomery County
- Identifying strategies to improve the responsiveness of workforce preparation so that both youth and businesses are served more successfully
- Proactively working toward coordinated youth services that advance strategically and leverage resources and strengths of key stakeholders

Who Are We?

The Montgomery County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) is composed of business representatives, community leaders and public officials appointed by the County Executive and approved by the County Council. The WIB's vision is that economic development, education, and the system of talent development are aligned both locally and regionally to sustain a vibrant economy in Montgomery County. The WIB works with the Montgomery County Division of Workforce Services (DWS) to ensure that Montgomery County has a well-prepared, educated, trained, and adaptable workforce to meet the current and future needs of business. The Youth Council is one of the WIB's committees. Branding of the workforce system in Montgomery County will change in 2015 from MontgomeryWorks to WorkSource Montgomery.

Purpose of this Study

The Youth Council of the Montgomery County Workforce Investment Board commissioned this report aimed at providing deeper insights for planning and coordinating youth services in the county, with a particular emphasis on addressing the needs of disconnected youth.

The first phase of the study focused on creating a catalogue and map of available youth services. Data was obtained from existing on-line sources and relevant special studies, and was supplemented by a survey of county-based organizations providing workforce and education services. The resulting Youth Resource Map provided profiles of 102 organizations, with 45 providing detailed survey responses that established the baseline information for this State of Youth and Youth Services report. Select findings from these survey responses can be found in Appendix A.

This State of Youth and Youth Services report provides deeper insights on youth service needs and opportunities obtained through an analysis of findings in the resource catalog, from the survey of youth organizations, and from input sessions that were held with three key groups: high school students, incarcerated youth offenders, and front-line youth services providers. Guiding questions for the input sessions are shown in Appendix B.

The information and analysis from the process occurs at a particularly important time for the Youth Council for three primary reasons:

1. The WIB has just completed updating its Strategic Plan for 2014-17 along with the Youth Council's role, and has completed an operational action plan aimed at achieving the strategic goals;
2. The primary federal workforce development law, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) is in the process of being replaced by a new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) as of July 1, 2015, which includes new priorities for youth workforce development strategies and new opportunities for creative actions in Montgomery County; and
3. Montgomery County has launched new planning efforts calling for a new level of coordination among workforce development organizations to provide a new "jobs culture" in the county, providing an opportunity for the WIB and its Youth Council to further their roles in support of and alignment with other partner organizations.

Youth Council Recommendations

The Youth Council reviewed TPMA's analysis of the Youth Resource Map, the survey of youth service organizations, and the insights from the input sessions at its January 2015 meeting. Following discussion, the Youth Council created two overarching recommendations impacting its work:

1. Establish a set of quality standards to assist programs and organizations in the development of quality organizational practices that support the delivery of quality evidence-based programs.
2. Work together to explore ways to coordinate and braid services to serve all youth in the County.

The Youth Council also developed specific recommendations related to each primary focus area of the TPMA report:

1. Promote awareness among students, teachers, parents and the population in general about the good jobs and occupations over the next 10 years that will not require a four-year college degree. Establish a goal to shift the culture in the county from one that promotes four-year degrees only for all high school graduates to one that promotes post-secondary education that includes certificate programs and two-year associates degrees as well.
2. Work with all post-secondary schools in the region to provide more seamless transitions between high schools and GED programs to post secondary and from post secondary into the labor market.
3. Provide more occupational awareness in K-12. Create programs that help students learn about careers and occupations, including dual enrollment (in high school and community college concurrently) and work-based learning opportunities along a continuum from career exploration through skill development stating in middle school.
4. Crate a pool of funding that will pay for tuition for industry based certifications that are non-credit bearing.
5. Expand apprenticeship programs and work-based learning opportunities.
6. Catalyze the development and use of technology for two purposes:
    a. To support labor market information collection and dissemination; and
    b. To support sharing information between programs to ensure seamless service delivery for customers.
7. Establish a method to project population in geographic corridors on an annual basis to help programs know when and how to expand if the opportunity arises.

8. Meet with the local elected officials in each area, especially those with the least "access points" to present findings and to work together to create more access points. Examine:
    a. Virtual information services housed in libraries;
    b. More utilization of school buildings to deliver services; and
    c. Transportation options to where services are currently located.

The Youth Council developed both the overarching and specific recommendations after thorough review and discussion of the information contained in the original Youth Resource Map and in the analysis that follows in the eight sections found in this report.

Report Structure

The first section of the report provides an overview of youth in Montgomery County based on analysis of demographic, labor market, and educational data. Following this is an analysis of the full resource map and youth provider survey responses. The analysis presented clusters of Opportunities and Challenges around eight primary focus areas;

1. Geographic Corridor of Services
2. Educational Attainment Environment in County
3. Relationship with K12 Public School System
4. Relationship with Montgomery College
5. Service Flows and Comprehensive Services Needs
6. Career Pathways with Occupational Targets as Connecting Strategy
7. Work-Based Learning Opportunities
8. Workforce Board and Youth Council Roles as Key Partners

The report that follows highlights key insights obtained in each of the eight focus areas. Included is information obtained in the survey of youth organizations and from the three input sessions. Reference is then made in each focus area to connections that exist to the WIB's updated Strategic Plan.

It should be noted that input sessions were developed "to recognize and serve the heterogeneous needs of youth participants" in three categories identified by a December 2013 Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) Report and discussed by the Youth Council:

- *At-Risk Youth* – typically of high school age and often requiring targeted interventions of limited cost, such as early employment opportunities and college/career planning assistance (Input Session #1: high school students in high-percentage minority school and high dropout rate school);
- *High-Risk Youth* – higher risk factors of disconnection, including school dropouts and court-involved (Input Session #2: youth services providers working with these populations)
- *Proven-Risk Youth* – older youths who are chronically disconnected and often adjudicated (Input Session #3: Incarcerated young adults at correctional facility).

The Conclusion section summarizes key opportunities for integration into the WIB's Strategic Plan.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following organizations for their support in responding to the Youth Workforce Development Survey:

Abilities Network

African Immigrant and Refugee Foundation

Arts on the Block

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the National Capital Area

City of Rockville Community Services

CollegeTracks, Inc.

Collegiate Directions, Inc.

Crittenton Services of Greater Washington

Expressive Therapy Center, LLC

Faith Connections, Inc.

Family Services, Inc.

Future Link, Inc.

GapBuster, Inc.

Hearts and Homes for Youth

Hispanic Business Foundation of Maryland

Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery Country

Identity, Inc.

Independence Now, Inc.

International Minority Affairs Cooperative

John L. Gildner Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents

Latin American Youth Center- Maryland Multicultural Youth Centers

Lead4Life, Inc.

Liberty's Promise

Literacy Council of Montgomery County

Marriott Foundation for People with Disabilities

Maryland State Department of Education - Division of Rehabilitation Services

Maryland Treatment Centers, Inc.

Mental Health Association of Montgomery County

Montgomery College Gudelsky Institute for Technical Education

Montgomery College Workforce Development & Continuing Education

Montgomery County Conservation Corps

Montgomery County Department of Recreation

Montgomery County Department of Transportation

Montgomery County Public Libraries

Montgomery County Public Schools

Montgomery County Volunteer Center

Our House

Seeking Equality, Empowerment, and Community

Stepping Stones Shelter, Inc.

Strive DC

Sunflower Bakery, Inc.

TransCen, Inc.

Treatment and Learning Centers

Unity Christian Fellowship, Inc.

Washington Youth Foundation

Workforce Investment Board Youth Council

Overview of Youth in Montgomery County

Demographics

Montgomery County, Maryland is located in both the Washington DC and Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Areas, and is home to more than one million residents. More than 30% of the population is 24 years old or younger, with more than 120,000 residents between the ages of 15 and 24.

