Evaluation of the Ready to Work Partnership Grant Program:
Findings from the Implementation Study of Four Training Programs for Long-Term Unemployed Workers

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Executive Summary

A key challenge facing policymakers and program administrators is how to develop effective strategies to help Americans facing economic challenges, particularly the long-term unemployed, to succeed in the labor market. During the deep recession of 2008-2009, an unprecedented number of workers lost their jobs and many remained under- or unemployed, even as the economy recovered. Identifying what strategies that can help them regain their economic footing has been a priority, with a particular interest in employment in higher-paying middle- and high-skill jobs that are in demand by American businesses.

As part of this effort, in 2014, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) funded **the Ready to Work (RTW) Partnership grant program** that is the focus of this report. RTW grants went to partnerships of workforce agencies, training providers, employers, and other organizations, to improve the employment prospects of the long-term unemployed by providing a range of customized services including training and job search assistance. The intent of the RTW grant program is to establish programs that might prove effective in preparing U.S. workers for employment, particularly in occupations and industries being filled by foreign workers through the H-1B visa program. In 2014, DOL awarded four-year grants totaling $170 million to 23 grantees, with individual awards ranging from $3 to $10 million.

DOL's Employment and Training Administration, in collaboration with the Chief Evaluation Office, sponsored a rigorous evaluation of the RTW grant program. The evaluation includes an implementation and impact study and is being conducted by Abt Associates and its partner MEF Associates. In consultation with DOL, the evaluation team purposively selected four grantees for study based on their program design and scale.[1]

This report documents early findings from the evaluation's implementation study of the four grantees. For each grantee, the report describes the design and operation of its grant-funded program components, including staff guidance, occupational training, employment readiness and job search assistance, work-based training, and other services individualized to each participant's needs and skill gaps. The report also presents key findings related to the implementation and operation of the programs. Future reports will examine the effectiveness of the four grantee programs individually in improving participants' education and employment outcomes.

The Ready to Work Partnership Grant Program

The RTW grant program focuses on the preparation of long-term unemployed workers for employment, particularly in high-growth industries and occupations where employers often cannot find sufficiently trained American workers to fill these jobs and may use H-1B visas to hire foreign workers. American Job Centers already provide employment services, such as job search assistance and access to occupational training programs, to the general public as required by the Workforce Opportunity and Innovation Act (WIOA). DOL developed and funded the RTW program to provide additional services *specifically targeted to those facing long-term unemployment.* The aim of the services is for such workers to adapt their skills and experience to new industries and occupations or to receive additional training for jobs that can match their previous earnings.

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[1] The evaluation will describe the implementation and impacts for selected grantee programs separately. It will not estimate the overall implementation or impact of the RTW grant program, and the results are not generalizable to all RTW grantees.

Specifically, DOL's Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA) specified that the RTW-funded programs should:

- Target long-term unemployed workers, defined as those who had been jobless for 27 weeks or more. This includes those who lost their jobs during or after the 2008-2009 recession and currently were either unemployed or underemployed (i.e., had obtained only short-term or part-time employment but had not yet found full-time jobs in line with their previous level of skill or earnings.)

- Assess participants' skills and needs and customized services along three tracks: (1) staff guidance, including intensive coaching and specialized services, and direct job placement services for those participants who have the skills and competencies to be placed directly into middle- and high-skill employment without additional training; (2) short-term training that leads to direct job placement for those who need short-term training to refresh or upgrade their skills; and (3) longer-term training that culminates in an industry-recognized credential for those who need to gain new skills and competencies.

- In addition to these tracks, provide (1) work-based training where participants are paid, such as on-the-job training and paid work experience and (2) services that address the unique barriers facing long-term unemployed workers, such as financial counseling and behavioral health counseling.

DOL awarded the 23 RTW grants in October 2014. Most grantees used the first several months to plan their programs and started to provide services in spring or summer 2015. The four-year grants are scheduled to end in October 2018.

RTW Evaluation Design and Grantees Included in the Study

The evaluation of the RTW grant program comprises two major components. An **implementation study** examines the design and operation of the four selected grantee programs. An **impact study,** using a random assignment research design, determines program effects on participant outcomes of interest, including educational attainment, employment, earnings, and other outcomes.

With a focus on the grantees' first year of operations, this first report on RTW program implementation examines how each of the grantees translated the RTW resources and guidance into an operational program and highlights key findings from these experiences. Specifically, this report describes the specific target population each grantee chose to serve, how the grantee recruited and enrolled participants, the staffing and organizational partnerships it established to operate its services, and the specific services and supports they provided—including assessment, employment readiness activities, occupational training, work-based training, job search assistance, and financial and other supports.

The analysis reported here primarily relies on in-person interviews conducted with all key grantee staff including program administrators, line staff, and organizational partners in summer 2016, some 8 to 10 months after the four grantee programs began random assignment for the impact study. The report also presents information on program participants' demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and employment and education history, collected for the evaluation when they applied to the programs.

The evaluation's **impact study** uses a random assignment design to determine whether the program services provided produce effects on participant outcomes of interest, including employment, earnings, and educational attainment, over an 18-month follow-up period. Random assignment involves assigning eligible program applicants randomly (as in a lottery or coin toss) to one of two groups: (1) a program group that is offered the chance to participate in the grant-funded services (whether or not those

individuals actually participate); and (2) a control group that cannot participate in the grant-funded services (but can access other services available in the community including those provided through WIOA). With half of eligible applicants going to each group, any differences between the two research groups' outcomes (known as *impacts*) that emerge over time can be attributed to the grant-funded program, because the two groups were statistically alike when they entered the program. A future report will document findings from the impact study. It will also examine program operations over the entire grant period.

Exhibit ES-1 provides an overview of the four selected grantees (the lead agency in each partnership) and their RTW-funded programs: Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation (AAWDC)—Maryland Tech Connection; Jewish Vocational Service (JVS)—JVS Skills to Work in Technology; Rochester-Works!—Finger Lakes Hired program; and Worksystems Inc.—Reboot Northwest. With RTW grants ranging between $5 and $10 million, three of the four grantees focus on employment in more than one industry, but all include information technology (IT) and two include manufacturing. The RTW grantees included in the evaluation are located in urban areas, but all serve a relatively large geographic area that includes suburban and rural communities. JVS is a non-profit organization; the others are workforce agencies that provide services under WIOA. All the grantees target unemployed or underemployed populations. For the evaluation, while a minimum of 500 program enrollees is desired (with an equal proportion in the respective control groups), target enrollments for the evaluation range from 500 at JVS and WSI up to 900 participants in AAWDC.

Exhibit ES-1: Overview of Grantee Programs in the Ready to Work Evaluation

Grantee (Lead Agency)	Program and Location	Target Industry
Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation (AAWDC) Organization Type: Workforce agency Grant Amount: $9,995,047 Study Target Enrollment: 900 program group, 900 control group	Program Name: Maryland Tech Connection (MTC) Geography of Services: Baltimore-DC Corridor, including Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's and St. Mary's Counties (Maryland)	• Information Technology • Bioscience
Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) Organization Type: Non-profit organization Grant Amount: $6,396,276 Study Target Enrollment: 500 program group, 500 control group	Program Name: JVS Skills to Work in Technology Geography of Services: San Francisco and Contra Costa Counties (California)	• Information Technology
RochesterWorks! Organization Type: Workforce agency Grant Amount: $5,189,848 Study Target Enrollment: 610 program group, 610 control group	Program Name: Finger Lakes Hired Geography of Services: Rochester metropolitan area, including Monroe County (New York)	• Information Technology • Healthcare • Advanced Manufacturing
Worksystems, Inc. (WSI) Organization Type: Workforce agency Grant Amount: $8,455,004 Study Target Enrollment: 500 program group, 500 control group	Program Name: Reboot Northwest Geography of Services: Portland (Oregon)-Vancouver (Washington) metropolitan region, including Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties (Oregon); Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum Counties (Washington State)	• Advanced Manufacturing • Information Technology

Key Findings from the Implementation Study

The 2008-2009 recession brought new urgency to programs providing assistance to those who lost their jobs in the wake of the economic downturn. In 2014, DOL dedicated substantial funding to develop programs to move unemployed workers, particularly those experiencing long spells of unemployment due to the recession, back into the labor market. The RTW grants funded partnerships of workforce agencies, training providers, employers, and other organizations to provide a range of employment-related services customized to long-term unemployed and underemployed workers. In particular, the SGA specified that the RTW grants be used to improve the employment prospects of the long-term unemployed by providing a range of customized services including short- and long-term occupational training, employment readiness and job search assistance, and work-based training. Its intent is to establish programs that might prove effective in preparing U.S. workers for employment, particularly in industries and occupations being filled by foreign workers through the H-1B visa program.

Four RTW grantee programs are included in the evaluation. Exhibit ES-2 presents selected characteristics of enrollees in each of the grantee programs (the program group). Text boxes summarize the key dimensions of each grantee's program, specifically its occupational training, employment readiness and job search activities, work-based training, and other supports. The full report discusses the operational experiences of each of the grantees separately. This summary focuses on the key cross-site findings learned from the implementation and operation of the programs across the four grantees.

- **The grantees launched their programs, using the RTW resources to fund the range of services specified by the grant.**

Although they structured their programs in different ways, all of the grantee programs provided the service options specified by the SGA. These included job search assistance; occupational training, with tuition funded by the grant; work-based training; and employment readiness workshops that often offered assistance geared towards the stresses that can accompany long-term unemployment. As discussed further below, at the time interviews were conducted for this report, participation in work-based training was lower than in the other program components.

Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation

Baltimore (MD) and Washington (DC) Metropolitan Region

Maryland Tech Connection Program

Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation (AAWDC) partners with six other workforce agencies in the state to operate the Maryland Tech Connection (MTC) program. The program assists long-term unemployed and underemployed workers across Maryland in finding employment in bioscience or information technology.

The initial activity is a two-week *job readiness workshop* designed specifically for the RTW program to provide participants with the tools and motivation necessary for a job search, at the same time helping them gain confidence in their skills and abilities as candidates for employment. This workshop also includes assistance with mental health issues and a screening for eligibility for public assistance programs.

Then grant-funded Career Coaches work one-on-one with participants to develop a customized set of program services that can include:

- **Occupational Training:** Short-term, primarily non-credit certificates in IT and bioscience, with tuition funded by MTC.

- **Work-Based Training:** (1) On-the-job training of up to six months with MTC reimbursing the employer for half of the participant's wages, and (2) "Work and Learn" positions of 400-1,000 hours, with MTC paying the participant directly.

- **Job Search Assistance:** One-on-one assistance from Career Coaches and access to group job clubs for MTC participants. Grant-funded Industry Navigators develop connections with businesses with the goal of introducing MTC participants to employers.

- **Other Supports:** For participants enrolled in occupational skills training, MTC provides financial assistance for transportation and training-related materials, as well as a needs-based payment of $100 per week while the participant is in training.

- **All grantees have been challenged to recruit participants from the population targeted by the RTW grant, and all have made outreach an ongoing priority.**

All four RTW grantees in the evaluation experienced some difficulties in identifying potential participants who both were underemployed or unemployed for long periods (generally more than 27 weeks) and had the experience and educational background required for middle-skill positions. Staff planned for a significant recruitment effort to make the target population aware of the RTW program. They reported, however, that recruitment was more difficult than anticipated due to improvements in the economy after the grants were awarded in 2014. Employment data in each of the grantee local areas indicate that this was the case; grantee staff reported that as a result, their target population—more highly skilled unemployed workers—were finding employment on their own. This challenge was compounded by an evaluation design that necessitated over-recruitment in order to establish a control group.

To address these issues, the grantees used multifaceted approaches to recruitment. All had grant-funded staff dedicate time to recruitment and/or hired other organizations to assist with recruitment. For example, AAWDC worked with the AARP Foundation to recruit older workers, and Worksystems contracted with an organization to run an online digital marketing campaign on social media and design recruitment materials. JVS used electronic outreach methods, such as sending emails to individuals who had posted resumes on Monster.com and seemed appropriate for its program. One innovation was working with the Unemployment Insurance program to identify claimants with long spells of receiving benefits, who could then be targeted for mailings and emails (RochesterWorks!, Worksystems). Overall, grantees varied in the extent to which they met their enrollment targets using these strategies. Through August 2016 (approximately one year of a three-year enrollment period), the grantee programs had enrolled between 20 percent (AAWDC, RochesterWorks!) and 50 percent (Worksystems) of their target enrollments for the evaluation.

