Since 2005 when Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa came into office, one of his first priorities has been to create jobs for young people through public-private partnerships. In conjunction with LA Youth at Work, an initiative of the L.A. Area Chamber of Commerce and the Community Development Department’s OneSource Youth Opportunity System, he created the HIRE LA’s Youth Campaign, aimed at helping young adults ages 14-24 to gain and retain entry level employment and develop work readiness skills. In February 2008, the Mayor unveiled the City’s and the Workforce Investment Board’s Workforce Development Strategy that includes six individual strategic components to move 100,000 area residents into living wage jobs. Strategy #4, “Connecting Young People to Jobs,” outlines how the City and its various private and public sector partners will collaborate in preparing youth for entry into the “world of work.”

Instrumental to the campaign, HIRE LA’s Youth 16-24 component was launched in 2006; private sector partnership that has generated and placed over 2,500 youth in private sector, unsubsidized jobs. This component secures hiring pledges from private sector employers for placing youth in entry-level positions throughout Los Angeles. HIRE LA’s Youth 16-24 component itself, by 2010, will help 4,000 young job seekers prepare and find mostly permanent, full-time employment. Since its inception in 2005, the HIRE LA’s Youth Campaign has placed more than 28,000 local youth in crucial, first-time paid positions through the City’s OneSource Youth Opportunity System and its many program partners. The partnership has actively sought and received private sector pledges to provide entry-level positions to youth living in the Los Angeles region. Through this partnership, the private sector provides youth access to full-time and part-time employment opportunities.

AT&T has played an integral role in helping the Mayor and the City of Los Angeles achieve its goal of getting more than 15,000 young adults hired in 2007-2008. The HIRE-LA campaign has benefitted from both financial contributions and in-kind support made available through AT&T. In 2007, AT&T donated $18,000 towards the marketing, communications and outreach, and website development to support the Campaign. AT&T also donated $25,000 towards the development of the music program at the Boyle Heights Tech Center. Not only has AT&T provided monetary contributions, but their senior leadership is fully committed to the campaign and have been stalwart supporters of the Mayor and his effort to make youth employment a top priority for the City of Los Angeles.
Their commitment is demonstrated in their pledge to provide a paid full-time AT&T employee to work on the campaign. In 2008, AT&T provided an Executive on Loan to assist with private sector engagement, business development and employment outreach; an in-kind contribution valued at more than $100,000. It is only through the commitment of AT&T that the HIRE-LA campaign has been able to engage other private employers in hiring young adults resulting in helping the Mayor and the City of Los Angeles reach its goal of getting more than 15,000 young adults into meaningful full-time and part-time subsidized and unsubsidized employment opportunities. This is a best practice that can be replicated in many cities to engage the private sector community in employing and providing opportunities for the future workforce of America. AT&T has set the example for the rest of the nation. They exemplify the successes that can be achieved when City’s focus on public-private partnerships.

The nation’s economic downturn has had the most devastating effect on our country’s youth. Unemployment for young people is on the rise, and the numbers for minority youth are even more disconcerting. The rate of youth employment in the Los Angeles region is even more stagnating. Studies show that more than 93,000 youth, 1 in 5 young people in the City of Los Angeles ages 16-24, are unemployed and not in school. The Los Angeles region is focused on year-round or summer jobs program that would allow many of these youth to connect with the world of work, gain valuable skills for future careers, and increase their chances today of earning more tomorrow.

HIRE LA’s Youth has a formula – training, certification and access equals success. Through HIRE LA’s Youth, participants receive work readiness training that builds a strong foundation of critical skills to carry out responsibilities and learn on the job. The Work Readiness Certification streamlines the hiring process by identifying a work-ready pool of job applicants. Once candidates are certified, they are connected to a pool of private employers, where they gain access to job leads and hiring events and prove they are work-ready.

Other Conference of Mayor’s Business Council Members that have supported HIRE LA’s Youth include: MWH, Inc. and Wells Fargo. Both companies have been instrumental in providing internship opportunities for youth. Also, Home Depot and Services Employees International Union CTW, CLS (SEIU) have partnered with the City to expand the campaign and employ youth.