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Bridging Research, Policy, & Practice

Unlocking Opportunities through Youth Apprenticeships in Utah:
A Multi-Agency Analysis

Presentation to the
State Workforce Development Board
Thursday, January 8th, 2026

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Senate Bill 122 (2024) and Utah Code section 53B-34-111

Call for a study to "*design a framework and system for maximizing efficiencies and expanding youth apprenticeship opportunities for students*"

- Increase youth apprenticeship offerings;

- Increase student and employer participation in youth apprenticeships;

- Formalize roles and streamline the use of existing infrastructure;

- Leverage secondary and post-secondary educational programs;

- Identify metrics to assess the success of youth apprenticeships (e.g., Department of Labor resources, Advance CTE); and

- Potential state appropriations for youth apprenticeships specialists for scalability.
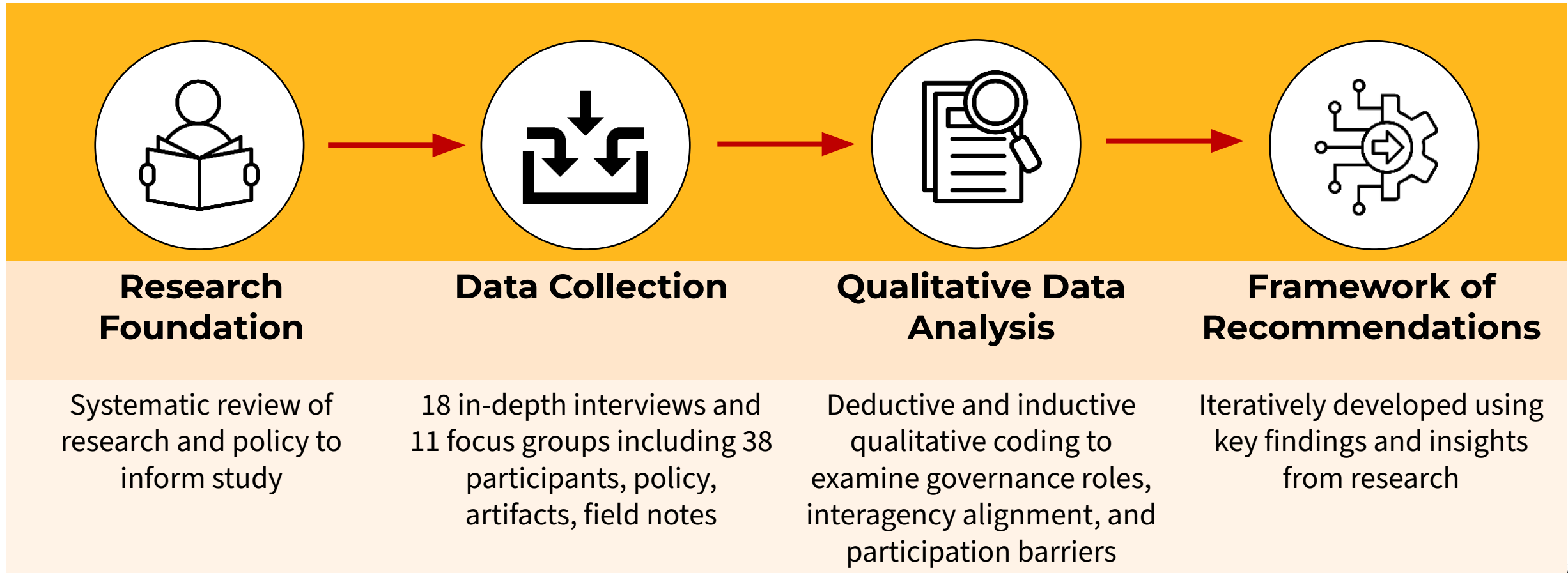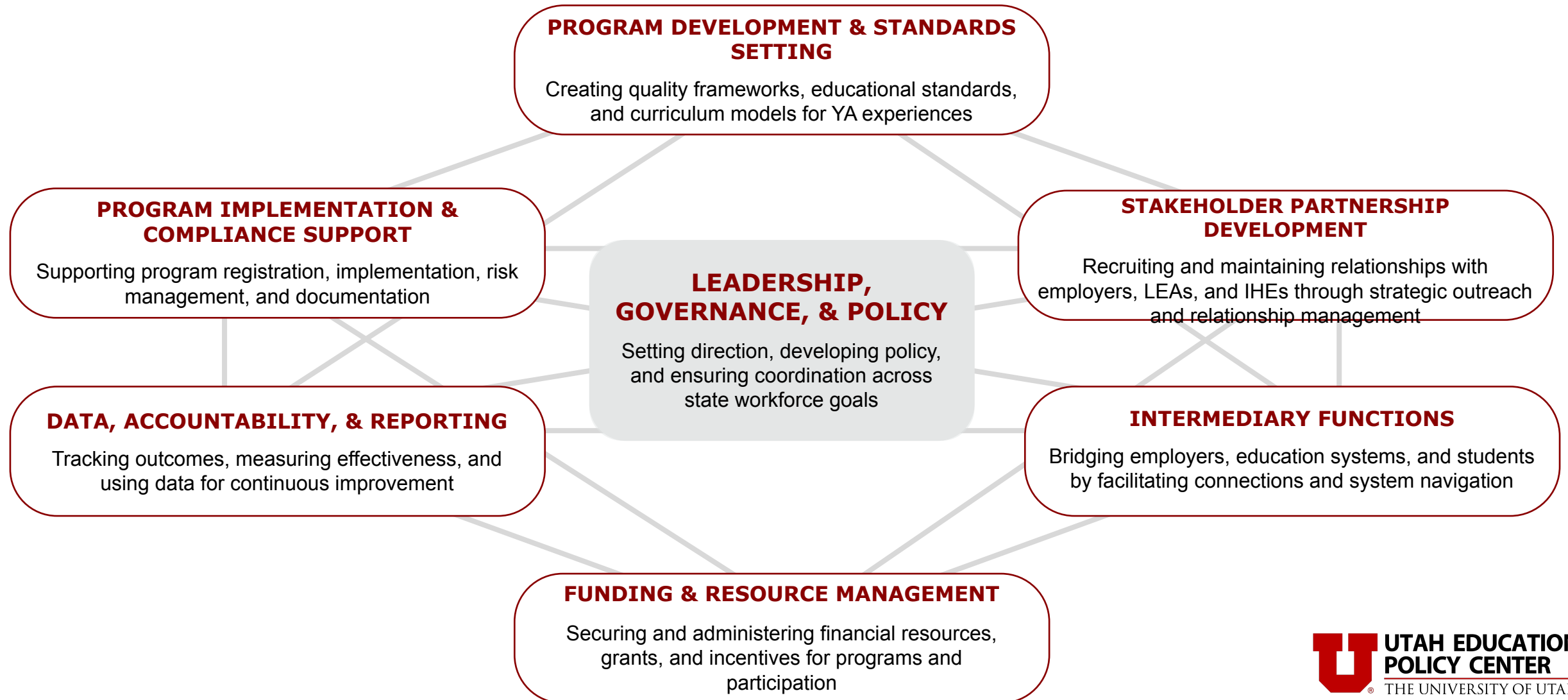
Research Partnership