- **In spite of these difficulties, grantees identified and enrolled their target population. Participants generally had the educational foundation required to pursue middle-skill positions yet were unemployed (some for long periods) when they enrolled.**

More than three-quarters of participants were unemployed at the time they enrolled in the program, and about one-third had been unemployed for more than a year. More than half of program enrollees had at least a bachelor's degree, with most of the others having some college experience. There are other notable characteristics of the population served. First, because the RTW grants focused on individuals with prior work experience and education, most enrollees were older, with an average age of around 45 and at least one-quarter older than age 55. Second, reflecting their long periods of unemployment, except for JVS, about half of the participants were receiving some type of public benefit, primarily Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits. Finally, of the four grantees, RochesterWorks! served a more disadvantaged group, with 45 percent having at least a bachelor's degree and 53 percent receiving public benefits. JVS served the least disadvantaged group based on these measures (81 percent having at least a bachelor's degree and 25 percent receiving public benefits).

Exhibit ES-2: Selected Characteristics of Program Group Members at the Time of Enrollment, by Grantee

Characteristic	AAWDC	JVS	RochesterWorks!	Worksystems
Female (%)	47.1	68.2	56.1	25.9
Average age (years)	46.7	46.5	45.7	45.0
Race (%)				
Black or African American	49.7	12.9	32.2	6.5
White	35.3	57.8	56.2	76.6
Hispanic ethnicity (%)	4.8	11.7	5.7	7.9
Unemployed at enrollment (%)	88.8	78.3	89.3	78.5
Unemployed 12 months or longer (%)	31.7	34.9	37.7	32.6
Education level (%)				
Some college but no degree	15.8	11.9	25.2	21.1
Technical or associate's degree	10.5	6.0	16.3	13.8
Bachelor's or master's degree	64.7	80.8	44.7	54.3
Children in household under age 18 (%)	38.9	23.6	46.7	30.5
Receiving any public benefit (%)	41.7	25.3	52.9	47.4

SOURCE: RTW Baseline Information Form.
NOTES: Percentages do not sum to 100 percent for race and education because not all response categories are included. Sample size is 200 for AAWDC, 153 for JVS, 130 for RochesterWorks!, and 250 for Worksystems and includes all program group members randomly assigned through October 3, 2016.

- **One-on-one assistance from grant-funded staff during all phases of the program was a key program service for three of the grantees.**

For AAWDC, RochesterWorks!, and Worksystems, grant-funded staff worked individually with participants to conduct assessments, develop individualized employment plans that specified program services, and provide ongoing support and assistance. Staff in these three programs reported that the tailored guidance and support was a central program element, and that such individualized one-on-one support was typically not available through the standard services at the American Job Centers. JVS took a different approach, enrolling participants directly in an IT training program at or coordinated by JVS, with one-on-one staff assistance delivered concurrently or coordinated with the technical training course.

- **Reflecting the needs of long-term unemployed participants, grantee employment readiness activities aimed to reorient participants to the work world, as well as build job search skills and industry knowledge.**

Though there are differences across the grantees, these activities generally included setting employment goals; understanding the types of jobs and skills required for the target industry; identifying interests, abilities, and strategies for filling skill gaps; developing job search skills for the target industry, such as resume development and networking; and labor market analysis and trends in the relevant sector. Most also included a peer group component, where participants received feedback and support from others in the class.

Three grantees (AAWDC, RochesterWorks!, Worksystems) provide a workshop (one to three weeks in duration) focused on building job search skills for a population without a recent work history. At AAWDC all participants take the workshop as their first step in the program. Rather than a workshop, JVS introduces employment readiness activities, including goal setting, in its program-specific initial "Foundation Week"; subsequent sessions focus on building industry knowledge and enhancing job search skills that accompanied technical skills training. AAWDC and JVS used RTW grant funds to develop

these activities, sometimes called "bootcamps," and Worksystems used funds to adapt a pre-existing bootcamp. RochesterWorks! uses a pre-existing workshop (that is open to non-RTW participants) at the American Job Center.

- **The grantee programs also provided access to specialized assistance on mental or behavioral health issues, specifically designed for RTW participants.**

Explicitly recognizing the emotional and psychological effects that can result from long-term unemployment, the four grantee programs included services intended to address participants' mental health and self-confidence. In some cases, grantees contracted with an outside organization to provide assistance on mental and/or behavioral health issues. For example, AAWDC offered a three-hour workshop led by a licensed counselor that focused on the trauma of job loss and unemployment and strategies for coping with stress. JVS offered a six-session, cognitive behavioral therapy–based component designed to build confidence and motivation to find employment, developed specifically for its RTW program. For its existing employment readiness workshop, RochesterWorks! included similar topics around identifying and addressing negative beliefs and emotions that could affect a job search. Worksystems contracted with an outside agency to offer behavioral health services to participants and provide staff training on dealing with mental health issues.

- **The grantees primarily relied on existing occupational training programs provided by community colleges or other training providers, with tuition paid by RTW funds.**

At this point in their operation, the four grantee programs primarily offer training to RTW participants that is short term (less than six months), although some make longer-term options (up to two years) available, as well. Other forms of tuition assistance would potentially be available to participants for these programs, which, depending on the training program, may include Individual Training Accounts offered through WIOA or Pell grants. The RTW programs, however, were able to coordinate their tuition assistance with a range of other assistance, as discussed above, including staff help identifying the appropriate training programs to achieve career goals and access to job readiness and job search services to facilitate moving from training to employment.

> **Jewish Vocational Service**
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> **San Francisco Bay Area (CA)**
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> **JVS Skills to Work in Technology Program**
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> Jewish Vocational Service (JVS), a not-for-profit organization in San Francisco, California, operates three programs under the umbrella of "Skills to Work in Technology" (STW-T). The programs aim to help long-term unemployed workers find employment in IT. At the time the data were collected for this study, eligible individuals enroll directly in one of three programs. Components of these programs include:
>
> - **Occupational Training:** (1) A six-week business administration "bootcamp" course primarily focused on job readiness skills, supplemented with training on Microsoft Office® software; (2) an 11-week program providing training in digital marketing; and (3) a 16-week program providing technical training on Salesforce® administration.
>
> - **Job Search and Job Readiness Activities:** Each program delivers these activities concurrently with the occupational training. They begin with a "Foundation Week" focused on team building among the class and personal and career exploration to prepare for job search. Later activities include developing job search tools, such as resumes and networking skills, and improving participants' motivation and self-confidence. After the training, participants support one another in job search and networking in peer group activities.
>
> - **Work-Based Training:** 1-3 week paid "fellowship" position with an employer as part of the Salesforce administration training.

- **Though available, the paid work-based training positions were less frequently used than the other program services.**

Three of the grantees had a distinct paid work experience component (at JVS it was part of only one of the training offerings). These positions typically included either on-the-job training, where participants' wages are subsidized by the grant as an incentive for the employer to hire them, or a shorter-term work experience position, where the grantee program pays the participants' wages. Staff at some grantees report that fewer participants have been placed in these positions, particularly the paid work experience, than they had expected. One reason is that it took time in the early stages of the grant period to build staff expertise and connections with employers. Grantees focused on launching other program components first, such as developing and implementing the work readiness workshops and enrolling participants in occupational training. In addition, staff report that it is sometimes challenging to identify employers that can offer positions that are well suited for short-term employment. Moreover, when an employer has a suitable position, the grantee does not always have a participant who would be a good match for the opening. Aside from JVS, grantee staff reported that they intended to build this program service moving forward.

- **Some grantees worked with employers in relevant sectors both to support the design of the program and to help identify employment opportunities for participants.**

The grantees used different approaches to engage employers in their program. AAWDC established grant-funded "Industry Navigators," dedicated to building relationships with employers in the targeted industries, identifying job openings, and referring program participants to them for work-based training and employment. Each of its three staff focused on a different industry or region targeted by its grant. The RochesterWorks! Project Manager played a lead role in contacting and networking with employers. JVS staff engaged employers in program design, and its staff interviewed 25 local technology employers about their hiring practices and how job candidates can demonstrate their skills during their job search. Grantee program staff at JVS also worked to identify employment options beyond the large technology companies where competition for jobs is significant, including small businesses.

> **RochesterWorks!**
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> **Monroe County (NY)**
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> **Finger Lakes Hired Program**
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> RochesterWorks!, the Workforce Investment Board for the City of Rochester and surrounding Monroe County in western New York, operates the Finger Lakes Hired program. The program assists long-term unemployed or underemployed workers in finding employment in IT, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing. Grant-funded Education and Employment Specialists work one-on-one with participants to develop a customized set of program services that may include:
>
> - **Occupational Training:** Short- and long-term certificate and two-year degree programs in IT, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing, with tuition funded by Finger Lakes Hired. For those enrolled in a training program at a partnering community college, on-site assistance with academic issues.
>
> - **Job Readiness Activities:** One-week workshop available at the Career Center focused on building job search skills and addressing social and emotional issues related to long-term unemployment.
>
> - **Work-Based Training:** (1) On-the-job training, with the grant subsidizing the participant's wages for 6 to 32 weeks, and/or (2) work experience "tryouts" of 2 to 4 weeks, with the grant paying the participant's salary.
>
> - **Job Search Assistance:** One-on-one assistance from Education and Employment Specialists. The Project Manager contacts employers in the relevant sectors to identify job openings and connect participants to them.
>
> - **Other Supports:** For participants enrolled in training, financial assistance for transportation, tuition, training-related materials and certification exams, and a needs-based payment of $50 per week.

- **The grantees generally served wide geographic areas, which helped facilitate recruitment, but necessitated ongoing attention to coordination and consistency.**

Each grantee program operated in multiple counties and generally required partnerships with multiple workforce agencies. For example, Worksystems coordinated three workforce agencies in six counties across two states; AAWDC involved seven workforce centers that served residents of 12 counties and one city in Maryland. Staff reported that this breadth of operation has been critical for operating the program at the desired scale. However, the large geographical reach of the programs also created management issues. Program staff made efforts to provide consistent services across local administrative systems, labor markets, and employer bases required ongoing coordination and communication. At times, grantees experienced difficulties communicating consistently with staff given their decentralized locations.

Conclusion

Overall, the grantees in the Ready to Work evaluation launched their programs, providing the range of services for long-term unemployed individuals, as specified by DOL. Though recruitment has been challenging, the grantee programs are using a multi-faceted outreach effort to identify and enroll well-educated and unemployed individuals, many who have been out of work for long periods.

Many of the grantee programs' services are specifically designed for the RTW population to find employment in the middle- to high-skill positions targeted by the grant, particularly employment readiness workshops, often with an emphasis on addressing emotional circumstances of those experiencing long-term unemployment; work-based training at an employer; and direct job search assistance. The grantees also funded tuition to attend existing occupational training programs, but these training programs were not generally developed specifically for the RTW grant program. Three of the programs featured a staff person who worked closely with participants to develop and guide a service strategy, and this was viewed by staff as a critical program component.

Future RTW evaluation reports will examine the impact of the RTW program services on participants' educational and economic outcomes, as well as additional implementation findings. For the impact study, this includes examining the effects of RTW services on: (1) short-term outcomes, specifically the

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Worksystems, Inc.

Portland (OR)–Vancouver (WA) Metropolitan Region

Reboot Northwest

Worksystems, the Workforce Investment Board for Multnomah and Washington Counties in Oregon, operates Reboot Northwest (NW) in collaboration with two other boards in six counties in the Portland-Vancouver (WA) metropolitan area. *Reboot NW aims to connect long-term unemployed workers and veterans to skilled positions in the fields of IT and advanced manufacturing.* Grant-funded Career Coaches work one-on-one with participants to develop a customized set of program services that may include:

- **Occupational Training:** Short and long-term certificate and two-year degree programs in IT, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing, with tuition funded by Reboot NW.

- **Job Readiness Activities:** Two- to three-week *grant-funded Career Link designed to increase participants' job readiness and job search skills and introduce them to industry experts and employers.*

- **Work-Based Training:** (1) On-the-job training, with the participant's wages subsidized by the grant with the expectation that the individual will be hired, and (2) paid work experience positions of up to 240 hours where the participant works with an employer, with the wages paid by Reboot NW.

- **Job Search Assistance:** One-on-one assistance from a Career Coach and peer support through networking groups with others who have finished other program activities.