The map below shows the geographic spread of youth in Montgomery County, with the largest amounts of youth between the ages of 15 and 24 concentrated in the zip codes highlighted in orange.
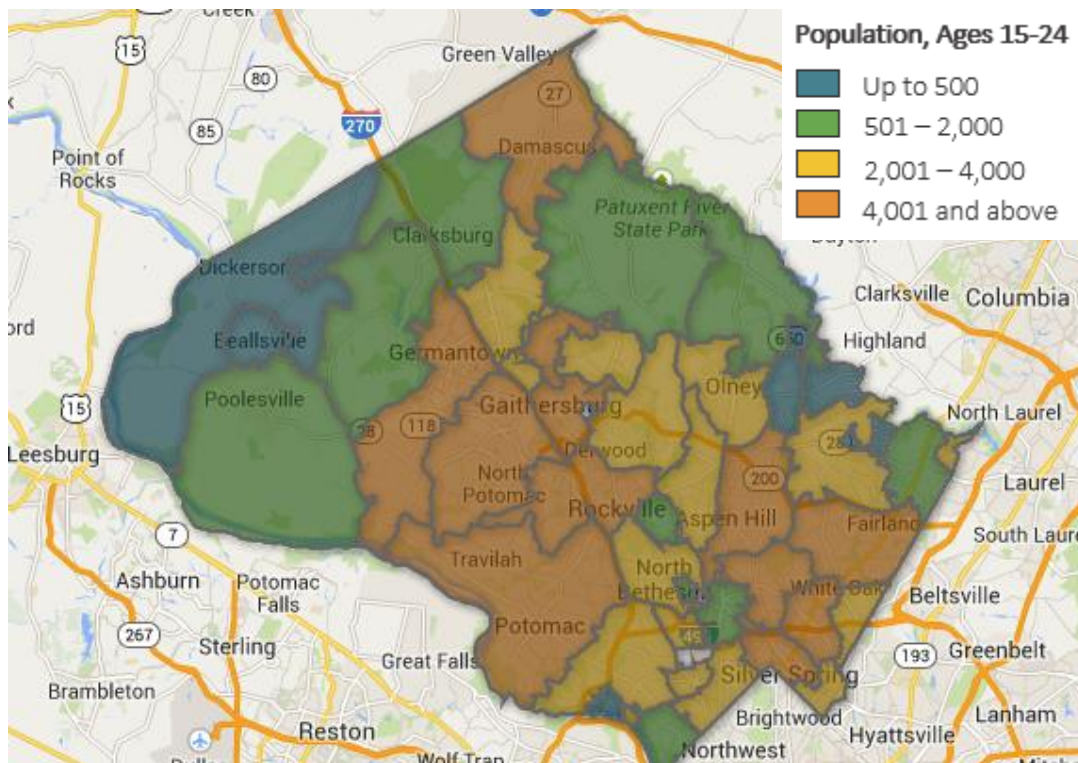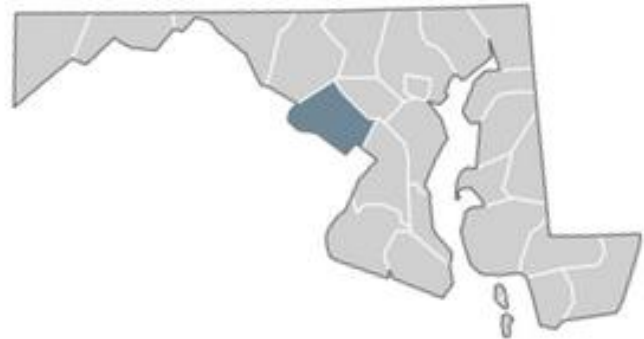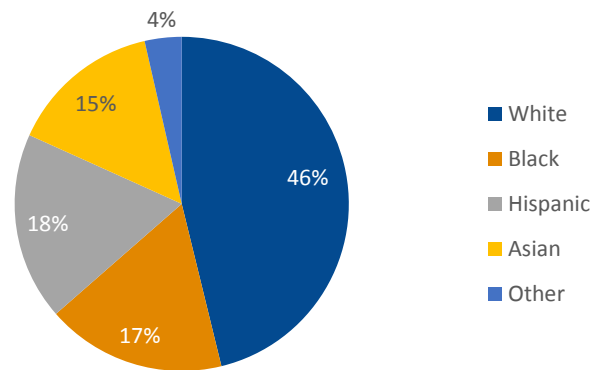
EMSI Analyst, 2014

The greatest portion of Montgomery County residents (46%) are White. More than half of the population in the County is identified as an ethnic minority, with 50% characterized as Hispanic, Black, or Asian.

Among the population ages 15 – 24, even larger portions are identified as Hispanic (24%), Black (20%), or Asian (12%), while 38% are characterized as White.
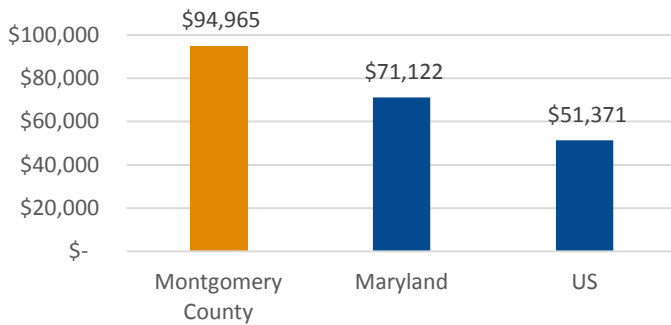
The median household income in Montgomery County is $94,965, which is much higher than the same measure for the state of Maryland and the United States at $71,122 and $51,371, respectively.

Population by Ethnicity, 2014

- White
- Black
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Other

EMSI Analyst, 2014

Median Household Income, 2012

US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012

In Montgomery County, 4.3% of families, and 6.4% of all residents are living below the poverty level. These figures also fall below national and state rates. Among youth ages 15-24, 10.1% are living below the poverty rate. Rates for different zip code tabulation areas across the county vary, ranging from less than 5% concentrated mainly in those areas forming the north and southwest edges of the county, to more than 20% in one area surrounding Silver Spring. The southeast corner of the county is concentrated with areas with the highest percentage of youth living below the poverty line (see map on page 3).

Families Living Below Poverty Level, 2012
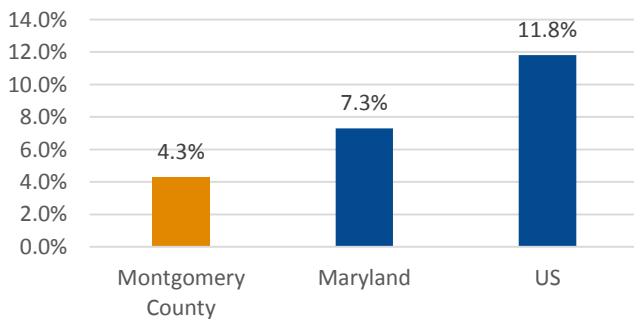
Individuals Living Below Poverty Level, 2012
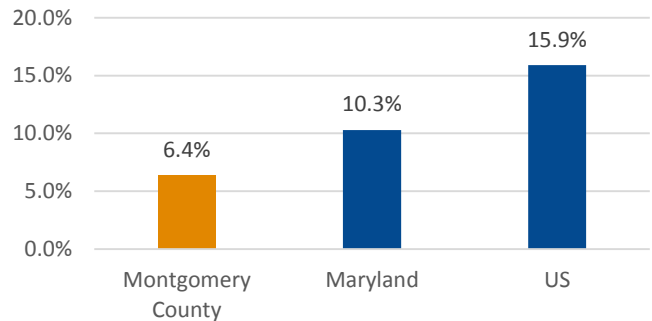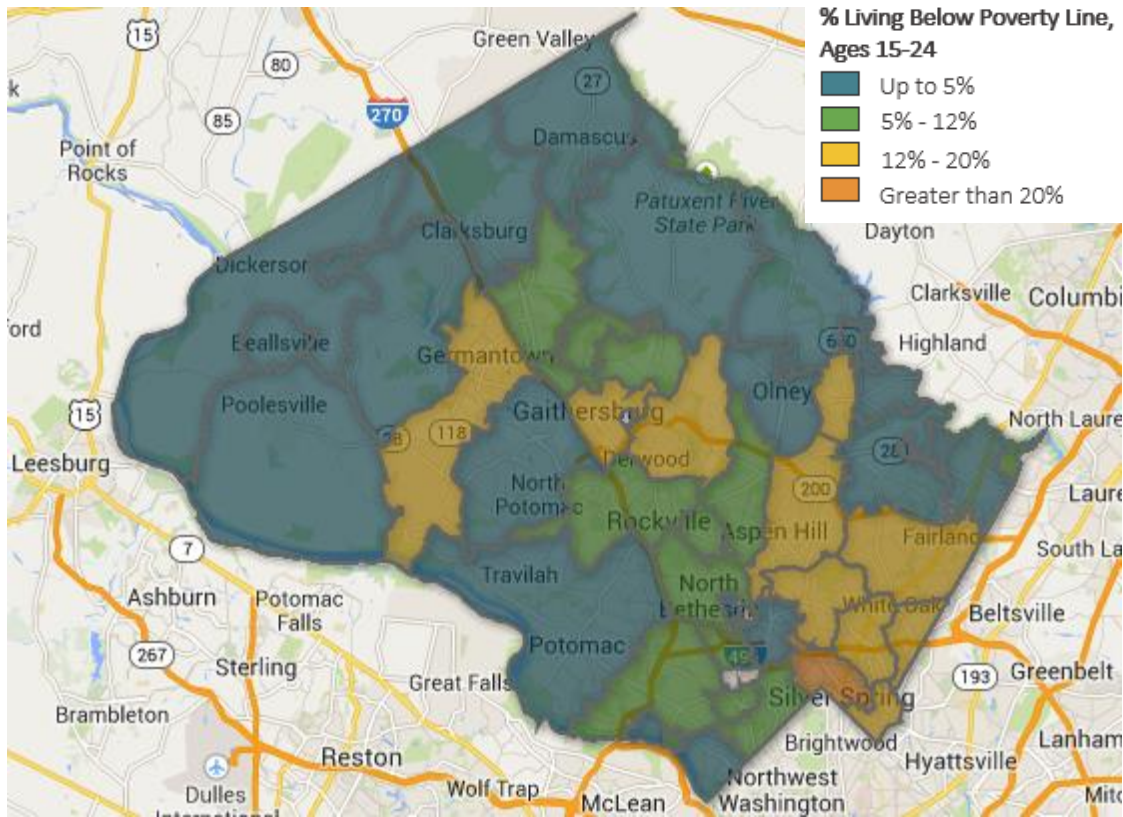
US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012