- The Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC) conducted the study in partnership with Talent Ready Utah (TRU) and in collaboration with:
  - Utah State Board of Education
 - Department of Workforce Services
  - The Governor's Office

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Study Design

Research Foundation

Data Collection

Qualitative Data Analysis

Framework of Recommendations

Systematic review of research and policy to inform study

18 in-depth interviews and 11 focus groups including 38 participants, policy, artifacts, field notes

Deductive and inductive qualitative coding to examine governance roles, interagency alignment, and participation barriers

Iteratively developed using key findings and insights from research

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Dimensions of State Agency Roles and Responsibilities for YA

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT & STANDARDS SETTING

Creating quality frameworks, educational standards, and curriculum models for YA experiences

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION & COMPLIANCE SUPPORT

Supporting program registration, implementation, risk management, and documentation

STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Recruiting and maintaining relationships with employers, LEAs, and IHEs through strategic outreach and relationship management

LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE, & POLICY

Setting direction, developing policy, and ensuring coordination across state workforce goals

DATA, ACCOUNTABILITY, & REPORTING

Tracking outcomes, measuring effectiveness, and using data for continuous improvement

INTERMEDIARY FUNCTIONS

Bridging employers, education systems, and students by facilitating connections and system navigation

FUNDING & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Securing and administering financial resources, grants, and incentives for programs and participation

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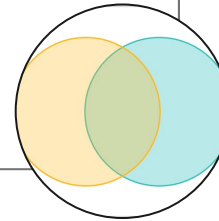
Interagency Alignment for Youth Apprenticeships

- Shared Purpose and Aims for YA
- Policy Development and Advocacy

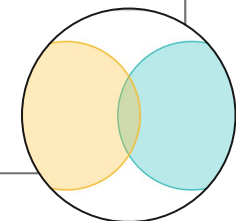**Areas of Strong Alignment**
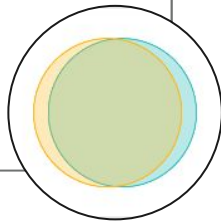
- Communication and Collaboration Mechanisms
- Stakeholder Engagement Processes
- Governance and Leadership Structures
- Shared YA Standards
- Shared Definitions of YA

Areas of Partial Alignment

- Role Clarity and Formal Agreements
- Funding Coordination
- Shared Data Systems and Metrics