- **Other Supports:** Transportation*, assistance on behavioral health issues provided through two contracted partners,* and housing vouchers provided by a local housing authority.

receipt of training and other services and the attainment of educational credentials; and, (2) the longer-term outcomes that are expected to be produced from these short-term outcomes, including increased employment and earnings, improved household income and financial circumstances, and reduced receipt of public benefits.

Two additional reports are planned: (1) an interim report providing additional implementation information, including participation patterns in different program services (such as the activities attended and completion rates) and the further development of program activities such as work-based training, and program impacts within a short-term 18-month follow-up period; and, (2) a final report providing impacts within a longer-term 30-month follow-up period.

1. Introduction

A key challenge facing policymakers and program administrators is how to develop effective strategies to help Americans facing economic challenges, particularly the long-term unemployed, to succeed in the labor market. During the deep recession of 2008-2009, an unprecedented number of workers lost their jobs and many remained under- or unemployed,[2] even as the economy recovered. Identifying what strategies can help them regain their economic footing has been a priority, with a particular interest in employment in the higher-paying, middle- and high-skill jobs that are in demand by American businesses.

As part of this effort, in 2014, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) funded the **Ready to Work (RTW) Partnership grant program** that is the focus of this report. Its grants went to partnerships of workforce agencies, training providers, employers, and other organizations, to improve the employment prospects of the long-term unemployed by providing a range of customized services including staff guidance, occupational training, employment readiness and job search assistance, and work-based training. Its intent is to establish programs that might prove effective in preparing U.S. workers for employment, particularly in industries and occupations being filled by foreign workers through the H-1B visa program.[3] In 2014, DOL awarded four-year grants totaling $170 million to 23 grantees, with individual awards ranging from $3 to $10 million.

To answer the effectiveness question, DOL's Employment and Training Administration (ETA), in collaboration with the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO), contracted Abt Associates and its partner MEF Associates to conduct a rigorous evaluation of RTW grantee programs. Four grantees were purposively selected for the evaluation based on their program design and size.[4] That evaluation comprises two major components:

- An **implementation study** that examines program design and operation; specifically, the services provided by each grantee program and participation patterns of program enrollees; and

- An **impact study** that uses a random assignment design to determine program effects on participant outcomes of interest, including employment, earnings, and educational attainment after 18 months (relative to the control group).

This report documents early findings from the implementation study covering the four grantees' first year of operation. A future report will provide additional results from the implementation study, including participation patterns. It also will document findings from the impact study.

The remainder of this chapter provides background on the RTW grant program, including its origins, goals, and requirements. It also provides an overview of the selected grantees being studied. The chapter then describes the evaluation design, including the methodology and data sources for the implementation

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[2]   Kosanovich and Sherman, 2015.

[3]   The H-1B visa program allows qualified nonimmigrant aliens to temporarily work in the United States when employers cannot otherwise obtain needed business skills and abilities from the U.S. workforce (https://www.dol.gov/whd/immigration/h1b.htm). See the box on the next page for more.

[4]   The evaluation will describe the implementation and impacts for selected grantee programs separately. It will not estimate the overall implementation or impact of the RTW grant program.

study and the design of the impact study. The concluding section outlines the structure and content of the rest of this report.

1.1   The Ready to Work Partnership Grant Program

The RTW grant program focuses on the preparation of long-term unemployed workers for employment, particularly in high-growth industries and occupations where employers often cannot find sufficiently trained American workers to fill these jobs.[5] Historically, the H-1B visa program has been an important means for U.S.-based businesses to address skills gaps.[6] The RTW grant program is funded by fees paid by employers seeking to hire foreign workers who require an H-1B visa and, consistent with this funding source, has the goal of preparing and placing American workers into jobs within occupations and industries where H-1B visas are used.[7] Specifically, the RTW Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA) specifies that the grantees should focus on assisting workers gain employment in industries and occupations that are projected to add substantial numbers of new jobs to the economy, are in new or emerging industries that are expected to grow, or are being transformed by technology and innovation requiring new skill sets for workers.[8]

DOL based its approach to the RTW grant funds on the premise that many of these workers are skilled but require customized services in adapting their skills and experience to new industries, and that other workers at lower skill levels may benefit from short-term and even longer-term training to obtain jobs that can match their previous earnings. In addition, as a result of their long-term unemployment, some may be burdened by debt or struggling with psychological difficulties such as depression.[9] To address this, DOL also allowed for an approach that included services that could address the emotional consequences of long-term unemployment.

DOL funded RTW grantees to provide a range of training and other services to prepare individuals with the skills and competencies in demand by employers in high-growth industries, particularly those using H-1B visas to hire foreign workers. The American Job Centers already provide the public with employment services, such as job search assistance and access to occupational training programs, as required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Thus, DOL developed the RTW

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[5]   A competing argument is that no skills gap exists; employers could eliminate the gap by raising wages. At higher wages, employers would demand fewer workers, more workers would apply, and more workers would seek the training (and be available soon) (Burtless, 2014). From either perspective, however, an increased supply of trained workers would arguably be better for both employers and workers.

[6]   Since 1990, the H-1B visa program has enabled U.S.-based businesses to employ highly educated, highly skilled foreign workers. Individuals with H-1B visas can work in the United States for three years (extendable to six) under the sponsorship of a specific employer. Initiated as part of the Immigration Act of 1990, the visa program emphasizes hiring foreign workers for "specialty occupations" that "require theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge" in which there is a shortage of U.S. workers with the requisite skill base. Generally, foreign workers must have a bachelor's degree or its equivalent to qualify for an H-1B visa.

[7]   In 2010-2011, the occupation with the highest concentration of H-1B workers was computer operator, followed by engineer, health diagnosing and treating practitioner, financial specialist, and business operations specialist. In fiscal years 2009-2012, some 41 percent of approved visa applicants had a bachelor's degree; 59 percent had a master's, professional, or doctoral degree (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2013).

[8]   U.S. Department of Labor, 2014.

[9]   Borie-Holtz, Van Horn, and Zukin, 2010.

program to provide **additional resources targeted to those facing long-term unemployment**, with the services tailored to their needs and circumstances.

DOL's SGA for the RTW program defined certain parameters:

- Grantees are to target *long-term unemployed workers*, defined as those who had been jobless for 27 weeks or more. This includes those who lost their jobs during or after the 2008-2009 recession (defined as those who lost their job after December 1, 2007) and were not currently employed or were underemployed—that is, had obtained only short-term or part-time employment but had not yet found full-time jobs in line with their previous level of skill or earnings.[10]

- RTW grant-funded services are to include an assessment of participants' skills and needs and customized services along three tracks: (1) staff guidance, including intensive coaching and specialized services, and other direct job placement services; (2) short-term training that leads to direct job placement; and (3) longer-term training that culminates in an industry-recognized credential and employment. Individuals can receive services in more than one track.

- In addition to these tracks, DOL had a specific interest in work-based training where participants are paid, such as on-the-job training and paid work experience; and in services that address the unique barriers facing long-term unemployed workers, such as financial counseling and behavioral health counseling.

DOL awarded the 23 RTW grants in October 2014. Most grantees used the first several months to plan their programs, and started providing services in spring or summer 2015. The four-year grants are scheduled to end in October 2018.

1.2 Grantee Programs Included in the Study

In consultation with DOL, the evaluation team purposively selected four grantees for study based on the following factors:

- *Strength of the services.* A primary selection criterion was the nature and strength of the grantee's program in key innovations central to the RTW SGA, including in each of the three tracks discussed above.

- *Program size and sufficient demand to create a control group.* Another primary selection criterion was the grantee's enrollment goals. Because the evaluation is to provide impact estimates specific to each study site, and because the impact study will do this using a random assignment approach in its research design, the evaluation needed grantees that could serve a large number of participants (approximately 500 in total). This translated into several hundred participants served over the course of a three-year enrollment period.

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[10] The SGA also allows incumbent workers to be served by the grant. *Incumbent workers* are defined as those who are in need of skills upgrade to obtain a new job or retain a current job that is requiring new or different skills in an H-1B industry/occupation, and where training is developed with an employer or employer association to upgrade skills training. Program enrollees in incumbent worker training funded by the grant are not included in the evaluation.

- *Ability to accommodate the study procedures.* Because grantees included in the evaluation must integrate random assignment into their enrollment procedures, the final section criterion was an intake process conducive to an experimental research design.

The process for identifying grantees for the study had three steps. First, the evaluation team reviewed and summarized application materials submitted to DOL by each of the 23 RTW grantees. Next, in early 2015, the team talked with each grantee to gain more detailed information on its planned program services. Topics covered in these conference calls included program content and size, projected enrollment numbers and enrollment period, service delivery location(s) and service strategies, target population, and recruitment steps.

The team then selected six potential grantee candidates for the RTW evaluation and conducted one-day site visits to each to gather additional information on its program design and services and how to incorporate study procedures. Based on this assessment, the team recommended to DOL four grantees for the study. Given this purposive approach to site selection, the grantees were not selected to be and are not representative of all RTW grantees.

Exhibit 1-1 provides an overview of the four selected grantees (the lead agency in each partnership) and their RTW-funded programs:

- *Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation (AAWDC)*—Maryland Tech Connection (MTC) in the Baltimore/Washington, DC corridor.

- *Jewish Vocational Service (JVS)*—JVS Skills to Work in Technology in the San Francisco Bay Area (California).

- *RochesterWorks!*—Finger Lakes Hired program in Monroe County (New York), which includes the city of Rochester.

- *Worksystems Inc. (WSI)*—Reboot Northwest in the Portland (Oregon)/Vancouver (Washington) metropolitan region.

The RTW grantees included are located in several urban areas, but each serves a relatively large geographic area that includes suburban and rural communities. JVS is a non-profit organization; the others are workforce agencies that provide services under the WIOA. With their RTW grants ranging between $5 and $10 million, three of the four grantees focus on employment in more than one industry, but all include information technology (IT) and two include manufacturing. All the grantees target unemployed or underemployed populations; three have relatively high target enrollments of 500 participants and the fourth a target of 900 (with an equal proportion in the control group; see further discussion below). AAWDC and RochesterWorks! agreed to provide a larger sample than the minimum required for the evaluation.[11]

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[11] All four grantees plan to serve more workers than will be included in the evaluation. Certain groups were not randomly assigned/included in the evaluation; primarily veterans and incumbent workers. In addition, workers in rural service areas of the RochesterWorks! grant program were not included in the evaluation. Total target enrollment levels for the grantees (including workers who will not be part of the evaluation) are 975 for AAWDC, 801 for JVS, 1,500 for RochesterWorks!; and 1,000 for WSI. JVS and WSI plan to serve more workers once study enrollment reaches the required 500.

The programs provided by the four grantees vary, but all include job readiness assistance, occupational training, job search assistance, and work-based training options. As discussed further in this report, though the RTW SGA focused on the provision of services along the three tracks (job placement, short-term training, longer-term training), the grantee programs provided a range of services that included but were not defined by these tracks.

Exhibit 1-1: Overview of Grantee Programs in the Ready to Work Evaluation

Grantee Lead Agency	Program	Target Industries	Target Group and Enrollment	Overview of Grant-Funded Services
Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation (AAWDC) Organization Type: Workforce agency Grant Amount: $9,995,047	Program Name: Maryland Tech Connection (MTC) Geography of Services: Baltimore-DC Corridor, including Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties (Maryland)	• Information Technology • Bioscience	Target Group: Long-term unemployed, **unemployed (≥19** weeks), and incumbent workers. Should be at least 18 years of age with a high school diploma/GED. Must have postsecondary education or prior experience in targeted industry Study Target Program Enrollment: 900	Maryland Tech Connection staff assess individuals to determine their interest and aptitude in IT and bioscience. All participants initially attend a two-week group job search skills and job readiness workshop developed for the grant program. Following this workshop, program staff and participants develop an Employment Plan that identifies the activities the participant will pursue including immediate job search assistance, occupational training funded through the grant, and work-based training at employer. Grant-funded Industry Navigators develop connections with businesses with the goal of introducing MTC participants to employers. In addition, a MTC partner provides assistance on mental health issues, and MTC requires that all participants receive a screening to determine their eligibility for public benefits programs, though they are not required to enroll in them. The program provides transportation assistance in the form of gas cards and, on a case-by-case basis, short-term needs-based financial assistance.
Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) Organization Type: Non-profit organization Grant Amount: $6,396,276	Program Name: JVS Skills to Work in Technology Geography of Services: San Francisco and Contra Costa Counties (California)	• Information Technology	Target Group: Long-term unemployed (≥27 weeks of Unemployment Insurance) and underemployed workers Study Target Program Enrollment: 500	Skills to Work in Technology includes three programs that combine job search and job readiness activities and different technical skills training classes. They are a six-week course primarily focused on job readiness supplemented with training on Microsoft Office programs needed for an office environment; an 11-week program providing training in digital marketing; and a 16-week program providing training on administration of the Salesforce® platform. Job search and readiness activities are similar among the three programs. They begin with a "Foundation Week" focused on team building and personal and career exploration. Later activities include developing individualized career action plans; identifying a target job; career exploration; developing job search tools such as resumes; learning about self-marketing; group activities to facilitate peer support; and classes to improve participants' motivation and self-confidence. After the training, participants support one another in job search and networking in peer group activities.