Education

More than 50% of adults over the age of 18 in Montgomery County hold a bachelor's or higher degree, and 75% have at least some level of post-secondary education. Among youth between the ages of 18-24, 15% have not yet achieved a high school diploma or equivalency, while an additional 24% have received a high school degree or GED without pursuing any additional post-secondary training.

Educational Attainment, Adults 18+, 2012

- Less than 9th grade
- 9th to 12th grade
- HS diploma or GED
- Some college, no degree
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree or higher
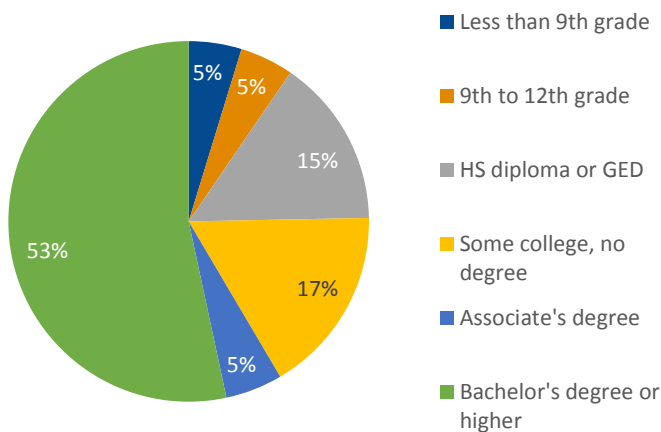
Educational Attainment, Youth 18-24, 2012

- Less than 9th grade
- 9th to 12th grade
- HS diploma or GED
- Some college, no degree
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree or higher
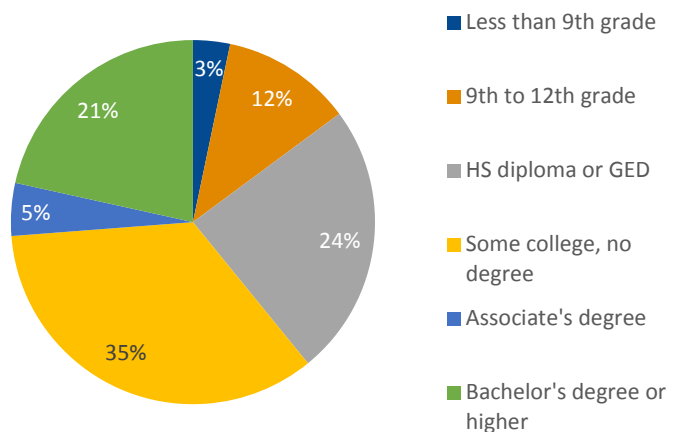
During the 2012-2013 school year, there were more than 45,000 high school students enrolled at 25 high schools in Montgomery County Public Schools.[1] The US Census estimates that there are an additional 8,600 students enrolled in private high schools.[2]

Graduation rates across the County's public schools in 2013 ranged from 68.6% to several schools which had rates higher than 95%. Only five schools had rates that were less than the state average of 85%.

Graduation Rates Above 95%	Graduation Rates Below State Average
Bethesda Chevy Chase High School	Seneca Valley High School (82.1%)
Poolesville High School	Gaithersburg High School (78.3%)
Wootton High School	Einstein High School (78.2%)
Churchill High School	Kennedy High School (77.5%)
	Wheaton High School (68.6%)
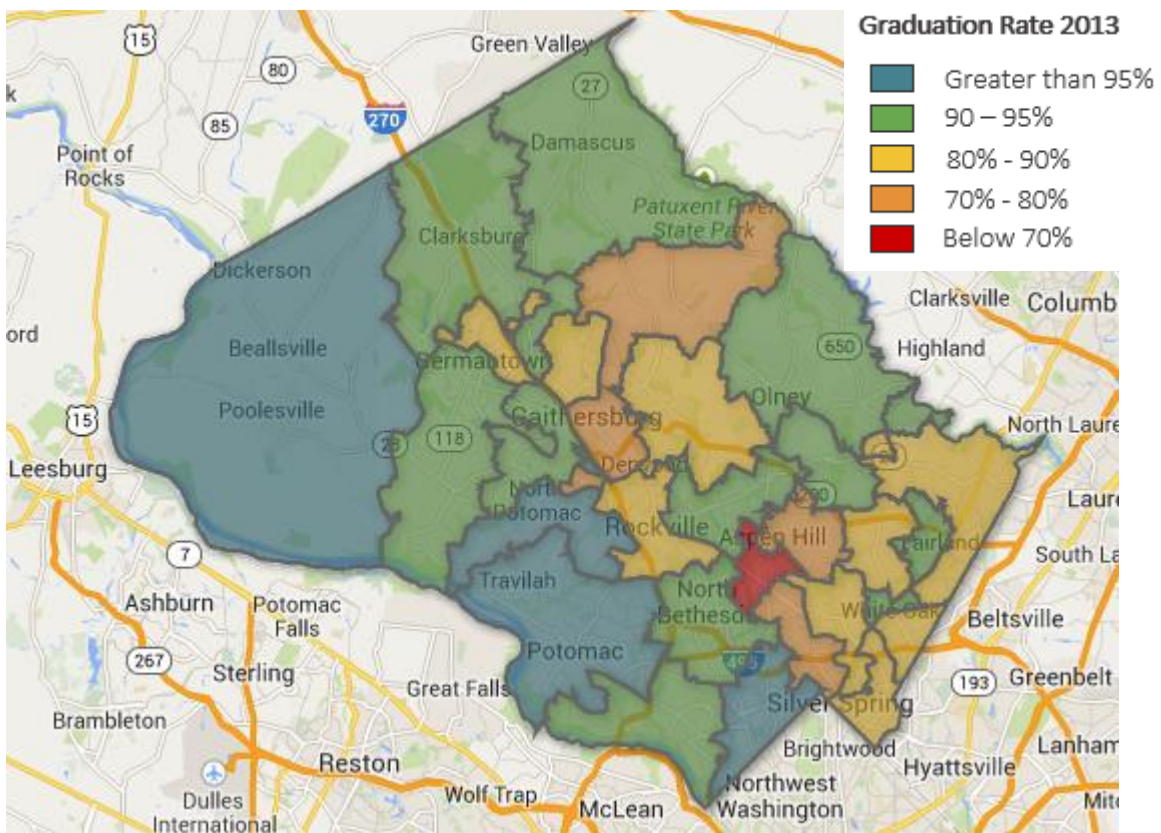
Maryland State Department of Education, 2013

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[1] Maryland State Department of Education, 2013 Maryland Report Card. http://mdreportcard.org/Entity.aspx?K=15AAAA
[2] US Census, American Community Survey, 2012.

