

GENERATION WORK

# Young Adult Recommendations

## Where Can We Lead?



Promotion of young adult voice and leadership is a deeply embedded value for Seattle Generation Work Partners. We regularly reach out to young adults and document their career advancement recommendations. This briefing report features examples of the marketing, leadership and career pathway recommendations of forty-two young people served by Generation Work partners Port Jobs and Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee (AJAC). All young adults were employed or had recently been employed at the time of the interviews.

## WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR WORKFORCE STAFF WHO ARE TRYING TO PROMOTE THEIR PROGRAMS TO YOUNG PEOPLE?

Young adults suggested that workforce programs do the following:

- › Use streaming video and interactive chat tools to promote programs.
- › Streamline enrollment processes so young adults don't have to take multiple steps (virtual or actual) to get the information they need to determine if a program might be right for them.
- › Hire young adults who have completed programs to be program recruiters and identify young adult recruitment venues and networks.
- › Bombard young adults with lots of messages. Their suggestions and philosophies varied and included: make more money, don't waste your life, work now, so you don't have to work forever.
- › Feature young adults who have "made it" in different careers, and the paths they took.
- › Try to brand programs more – with shirts, hats, so they get more routinely seen in the community.
- › Hire apprentices and other young adults who have good jobs to speak at high school Career Technical Education programs, and Skills Centers, youth transitional/time-limited housing or other places where large numbers of young people may be exploring careers or looking for work.
- › Ask companies to feature young adult employees, including persons from different ethnic communities and genders, to promote career opportunities.





- › Show pictures of companies which work with training programs, including images of how the work they do fits in with other sector-related companies and global markets. One young person said, “You want to show how the type of training you are promoting is connected to other businesses so that young people feel that they are starting down a career path that will have multiple job opportunities.”
- › “Show two pictures of the same person – one wearing their work outfit and one wearing something trendy or doing something important like getting a tattoo.” The young person who made this suggestion said, “Messaging should emphasize something about having a full life. Making money to do what you want.” Similar recommendations were made by several young people. One said, “I would be more drawn to a picture of a young person paying bills and then buying a car with the money they earned, than reading a brochure that lists the job skills I would earn.”

#### **WHAT ROLES COULD YOUNG ADULTS PLAY IN GUIDING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS?**

Young adults recommended that they could play a vital role in:

- › Planning special employment events.
- › Reviewing workforce training program curriculum to see if it promotes gender and racial equity, and is interactive and interesting.
- › Informing and helping workforce programs design videos, choose speakers and social media channels to use.
- › Review workforce program job descriptions to ensure that the staff they hire understand young people and are being asked the “right kinds of questions to determine their values and expertise.”
- › Ask companies to sponsor new hires who are graduates from the different programs to be part of a Young People Chamber of Commerce that sponsors parties, and youth-chosen presentations and training.

- › Have a youth-run and led employment-focused cable show where youth interview employers, talk about their jobs, give candid advice to jobseekers, and promote youth business ideas.
- › Hire youth interns. One young adult said, “This should be a requirement of workforce development programs to get funding to do youth employment.”

## WHAT KINDS OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES DO YOU WISH COMPANIES WOULD PROVIDE?

Young adults identified the following resources:

- › Tuition assistance and scholarships for classes that is not limited to work-related courses.
- › Funds for online training to advance our skills. One young person said, “If I took an online computer class or OSHA 30, and proved that I had developed new skills in areas it would be great if my employer could pay for that and maybe recognize my certificate and new skills, by giving me a wage increase or some other form of recognition.”
- › Paid/unpaid flexible time to take work-related training.
- › Employers and supervisors who help young adults map out the route they need to take to be promoted, or if that is not a possibility work with them to pursue next step opportunities to observe and learn new skills by shadowing other jobs in the company.

## REFLECTIONS

Many of the recommendations shared by working young adults revealed their life/work balance perspectives. One young person said, “Life isn’t about work. Rather, work is about being able to live.” The leadership potential and promise of young adults in workforce development and career advancement is great. Many young adults believe and subscribe to a “take it on, pass it on” philosophy. For example, apprentices working with AJAC liked promoting what they have learned and are doing at work with high school career technical education students and career fairs. Similarly, young adults who received scholarship assistance from Port Jobs appreciated the free tuition, career navigation and career advancement focus of Port Jobs, and took many opportunities to tell other airport workers about these opportunities. Based on the suggestions made by young adults there are undoubtedly many other areas where their involvement could strengthen their individual efforts to advance, as well as the operation of the broader youth workforce system. There are also other areas where Generation Work partners are promoting youth leadership. These will be featured more fully in future briefing reports.

As always, many thanks to the young people who generously shared their time, during the COVID-19 pandemic when the interviews were conducted. One young person, who was temporarily out of work said, “It was good to think about youth leadership and careers at a time like this. If I had not been involved in such a program before being furloughed, I would probably be feeling even more isolated. When you think about it that is really the main thing workforce programs do for us... they connect us, care about us, and make it so we have the skills and resources to stay okay during tough times.”

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“I am proof that people can work and go to school at the same time. I also feel like I am leading my younger siblings to develop career goals. I have learned a lot about how colleges work, financial aid and being patient about achieving your career goals. I tell my co-workers that the only thing holding back their dreams is them.”

Young Adult Advisor

Prepared by:

## Business Government Community Connections

“I think that some youth who complete training programs and get jobs, as well as other young adults who, like me complete their GED, and then go on to being an apprentice show that people can really change their lives, and take advantage of opportunities. I am in a position now to tell other young adults that the time and trials of changing your habits, and priorities are worth it. I know I am a different person and I didn't have to sell out my identity to do it.”

Young Adult Advisor

# PORT JOBS

*Port Jobs is supporting local efforts which connect young adults to good jobs and career pathways in King County. Port Jobs is the local lead for the Seattle Generation Work partnership. The Annie E. Casey Foundation launched Generation Work in 2016 to explore new ways of connecting young Americans with the knowledge and experience they need to succeed in the job market. The initiative includes partnerships in Cleveland, Hartford, Indianapolis, Philadelphia and Seattle. All are dedicated to weaving together best practices from the adult education and training field. The particular focus is on demand-driven workforce development strategies which integrate and are driven by positive youth development practices, such as mentoring and work-based learning, to better prepare young people ages 18-29 for work.*

*Port Jobs regularly convenes Seattle Generation Work partners to share what they are learning and brainstorm ways to align, coordinate and leverage resources. In support of these efforts, Port Jobs engaged Business Government Community Connections (BGCC) to interview young adults served by Seattle Generation Work partners. The interviews garner young adult feedback about their experiences prior, during and after receiving services into Generation Work learning community meetings and planning. Results are shared to ensure young adult voice informs the work of all partners.*

*Port Jobs would like to thank the young adults who shared their experiences and offered their feedback. Your valuable input will help our partnerships and programs more effectively support the career and educational goals of young people living in the King County region.*

**For more information about Generation Work please visit <http://portjobs.org/index.php>**