Exhibit 1-1: Overview of Grantee Programs in the Ready to Work Evaluation (continued)

Grantee Lead Agency	Program	Target Industries	Target Group and Enrollment	Overview of Grant-Funded Services
RochesterWorks! <u>Organization Type:</u> Workforce agency <u>Grant Amount:</u> $5,189,848	<u>Program Name:</u> Finger Lakes Hired <u>Geography of Services:</u> Rochester metropolitan area, including Monroe County (New York)	• Information Technology • Healthcare • Advanced Manufacturing	<u>Target Group:</u> Long-term unemployed and **underemployed workers (≥ 27 weeks).** Should have high school diploma/GED, plus additional education, training, or work experience in the industry <u>Study Target Program Enrollment:</u> 610	Finger Lakes Hired participants are assessed by grant-funded program staff to develop a customized set of program services. The plan and subsequent activities pursued by the participant may include occupational training in IT, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing programs funded by Finger Lakes Hired; employment readiness activities to build job search and "soft" skills needed to find and keep jobs (primarily a one-week workshop available through the Career Center); work-based training at an employer, including on-the-job training; and job search assistance. Finger Lakes Hired program staff provide guidance on employment-related issues, and for participants enrolled in a training program at a partnering community college, on-site assistance with academic issues. Finger Lakes Hired also provides participants enrolled in occupational training with financial assistance for transportation, tuition, training-related materials, and needs-based payments.
Worksystems, Inc. (WSI) <u>Organization Type:</u> Workforce agency <u>Grant Amount:</u> $8,455,004	<u>Program Name:</u> Reboot Northwest <u>Geography of Services:</u> Portland (Oregon)-Vancouver (Washington) metropolitan region, including Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties (Oregon); Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum Counties (Washington State)	• Advanced Manufacturing • Information Technology	<u>Target Group:</u> Long-term unemployed, underemployed workers (≥27 weeks), and unemployed veterans. All should have high school diploma/GED, and some postsecondary training or work experience <u>Study Target Program Enrollment:</u> 500	Reboot Northwest participants work with grant-funded program staff to assess skills, work experience, and career goals to develop an individualized training plan in advanced manufacturing or IT. The plans pursued by program participants can include occupational training programs with tuition paid by grant; a two- to three-week job readiness class designed for the grant to build "soft" skills, strengthen professional networks, and enhance job search strategies; work-based training with industry employers; and job search activities. Reboot Northwest also includes assistance on behavioral health issues, provided by organizational partners. Participants enrolled in occupational training programs receive financial assistance for transportation, training materials, and needs-based housing and utility payments.

1.3   Evaluation Design and Data Sources

This section discusses the methodology and data sources for the implementation study that is the focus of this report. It then describes the design for the impact study to come.

1.3.1   Ready to Work Implementation Study Goals and Data Sources

The RTW implementation study documents the four programs as implemented and describes the experiences of the grantees in operationalizing their grant-funded efforts. With a focus on their first year of operations, this first report on RTW program implementation examines how each of the four selected grantees translated the RTW resources and guidance into an operational program and highlights key findings from these experiences. Specifically, this report describes the specific target population each grantee chose to serve, how they recruited and enrolled participants, the staffing and organizational partnerships they established to operate the services, and the specific services and supports they provided (including assessment, staff guidance, employment readiness activities, occupational training, work-based training, job search assistance, and financial and other supports)

The information presented in this report primarily relies on in-person interviews conducted with grantee program administrators, line staff, and organizational partners in summer 2016, some 8 to 10 months after the four grantee programs entered the study and random assignment for the impact study began (discussed below). For each grantee, all grant-funded staff were interviewed at all locations of the program. In addition, staff and partners who worked on the RTW program in some capacity were interviewed even if they did not receive direct funding from the grant. No staff declined to be interviewed for the study. Appendix A provides a list of all staff positions interviewed for the study for each grantee.

The report also presents information on program participants' demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, employment and education history, receipt of public assistance, and opinions about work, collected when they enrolled in the program. Longer-term implementation results, including the participation patterns of enrollees, will be presented as part of the impact study.

1.3.2   Ready to Work Impact Study Design

To produce reliable estimates of the effectiveness of each grantee's program, the RTW evaluation uses an *experimental* research design. This involves assigning eligible program applicants through a lottery-like (*random*) process to one of two groups and then comparing outcomes for the two groups. The two groups are:

- A **program group** that is offered the chance to participate in the grant-funded training and other services (whether or not they actually participate); and

- A **control group** that cannot participate in the grant-funded training and other services (but can access other similar services available in the community).

With half of eligible applicants going randomly to each group, any differences between the two research groups' outcomes (known as *impacts*) that emerge over time can be attributed to the grant-funded program, because the two groups are statistically alike when they enter the program. Maintaining the comparability of the program and control groups requires comparing all those in the program group versus all those in the control group, regardless of whether they enrolled in the program. A critical implication of this is that the evaluation estimates the impact of access to the entire program, as opposed to specific components.

In addition, both program and control group members can access education, training, and support services available in the community that are not exclusive to the RTW program. Because the control group can access other services, the program group is not being compared versus a "no services" control group. Thus, the impact study will measure the effects on participant outcomes of offering the grant-funded services versus the configuration of services already available to anyone in the community.

Depending on the grantee, program staff started random assignment in summer or fall 2015, about two to three months after their programs were implemented and will continue for approximately three years. All applicants who were determined eligible for the program are included in the evaluation and random assignment, except for veterans and incumbent workers. The specific random assignment procedures for the grantees are described in the program-specific chapters that follow. However, all grantees' random assignment procedures followed the same steps:

- *Recruitment.* Program staff recruit potential participants using standard methods, which can include referrals from community partners, word of mouth, and media publicity.

- *Eligibility.* Program staff determine that applicants are eligible for the grant-funded services using standard procedures (i.e., program application forms, meetings to determine whether an applicant meets the grantee-specific eligibility criteria).

- *Informed consent.* Program staff describe the study to eligible applicants and administer the informed consent form, which explains their privacy and other rights as study participants. Applicants must sign this form to be in the evaluation. Those who refuse to sign the informed consent form are not included in the study and are not eligible for the grant-funded services. They receive information about other similar services in the community.

- *Baseline data.* Eligible applicants who consent to be in the study complete the Baseline Information Form (BIF), which captures information on their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, employment and education history, receipt of public assistance, and opinions about work. Program staff enter information from the BIF into a web-based Participant Tracking System (PTS) developed specifically for the evaluation.

- *Random assignment.* Program staff use the PTS to randomly assign program applicants to the program or control group.

- *Services according to random assignment status:*

  – Applicants assigned to the program group are providing the training and related services provided through the grant-funded program.

  – Applicants assigned to the control group are not allowed into the program; they have no access to the grant-funded training and other services. Instead, they receive information about other similar services in the community and may choose to access those.

1.3.3 Ready to Work Impact Study Data Collection and Analysis

The contribution of the impact study to the RTW evaluation is to estimate the effects (if any) of each grantee program on its program participants, measured approximately 18 months after random assignment. Specifically, the impact study examines the impact of each program on (1) the short-term intermediate outcomes on participants' of receiving training and other services and their attainment of educational credentials; and (2) the longer-term outcomes that are expected to be produced from these

short-term outcomes, including increased employment and earnings, improved household income and financial circumstances, and reduced receipt of public benefits.

Data collection for the evaluation's impact study is ongoing. Its sources include a survey administered to all study participants (program and control group) 18 months after random assignment and administrative records (data from the National Directory of New Hires on quarterly earnings in jobs covered by Unemployment Insurance).

As noted, information on the impact evaluation, including additional information on the methodology and the results, will be discussed in a future report.

1.4   Overview of the Report

The remainder of this implementation report is organized as follows:

- *Chapters 2 through **5*** present the implementation study results, separately, for each of the four study grantees. Each of these chapters begins with an overview of the grantee's program, the context in which the program operates, the population targeted for services, the characteristics of program group members at baseline, and the organizational structure of the program. Each chapter then examines recruitment and enrollment processes and describes the trainings, supports, and assistance provided as part of the grant.

- *Chapter 6* examines key findings and lessons related to the implementation and operation of the programs across the four grantees.

2. Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation—Maryland Tech Connection

This chapter describes the Maryland Tech Connection program operated by Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation. After an overview of the grant, it describes the context and goals of the program, its target population, the characteristics of its enrollees, its organizational structure, and its process for recruitment and enrollment. The final section describes the program services provided by Maryland Tech Connection, including assessment and ongoing assistance from program staff, employment readiness activities, occupational training, work-based training, job search assistance, and financial assistance.

2.1 Grant Overview

Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation (AAWDC) provides workforce development services in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. It partners with six other workforce agencies in the state to operate the Maryland Tech Connection (MTC) program, which received a $10 million Ready to Work (RTW) grant. MTC brings together a range of services to help long-term unemployed and underemployed workers across Maryland find employment in bioscience or information technology (IT).

The MTC program features Career Coaches, located in each of seven Career Centers, who work individually with participants while they are in the program. Participants first attend a two-week, group job readiness workshop called Career ReStart, focused on strengthening job search skills needed to find and keep jobs, expanding employer networks, and building confidence. During this workshop, program partner Arundel Lodge provides assistance on mental health issues, tailored to the needs of the long-term unemployed. As part of the workshop, partners Seedco screens attendees to determine their eligibility for public benefits programs and MdBio Foundation provides a career awareness session and laboratory demonstration.

Following Career ReStart, a Career Coach works with each MTC participant to customize an Employment Plan that identifies the activities the participant will engage in to get a job. Depending on their needs and interests, participants can receive a range of grant-supported services including occupational training, paid work-based training, and individualized job search assistance. For participants enrolled in training, MTC also provides financial assistance for transportation, tuition, and training-related materials and a needs-based payment of $100 per week. Grant-funded Industry Navigators develop connections with businesses with the goal of introducing MTC participants to employers; they also use information from these connections to assess participants' skill gaps and provide input to participants' Employment Plans.

2.2 Program Context

Established in 2001 as a non-profit organization, Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation provides services for job seekers and employers in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, at its American Job Centers (AJCs), known as Career Centers in Maryland, under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). These services include job search assistance, General Education Diploma (GED) preparation, and job readiness workshops. AAWDC also works with businesses to identify labor needs and develop strategies to address them such as identifying training options or referring qualified candidates. AAWDC administers the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for the county and operates a number of workforce initiatives funded by federal and state grants. Established in 2015, MTC is a new program that incorporates several elements of previous AAWDC initiatives, including a sector focus, financial support, a regional service area, and assistance to older workers (generally defined as those over age 50).

Led by AAWDC, the Maryland Tech Connection is a regional initiative; together the partnership serves residents of Baltimore City plus 12 of Maryland's 23 counties: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's (see Exhibit 2-1). Residents of other Maryland counties can also participate by going to the one of the participating MTC Career Centers. MTC has a particular geographical emphasis on the Interstate 95 corridor and Capital Beltway near Washington, DC, where a concentration of the population and jobs are located.

