

The Intermediary Network (INet) began in 1998 with federal grant support and is now a self-governed and self-funded, national association of leading education, workforce, and youth development organizations working in local communities to ensure youth success.

In 2002, participants in the federally funded School-to-Work Intermediary Project (managed by Jobs for the Future and New Ways to Work) found their connections to be so valuable that they decided to create a self-funded network to sustain their work together beyond the funded activities of the project. The Leadership Committee of the INet agreed that the Boston Private Industry Council would serve as fiscal agent and New Ways would serve as the facilitating partner of the resulting Intermediary Network.

The INet today represents thirty-nine local Intermediaries and six National Affiliate members. New Ways to Work supports INet members through professional development, peer-to-peer networking, data collection and evaluation, strategic planning opportunities, and leadership activities focused on extending the vision and practice of intermediaries.

Network members connect schools and training organizations, employers and workplace partners, social services and community organizations, and families and neighborhoods communities. National Affiliate members support local organizations in their efforts to improve the lives of our nation's youth. Members also convene local, regional, and state-wide organizations doing similar work to maximize resources and effort. Through the ongoing support of the Intermediary Network, intermediaries are increasing high school graduation, improving college and career success, and reconnecting out-of-school and out-of-work youth.

The Context for Collaboration

How do we best meet the needs of our youth as they make the transition into the adult world? For young people to succeed in life, they need to develop competence, confidence, and connections to real-world experiences at critical points during their educational, career, and personal development. Our schools cannot do this alone, nor can youth development, social service, or workforce preparation organizations - they need partners.

For this reason, over the past decade collaborative structures managed by organizations known as Intermediaries have emerged, designed to bring together a range of local resources to promote young people's self-confidence about their abilities, increase their connections to adults and opportunities, and foster the personal, academic, and work-related competencies they need to succeed.

According to a report published by the Institute for Educational Leadership entitled *Local Intermediary Organizations: Connecting the Dots for Children, Youth, and Families*, local communities are turning to intermediary organizations to maximize available resources and connect young people to a range of local services and opportunities.

Intermediaries support effective programs for youth and augment the efforts of local organizations dedicated to serving youth in a wide variety of programs and settings including the fields of education, workforce development, after-school and youth development. Intermediaries support community and school partnerships, economic and workforce development efforts, and local collaboratives serving special populations of vulnerable youth.

What is an Intermediary?

The growth of intermediaries is part of a broad trend within our economy and society toward fluid, networked, and interactive systems for organizing multi-partner communications and collaboration. As innovative, project-specific, and goal-oriented partnerships have grown across the economy and society, organizations to broker, manage, and simplify these relationships have solidified and matured.

Intermediaries connect employers, government agencies, social services, schools, and local communities to ensure youth success. Young people need better opportunities and supports to gain the knowledge and skills critical for success in college and careers. Employers need a skilled and motivated workforce. Our schools and programs can't do it alone. Yet workplace and community partners lack the time and expertise to navigate public systems. Intermediaries solve the problem.

Intermediaries bring the right people together to make a difference. They are driven by quality, consistently measuring and improving local programs and services. They organize public and private support for the policies and funding necessary to connect the classroom with the workplace and the community.

Strategic Intermediary Functions

Intermediaries perform four key functions in their communities to connect services and supports and help build a comprehensive system that ensures the success of young people.

Intermediaries

- ❑ **Convene** local, regional and/or state leaders, practitioners, and customers across sectors to ensure youth success.
- ❑ **Connect** and broker or provide services to youth, public and private partners, including schools and training organizations, employers and workplace partners, social services and community organizations, and families and neighborhoods communities.
- ❑ **Measure** effectiveness and ensure the quality and impact of youth-serving efforts.
- ❑ **Sustain** effective practices through advocacy and progressive policies.

About The Network

The Intermediary Network connects local and national organizations to share effective strategies, to learn from one another, and to grow and professionalize intermediary practice across the country.

The Intermediary Network

- ❑ Promotes the importance of intermediary organizations and activities on the public policy agenda.
- ❑ Establishes standards of quality for intermediaries and their staff.
- ❑ Provides state-of-the-art professional and leadership development opportunities through a facilitated network of the top practitioners in the country.
- ❑ Engages members in a peer-supported, self-managed, professional learning community.
- ❑ Represents the collective voice of organizations and individuals performing intermediary functions.

- ❑ The Intermediary Network provides valuable connections for peers across the country, inspiring new ideas, supporting innovation, and defining quality practices. Leadership meetings, Practice Communities, content trainings, regular electronic communications, and annual Institutes move members toward an increasingly ambitious vision of their work, both locally and nationally. The Intermediary Network Practice Communities provide a vehicle for members to share quality practice, identify areas of potential collective work and explore topics of common interest in topical areas.

Membership Benefits

- ❑ Participation in a self-governed community of leaders and practitioners in the allied youth fields
- ❑ Participation in the Intermediary Network Practice Communities
- ❑ Collective policy voice
- ❑ Leadership and staff development opportunities
- ❑ Technical assistance, timely information, and proven tools
- ❑ New funding and project opportunities

Who are the Members?

Current membership includes School-to-Work Partnerships, Youth Councils, After-School Intermediaries, Out-of-School Youth Providers, Workforce Investment Boards, Chambers of Commerce, Local Education Foundations, Non-Profit Organizations, Business-Education Partnerships, Industry Associations, State and National Affiliates, and other organizations performing intermediary functions.

Much of the value of the network comes from the interchange of ideas, challenges and solutions among member organizations. All members commit to sharing what they know and do, and to collectively promoting the success of intermediaries across the country.

Network Features

Members of the INet contribute to and benefit from a professional, peer-to-peer network, facilitated by New Ways to Work and supported by the following elements.

- ❑ A leadership team, composed of local, state, and national practitioners and policy makers to fully develop and refine the standards of membership, address the core questions surfaced as allied fields of practice are brought to the same table, identify quality practices, and inform the creation of initiative approaches, tools, and materials to support local practice.
- ❑ Common tools and frameworks that reflect an expanded vision of local intermediary practice in order to promote, guide, reflect and support the work at the local level.
- ❑ Peer-to-peer coaching strategies, where network members work to support others faced with similar challenges.
- ❑ Documentation, collection, and dissemination of quality practices and promising approaches to challenging issues.
- ❑ Research and evaluation of the effectiveness of intermediary approaches in addressing the issues of transitioning youth.
- ❑ The development of a public policy agenda, to promote and sustain intermediary practice.

Member Services

INet members are supported by the following elements.

- ❑ Training, support, and regular networking opportunities for identified team leaders from each implementing community.
- ❑ Participation in the Intermediary Network Practice Communities.
- ❑ Technical assistance in and strategies for connecting to local youth-serving systems.
- ❑ Annual team institutes, designed to deliver critical content, support peer networking and allow for focused strategic planning time.
- ❑ Annual Team Leader Forums, to address emerging issues and set the course of the network for the year.
- ❑ Periodic site visits to member communities engaged in quality practices.
- ❑ Regular teleconferences and content calls covering key issues identified as high need by the participating organizations.
- ❑ A vibrant communication and technology component, supporting on-line dialogues; the collection and sharing of promising practices, tools and ideas; collecting information; and monitoring progress.
- ❑ A regular electronic newsletter to update progress and communicate success to a broad audience.

For more information please contact New Ways to Work at 707-824-4000.

Visit the Network online at www.intermediarynetwork.org.