YOUTH CAREERCONNECT
PARTICIPANT FILES
RESOURCE GUIDE

This Resource Guide seeks to clarify the creation of participant files for students enrolled in the Youth CareerConnect (YCC) grant programs.

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This Resource Guide also provides a list of items you may include in each participant file (electronic or paper); not all of these documents are requirements for the YCC program. What is critical is your program has proof of services and activities took place for each YCC participant unique to the YCC program, the proof is organized and uniform; and programs have up-to-date notes on each student.

The National Office strongly suggests each YCC program create a written description of the standards for participant files for all YCC Career Counselors as well as create a checklist of what documentation is in each file, this includes guidelines for recording case notes, organizing participant files, and establishing an internal quality assurance system to facilitate maintaining high standards for documentation in YCC participant files.

Please contact your FPO if you have additional questions on requirements for review of participant files for monitoring reviews.

PARTICIPANT FILES FAQS

1. **What are the components of a participant file?**
   In general, a participant file includes the following:

   - Eligibility documents
   - Equal Opportunity Documentation
   - Assessments
   - The individual development plan (IDP)
   - Records of participation in activities
   - Supportive services
   - Documentation of credentials and diplomas achieved
   - Documentation of other outcomes attained (such as employment)
   - Case notes

   There are more detailed suggestions in the "Sample YCC Participant File Items" of this Resource Guide.

   YCC grant programs are responsible for providing information on each YCC student regarding their eligibility for the YCC program; any applicable assessments for the YCC program; education and support received through (or in conjunction with) YCC; employment and work-experience received through (or in conjunction with) YCC; placement after exit as well as case notes.

2. **Are participant files an important a part of the YCC program and monitoring?**
   Yes, participant files, or other methods of organizing documentation, are a very important component of the YCC program and are strongly suggested for each student enrolled in the YCC program. Participant files are an essential component of record keeping and provide a uniform method to securing all critical documents on each participant in order to plan, implement, and evaluate their services.

   The participant file is a focal point for accountability to the student, the YCC program and the Department of Labor. Each strongly suggested each YCC program create a written description of the standards for participant files for all YCC Career Counselors as well as a created checklist of what documentation is be in each file, this includes guidelines for recording case notes, organizing participant files, and establishing an internal quality assurance system to facilitate maintaining high standards for documentation in YCC participant files. In addition, under the *U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Core Monitoring Guide,* Participant Files indicate 1) the grantee is serving the eligible/target population identified in the grant; 2) the grantee develops an individual service plan (i.e. the Individual Development Plan) identifying and meeting the specific needs to each individual participant; 3) supportive services are being provided as needed to overcome client barriers to participation and completion of the individual service plan; and 4) participants are receiving training as needed and progressing toward achieving their employment goals.

3. **Is the participant file a different file from the student's school file/record?**
Yes, the participant file is a different file from the student's school file and it is strongly suggested the YCC Participant file be separate from the student's school file since different personnel will be required to access the file and there is some documentation only the school can have access too.

4. **Can the PTS act as a student's Participant File?**
No, the Participant Tracking System (PTS) cannot act as the student's participant file alone.

    The PTS is a data collection tool which allows grantees to track specific data elements, by participant, and report against program performance measures. This data collection includes demographic information, information on services received, and short- and long-term performance data (such as wage and type of occupation for each job placement).

    Individual participant files enhance the PTS by housing documentation as proof of services and activities provided; therefore the PTS cannot act as the student's participant file alone.

5. **Do participant files have to be hard copies?**
This depends on design of the YCC program's guidelines. Items in a participant file can be electronic, in a physical folder or a hybrid of both. Much of the information for an YCC participant file can be scanned and thus stored electronically on a computer. Other items may be printed out and placed in a folder.

    Again, all of these formats are acceptable as long as the information is secure and kept in a locked or passcode-protected filing cabinet, room or computer and all files must be accessible.

6. **How will participant files be used during a monitoring visit?**
Guidance for FPOs is provided on pages 4-5 of the *U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Core Monitoring Guide.* FPOs will pull or request, participants' files randomly to determine whether the four objectives (listed in question #1 above) are being met. If the files are solely electronic, the FPO must have access to those files. They will also interview personnel who manage the participant files. The more comprehensive your files are, including documentation, signatures, case notes, receipts, logs, time sheets, etc. the better.