Exhibit 2-1: Counties Served by Maryland Tech Connection and Career Center Locations
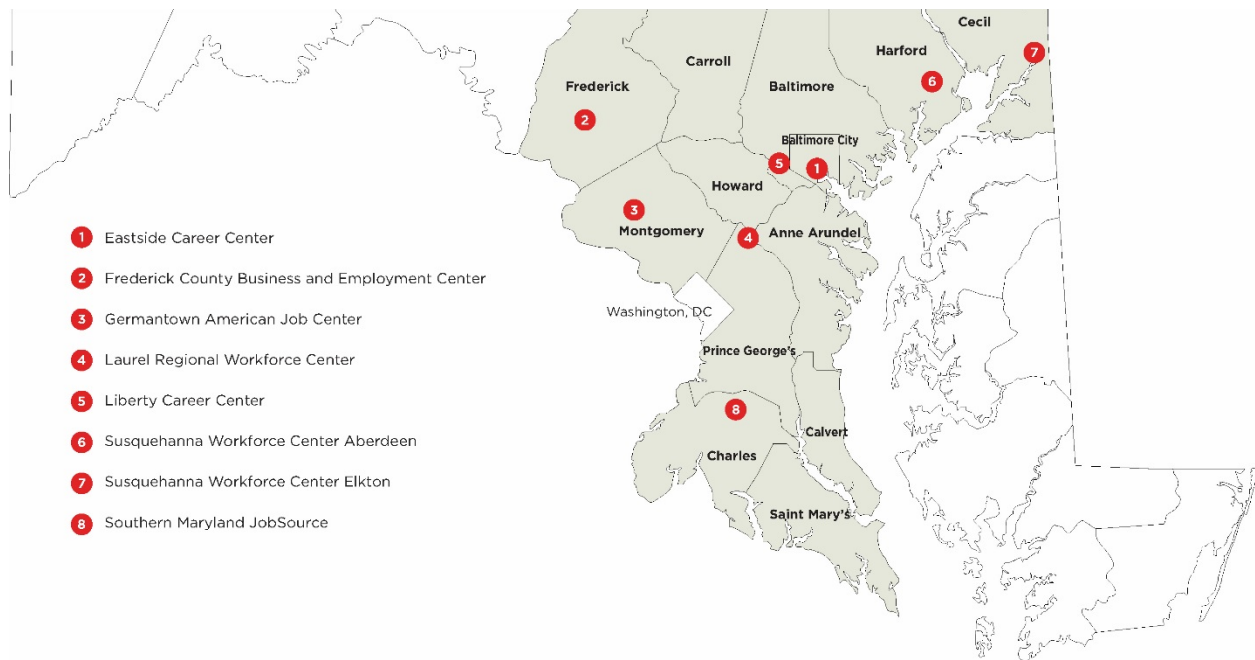
MTC's service region is a mix of urban, suburban, and rural areas that vary demographically and economically. Anne Arundel, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's surrounding the District are primarily suburban, as is Baltimore County. Baltimore City is a major urban center. Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's (known also as the Tri-County Area) in the south are more rural. Carroll, Cecil, Frederick, and Harford are a mix of suburban and rural.

The populations in Prince George's County and Baltimore City are predominantly Black or African American. Montgomery and Prince George's Counties have comparatively large Latino populations, and the rural counties are predominately White (excepting Charles County). Household income and poverty levels differ significantly. For example, Howard County has a median household income of $110,000 and 5 percent of its population lives below the poverty level; Baltimore City's median household income is $42,000, with nearly 25 percent of its population living below the poverty level.

The economic conditions also vary, with relatively low unemployment rates in the suburban counties (3.9 to 5.4 percent) versus almost 8 percent in Baltimore City in 2015. (Appendix Exhibit B-1 shows selected demographic and economic characteristics for the MTC service region.)

The 2008-2009 recession's impact on the region served by MTC was smaller than on other parts of the country,[12] in part because the federal government is one of the largest employers in Maryland and is typically less affected by economic downturns. Still, staff reported that the decline in federal spending in the years following, due to the government shutdown and budget sequestrations, led to slower economic growth. In the years immediately prior to the 2015 start of the MTC program, however, Maryland's economy improved sharply. For example, the unemployment rate in Anne Arundel County dropped from 6.9 percent to 4.5 percent between 2010 and 2015.[13] Other counties in the MTC service area had similar improvements.

In its grant application, AAWDC still saw room for improvement. Its research suggested that some long-term unemployed Maryland workers were relatively well educated but were being overlooked by employers who thought them overqualified or were unwilling to pay them commensurate with their education and experience.

AAWDC designed MTC to focus on the IT and bioscience industries because they were projected to be key growth areas in the state.[14] Further, in 2013, the top five occupations for H-1B visas in Maryland were in either IT or bioscience.[15] Maryland is home to a large concentration of bioscience employers, including biotech firms, life sciences companies, the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration, the Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Maryland. Staff also reported strong job demand in IT, particularly from federal agencies and government contractors located in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, especially in cybersecurity, a sector of the IT industry.[16]

2.3   Target Group and Program Group Characteristics

Maryland Tech Connection is open to Maryland residents who are at least 18 years old; have a high school diploma or equivalent; and are long-term unemployed, defined as having been out of work for 19 weeks or longer, or underemployed workers who lost their job and have not found equivalent work. In addition, applicants must have education and/or experience relevant to the IT or bioscience occupation they intend to pursue or aptitude applicable to the field, and an interest in pursuing IT or bioscience further (see Section 2.5). In particular, AAWDC seeks to serve older workers with advanced degrees who have had difficulty finding a job after the 2008-2009 recession.

Exhibit 2-2 shows the demographic characteristics of program group members as reported on the study's Baseline Information Form. As discussed in Chapter 1, program applicants included in the study were randomly assigned to either a program group that could access RTW grant services or a control group that

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[12]   Maryland Department of Planning, 2016; Johnson and Craighill, 2015.

[13]   U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Data*.

[14]   Maryland Department of Commerce.

[15]   In IT: computer systems analyst, computer programmer, software developer (applications), and computer and information systems manager. In bioscience: biochemist and biophysicist. (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013)

[16]   In a 2015 report, Maryland had the sixth-highest number of openings in this field, with growth of 39 percent between 2010 and 2014 (Burning Glass Technologies Research, 2015).

could not. As shown, the program enrolled slightly more men than women (53 percent versus 47 percent). Half of them reported that they were Black or African American, 35 percent White, and 11 percent Asian. In addition, 5 percent reported Hispanic ethnicity. Reflecting MTC's focus on older workers, the average age of program enrollees was 47 years old, and 60 percent were 45 or older. Some 44 percent of program participants reported being married; about one-quarter (24 percent) were widowed, divorced, or separated. Three-fifths of participants did not have children age 18 or younger living in their household.

Asked about work, a similar proportion of enrollees were willing to take any job even if the pay was low (46 percent) as preferred a job related to their training (42 percent). Some 12 percent reported that issues with transportation limited their ability to work; fewer were limited by childcare or health/disability issues (7 percent for each).

Also reflecting the program's target population, MTC has enrolled relatively well-educated workers. Nearly two-thirds of participants (65 percent) reported having a bachelor's or master's degree. Sixteen (16) percent of enrollees had some college credit but no degree; smaller proportions had other credentials such as a technical or associate's degree (11 percent). Most MTC enrollees (89 percent) were not employed at the time of enrollment; of them, almost one-third had not worked for more than a year. For the 11 percent who were employed at the time of enrollment, weekly earnings averaged $364. Forty-two (42) percent of program participants were receiving a public benefit at the time of enrollment, the most common being SNAP (23 percent) and Unemployment Insurance (21 percent).[17]

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[17] Given their long spells of unemployment, some enrollees may have exhausted their UI benefits.

Exhibit 2-2: Selected Characteristics of Program Group Members at Baseline, AAWDC Maryland Tech Connection

Characteristic	Outcome
Demographic Characteristics	
Gender (%)	
Female	47.1
Male	52.9
Race (%)	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.1
Asian	10.7
Black or African American	49.7
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.0
White	35.3
Multi-race or other	3.2
Hispanic ethnicity (%)	4.8
Age (%)	
24 years or younger	2.6
25 to 34 years	16.1
35 to 44 years	22.4
45 to 54 years	29.2
55 years or older	29.7
Average age (years)	46.7
Citizenship (%)	
U.S. citizen	88.9
Legal resident	11.1
Speaks language other than English at home (%)	26.1
Family Status	
Marital status (%)	
Married	44.1
Living with a partner	1.6
Widowed/divorced/separated	24.2
Never married	30.1
Number of own children in household age 18 or younger (%)	
None	61.0
One child	16.9
Two children	18.6
Three or more children	3.4
Education	
Education level (%)	
Less than high school	0.0
High school diploma or GED	8.9
Technical or associate's degree	10.5
Some college credit but no degree	15.8
Bachelor's or master's degree	64.7

Exhibit 2-3: Selected Characteristics of Program Group Members at Baseline, AAWDC Maryland Tech Connection (continued)

Characteristic	Outcome
Currently enrolled in school or training program (%)	
High school or GED program	0.0
Vocational, technical, or trade school	1.5
2- or 4-year college	6.5
Another training program	2.5
Employment	
Employed (%)	
Currently employed full time (30+ hours)	5.3
Currently employed part time (<30 hours)	5.8
Not employed (%)	
Employed in last 12 months but not employed currently	57.1
Longer than 12 months since last worked	31.7
Weekly earnings ($)	364.12
Factors That Affect Employment	
Hourly rate a job must pay for respondent to take ($)	20.91
Job preferences (%)	
Will take any job, even if pay is low	46.2
Prefers the kind of job that relates to training	42.1
Limits on ability to work (%)	
Finding quality, affordable childcare	7.0
Transportation problems	12.4
Health or disability	6.5
Felony conviction (%)	1.1
Public Benefits	
Receiving any public benefit (%)	41.7
Type of benefits received (%)	
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	1.6
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	22.7
Unemployment Insurance (UI)	21.1
Section 8 or public housing assistance	5.4

SOURCE: Ready to Work Baseline Information Form.

NOTE: Statistics in this table are computed based on those MTC program group members who completed the BIF for the given question (e.g., gender). Sample size is 200 and includes all program group members randomly assigned through October 3, 2016.

2.4   Organizational Structure and Staffing

As the lead grantee for a regional initiative, AAWDC is responsible for overall fiscal and program management of MTC. A full-time Project Director manages grant operations with support from a full-time Project Assistant who coordinates with the seven Career Coaches. AAWDC selected the Laurel Regional Workforce Center as MTC's management staff headquarters because it is centrally located in the service area and serves a large proportion of participants and employers.[18]

The Career Coach's job is to recruit prospective applicants, assess and determine their program eligibility, conduct the two-week Career ReStart workshop (see Section 2.6.1), and provide group job search assistance and one-on-one assistance to participants during their time in the program. Each Career Center has a different local service area; for MTC, each employs a full-time or part-time Career Coach.[19] Exhibit 2-3 shows the Career Coaches associated with each Career Center and the counties they serve.

Exhibit 2-4: Distribution of Career Coaches across MTC's Service Area

Staffing	Career Center(s)	Counties Served
1 full-time Career Coach	• Laurel Regional Workforce Center	Anne Arundel, Howard, Prince George's
1 full-time Career Coach	• Liberty Career Center	Baltimore, Carroll
1 full-time Career Coach	• Eastside Career Center	Baltimore City, some participants from Baltimore County
1 full-time Career Coach who splits time between the two Career Centers	• Frederick County Business and Employment Center • Germantown American Job Center	Frederick, Montgomery
2 quarter-time Career Coaches	• Susquehanna Workforce Network	Cecil, Harford
1 half-time Career Coach	• Southern Maryland JobSource	Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's

The RTW grant also funds 2.5 full-time-equivalent Industry Navigators, whose primary role is to inform businesses in the IT and bioscience sectors about MTC and develop relationships that may lead to jobs or work-based training experiences for MTC participants. The Navigators specialize by industry: one focuses on IT, one on cybersecurity, and one on bioscience.[20] Navigators also provide an overview of the IT and bioscience sectors during Career ReStart, meet individually with participants early in the program to help them identify an employment goal, and oversee the work-based training positions.

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[18] Program enrollment data collected from the evaluation show that of MTC's seven Career Centers, the Laurel Regional Workforce Center serves the largest proportion of MTC participants, 33 percent. Other centers serve the following: Liberty Career Center, 18.5 percent; Eastside Career Center, 18.5 percent; Susquehanna Workforce Network, 11 percent; Frederick County Business and Employment Center, 7.5 percent; Germantown American Job Center, 6.5 percent; and Southern Maryland JobSource, 5.5 percent.