In 2013, dropout rates from Montgomery County high schools ranged from 17.5% to less than 3%. The county average of 6.3% falls below the state average of 9.4%. Just three schools fell below the state's average – Einstein High School (10.4%), Gaithersburg High School (10.7%), and Wheaton High School (17.5%)

Maryland State Department of Education, 2013
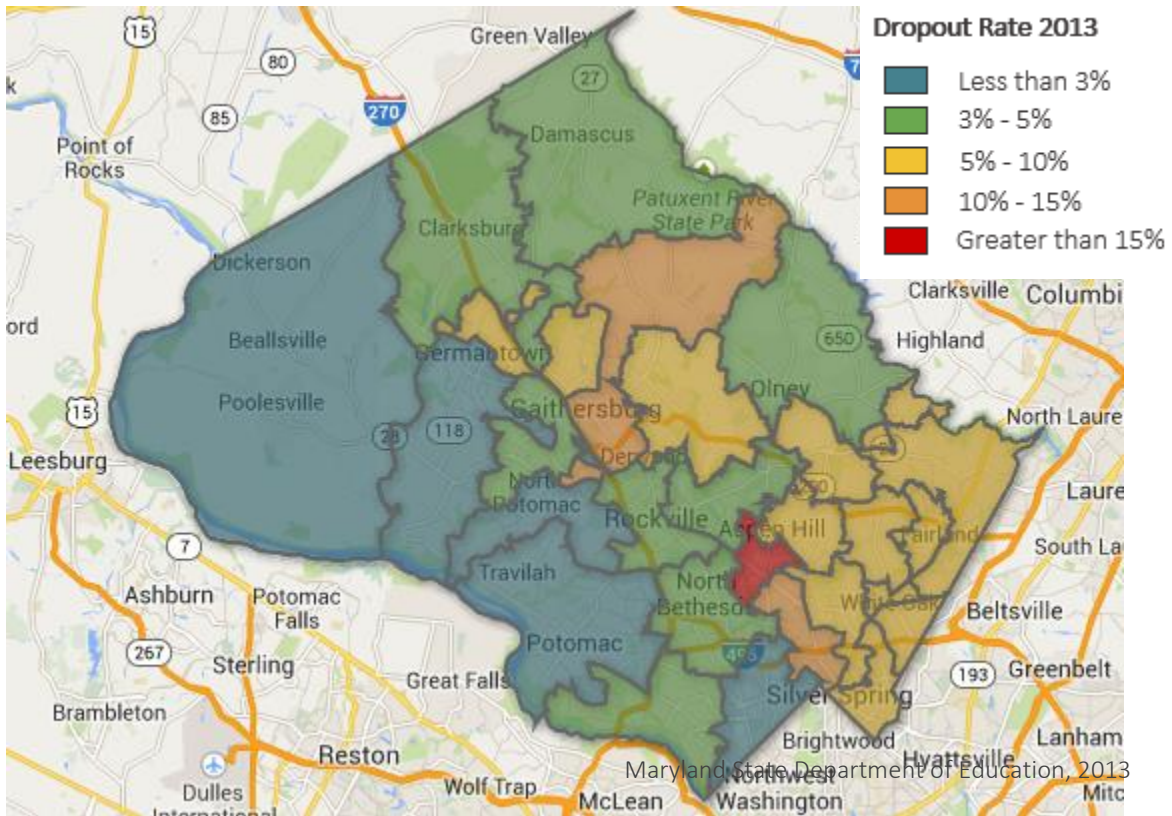
According to the December 2013 OLO report, more than 91% of high school seniors across the county indicated they would pursue post-secondary education through either a two- or four-year program. This is higher than the state average of about 84%. Only three schools fell below the state average for this measure – Gaithersburg High School (82.7%), Watkins Mill High School (82.3%), and Kennedy High School (57.7%).

At the post-secondary level, there were more than 4,544 degrees, certificates, or credentials awarded to individuals in 2012 by accredited programs. More than 20% of these were awarded in Liberal Arts and Sciences. The top ten programs by completers are listed in the following table.

Program	Completions 2012
Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities, Other	1,006
Medical/Clinical Assistant	479
Business/Commerce, General	381
Cosmetology/Cosmetologist, General	280
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	262
Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies	185
Barbering/Barber	110
Cosmetology and Related Personal Grooming Arts, Other	108
Engineering, General	98
Labor Studies	96

EMSI Analyst, 2014

Economy

The Government industry is the largest employer in Montgomery County, accounting for nearly 20% of employment at more than 100,000 workers. The top ten industries by 2014 employment are listed below. Government is followed by Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services and Retail Trade, which account for 12.9% and 13.6% of employment, respectively.

Industry	2014 Employment	% of total Employment	Change since 2009	2014 Earnings
Government	100,446	19.8%	7,797	$106,222
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	67,949	12.9%	(3,831)	$103,850
Health Care and Social Assistance	62,506	13.6%	4,490	$62,007
Retail Trade	47,137	8.8%	2,236	$38,572
Other Services (except Public Administration)	37,297	7.7%	1,687	$36,592
Accommodation and Food Services	33,778	6.5%	3,180	$24,393
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	32,502	6.2%	1,160	$44,916
Construction	25,999	5.2%	(4,495)	$63,296
Finance and Insurance	21,601	3.9%	(787)	$132,568
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	13,407	2.4%	(371)	$80,662

EMSI Analyst, 2014

Among these top 10 industries, four have experienced a decline in employment in the last five years. With the exception of Government, the industries that have experienced growth are those with the lowest average earnings for workers, ranging from $24,393 in Accommodation and Food Services to $62,007 for Health Care and Social Assistance.

The following table displays the top 10 occupations required to staff the County's top three industries: Government; Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; and Health Care and Social Assistance.

Occupation	2014 Emp.	Median Hourly Earnings	Education Requirements
Military occupations	6,745	$14.95	N/A
Registered Nurses	6,458	$37.20	Associate's degree
Business Operations Specialists, All Other	5,662	$40.63	High school diploma or equiv.
Physicians and Surgeons, All Other	5,249	$68.49	Doctoral or professional degree
Management Analysts	5,121	$44.18	Bachelor's degree
Nursing Assistants	5,093	$14.07	Postsecondary non-degree award
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	4,906	$19.97	High school diploma or equiv.
Accountants and Auditors	4,368	$37.76	Bachelor's degree
General and Operations Managers	3,664	$62.95	Bachelor's degree
Lawyers	3,639	$59.88	Doctoral or professional degree

EMSI Analyst, 2014

Four of these occupations typically require less than an Associate's degree for entry into a new position, one requires an Associate's degree, three a Bachelor's degree, and the remaining two a Doctoral or professional degree. This demand for occupations requiring higher levels of education reflects the high educational attainment levels of Montgomery County.

Comparing these top occupations to the programs in the county that individuals are completing, there is some overlap in the areas of healthcare and business. However, programs are producing more general and service-related degrees that either are not connected to the most in-demand areas, or are unclear as to the connection between the program and the occupational skills acquired.

Youth Employment

According to the 2013 American Community survey, there were more than 65,000 youth between the ages of 16 and 24 participating in the labor force in 2013. More than 50,000 of these potential workers were employed, creating an unemployment rate of 14% for youth. This is lower than the corresponding figure for the United States and the state of Maryland, which have unemployment rates for youth of 15.3% and 14.8%, respectively.

Though Montgomery County boasts a lower unemployment rate for those aged 16 to 24, fewer members of this population are participating in the labor force compared to other geographies. Across this age range, 63.1% of Montgomery County youth are participating in the labor force, a rate that is equal to 66.4% for the United States and 66.8% for Maryland.

The discrepancy is even more noticeable when dividing these youth into sub-groups: ages 16-19, 20-21, and 22-24. Shown in the following graphs, for the 16-19 and 20-21 age groups, Montgomery County youth participate in the labor force at an even lower rate compared to the state and nation. However, among youth ages 22 to 24, the labor force participation rate greatly jumps and is higher than the compared populations.