Areas with Opportunity for Alignment

Barriers to YA Participation and Implementation in Utah

LOGISTICAL & IMPLEMENTATION BARRIERS

Practical obstacles that hinder the operations and accessibility of YA programs:
- Transportation challenges
- Scheduling coordination
- Program structure and design disconnects
- Employer readiness for supporting YA
- Rural locale implementation challenges

REGULATORY & POLICY BARRIERS

Formal constraints stemming from external laws, rules, and institutional policies:
- External regulatory or policy constraints
- Institutional or organizational capacity constraints
- Program alignment and articulation issues
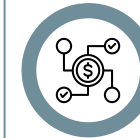
FINANCIAL BARRIERS

Funding and resource limitations affecting the sustainability and capacity of YA initiatives:
- Adequate program funding for sustainability and growth
- Adequate staffing and personnel turnover
- Employer ROI concerns
- Apprentice compensation issues and concerns

GOVERNANCE & COORDINATION BARRIERS

Organizational challenges stemming from barriers related to working across institutional boundaries of state agencies:
- Lack of role clarity and confusion for stakeholders
- Competing priorities and territorialism
- Personnel turnover and precarity of dependence on relationships and informal coordination
- Data and information sharing gaps

AWARENESS & PERCEPTION BARRIERS

Informational and attitudinal obstacles rooted in limited knowledge and/or misconceptions about YA:
- Awareness and information gaps (YA offerings, value)
- Misconceptions about education and career paths
- Industry perceptions
- Workplace culture challenges
- Student motivation and commitment challenges

PARTICIPATION & OPPORTUNITY BARRIERS

Structural and situational challenges that limit access to YA programs for some regions and groups:
- Geographic challenges (particularly more remote and rural regions)
- Socioeconomic pressures and barriers for families and students
- Demographic or cultural challenges

A Framework for Unlocking Opportunities through Youth Apprenticeships in Utah

GOVERNANCE LEVERS
Establish joint governance structures and clear roles, responsibilities, and authority across agencies to support coordinated YA implementation and decision-making alignment.

STRUCTURAL LEVERS
Develop standardized systems, information and data sharing infrastructure, and standards for program development to support efficient YA implementation

OPERATIONAL LEVERS
Strengthen stakeholder processes, tools, and day-to-day implementation supports that enable coordinated YA delivery across agencies and programs.

COMMUNICATION LEVERS
Create consistent messaging and information-sharing to enhance awareness, understanding, and engagement with YA.

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT AND CAPACITY LEVERS
Build sustainable funding and resources to support long-term YA program sustainability and growth through investment and capacity building.

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Aligned YA Policy Recommendations

Governance & Coordination

- **Establish a statewide YA Governance coordinating council**
- Define and formalize each agency's core and supporting responsibilities
- Develop operational definitions and YA program quality standards
- Establish a coordinated process among secondary schools, postsecondary institutions, and workforce partners to align curriculum, credit transfer, and apprenticeship recognition, access, and participation

Funding, Budget Appropriations, & Resource Use

- Allocate recurring funding for sustained interagency governance & coordination
- Create blended funding streams to support coordination, communication, and implementation among involved agencies
- Create financial incentive opportunities for students and employers
- Provide dedicated funding to support LEAs and schools in implementing and sustaining YA programs
- Alleviate restrictions on resource sharing between credit and non-credit IHE programs
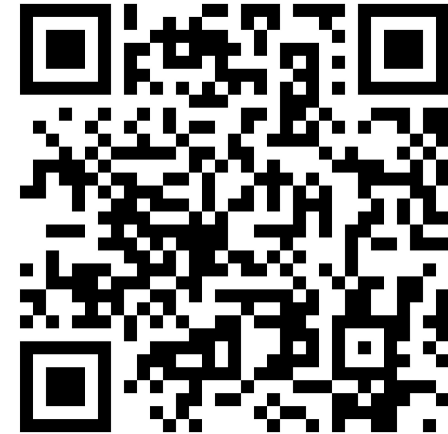
Information Sharing & Data Systems

- Develop a statewide Youth Apprenticeship data governance policy that defines data collection requirements, privacy protections, and infrastructure for data collection
- Develop a unified performance monitoring supported by an integrated data and information system

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Access the Full Report

https://bit.ly/UEPC-YAstudy

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2026 Legislative Recommendation

Youth Apprenticeship Governing Council

Duties:

- Clarifying agency roles and responsibilities
- Developing shared operational definition and program quality standards
- Coordinating cross-agency implementation structures
- Establishing communication roles and protocols
- Developing student and employer incentive strategies
- Implementing unified performance monitoring and integrated data systems
- Developing coordinated communication and phased statewide implementation plans

Recommendations to report back for 2027 session:

- Statewide funding needs
- Employer incentive structure
- Full statewide action plan