[19] The determination of which locations would have a full-time versus a part-time Career Coach was specified in AAWDC's grant application and was based on the target enrollment for that particular segment of the region. The more urban and densely populated areas had higher participant enrollment targets and thus have full-time Career Coaches; the more rural areas (served by Susquehanna Workforce Network and Southern Maryland JobSource) had lower enrollment targets and have part-time Career Coaches.

[20] The IT and bioscience Navigators are full-time employees; the cybersecurity Navigator is part time.

In addition to the six other workforce agencies, several other organizations partner with AAWDC for the MTC program:

- **Seedco** is a non-profit economic development organization with offices in four states. It operates a program called *Earn*Benefits Online® that screens clients for eligibility for a range of public benefits programs including SNAP, TANF, utility assistance, and childcare subsidies. Two Seedco staff (one full time based at the Laurel Regional Workforce Center and one half-time based in the Baltimore area) meet individually with MTC participants during Career ReStart to conduct a benefits screening. For participants who choose to apply for benefits, the Seedco staff assist with their applications (see Section 2.6.1).

- **Arundel Lodge** is a non-profit provider of behavioral health programs and services. It assisted AAWDC in creating a screening tool that is used by Career Coaches during MTC's intake process to identify mental health issues among applicants. AAWDC involved Arundel Lodge in the grant because it anticipated that a long spell of unemployment can cause depression or other mental health issues. Arundel Lodge conducted training for Career Coaches and developed resource materials for both staff and participants. In addition, an Arundel Lodge clinical therapist conducts a half-day workshop on stress management during the Career ReStart workshop.

- **The AARP Foundation**, an arm of AARP, Inc., assists and advocates nationally for those older than age 50. It recruits and refers potentially eligible participants from its client base. AAWDC partnered with AARP because its focus on serving older workers makes it an attractive referral partner for a key target group.

- **MdBio Foundation** is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to providing bioscience awareness, education, and workforce development, primarily in the state of Maryland. MdBio staff conduct an industry awareness session and provide a laboratory demonstration during Career ReStart.

- **MD CASH Campaign** is a non-profit that assists low-income individuals with financial screenings and counseling. MD CASH provides training to Career Coaches on financial management and helped develop a financial education component for Career ReStart.

Finally, several organizations provide training to MTC participants: Anne Arundel Community College; Baltimore BioWorks; Biotechnical Institute of Maryland; College of Southern Maryland; Community College of Baltimore County; Harford Community College; Howard Community College; Montgomery College; University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) Training Centers; Workforce Excellence Group; PathSensors; and The Knowledge Academy.

In its grant application, AAWDC identified approximately 60 partners, including those described above. During the grant start-up period, AAWDC convened the partners in planning committees to provide input on MTC content and operations and to discuss local needs.[21] Career Centers, colleges, and several businesses provided input on the design of the work-based training component; Career Centers and community-based organizations weighed in on strategies for outreach and recruitment; and the partnering Career Centers collaborated on development of the MTC participant intake process and service delivery strategy. Partner involvement in the committees lessened as MTC was implemented.

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[21] There were five committees during planning: outreach; intake and case management; performance and tracking; work and learn; and specialized service delivery.

2.5   Recruitment and Enrollment

This section describes the strategies used to recruit applicants and enroll them in MTC. The process involves enrollment in the study and then random assignment to either the program or control group as described in Chapter 1. Through August 2016, after approximately one year of a three-year enrollment period, 181 participants had enrolled in MTC's program group, or 20 percent of its target study enrollment 900 (with an equal proportion in the control group).[22]

2.5.1   Recruiting Participants for MTC

AAWDC uses three strategies to recruit applicants: the MTC website, referrals, and staff outreach. Each is described below.

MTC Website. AAWDC branded MTC by developing a logo, which it uses on the MTC website and in its printed materials. The website provides information on program eligibility and requirements, the services and training offered, a schedule of upcoming information sessions, and a link to register to attend an information session. MTC staff reported that the website has generated a steady source of interest in the program.

Career Center and Partner Referrals. Locating MTC within Career Centers facilitates referrals by staff of co-located organizations. For example, at the Laurel Regional Workforce Center, the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation operates the Professional Outplacement Assistance Center (POAC), providing job seekers who have experience in professional and technical fields with career guidance and job search resources. POAC has been a significant source of referrals to MTC's Laurel-based Career Coach. Other referral partners include community- and faith-based organizations that served on the MTC planning committees (see Section 2.4).

AARP Foundation Referrals. Independent from MTC, an AARP Foundation initiative helps connect unemployed workers who are age 50 and older with resources that may help them in their job search efforts. AARP advertises this initiative through its website and local newspaper advertisements that direct those interested to contact AARP by telephone. AARP staff who answer the calls have a basic understanding of MTC and its eligibility requirements. They inform callers about MTC and prescreen those who appear appropriate for the program. AARP registers potential applicants for an upcoming MTC information session. At the session, attendees referred by AARP sign in on a separate attendance form so that Career Coaches can monitor its referrals.

Outreach by Career Coaches. Career Coaches meet with local organizations to inform them about MTC and encourage referrals; they also participate in events that potential MTC applicants might attend. For example, Career Coaches have participated in job fairs held at the Career Centers or by outside agencies, delivered presentations about MTC at libraries and faith-based organization events, collaborated with a refugee agency to identify refugees who meet MTC eligibility requirements, and distributed information to local news media and local government officials. Staff also produced and distributed brochures and flyers locally, and AAWDC has paid for Facebook ads that target users in MTC's demographic.

Overall, MTC staff reported that recruitment has been challenging and Career Coaches have had a difficult time finding eligible potential applicants. When developing its RTW grant application,

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[22]   AAWDC's total target enrollment for the RTW grant is 975.

AAWDC's staff had found through their research that the region was home to a significant number of long-term unemployed workers with advanced degrees (see Section 2.2). However, between AAWDC applying for the grant and implementing MTC, this population appeared to decline. For example, in the early months of the grant, POAC referred a steady stream of highly educated long-term unemployed individuals who qualified for MTC; in recent months, however, many of POAC's clients have not met its unemployment or underemployment eligibility requirements.

2.5.2 Enrollment Process for MTC

Potential applicants to MTC first attend a one- to two-hour information session conducted by a Career Coach at a Career Center, as shown in Exhibit 2-4. At the lower-traffic centers (e.g., Susquehanna Workforce Network), sessions are held approximately once a quarter; in the high-traffic centers (e.g., Laurel Regional Workforce Center), they may occur as often as every other month. Information sessions are scheduled by the Career Coach a few weeks before the start of his or her next Career ReStart workshop. Dates are listed on the MTC website and prospective attendees register online. The session provides information on the program's goals and content, as well as its eligibility requirements. The Career Coach also describes the RTW evaluation and its use of random assignment in the enrollment process.

After attending an information session, interested applicants schedule a time to return to the same center to complete three computer-based assessments and meet individually with the Career Coach. The assessments are (1) Career Scope, to determine aptitude in bioscience or IT; (2) Prove It!, to gauge knowledge of business etiquette; and (3) a screen for mental health and financial issues, developed by Arundel Lodge and the MD CASH Campaign, respectively (see Section 2.4). In total, the assessments take approximately two and a half hours to complete.

Immediately following the assessments, applicants meet one-on-one with the Career Coach, who reviews their assessment results and their resume. The Career Coach determines whether MTC is a good fit for the applicant, meaning the applicant understands and is interested in a career in IT or bioscience; has prior educational or professional experience related to those industries or demonstrated an aptitude for related skills, as assessed by Career Scope; and appears committed to participating in the MTC program and finding a job.

At the conclusion of the appointment, if the Career Coach determines the applicant is both a good fit and eligible for MTC, the Coach describes the study in greater detail. Applicants who agree to be part of the study complete the study's consent form and Baseline Information Form. Then the Career Coach randomly assigns applicants to either the program or control group. Those assigned to the program group receive information about beginning the next Career ReStart workshop. Control group members receive information on other, similar services available in the area, including any at the Career Center open to anyone.

Exhibit 2-5: Maryland Tech Connection Enrollment Process

Recruitment	• Potential applicant learns about Maryland Tech Connection through the program website, a referral from a Career Center or partner organization, or outreach conducted by MTC staff.	
MTC Information Session	• Potential applicant attends an MTC information session, scheduled a few weeks ahead of the next Career ReStart workshop, to learn about the program and the study and confirm interest in applying for the MTC program.	➡ Potential applicant is not interested in pursuing MTC.
Assessments	**Intake Appointment** • Applicant completes three assessments: Career Scope; ProveIt!®; and a mental health and financial screening.	
Meeting with Career Coach	• Applicant meets individually with the Career Coach to discuss the assessment results. Career Coach also reviews the applicant's resume and assesses "fit" and eligibility for the MTC program. • Applicant enrolls; completes the study's consent form and Baseline Information Form. • Random Assignment • Career Coach conducts random assignment. • Program group member–Career Coach provides information on beginning Career ReStart.	➡ Is not eligible; not a good fit for the program. ➡ Does not consent; does not complete BIF. ➡ Control group member– may not access MTC training and services.
Career ReStart	• Services Start • Two-week Career ReStart workshop typically begins within a week or two after the intake appointment.	

2.6   Program Services

After being enrolled in the MTC program (by random assignment to the study's program group), participants attend the two-week career readiness workshop Career Restart. As shown in Exhibit 2-5, after Career Restart, each participant meets with a Career Coach to discuss in greater detail his or her objectives for MTC and to develop an individualized Employment Plan for achieving them.

The MTC program services can include occupational training, work-based training, and/or job search activities. The Career Coach maintains contact with participants while they are in the program, although the degree to which a

> **Services and Supports Provided by the Maryland Tech Connection Program**
>
> The following services and assistance are specific to the MTC intervention and available only to program group members:
>
> - A two-week, job readiness workshop, Career ReStart, with an added mental health component designed specifically for unemployed workers
> - Public benefits screening; assistance enrolling in benefits
> - Development of an individual Employment Plan
> - Access to occupational training in IT or bioscience, with tuition paid by MTC
> - Paid work-based training
> - Ongoing one-on-one support from a grant-funded Career Coach
> - Job search assistance including access to a group job club and to MTC Industry Navigators who work with employers to identify job openings
> - Financial assistance, including for books, certification exam fees, and transportation, and if found eligible, needs-based s for those enrolled in training

participant engages with the Career Coach and takes advantage of the opportunities accessible through MTC depends on the participant's initiative. In addition, participants get individual support from Industry Navigators and Seedco representatives.

The remainder of this section discusses the services participants can attend as part of the MTC program.

Exhibit 2-6: Overview of the AAWDC Maryland Tech Connection Program
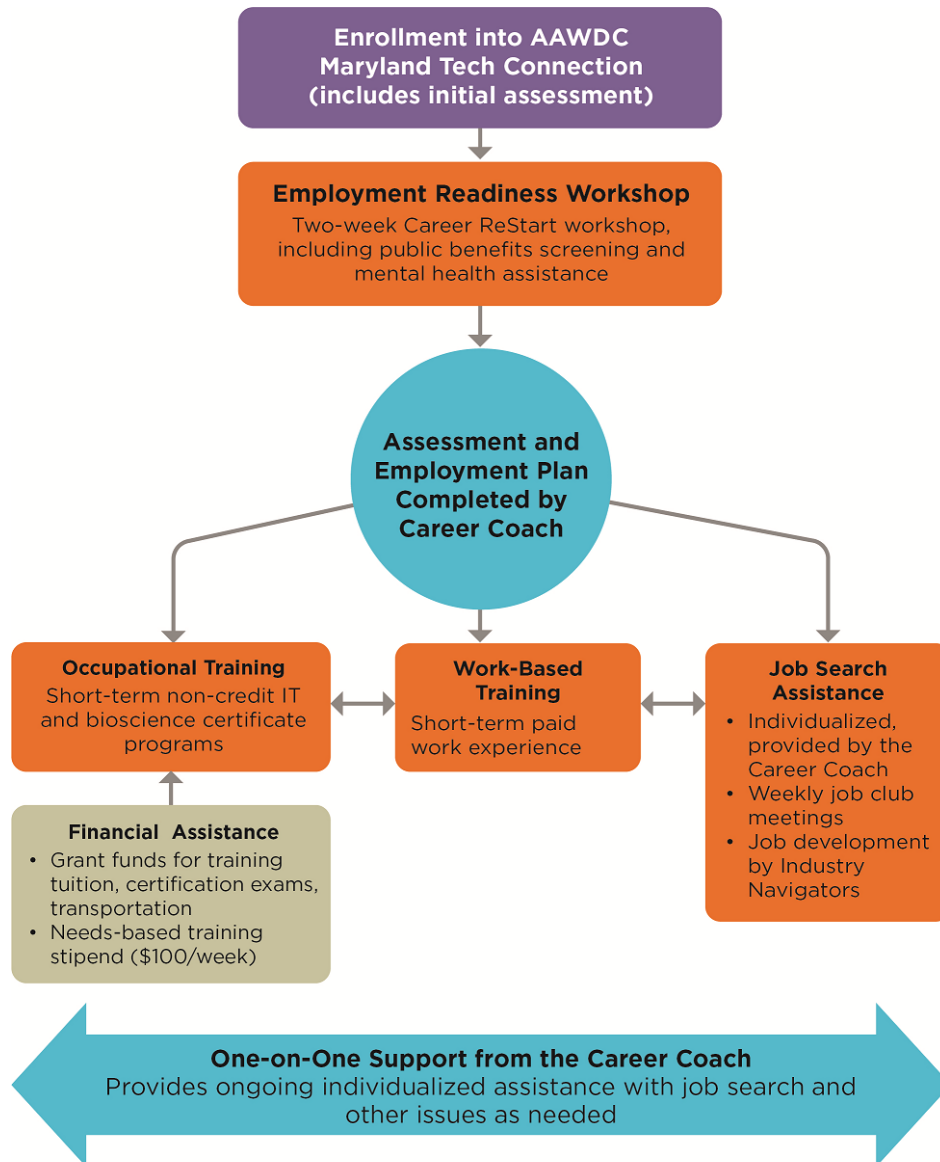
After Career ReStart, participants can move between occupational training, work-based training, and job search assistance in any sequence.

