

SAN FRANCISCO/BAY AREA

YouthWorks

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"I was in YouthWorks for two years, and I think it gave me good work exposure at an office, instead of working at the Gap like other teens. I was working with people a lot older than me. It got me used to working in a real working environment."

- Le Thai, age 21, UC Berkeley senior

Mission: A year-round, paid internship program designed to give San Francisco youth the chance to explore a career and learn about city government.

Overview: YouthWorks offers internship opportunities in more than 40 city departments, one-to-one job shadowing and career mentoring. Participants also have the opportunity to take part in Career Development Workshops on topics such as financial literacy, college admissions and financial aid, and job search skills.

The program has three cycles throughout the year: fall, spring and summer. Students can work up to 10 hours a week during the school year and up to 20 hours per week during the summer. The core of the program provides all participants with a volunteer career mentor: a city employee who, with the support of program staff, provides an educational work-based learning experience for participants. This experience is supplemented by other program elements, including educational activities, pre-employment and job search skills training, on-going workplace monitoring and leadership opportunities.

Results:

- Ninety-four percent of past participants who responded to YouthWorks surveys said that their internship helped them to be successful in current or past jobs, career, or school.
- Eighty-nine percent of mentors agree that YouthWorks succeeds in providing career exploration and job- readiness training.

Key Elements of Success:

- Assessment and placement of youth after individual interviews and matching with mentors
- One-on-mentor relationship for each student worker
- Job-readiness and career-development training
- Monitoring and support by staff via bi-weekly site visits, phone calls, program-wide gatherings and mediation of workplace issues
- Youth-leadership component that allows participants to plan events and provide input into program design

Target Population: YouthWorks is a citywide program that serves 400 10th, 11th and 12th grade students who are San Francisco residents and attend a public, independent, parochial or community-based high schools in San Francisco.

Evaluations: Resource Development Associates Evaluation 2003

Awards: National Youth Employment Coalition's PEPNet (Promising and Effective Practices Network) Award, 2003

"YouthWorks gives kids something to do; it keeps them off the street. And since it is a job, it gives them an incentive to go. It is something that is theirs, and it teaches them responsibility at a young age."

--Le Thai