Labor Force Participation Rates, 2013

Youth Ages 16-19

United States 37.7%
Maryland 38.6%
Montgomery County 34.7%

Youth Ages 20-21

United States 69.3%
Maryland 68.0%
Montgomery County 65.6%

Youth Ages 22-24

United States 78.8%
Maryland 82.7%
Montgomery County 85.3%
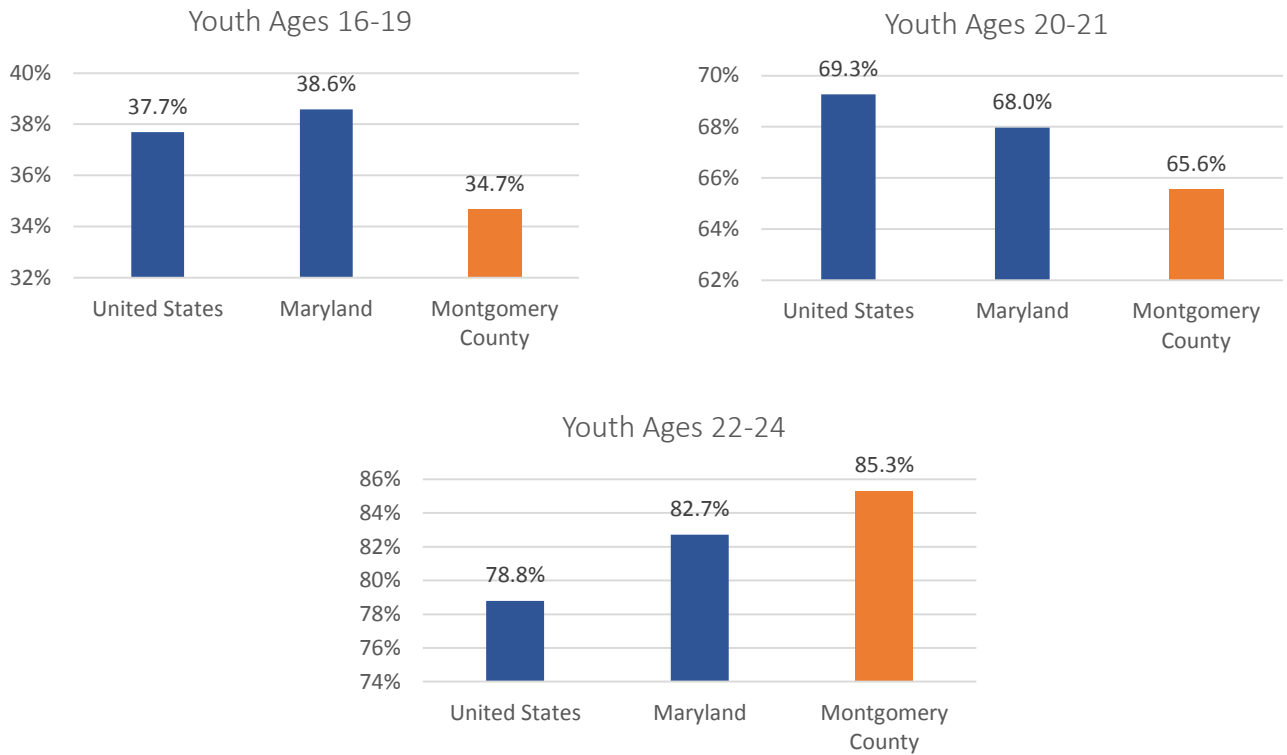
US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013

In addition, in 2013,[3] 5973 youth in Montgomery County were determined to not be in the labor force, not enrolled in school, and who have not completed an Associate's degree or higher.

For those youth ages 14-24 who are employed, nearly 50% are employed in three industries – Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance. For both the 19-21 and 22-24 age groups, Retail Trade is the top industry of employment, while Accommodation and Food Services is at the top of the list for youth ages 14-18. The table below shows the top five industries in which youth are employed in Montgomery County.

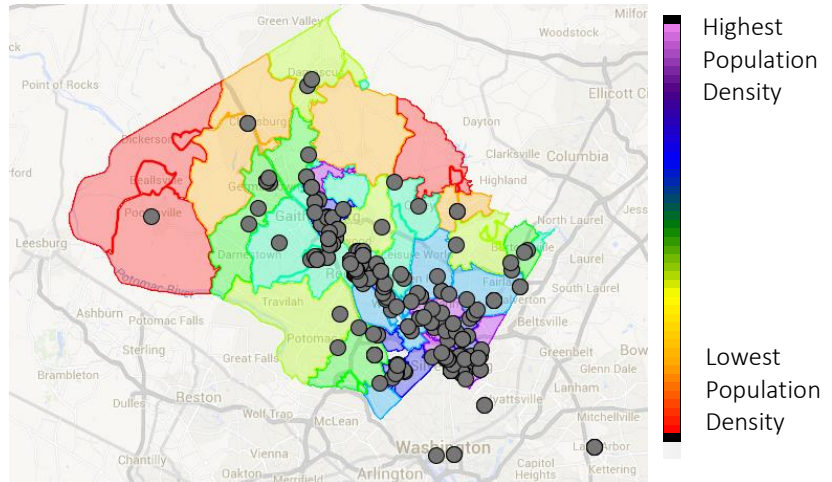| Industry	2014 Emp. Ages 14-24	% of Youth Emp.	% of Total Industry Emp.
Retail Trade	11,660	19.9%	24.7%
Accommodation and Food Services	10,889	18.6%	32.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	6,458	11.0%	10.3%
Government	5,598	9.6%	5.6%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	4,370	7.5%	6.4%

EMSI Analyst, 2014

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[3] United States Bureau of the Census, 2013 American Community Survey Public Use Microsample Data, U.S. Population file.
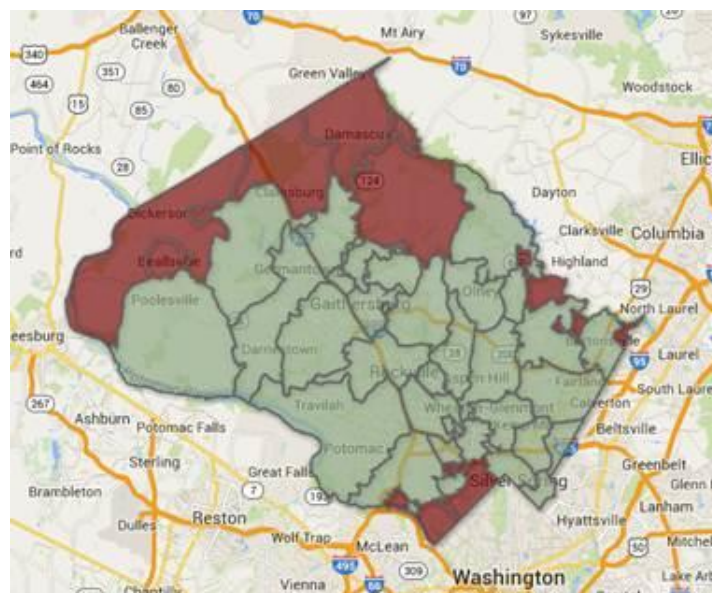
Section 1. Geographic Corridor of Services

Geographically, the mapping of youth services completed in Phase I showed an alignment of service access points with the corridor of populations in need, roughly clustering along I-270. In addition to the correlation with the I-270 corridor, service access points are more highly clustered in the down-county region, where the population is denser.

Access points refer to physical locations where youth-serving organization provide services. These access points, however, do not cover those organizations whose service locations are simply referred to as community- or home-based.

Map of Youth Services in Montgomery County, displayed against population density.

Of the 50 zip code areas in Montgomery County, 19 do not contain access points to youth services that were identified in the Resource Map. Five of these 19 represent cities with additional zip codes that do contain access points. In the map to the right, those zip code areas without services are highlighted in red. Residents of the down-county zip codes that are highlighted in red may have an easier time accessing services, as the distance to access points is not as great. For some living in the less densely populated area up-county, there are be fewer options and those looking for programs may have to travel farther to be served.

Zip Codes in Montgomery County, those displayed in red do not contain access points for youth services identified in the resource map.

Key Connections to WIB Strategic Goals & Objectives

Network with existing groups that support workforce development.
(Strategic Goal 3, Objective 2)

Collaborate with all community partners, such as Montgomery Moving Forward and MBDC, to ensure the WIB as the delivery system for all workforce development and related community initiatives.
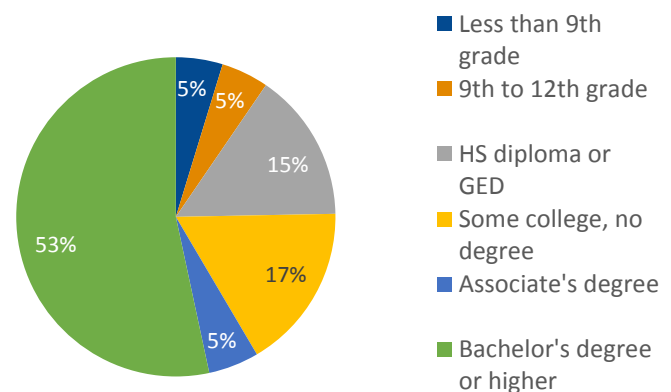*(Strategic Goal 3, Objective 5)*

Section 2. Educational Attainment Environment in the County

Survey results and input sessions pointed to the challenges faced by youth and youth-serving organizations in connecting educational and supportive services in coherent frameworks that engage employers and lead to family-sustaining jobs in the county. The biggest needs cited by youth services providers were operational funding, especially to expand GED programs, and partnerships with training programs for skills certification and with employers for work-based learning opportunities. Also described was the need to provide better counseling of two types: career/college counseling with direct connections to occupational plans and employers; mental health counseling to address barriers to educational and job success. Interestingly, creation of new training programs was cited as a need, but few occupationally-specific programs were noted as either a need or as programs currently in development. In essence, a career pathways model was described as being a key to success for youth and the programs that serve them, and that such a framework is currently lacking. The need described by incarcerated youth was particularly acute, as they faced not only the skills certification barrier but also the barrier of a felony conviction that would eliminate many job options. Many of these youths stated that leaving the immediate area might be required for them to succeed, as the influences that got them into trouble to begin with will still be there when they are released.