7. **Who's in charge of participant files?**
This depends on design of the YCC program's guidelines. Most likely it will be the YCC Career Counselors with other approved persons who are a part of the YCC program. Students and parents should be informed who will have access to this information as well as what information will be kept in the file and where.

8. **What is the difference between a monitoring visit, Desk Review and a Site Visit?**

Program & Financial On-site Monitoring Visit	Desk Review	TA Site Visit
The purpose of ETA conducting a monitoring review of your grant program and fiscal components is to ensure you have implemented your grant consistent with required: • Statutes and regulations • Grant terms and conditions • Federal financial and administrative requirements including the cost principles that apply to your organization • DOL policies and guidance The On-Site Monitoring review is conducted at least once during the life time of the grant if travel resources are available. While monitoring provides the opportunity to identify and correct any weaknesses early on, it also is our opportunity to identify innovative and promising practices that can be shared with the rest of the workforce development system**.** The FPOs use the Core Monitoring Guide that includes the objectives for both the financial and programmatic review including ledgers and participant files. An Enhanced Desk Review can take the place of an One-site Monitoring visit if travel funds are not available.	The Desk Reviews are done quarterly, based on the quarterly reports both financial and the programmatic. They are completed in GEMS (Grants Electronic Management System); answering a list of questions, based on the information provided in the quarterly reports. Desk Reviews do not have to be completed on-site. In addition, the examination and review of financial data and cash data can be performed through a desk review.	The purpose of ETA site visit is to give the FPO an opportunity to introduce him/herself to the grantee, partners and administrators. This time also allows the FPO to review the requirements of the grant, any policies and other issues. In addition FPOs may provide technical assistance to the grantee to enhance the quality of delivery of services as well as administrative and fiscal monitoring of the grant.

PARTICIPANT FILE TIPS

The standardization of the contents and organization of the participant files to ensure uniformity and consistency throughout all file records aids in ensuring effective service delivery. It helps YCC Counselors, supervisors, and FPOs locate information quickly and ensures a seamless service delivery system. Maintenance of participant files will be one of the factors considered during the annual performance review process. It is the grantee's responsibility to adhere to adhere to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) rules and regulations. The following is a series of tips for YCC grantees to consider for the contents and maintenance of Participant files:

- Participant file documentation is:
    - Complete and comprehensive
    - Written in black or blue ink or typewritten
    - Entered in a computer database or printed on paper.
- Whether handwritten or computer generated, each participant file page indicates the youth's name.
    - Each entry made by the YCC Career Counselors is dated. Where electronic records are used, the site ensures the integrity of the documentation.
- Participant files are kept secured.
- Participant files encompass, at a minimum, youth demographic information including:
    - Residence, address and telephone number
    - Emergency contact person(s)
    - Copies of documents supporting eligibility
    - Assessment results, if applicable
    - An updated copy of the youth's individual development plan
    - Correspondence with participant regarding the YCC program
    - Copies of certificates or diplomas
    - Verification of placements (job, training, or education)
    - Documentation of short-and long-term goal completion
    - Attendance records as applicable
    - Case notes
    - Other information pertinent to the enrollee.
- Participant files contain proof of services delivered and documentation of outcomes. Some items can be scanned and thus maintained in an electronic format.
- Copies of assessments and reassessments, including a copy of initial assessment of enrollee needs, which addresses the youth's strengths and assets; social or academic status; long-term training choices; family support; environmental and special needs.

- Pre-and post-test results for the measurable objectives are kept in the file.
- Copy of the most up-to-date signed individual development plan.
  - If the plan is electronic it is strongly suggested a print-out of the completed or most up-to-date IDP, with student's signature be in the participant file
- Documentation the YCC Career Counselor has evaluated the participant's current status and the effectiveness of services being delivered. This can be accomplished by reviewing enrollee goals to determine if they are appropriate, if they have been met, or how services might be adjusted to better serve the youth. Suggestions include housing, clothing, food, transportation, child daycare, academic, medical, mental health, vocational, and post placement follow-up services being provided to the enrollee.
- Correspondence, including letters, e-mails, phone logs, etc. with local service provider contacts, and post-program follow-up
- Case notes, including pertinent documentation of the type of contact made with the youth or all other persons who may be involved with the youth's care and career development.
- Other documentation as may be required by the program operator or funder
- Each YCC program creates written description of the standards for participant files for all YCC Career Counselors as well as a created checklist of what documentation will be in each file
- YCC Career Counselors can develop the habit of 1) entering a case note immediately after the end of a telephone conversation or a meeting with a young person and 2) reviewing all case files on a regular basis (for example, once a month or whatever guidelines the grantees have for participant files management).

