

The Linking Innovation, Knowledge and Employment Program (@LIKE)

On July 1, 2012, the Riverside County Economic Development Agency was awarded a four-year, six million dollar U.S. Department of Labor Workforce Innovation Fund grant to provide intensive services to 675 disconnected young adults, ages 18 to 24, in Riverside, San Bernardino and Imperial Counties. These young adults have been disconnected from school, work and the military for at least 90 days and are either low-income, ex-offenders, gang-involved or recently separated veterans.

The @LIKE (Linking Innovation, Knowledge and Employment) project is designed to test strategies to reconnect the disconnected young adults to educational opportunities, employment and community. In particular, the project is focused on how self-efficacy and resiliency can be measured and reinforced; how life coaching is a critical aspect of re-engagement; and what program elements work best to help these young adults re-engage in school and work. @LIKE has nine delivery sites across the three counties.



@LIKE Advisory Council members who offer input to the program's Steering Committee

According to a report compiled by Measure for America, Riverside-San Bernardino has the highest share in the nation (18.8% of youth ages 16 to 24) of disconnected young people. Research finds that young adults disconnected for three or more years are 14 times more likely to be poor and rely on public assistance. @LIKE is a region-wide effort to attack the problem of disconnected youth.

The program design is a holistic approach, featuring intensive, wraparound services that include teaching basic skills, academic credit recovery and career exploration. At the end of their time in @LIKE, participants are expected to enter post-secondary education or obtain industry recognized certifications, or obtain employment that puts them on a path toward family sustaining wages. Through participation in the program, young adults are exposed to work-based learning activities such as paid work experience, occupational skills training, internships and entrepreneur workshops. During the program, participants also earn the nationally recognized Career Readiness Certificate which certifies that the individual has attained specific workforce competency levels. Program providers partner with education institutions,

businesses, regional workforce investment boards and community-based organizations to provide services. All @LIKE customers have trained life coaches to assist in gaining decision making skills, internal capacities and resiliency.

The grant has a rigorous evaluation component conducted by an independent evaluator, IMPAQ International of Columbia, Maryland. Program enrollment is open through the end of October 2014. For the location and contact information of program provider sites, check the @LIKE website at <http://www.atlike4u.com>.