Montgomery County and neighboring Howard County are in a group of educationally elite counties nationally with an adult educational attainment rate well above 60 percent. Most parts of the nation are striving to raise attainment levels to that height over the next decade. With this level of adult college attainment, the high schools are viewed as mostly preparatory for college entry, with career and technical education (formerly known as vocational education or "the trades") viewed as a needed option for a small group of students who are not on the college success track because they are not capable of the rigors of college or are not interested in learning that occurs in the classroom.

Educational Attainment in Montgomery County, Adults 18+, 2012

Legend:
- Less than 9th grade
- 9th to 12th grade
- HS diploma or GED
- Some college, no degree
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree or higher

Pie chart values: 5%, 5%, 15%, 17%, 5%, 53%

For youth possessing a high school diploma or less, access to post-secondary education and training programs and ultimately high-paying jobs is severely limited, as they now find themselves competing with a highly educated adult population for entry. Montgomery College, for example, reported that training classes designed to attract high school students were being filled with adults with Bachelor's degrees who were seeking access to emerging jobs. Further, in what has been described as the "Great Squeeze" resulting from the recent recession, middle-skill jobs are being filled by college graduates with education levels exceeding the skill needs for the jobs. In other regions of the country, these jobs would likely be filled by candidates possessing certificates or two-year degrees from career and technical education programs.

As a result of a highly-educated county population competing for jobs and education in a rebounding, but still sluggish, economy, youth access to programs and training must be defined as access to a comprehensive set of educational and supportive services leading to a post-secondary credential that is highly-focused on employers' needs and is recognized by employers as proof of skills needed for entry into high-paying jobs. A comprehensive career pathways approach, described further in Section 9, is essential for youths who have become disconnected from training and services. Access is a much broader issue than just geographic doors to initial services described in Section 1, as it is also an issue of connectedness of services that produce a credential and record of success that employers will value and reward with a job. Currently some disconnected youth find comprehensive services via County social services or criminal justice programs that receive TANF and other funding.

Key Connections to WIB Strategic Goals & Objectives

Support individual's (youth and adults) skill development through job search assistance, skills assessment, coaching, and skills training that result in obtaining an industry recognized certificate or a credential.
(Strategic Goal 1, Objective 4)

Support proven strategies designed to help vulnerable and disconnected youth obtain the credentials they need to find sustainable and meaningful employment.
(Strategic Goal 1, Objective 5)

Build and maintain relationships with educational institutions to become the sources for useful demand side information for use in instruction, curriculum, and career pathway development.
(Strategic Goal 3, Objective 1)

Section 3. Relationship with K12 Public School System

All youths, including disconnected ones, will ultimately need foundational education in the form of a high school diploma or equivalent as the ticket to the post-secondary education and training necessary to acquire good jobs in the county. The primary provider of foundational education is the Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) system, and efforts to strengthen that foundation will need to begin there. Reducing the number of dropouts will serve to reduce the demand for GED services, which was identified as a major bottleneck in the workforce development system. Support services in the form of career guidance, mentoring, job exploration, and mental health counseling will need to be strengthened at the K12 school level where they can be delivered in the most cost-effective ways. New levels of partnership are needed between MCPS and the broader community of employers, post-secondary education institutions, community organizations, and social services providers. Re-engaging high school dropouts will require similar partnerships but in a much more challenging environment as solutions are more costly and resources continue to be scarce.

Foundational education and support services are best viewed in light of three categories of risk:

At-Risk Youth	High-Risk Youth	Proven-Risk Youth

At-Risk Youth have direct or indirect exposure to risk factors for disconnection that may include deficiencies in basic academic skills, disengagement from school, poverty, gang involvement, pregnancy/parenting, or other issues. These youth are typically high school age and many are still in school. Targeted interventions at this level are often limited in scale and cost.

High-Risk Youth, in addition to experiencing risk factors of disconnection, also lack work experience and current connections to education. These youth are often court-involved, in foster care, or are homeless. Interventions for these youth require longer time periods and more services at higher cost.

Proven-Risk Youth have barriers of the other risk levels plus have usually been adjudicated. They are often older and chronically disconnected, requiring increased length or services with intensive case management and mentoring.

At-Risk Youth strategies will be implemented largely with in-school students at MCPS or with students at the time they are exiting high school, either as graduates or as dropouts. Issues related to High-Risk and Proven-Risk youths are addressed in sections that follow. Dropouts almost immediately become High-Risk if not connected directly to services at this stage. And all students will find limited access to good jobs if not connected directly to post-secondary education options at the time of graduation. To address these issues, community partners will need to work extensively with MCPS on a set of mutually-supportive commitments, with MCPS committing to:

1. Integrated college and career readiness plans for all students, with strengthened options for career and technical education.
2. A career planning tool used by all students and reinforced by teachers and counselors who use it with students and parents in year-to-year academic plans and progress reviews.

3. A progressive assessment structure (ACT, SAT, PSAT, WorkKeys, and/or others) for students that results in data-driven career/academic counseling and school-based planning teams to address weak areas of performance.
4. Engagement of local employers to expand students' knowledge of good jobs, skills requirements, and educational paths available locally.
5. Connection of all exiting students (graduates and dropouts) to a next level of education to reinforce the need for all students to have a post-secondary credential.

Survey results and input sessions resulted in both good news and bad news related to relationships with MCPS. On the positive side, MCPS was cited as a key partner by many youth service provider respondents. However, the input session with some of these same providers identified access to "trade education" as a need for both high school students and dropouts, with greater access to Thomas Edison High School of Technology career and technical education courses specifically cited as a priority. In a county where college entry is viewed as success, the student who falls behind academically in high school can become "disconnected" very quickly from paths to further education and training leading to good jobs. Front-line youth service providers during the input session noted that not only were high school students not getting intensive re-engagement services, but some may also be encouraged to leave school and obtain a GED. In the high school input session, students described their searches for career information as haphazard and unconnected, achieved by a combination of on-line searches, information from some teachers, special events at the school (such as Career Day), and informal information from peers and parents. Students did not report having up-to-date career plans that tie academic progress to career goals and also connect high school preparation to post-secondary education. Students cited a need for more direct connections to employers at their schools to better understand jobs that are locally available. Youth service providers added that K12 schools typically emphasize four-year colleges as the primary target and that we need to redefine what we mean by "trades" in today's job market, with increased emphasis on technology applications in a wide array of occupational choices.

Key Connections to WIB Strategic Goals & Objectives

Build and maintain relationships with educational institutions to become the source for demand side information for use in instruction, curriculum, and career pathway development.
(Strategic Goal 3, Objective 1)

Facilitate the on ramps to career pathways for jobseekers and develop methods for employers to reach into the pathways to find qualified individuals.
(Strategic Goal 1, Objective 3)

Provide a study on return on investment (ROI) every 2 years.
(Strategic Goal 3, Objective 6)

Section 4. Relationship with Montgomery College

All youths in Montgomery County will need a post-secondary credential in some form to be able to compete for high-quality jobs now and in the future. The post-secondary credential may be a two-year degree, a four-year degree, an industry-recognized certification of skills, or a professional license. To acquire credentials that have currency in the labor market, all youths must have a high school diploma or equivalent to move to the next level of education, or in some cases work on high school completion simultaneously with occupational training in a contextualized environment. Montgomery College is uniquely positioned to provide a wide array of educational opportunities from highly-focused occupational certifications to fill employer niches to stackable credentials that can lead to advancement along career pathways.

> ### ACES Program
>
> Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success (ACES) is a student support program that provides Montgomery College academic coaches to targeted high school students in ten MCPS High Schools.

Survey results and input sessions provided and interesting mix of insights. While youth services providers cited the need for increased career and technical education options for students, Montgomery College was cited only once in the survey, and no other post-secondary institution was noted, as a key partner. As noted earlier, service providers stated a need for occupationally-specific programs following or combined with basic education, yet few ideas were offered on types of training desired or gaps that exist that need to be filled. They did, however, call for more direct connections to employers to ensure that training leads to employment.

