



Membership Overview

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 committed to pursuing concentrated efforts to promote intermediary work, improve intermediary practice, and connect young people to their futures. The Leadership Committee of the INet agreed that the Boston Private Industry Council would serve as fiscal agent and New Ways to Work would serve as the facilitating partner of the resulting Intermediary Network.

The INet today represents local and state Intermediaries and National Affiliate members who are working to improve outcomes for youth. 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 community organizations with employers and other workplace partners to improve educational achievement, career development, and build a future workforce. Members also convene local, regional, and state-wide organizations doing similar work to maximize resources and effort.

The INet provides valuable connections for intermediary practitioners across the country by sharing inspiring ideas, supporting innovation, and defining quality practices. Leadership meetings, shared resources, and annual Institutes move members toward an increasingly ambitious vision for their work. 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 each point of their educational and career development. Our schools or training programs cannot do this alone. They need partners.

For this reason, new collaborative structures have emerged in many communities, designed to promote young people's self-confidence about their abilities, increase their connections to adults and opportunities, and foster the academic and work-related competencies they need to succeed in life. 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.

What is an Intermediary?

All across the country, schools, organizations, and institutions are coming together to provide opportunities and support for young people.

Collectively they seek to:

- ❑ Lower drop out rates and increase high school graduation rates.
- ❑ Improve college, post-secondary, and career success.
- ❑ Ensure successful transitions for youth who are in our public systems, and re-engage youth and young adults who are out-of-work and out-of-school.
- ❑ Connect youth to the workforce and/or post secondary training that addresses the “skills gap” and builds the future workforce.
- ❑ Make effective use of public and private resources to ensure youth success.

This is the work of Intermediaries, locally-directed organizations that provide the vision, leadership, and operational support to organize and implement effective solutions to the challenge of creating comprehensive opportunities for youth that are linked to a vibrant economy and healthy communities. Intermediaries connect systems partners to each other and youth to their future.

These locally-based organizations:

- ❑ Work with key partners in cities and towns to weave together programs and services so young people have every opportunity to succeed.
- ❑ Bring people together to develop local solutions to better support young people.
- ❑ Broker services, resources, and supports to youth and the organizations and systems that are designed to serve them.
- ❑ Work to connect programs and services to local economic development efforts and youth themselves to the workforce.
- ❑ Measure what they do, and seek consistently to improve their practice based on the results they produce.
- ❑ Take what they know works, and seek to develop and institutionalize policies at the local, state, and national levels that allow for the expansion of quality practices, and sustain and spread their work to save a generation of young Americans.

Strategic Intermediary Functions

These collaborative structures do not come together by themselves, nor can they be sustained without significant commitments of time and resources. Intermediaries therefore, perform four strategic intermediary functions critical to successful, sustainable community efforts to connect work and learning for 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 service and community organizations, and families and neighborhoods.
- ❑ **Measure** effectiveness and ensure the quality and impact of youth-serving efforts.
- ❑ **Sustain** effective practices through advocacy and progressive policies.

Intermediary organizations perform key, day-to-day, operational functions in collaboration with:

- ❑ **Employers and workplace partners** - to create demand for working with and employing youth, and to provide services to address the needs of the partners;
- ❑ **Schools and youth-serving organizations** - to build staff awareness and buy-in and provide services and training to support their involvement and improve their practice;
- ❑ **Youth** - to connect them to appropriate experiences and opportunities, to improve the quality of work-based learning, employment and other career development activities; and to expand their opportunities for college and career ladder employment;
- ❑ **All partners** - to provide the communications link among partners and create a system focused on quality and continuous improvement.

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. 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.

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.
- ❑ Provides valuable connections for peers across the country, inspiring new ideas, supporting innovation, and defining quality practices.

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 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.

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.

- ❑ Leadership team, composed of local, state, and national practitioners and policy makers who 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.
- ❑ Development of public policy that promotes and sustains intermediary practice.

Member Services

INet members are supported by

- ❑ Training, support, and regular networking opportunities for identified leaders from each implementing community.
- ❑ Participation in the Intermediary Network Practice Communities to share resources, promising practices, and cover key issues identified by participating organizations.
- ❑ Technical assistance 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 Leadership Forums, to address emerging issues and set the course of the network for the year.
- ❑ A vibrant communication and technology component – on-line dialogues; the collection and sharing of promising practices, tools and ideas; and monitoring progress.
- ❑ A regular electronic newsletter to update progress and communicate success.
- ❑ Informal member to member communications.

For more information or to get connected to the INet

Contact New Ways to Work at 707-824-4000.

Visit the Network and pick up application materials online at www.intermediarynetwork.org.