2.6.1   Employment Readiness Activities

The vast majority of MTC participants enroll in Career ReStart as a required first activity. The Career ReStart workshop is designed to provide participants with the tools and motivation necessary for a job search, at the same time helping them gain confidence in their skills and abilities as candidates for employment. Career ReStart is held at each Career Center location, usually from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm every day for two weeks. It usually begins within a week or two after enrollment in MTC and is led by the Career Coach who conducted the intake for the participants in the group.

Each Career Coach sets his or her own schedule of Career ReStart workshops, and their frequency depends on the volume of MTC applicants in the local area, which varies across the service region. Career Coaches in more densely populated areas schedule a Career ReStart about every two months, with an

average of 10-15 attendees. Career Coaches in less populated, more rural areas schedule them less frequently, with 6-9 attendees.[23]

AAWDC developed Career ReStart specifically for the RTW grant, anticipating that long-term unemployed workers, who may have experienced depression, stress, and financial hardship, would require services different from those typically offered through the Career Centers. As described below, the Career ReStart curriculum helps build job search skills and addresses both mental health and financial issues.

> **"5 Steps to Rapid Employment" Curriculum**
>
> **Step 1:** Understanding how beliefs and emotions influence actions and overcoming negative beliefs; recognizing and addressing fear; identifying a support circle.
>
> **Step 2:** Identifying life and work values; developing options to broaden job possibilities.
>
> **Step 3:** Developing language to communicate to employers what skills and abilities the candidate brings to employers; identifying references; developing resumes.
>
> **Step 4:** Structuring the job search, including creating a weekly schedule with goals and tasks.
>
> **Step 5:** Interviewing skills; building a professional network; and keeping a job once obtained.

- *Job search skills.* Part of the curriculum focuses on increasing participants' confidence and job search skills. It is based on Jay Block's book *5 Steps to Rapid Employment*, using group discussion, individual work, and two to three hours of homework a night.[24] All Career Coaches are trained and certified as *5 Steps* instructors.

    Some Career Coaches invite the Industry Navigators to attend a day of their Career ReStart workshop to give an hour-long presentation about the Navigator role and about employment in the IT and bioscience industries. Following this introduction and during the workshop, the Navigators meet one-on-one to discuss each participant's job interests in the context of his or her current skills and skill gaps. The Career Coach then uses this information when working with the participant to develop an individual Employment Plan.

    MdBio staff also conduct a two-hour career awareness session on the bioscience, IT, and cybersecurity industries in Maryland. They discuss what jobs in these fields are in high demand in Maryland, where they are located, and what kinds of certifications are needed for them. At the end of the workshop, they also conduct a laboratory demonstration for those interested in learning more about bioscience.

- *Mental health session.* Arundel Lodge developed a three-hour mental health session for the Career ReStart workshop, led by one of its licensed clinical counselors. The counselor introduces the concept of trauma and discusses job loss and unemployment as a traumatic event that can have lasting mental, emotional, and physical effects. The goals are to help participants recognize that their mental health is important to their job search process and to help them identify strategies for self-care and handling stress.

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[23] MTC staff reported that almost all participants finish Career ReStart, with only a few dropouts, due to circumstances such as falling ill or finding a job.

[24] The nationally available *5 Steps* curriculum was developed by Jay Block, a career coach and author of the book *5 Steps to Rapid Employment: The Job You Want at the Pay You Deserve*. Instructors of *5 Steps* participants must be certified to use the curriculum. Certification for *5 Steps* instructors includes in-person and online training, as well as an exam; certification for *5 Steps* coaches involves attending the five-day workshop and taking an exam. Recertification occurs annually.

- *Public benefits screening.* During Career ReStart, all participants must meet individually with a Seedco representative to be screened for eligibility for 23 public benefits programs and support services using Seedco's *Earn*Benefits Online® software tool. The web-based tool collects information from the participant on household size, demographics, household income and expenses, benefits currently being used, and veteran status. The initial screening takes 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the degree of detail participants choose to share about their situation. Although participants are strongly encouraged to be screened, they are not required to do so or enroll in any benefits programs unless they request needs-based payments. If participants are eligible for any new benefits, the Seedco representative can help them to apply/enroll at a separate meeting. Common benefits include SNAP and TANF; Medicaid and Medicare; a discount card for prescription medications; utility assistance; and tax credit programs for homeowners and renters.

- *Financial education.* Career Restart includes a three-hour segment, developed by the MD CASH Campaign, covering financial decision making, budget and spending strategies, understanding credit reports, debt management, and identity theft.

2.6.2 Assessment

As discussed in Section 2.5.2, applicants complete three assessments during the enrollment process for MTC, and the Career Coach uses the results to inform a discussion about eligibility and suitability for the program. After enrollment in the program, each participant meets with the Career Coach to discuss in greater detail his or her objectives for MTC and to develop a plan for achieving them. Most Career Coaches hold these one-on-one appointments immediately after the conclusion of Career ReStart, but some prefer to hold them before that workshop begins.

During this appointment, the Career Coach and the participant use a form developed specifically for MTC, that defines his/her employment goal and the steps he/she will take towards it, such as enrolling in occupational training, pursuing work-based training options, experience, and participating in other job search activities. This Employment Plan (along with the weekly schedule of goals and tasks created during Career ReStart as described in Section 2.6.1) is intended to give participants concrete steps to take in finding a job in their field of interest.

2.6.3 Occupational Training

As noted above, to qualify for MTC, AAWDC requires that participants have an aptitude and interest in their chosen industry (IT or bioscience); however, not all participants have had formal training or have credentials relevant to the position they seek. Participants without such formal training or credentials can enroll in training programs that are eligible for Individual Training Account (ITA) funds to pay for the tuition, as authorized by WIOA, with the full cost paid by MTC directly to the training provider.[25] The training usually is with one of the providers partnering on the RTW grant (see Section 2.4). Career Coaches complete a pre-training agreement with participants that describes the training they will pursue and MTC's expectations of them as students. The Project Director ultimately approves the agreement and authorizes funds for tuition.

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[25] Staff report that for the majority of participants, the RTW grant funds their full tuition costs. However, sometimes the participant or the specific training may qualify for another workforce program that can cover training costs, as well. In these instances, the RTW grant and the other source both support the participant's training, and the participant is considered to be jointly enrolled in both programs.

MTC staff reported at the time of the site visit that about half of its participants had enrolled in a training program, the majority of which were short term and non-credit. IT was the more common, with training ranging from a few weeks to three months, depending on the training selected. Bioscience training programs ranged from three months to one year. Common trainings pursued by participants in each of the sectors, as described by MTC staff, are discussed below and shown in Exhibit 2-6.

Exhibit 2-7: Common Examples of Programs Pursued by Maryland Tech Connection Participants

Program	Length	Credit and Resulting Credential	Training Provider(s) Commonly Used by Participants
Information Technology			
Cybersecurity Nexus (CSX)	3 weeks	• Non-credit • Certificate of Completion with MTC requirement to sit for certification exam	• Comtech TeleCommunications Systems, Inc.
A+	2-3 months	• Non-credit • Certificate of Completion with MTC requirement to sit for certification exam	• University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) Training Centers • Anne Arundel Community College • Train Ace
Security+	2-3 months	• Non-credit • Certificate of Completion with MTC requirement to sit for certification exam	• UMBC Training Centers • Anne Arundel Community College • Montgomery College • CompTIA
Project Management Professional (PMP)®	3 months	• Non-credit • Certificate of Completion with MTC requirement to sit for certification exam	• UMBC Training Centers • Anne Arundel Community College • ReGroup Consulting
Bioscience			
Clinical Trial Project Management	3 months	• Non-credit • Certificate of Completion with MTC requirement to sit for certification exam	• Montgomery College
Good Manufacturing Practices for Bioprocesses	4 months	• Non-credit • Certificate of Completion with MTC requirement to sit for certification exam	• UMBC Training Centers
Laboratory Associate	6 months	• 6 credits earned towards an associate's in biotechnology at Baltimore City Community College • Certificate of Completion with MTC requirement to sit for certification exam	• BioTechnical Institute of Maryland

Program	Length	Credit and Resulting Credential	Training Provider(s) Commonly Used by Participants
Health IT	10 months	• Non-credit • Continuing education certificate with MTC requirement to sit for certification exam	• Community College of Baltimore County

- *Information technology.* MTC offers training in four primary areas of information technology: software development and programming, system administration, cloud technologies, and cybersecurity. Training in the cybersecurity program requires that participants already have some background in that area because a large portion of jobs are with the federal government, which requires extensive experience. The most common trainings are Cybersecurity Nexus (CSX) for positions in cybersecurity; A+, which prepares participants for entry-level computer technician jobs; Security+ for jobs in IT security; and Project Management Professional (PMP)®.

- *Bioscience.* Bioscience training programs that can be funded by MTC are in the fields of drug research, biomanufacturing, clinical trials, animal research facilities, and quality control. Staff reported that jobs in bioscience tend to require a bachelor's degree or higher, but MTC does not fund four-year degree programs, due to the RTW grant's length. Instead, it offers short-term bioscience training that helps participants develop specific knowledge and skills to enhance their existing credentials. Participants must already have a bachelor's degree or higher in a bioscience discipline or prior work experience in this sector. The most common trainings pursued by participants are Clinical Trial Project Management, for positions managing pharmaceutical clinical trials; Good Manufacturing Practices for Bioprocesses, which includes instruction in biotechnology processes, building management, and equipment design; Laboratory Associate, which prepares participants for laboratory technician jobs; and Health IT, for jobs as electronic health records specialists. MTC has also allowed participants to enroll in training for occupations that support bioscience, such as sales or marketing for a bioscience company.

Initially, MTC did not require participants to complete any of the certification exams generally associated with their trainings, such as the CompTIA A+ or Security+ certification, the Project Management Professional (PMP)® certification administered by the Project Management Institute, or the Certified Healthcare Technology Specialist (CHTS) certification. As a result, staff reported, some participants chose not to sit for certification exams, and thus did not receive these credentials. About a year into the grant, MTC made it mandatory that its training participants sit for the industry-recognized certification exam associated with that training. MTC added that requirement to its pre-training agreement that each trainee must sign. Some participants have formed study groups to prepare for these exams, and MTC has also piloted exam preparation workshops for common certification exams.