Many of the participants in the high school students' input session viewed Montgomery College programs as a viable post-secondary option for them. The ACES program,[4] a collaboration between MCPS, Montgomery College, and the Universities at Shady Grove, appeared to be having an impact, as students described Montgomery College both in terms of career training and as a stepping stone to a four-year degree. The program students assists by providing information on post-high school programs, group meetings to discuss options, and individual planning with a counselor. Assistance continues after graduation and into the first year of college. In the incarcerated youths' input session, several participants had attended Montgomery College and saw returning to college as an option after release. Few, however, offered specific career tracks that they intended to pursue as they also cited employers' reluctance to hire felons as a major barrier.

Input from youth services providers and youths themselves point to lack of continuity from foundational education (high school and GED preparation programs) to post-secondary education and to direct access to jobs that employers have in the region. Prior reports commissioned by Montgomery County government identify the power of a coalition between the WIB/Youth Council and Montgomery College in creating a jobs-focused infrastructure for re-engaging disconnected youths. The coalition can also provide a stronger base for working with the Montgomery County Public Schools to engage employers directly with the K12 school system and widen the array of post-high school options for all students.

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[4] http://www.acesmontgomery.org/

Key Connections to WIB Strategic Goals & Objectives

Build and maintain relationships with educational institutions to become the source for demand side information for use in instruction, curriculum, and career pathway development.
(Strategic Goal 3, Objective 1)

Facilitate the on ramps to career pathways for jobseekers and develop methods for employers to reach into the pathways to find qualified individuals.
(Strategic Goal 1, Objective 3)

Continue to build strategic partnerships and alliances with industries with high growth and high demand or high wages to meet businesses' workforce needs.
(Strategic Priority 3)

Section 5. Service Flows and Comprehensive Service Needs

The survey and input sessions yielded insights on barriers to comprehensive services, along with needs for addressing them. The biggest reported need of service providers was funding for staff and general operations, as they reported being under-resourced in multiple ways. When asked about waiting lists, the primary bottleneck reported in the system was access to GED preparation and language programs, presenting a significant barrier for system entry and also supporting the need for decreasing demand for these services by serving more youths effectively at the At-Risk level of need while they are still school-connected. The second highest priority reported as a need was counseling services (both academic and career) and mental health services. Other forms of support services (transportation, legal services, housing, emergency assistance) were mentioned with far lower frequency, but as pointed out in input sessions, may be major needs that have to be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Better sharing of information, both face-to-face and on-line access, was cited as a need for coordinating services. Montgomery Works and units of Montgomery County government have been the primary conveners of youth service organizations. Of particular note in the survey is the response to key partnerships cited by respondents; most often mentioned were the Montgomery County Public Schools and units of Montgomery County government, but rarely mentioned were post-secondary institutions and specific employers or employer associations. This is further evidence of the gap that exists in the array of comprehensive services related to higher education and employment connections.

Key Connections to WIB Strategic Goals & Objectives

Position the WIB as the infrastructure that brings coherence and consistency to the County's workforce development programs.
(Strategic Priority 4)

Support proven strategies designed to help vulnerable and disconnected youth obtain the credentials they need to find sustainable and meaningful employment.
(Strategic Goal 1, Objective 5)

Adopt standards and indicators that define organizational standards of quality and assist organizations in meeting them.
(Strategic Goal 2, Objective 1)

Network with existing groups that support workforce development.
(Strategic Goal 3, Objective 2)

Section 6. Career Pathways with Occupational Targets as Connecting Strategy

The Career Pathways framework has emerged as the focus of attention at both the national level, as a program priority for implementation of the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, (WIOA), and at the local level as a key recommendation for building a "jobs culture" in the county. At the federal level, the Departments of Education, Health & Human Services, and Labor are jointly promoting a Career Pathways framework as a means of aligning resources for greater efficiency. Use of the framework will make local applicants for grants from these departments more competitive. The federal partners define career pathways as a "series of connected education and training strategies and support services that enable individuals to secure industry relevant certification and obtain employment within an occupational area and to advance to higher levels of future education and employment in that area."

The Workforce Investment Board's promotion of the career pathways framework will allow it to remain highly relevant in the current environment as it connects educational and workforce development resources more efficiently for each youth risk level that has been identified. More importantly, the WIB's leadership with key employers in the community will serve to ensure that the approach aligns with its sector-based strategies in the WIB Strategic Plan and brings employers in as partners in all phases of the pathways. While some definitions of Career Pathways seem to describe education-driven structures followed by employer connections at the end, the WIB's relationship with employers will enable Career Pathways to be employer-driven from the beginning and employer-engaged throughout the training and education process. Employer engagement opportunities are further developed in Section 7.

The following chart is widely used at the federal level to define key process steps for building Career Pathways[5]:

1. Build cross-agency partnerships and clarify roles

2. Identify sector or industry and engage employers

3. Design programs

Six Key Elements of Career Pathways

6. Measure system change & performance

5. Align policies and programs

4. Identify funding needs and sources

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[5] US Department of Labor, 2011.

As the WIB is now implementing its Strategic Plan, with guidance from this report it can immediately strengthen its role as a focal point for Steps One and Two above. This will provide a departure point for aligning the WIB's work with others in the county to identify best practices, design and align programs, develop sustainable funding structures, and define a community metrics and accountability framework.

As noted earlier, most youth development programs in the county focus primarily on foundational education and soft skills development but fall short of a complete pathway by not being directly connected to local colleges and employers. Employment outcomes are often dealt with in a job development phase following education and counseling, not as a driver and motivator throughout the process. Service providers emphasized that we need to broaden the range of success options for students and redefine what we mean by "the trades" in today's job market, as "tech applications" provide good jobs in all sectors. High school students also reported that they did not have occupationally-focused career and academic plans driving their course selections, and that their access to career information is haphazard and largely uncoordinated. Incarcerated youth are a special challenge, as their career pathways are somewhat restricted by employers' attitudes about felony convictions and by occupations that will be closed to them at present by the criminal record. However, the same principles will apply to incarcerated youths, but with occupational goals and employer connections developed with assistance from offender-friendly employers.

Key Connections to WIB Strategic Goals & Objectives

Continue to build strategic partnerships and alliances with industries with high growth and high demand or high wages to meet businesses workforce needs.
(Strategic Priority 3)

Continue to grow the capacity of the WIB's industry sector approach as a means of providing services to business.
(Strategic Goal 1, Objective 2)

Facilitate the on ramps to career pathways for jobseekers and develop methods for employers to reach into the pathways to find qualified individuals.
(Strategic Goal 1, Objective 3)

Section 7. Work-Based Learning Opportunities

In the input session with high school students, participants stated a desire for more direct contact with employers via employers visiting the schools, internships, and part-time job opportunities. Most students did not have a positive impression of jobs available in the region and most had a goal of leaving the region after high school or college completion. The students who had held jobs did, however, view the experience as positive, with skills learned in customer service, work ethics, and teamwork.

Employers need to be engaged as full partners in skills development and education strategies, especially those employers who are experiencing skills gaps in their job applicants and available labor pools. Prior reports and initiatives at the county level correctly identify Career Pathways as a key structural device for connecting partners and defining needed outcomes; however, in these descriptions employers are primarily viewed as providers of labor market insights and end-users of skills certifications in their hiring processes, not as partners in providing education and training throughout the steps in the pathways. The WIB and Youth Council have a major opportunity to further engage the employer community as partners and investors in skills development and education for students and workers.

Work-based learning is now identified as a priority in the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and has been recently emphasized as a key program element in competitive grant solicitations involving partnerships between WIBs and community college systems. The apprenticeship model provides one of the best examples of integrated work and learning frameworks engaging employers and educators as partners. The U.S. Department of Labor is currently encouraging the expansion of the apprenticeship model for learning well beyond its traditional roots in the building trades. USDOL has defined work-based learning as "educational training that combines rigorous academic preparation with hands-on career development experiences to connect classroom instruction to the world of work and future career opportunities." Work-based learning may take a variety of forms: apprenticeship, internships, co-operative education programs, job shadowing, career camps, and other means. The youth services survey and the input sessions both identified stronger employer connections as needed in the education process for students and program participants.

Survey respondents cited a number of needs directly related to strengthening employer engagement: work-based learning opportunities were cited as needed in the form of: field trips/events with employers; stipends for students' work experiences; subsidized employment; job placement in students' fields of interest; on-the-job experiences tied to academics; and support (such as transportation) to enable work experiences to take place. In addition, the need was expressed for better career counseling tied to specific jobs with employers in the region in the context of a career pathways structure.