SUGGESTED YCC PARTICIPANT FILE ITEMS

This is a list of participant file items adapted from several current and former youth program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor; and takes into consideration the uniqueness of the YCC program.

Please note this is a sample list of SUGGESTED items <u>only</u> and not all of these documents are requirements for the YCC program. This list divides a student's participant file in to six sections and seeks to be exhaustive; however, many of these documents may not apply to your program or to each student. What is critical is your participant files have proof of the unique services and activities took place for each YCC participant based on the required elements of the YCC program.

Each grantees is strongly suggested each YCC program create a written description of the standards for participant files for all YCC Career Counselors as well as create a checklist of what documentation is be in each file, this includes guidelines for recording case notes, organizing participant files, and establishing an internal quality assurance system to facilitate maintaining high standards for documentation in YCC participant files.

Please discuss with your FPO for further clarification. Additional documentation can be added to provide evidential support.

Area	*Suggested documentation*
SECTION 1—ELIGIBILITY	
Documentation	□ Selective Service Registration – male 18+
	□ Emergency Contact for Parent/Guardian, if under 18
Participant Application Form	□ Information on whether the student has an individualized education program (IEP)
	□ Information on whether the student is certified as eligible for free and reduced-price lunch through the National School Lunch Program
	□ Equal Opportunity Documentation
	□ What YCC industry/occupational focus the student will enter into
	□ Demographic information such as gender, race/ethnicity, English proficiency, and the extent to which a language other than English is spoken at home
	□ Information, or listing, of other in or out-of-school extracurricular activities (clubs, music, sports, etc.) the participant is involved
	□ Signed/Dated

Area	Suggested documentation
SECTION 2—ASSESSMENTS	
Assessments	□ Reading/Math/Vocational Assessments
	□ Career Exploration Assessments
	□ Individual Development Plan (IDP), completed and signed if paper
	□ Additional Assessments, if applicable, including assessments of skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, and competencies
Other Forms	□ Photo Waiver
	□ Parental Consent Form to Participate in every element of the program **(REQUIRED if the student is under 18 years of age)**
	□ Release of information for employers and educational institutions, if necessary
SECTION 3—EDUCATION & SUPPORT	
Education	□ Report Card with information on classes enrolled (including Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme) and attendance
	□ Copies for student achieve awards such as Honor Roll or special recognition
	□ Dual enrollment information such as college acceptance letter, syllabi and/or course work
	□ Documentation on academic support provided to student such as tutoring
	□ Evidence of scholarships, financial aid or grants received
	□ Evidence FASFA form was completed and submitted
	□ Receipt and written support for monetary support given to the student against the grant for tuition and other post-secondary education or training-related costs, including books and academic fees for courses in the identified H-1B industry/occupation
	□ Receipts for costs related to credential attainment for individual participants, e.g., certification exam fees
Mentoring	□ Signed agreement(s) for mentoring program from mentor, student and guardian
	□ A record of mentoring meetings (example, signed time records)
	□ Mentoring activity log, program outline and/or curriculum including topic, start/end time, hrs. per month, type to mentoring (group, one-on-one, virtual) etc.

Area	Suggested documentation
Supportive Services	□ Documentation for any supportive services provided to support participant's ability to participate in program activities, such as transportation, childcare, tools/supplies, and work clothes
	□ Copies of receipts for supportive services received
Community or Service Learning	□ Proof of volunteer services (example: sign in sheet of letters from organizations noting date and times (amount of hours) the student participated)
Work-readiness	□ Documentation of leadership development activities for program participants
	□ Portfolio Contents – resume, cover letter, thank you letter, references, and generic job application
	□ Job Referrals, Employer Contact Sheet, Faxes, etc.
	□ Documentation of participation career and post-secondary awareness and exploration activities– start/end date, number of days/hrs. per week, etc.
	□ Documentation of participation in exposure to the world of work such as job shadowing, employer field trips and career awareness activities – start/end date, number of days/hrs. per week, etc.
	□ Documentation on any financial literacy workshops attended
	□ Documentation of Job search and placement assistance
	□ Vocational and/or Workplace Trainings – start/end date, number of days/hrs. per week, etc.
	□ Documentation of participation in YCC Counseling, Career Fairs, Employer Engagement or Networking Workshops – start/end date, # of days/hrs. per week, etc.
	□ Documentation Credentials/Certificates Earned for training and workshops attended
SECTION 4 – WORK EXPERIENCE /INTERNSHIPS/ APPRENTICESHIPS	
Work Experience & Summer Employment	□ Work Agreement Signed/Dated
	□ Participant Evaluation Completed by Employer
	□ Receipts for Uniforms, Tools, etc.
	□ Copies of Stipend/Incentive/Pay Checks
Internships	□ Internship Agreement Signed/Dated
	□ Internship Participant Evaluation Completed by Employer
	□Timesheets or Attendance
Pre-Apprenticeships & Registered Apprenticeships	□ Apprenticeship Agreement Signed/Dated
	□ Apprenticeship Evaluation Completed by Employer
	□ Receipts for Uniforms, Tools, etc.