Key Connections to WIB Strategic Goals & Objectives

Continue to build strategic partnerships and alliances with industries with high growth and high demand or high wages to meet businesses workforce needs.
(Strategic Priority 3)

Develop and strengthen relationships with businesses through a Business Solutions Team that develops customized services for businesses.
(Strategic Goal 1, Objective 1)

Work with businesses to analyze their needs and provide workforce related consulting services, as appropriate.
(Strategic Goal 3, Objective 4)

Section 8. Workforce Board and Youth Council Roles as Key Partners

The survey and input sessions identified that the WIB has numerous options for positive impact, visible leadership, and strengthening key partnerships as it implements its current three-year WIB Strategic Plan.

Numerous forces are currently in alignment in the county to enable the WIB and its Youth Council to be the recognized leader in employer engagement in a context of Career Pathways where roles and responsibilities of all education and community partners are well-defined. In doing so, the WIB will not only be a highly relevant player in the county and regional environment, but also a national best practice in implementing the new federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that challenges local communities to reach new levels of innovation in career pathways, employer-based solutions, credentials attainment, and connecting hard-to-serve populations to labor market based needs. Montgomery County is already a national leader in college attainment. Through the WIB's efforts it can also be a leader in connecting the rest of the population to relevant training leading to good jobs.

While multiple units of Montgomery County government were cited as key partners by youth organizations in the survey, the Workforce Board and its Youth Council were rarely noted as partners. However, during the input session with youth service providers, Montgomery Works was identified as a key convener and coordinator for youth programs related to employment and training. In addition, organizations that are funded by the Workforce Board and Youth Council were also identified as partners. This evidence suggests that the roles played by the current Workforce Board and Youth Council in designing and organizing youth employment services are valued but not necessarily recognized under the Workforce Board and Youth Council identities. On a positive note, prior reports commissioned by Montgomery County government identified the Workforce Board and its Youth Council, in partnership with Montgomery College, as primary candidates for strengthening the jobs infrastructure for re-engaging disconnected youth in the county.

The WIB's Strategic Plan for 2014-2017 states that "the WIB envisions its role as the hub of the workforce development system in Montgomery County" and that "the WIB is uniquely positioned to work with a variety of partners and interested stakeholders to ensure that all investments in the County designated to develop the skills of individuals looking for work and to help businesses fill their workforce needs are coordinated and moving toward a shared vision and mission." The survey and input sessions support that vision, and the current environment of transition, which also includes the introduction of the WorkSource Montgomery brand, offers the opportunity for the WIB and Youth Council to stake out clearly-defined roles in the mix of planning entities, education providers, and other youth-serving organizations.

Key Connections to WIB Strategic Goals & Objectives

Position the WIB as the infrastructure that brings coherence and consistency to the County's workforce development system.
(Strategic Priority 4)

Build and maintain relationships with educational institutions to become the source for useful demand side information for use in instruction, curriculum and career pathway development.
(Strategic Goal 3, Objective 1)

Network with existing groups that support workforce development.
(Strategic Goal 3, Objective 2)

Provide advice, counsel and consultation on workforce issues to county leadership and elected officials.
(Strategic Goal 3, Objective 3)

Collaborate with all community partners, such as Montgomery Moving Forward and MBDC, to ensure the WIB as the delivery system for all workforce development and related community initiative.
(Strategic Goal 3, Objective 5)

Appendix A: Findings from Youth Survey

While the Youth Services survey gathered many details on organizations and youth programs that are represented in the Youth Resource Map, there were also several questions designed to understand the gaps perceived by local organizations and opportunities for service additions and expansions. These questions and the responses received are captured below.

What are the programs or services that you are planning to add in the next two years?

Expansion of Staff & General Operations (3)
- Increase number of students served
- Expand after-school program
- Expand ESOL

Creation of New Training/Education Programs (8)
- Automotive repair
- STEM Clinic
- Homework Club
- E-curriculum for high school counselors
- Art Therapy
- Nutrition Education

Connections to Employers/Work-Based Learning Opportunities (5)
- Internships
- Supported employment

Additional Counseling for College & Careers (5)
- More "employment services"
- SAT/ACT Camps
- Increased academic advising
- Life skills

Mental Health Services (4)
- Family counseling
- New group therapy options
- Positive youth development
- Mental Health Vocational Program

Additional Mentor Services (4)
- Latino mentors
- More intensive mentoring

Supportive Services Needs – Beyond Mental Health (2)
- Housing

If your organization was to receive a non-restricted donation of funds, what would be your highest priority for using the funds?

Expansion of Staff & General Operations (17)
- More resources & supplies
- More staff
- Expand annual leadership forum
- Expansion of existing programs to other high schools in the state
- Larger facility
- Sustaining operations in light of unprecedented growth in needs
- Staff training programs
- New computer lab

Connections to Employers/Work-Based Learning Opportunities (6)
- More field trips & events
- Increase stipends for student work
- Subsidized employment
- Placement in jobs in students' areas of interest
- On-the-job work experiences for youths with disabilities
- Expand "place-based work experiences" via staff support, transportation

Additional Counseling for College & Careers (5)

Creation of New Training/Education Programs (6)
- Lumber for auto repair bay (training program already planned)
- Workforce training (non-specific)
- New GED, language, and ESOL programs
- Expand technology courses
- Create new programs in cooking, gardening, dance, entrepreneurship

Supportive Services Needs – Beyond Mental Health (4)
- Legal services
- Transportation
- Housing for homeless
  Emergency assistance fund

- Operational support for college access & success program
- Tutoring, testing assistance, application fees aimed at college entry
- Career pathways with community colleges
- Job readiness training

Mental Health Services (6)
- General youth development programs, healthy lifestyles
- Funds for fees for therapy, services for uninsured
- Art therapy
- Anti-bullying, gang prevention

Additional Mentor Services (3)
- More Latino mentors

What other organizations provide you the most help in meeting your goals?

Montgomery County Public Schools (8)
Foundations (5)
Montgomery County Government - General (5)
Specific employer partners cited (5)
Unspecified "fellow non-profits" (4)
Montgomery County Department of Health & Human Services (4)
Montgomery County Libraries (3)
Individual & Corporate Donors/Funders (2)
Montgomery County Collaboration Council (2)
Montgomery County Department of Recreation (2)
Department of Juvenile Services (2)
CPDC (2)
Division of Rehabilitation Services (2)
Faith-based organizations (2)
Arts & Humanities Council
Montgomery Works
MSDE
MDOD
TAYA
HOC
MCAEL

DLLR
Developmental Disabilities Administration
ADA Information Center
Legal services
Various schools, businesses, local governments in DC Metro area
Montgomery College
Fox 5 News in D.C.
DC Best
Private County Rehab Programs
Career Catchers
Local middle & high schools
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Gandhi Brigade
Carpe Diem Arts
Wide array of government & non-profits as speakers
Mental health professionals
Families
Community Clinic
City of Gaithersburg
City of Rockville
ProLiteracy

Appendix B: Input Session Guiding Questions

Three input sessions were held to gather first-hand feedback from youth and service providers. The following questions were used to guide the conversations with each respective group.

Session #1: Youthful Offenders – Montgomery County Correctional Facility

- What levels of education have you already received? Are you pursuing any education while you are at this facility?
- What are your plans after you are released?
- Where do you get career information? What kind of information do you get?
- Where do you get career counseling or advice? Did you receive this when you were in school?
- How will you search for employment when you are released?
- What resources will you need to succeed after you are released?

Session #2: In-School Youth – High School Seniors

- Do you have a clear career goal at this point? What influenced you the most in making that choice?
- Do you have good information about job opportunities in this geographic area? Where did you get that information?
- What adults do you get career service information from? What kind of information do you get? What advice about jobs and education do you get from your parents? From your teachers and other school officials?
- Where did you get the best career counseling or advice? Did you have to ask for help or was it provided to you in school or in programs you participate in?
- Do you think you will find employment in this geographic area? What will serve to keep you here? What will cause you to leave here?
- Are there programs and services related to employment and education that you have needed but aren't available? What kinds?
- Do you have a sense of what education is needed to reach your career goals?

Session #3: Youth Service Providers and Community Organizations

- What is the best "table" or mechanism you have for coordinating with other community organizations? What makes it effective?
- Do you think the community is doing a good job in helping our youths with career and academic pathways aimed at good jobs? What organizations and programs do you think help the most in providing such help?
- What are the biggest barriers you see for our youths as they acquire (or don't acquire) good skills and good jobs?
- What types of outreach have you found to be the most effective in getting the attention of youths about the need for a good education?
- What are the best examples you have for multi-organization partnerships for education and career advancement for youths?
- What do you feel is the biggest missing ingredient for our youths to succeed in acquiring good jobs?
- Who do you most need as a partner for your organization to be more effective?
- Who do you think most needs you as a partner for them to be more effective?