Area	Suggested documentation
	□ Copies of Stipend/Incentive/Pay Checks/Supportive Services Received
SECTION 5—PLACEMENT/FOLLOW UP	
Follow Up Activities	□ Evidence of participation in YCC Alumni Activities such as Workshops
	□ Job Search Documentation
	□ Copies of correspondence
	□ Recognitions and Letters
Outcomes	□ Proof of Employment
	□ Check Stubs
	□ Enrollment in Educational and/or Training Program
	□ Verification from Educational Institution/Training Provider
	□ Industry Recognized Certificates/Credentials
SECTION 6—CASE NOTES	
Case Notes	□ Monthly Case Notes – in program and follow-up
	□ Telephone Verification/In-Person Contact (signature suggested)
	□ Follow-up Calls
	□ Updated Contact Information
	□ Services Provided
	□ Referral Information
	□ Updated Employment Information

PARTICIPANT FILE RESOURCES

The following list provides resources on participant files and other tools to create a comprehensive file and connect YCC program staff and participants to supportive, educational, employment and training opportunities.

"Is Your House in Order?" YouthBuild Video Series (2014) contains 11 videos to help assist grantees in preparation for DOL grant compliance and monitoring reviews, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLX8R1qzt_6MBNXfTij_r9s19b5ydI2hCk

First Step: A student Practitioner's Resource Guide to Supportive Services (2012) provides youth practitioners with the information needed to connect young adults to those supportive services their employing organizations may not offer. The Guide provides quick and easy access to programs and services at the state or local level. http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEN/TEN_31_12_Att.pdf

Improving Demand-Driven Services and Performance: Toolkit for Effective Front-Line Services for Youth (2007) assists programs with improving case management, recruitment, intake, follow-up services, and developing Individual Service Strategies. *Chapter Six, Documentation: Record-Keeping and Case Notes* presents a summary of some guidelines for recording case notes, organizing case files, and establishing an internal quality assurance system to facilitate maintaining high standards for documentation in case fileshttp://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/pdf/TOOLKIT%202007-Manual.pdf

U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Core Monitoring Guide (2005) provides a consistent framework and starting point for all on-site grant monitoring responsibilities by ETA. ETA has been moving forward in a coordinated effort to improve the consistency of oversight while relying on and providing opportunities for Federal Project Officers (FPOs) to bring their professional judgments and experience to the process. "*Core Activity 4: Service/Product Delivery- Objective 4.2: Participant Files*" provides a summary of indicators for review of participant files and case notes, http://www.doleta.gov/regions/reg02/documents/OSID%20Conference/Resource%20-%20Core-Monitoring-Guide.pdf

Youth CareerConnect Community of Practice (temporary location) contains resource information for the YCC program including guides, handouts, recorded webinars, videos, research documents, and data, https://etagrantees.workforce3one.org/page/resources/1001422629124768152

Youth.gov "Map My Community" allows users to search for federally-funded, youth related resources. The interactive mapping tool on this page to locate federally supported youth programs in your community. Search by full address or ZIP code and click Find Programs. If programs are found the location is marked on the map, http://youth.gov/map-my-community.

YouthBuild Counseling and Case Management Handbook (2010) focuses on how to offer the personal supports students need to overcome obstacles to achieving their goals, how to assist them in linking with the resources they need, and to document outcomes associated with the delivery of these services and opportunities to YouthBuild participants. The second part of the manual focuses on Case Management in Practice, http://youthbuild.workforcegps.org/~/media/WorkforceGPS/youthbuild/Files/Program%20Handbooks/Counseling_Case_Management_0610.pdf