2.6.4 Work-Based Training

The work-based training component of MTC includes on-the-job training (OJT) and positions known as "Work and Learns" that allow participants to work in paid, short-term positions with local businesses. Their purpose is for participants to gain workplace experience relevant to their employment goal, earn an income (paid or subsidized by MTC), and begin to build a professional network. OJT and Work and Learn opportunities can be identified either by the Industry Navigators through their business contacts or by participants. Participants who identify Work and Learn placements provide a letter to the employer

that explains Work and Learn and gives contact information for the Industry Navigator to make the financial arrangements. The positions are structured either way, depending on the business's preference:

- *On-the-job training* is structured such that the employer pays the participant and is reimbursed by MTC. The business pays the MTC participant directly, and AAWDC reimburses the business 50 percent of the new hire's hourly rate, to a maximum of $10,000. OJTs last up to six months.

- *Work and Learn* positions are structured so that MTC pays the participant directly. MTC and the business enter into a contract that stipulates the participant will work a minimum of 400 hours and a maximum of 1,000 hours. The contract includes a training plan for the participant developed by the business in consultation with the Industry Navigator. MTC pays the participant a $10 per hour wage. Because the business contributes its staff resources in the form of training, MTC does not require it to contribute towards the participant's wage; however, MTC does suggest that the business compensate the participant beyond the $10 per hour if appropriate given the typical pay for the position.

MTC staff market the work-based training component to businesses as a benefit to them, as they can bring on workers at a reduced cost. Program staff reported that OJTs and Work and Learns have been especially attractive to start-up companies in both IT and bioscience with project work related to a phase of a contract that has yet to be awarded, and thus have limited resources. Staff also reported that in some instances, businesses have used work-based training as an opportunity to train workers, assess them as a potential permanent hire, and then extend a permanent offer.

The OJTs and Work and Learn components of the MTC program were still getting under way at the time of the site visit, and MTC staff reported that few participants had pursued them. Program leadership intended to expand enrollment in work-based training in the subsequent years of the grant by increasing awareness of the program among employers.

2.6.5 Job Search Assistance

After Career ReStart, MTC also provides follow-up support for participants' job search activities. The activities can occur as a stand-alone activity, concurrently with occupational training or work-based training, or after that is completed. Job search assistance can include meeting with the Career Coach, group job clubs, and independent efforts to identify and apply for jobs that build on efforts by the Industry Navigators.

One-on-One Assistance. Career Coaches are available to assist participants in identifying and applying for jobs. To identify job openings for MTC participants, Career Coaches draw on relationships with and information shared by knowledgeable staff members at local universities; Maryland's Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation; and the business service representatives at local Career Centers. Some Career Coaches reported that they learn of job opportunities through the Maryland Workforce Exchange, the state's online platform for job seekers and its workforce system. MTC also runs recruitment events with businesses. Career Coaches can review resumes and assist participants in tailoring them to specific job openings.

The expectation is that participants will lead their own job search efforts and take the initiative to pursue the individual help that Career Coaches can provide. Career Coaches contact participants periodically after Career ReStart ends to check in on their job search efforts and offer support, but Coaches reported that it can be difficult to engage some participants.

Job Clubs. The Career Coaches organize weekly group meetings for MTC participants who have completed Career ReStart to discuss their job search activities. Although the Career Coaches facilitate the meetings, they encourage participants to play a role in organizing them, such as by arranging where to meet and choosing what topics to cover. Depending on the topic, the Career Coach may identify a guest speaker knowledgeable in a particular area who can make a presentation. Examples include an Industry Navigator to discuss aspects of the IT and bioscience field or an AARP representative to talk about issues specific to older workers. The intention is for job clubs to be an ongoing activity to keep participants engaged in MTC and in their job searches.

Job Development. Industry Navigators contact local IT and bioscience businesses, research institutions, and non-profit organizations to inform them about MTC and its participants, and to establish relationships they can draw on later if the business has a job opening that might fit an MTC participant or if an MTC participant is seeking an OJT or Work and Learn placement. To identify and meet prospective employers, the Navigators attend industry events at the Chamber of Commerce, attend industry conferences, and network at local government offices and military bases, for example. Training providers and regional workforce partners may introduce them to local businesses, and sometimes an employer hears about MTC through word of mouth and contacts the Navigator directly.

When Navigators identify a job opening, they share the information on the MTC internal website that only Career Coaches and participants can access. The Career Coaches also use this site to post participant resumes that the Industry Navigators can review. If they identify an appropriate candidate for the opening, Industry Navigators contact participants directly to arrange for an interview with an employer. To allow MTC participants to meet and practice communicating with employers, the Industry Navigators have drawn on their business relationships to set up mock interviews and speed interviewing events.

2.6.6   Financial Assistance and Other Supports

In addition to the public benefits screening that MTC encourages of all program participants (see Section 2.6.1), it also provides several forms of financial support, including direct financial assistance for a variety of expenses, funds for occupational training tuition and expenses as noted above, and a needs-based payment while enrolled in training.

Transportation and Other Assistance. Participants who need it can receive transportation assistance in the form of gas cards. After Career ReStart, MTC participants who enroll in training can request gas cards, if their need is directly connected to their ability to attend the training. In addition to transportation assistance, participants who complete Career ReStart can receive a refurbished computer to aid their job search paid for by the grant and provided by a partner.

Access to Public Benefits. As discussed in Section 2.6.1, as part of Career ReStart, participants meet with a Seedco representative to be screened for eligibility for a range of public benefits programs, using Seedco's *Earn*Benefits tool. The Seedco representative also helps participants enroll. Within a few weeks after the enrollment meeting, the representative follows up to confirm that participants are receiving the benefits for which they enrolled, and if they are not, assists them in addressing any issues with their application. Seedco staff also check in with participants periodically to make sure they maintain their benefits, such as by helping them update their income information if they have a change in employment status.

Training-Related Costs. As discussed in Section 2.6.3, MTC uses RTW grant funds to pay training providers directly for participants' tuition costs. The program also covers the cost of certification exams

associated with those trainings; course-related books and manuals; and test preparation courses to help participants pass certification exams. MTC also can assist participants with childcare expenses if needed to attend occupational training.

Needs-Related Payment. While enrolled in training, participants can receive a stipend of up to $100 per week, to a maximum of $1,000, to cover needs-related items. MTC determines the amount of the payment by reviewing the participant's household income and family size; only those whose household income falls below the living wage in the local area are eligible.[26] Payments are distributed weekly, and the participant must provide documentation of having attended class during that week by means of a form completed by the participant and the training provider.

Other Financial Assistance. Other forms of financial assistance are determined by the Career Coach case by case, and funds must be approved by the Project Director. These one-time-only payments can include grocery cards while a participant waits for SNAP benefits to begin; rental assistance; funds to pay for car repairs or car insurance; assistance paying cell phone bills; and help paying for a storage unit if evicted from housing.

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[26] AAWDC uses the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator (http://livingwage.mit.edu/) to determine the living wage for a given household size in the participant's local area.

3.   Jewish Vocational Service—JVS Skills to Work in Technology Program

This chapter describes the JVS Skills to Work in Technology program operated by Jewish Vocational Service. After an overview of the grant, it describes the context and goals of the program, its target population, the characteristics of its enrollees, its organizational structure, and its process for recruitment and enrollment. The final section describes the program services provided by JVS Skills to Work in Technology, including a team-building "Foundation Week," technical skills training, job search and job readiness assistance, and other supports.

3.1   Grant Overview

Jewish Vocational Service (JVS), a non-profit organization in San Francisco, California, operates three programs funded by a $6.4 million Ready to Work (RTW) grant under the umbrella name "Skills to Work in Technology" (STW-T). These programs provide a combination of services and training to help underemployed and long-term unemployed workers find employment in the information technology (IT) sector. JVS staff provide job search and job readiness activities, engaging contractors or other training providers to provide technical skills training in IT-related areas.

STW-T offers three distinct programs:

- *Business Administration Bootcamp.* A six-week program primarily focused on job readiness skills, supplemented with training on Microsoft Office programs needed for working in an office environment.

- *Digital Marketing.* An 11-week program providing training in a variety of topics related to marketing using digital tools.

- *Salesforce*® *Administration.* A 16-week program providing technical training on how to manage the Salesforce platform for an organization.

Each program begins with a "Foundation Week" focused on team building among the class members and personal and career exploration to prepare for job search. The job search and job readiness activities and the technical skills training then occur concurrently.

The job readiness activities are relatively consistent across the three programs and focus on developing job search tools such as resumes, cover letters, LinkedIn profiles, networking, and interviewing skills. Activities include developing individualized career action plans, identifying a target job, exploring careers, and learning about self-marketing; group activities to facilitate peer support; employer events such as guest speakers and mock interviews; and classes aimed at improving participants' motivation and self-confidence. The technical skills training differs in duration and focus from program to program. After the training, participants support one another in their job searches and networking in peer group activities.

3.2   Program Context

JVS is a San Francisco–based not-for-profit organization that provides employment and training services for job seekers at various career levels to several counties in the areas.[27] JVS offers a number of programs in addition to STW-T, including general job search services and workshops; a program for low-income youth; and job training programs in the financial services (e.g., retail banking) and healthcare sectors.

The RTW grant opportunity fit into JVS's general mission of providing employment services for job seekers. Furthermore, the RTW grant opportunity was issued as JVS was developing a strategic plan that focused on training in particular sectors. JVS did not have programs in the technology sector at the time, and it used its RTW grant to implement the Skills to Work in Technology programs.

JVS's service area includes the city and county of San Francisco and several neighboring counties in the San Francisco Bay Area: Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo, and Santa Clara (see Exhibit 3-1). JVS's only office location is downtown San Francisco. JVS offers the STW-T programs primarily at that office, but since the site visit (in September 2016) it began offering Business Administration Bootcamp at a second location in San Pablo, a small city in Contra Costa County that is east of the San Francisco Bay (the "East Bay"). JVS also offers some of its programs at partner locations within the service area (e.g., its youth program on location at various high schools in San Francisco). JVS receives referrals to STW-T programs from organizations in other California counties, and many participants commute into San Francisco to participate in services, particularly from the East Bay.

Exhibit 3-1: Counties Served by JVS Skills to Work in Technology

The San Francisco Bay Area contains a number of major cities, including San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose, and their suburbs. It is a relatively high income area, though areas of poverty exist. For example, San Francisco had a relatively high median household income of more than $78,000 in 2014, but 13 percent of the population had incomes below the poverty line (see Appendix Exhibit B-2). The city's population is highly educated: 6 percent have an associate's degree, 32 percent have a bachelor's degree, and 21 percent have a graduate or professional degree. STW-T staff describe the cost of living in the area as high, particularly rent, and reported that many of their lower-income participants have been moving farther from San Francisco.

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[27] A network of agencies around the country under the name Jewish Vocational Service provide vocational and/or rehabilitation services. Each operates independently and is administratively separate from the others. Like the others, this JVS is an independent organization. It serves the San Francisco Bay Area.

San Francisco's unemployment rate was 3.6 percent as of 2015, below the national average of 5.3 percent. During the recession, the county's unemployment rate peaked at 8.9 percent in 2010, but it fell each year afterwards, especially in recent years as the Bay Area experienced rapid growth in high-skill, high-wage jobs in the technology and business sectors. Silicon Valley is located in the southern part of the area (the "South Bay"), which is home to Google, Apple, Facebook, and other major technology companies. Overall, the Bay Area has seen job growth in the technology sector in recent years, including with companies such as Twitter and Salesforce. Though the presence of technology employers means the demand for skilled workers is high, JVS staff reported competition for skilled jobs is also high, as many high-skilled workers have also moved into the region. Hospitality and tourism are other major industries, providing lower-skill, lower-wage jobs.

3.3   Target Group and Program Group Characteristics

In order to be eligible to participate in a STW-T program, applicants must be able to work legally in the United States, be a resident of one of the counties served by JVS, and be age 18 or older, as well as fulfill the Ready to Work grant criterion of underemployment or long-term unemployment. JVS generally requires a high school diploma for participation in STW-T; a bachelor's degree is preferred. Beyond that, JVS targets workers who have experience (or related college education) in a field related to the particular program and who have sufficient computer skills for that program. The specific requirements differ for the three STW-T programs:

- *Business Administration Bootcamp* requires no specific technical skills, but applicants must have job goals related to working in an office environment.

- *Digital Marketing* targets workers with a marketing or sales background; applicants must demonstrate a basic understanding of marketing and how up-to-date digital skills might fit within their career.

- *Salesforce Administration* requires applicants to demonstrate a related background that can be supplemented by Salesforce certification, understand how the training could help their career, and possess basic computer skills such as typing, use of web browsers, and Microsoft Excel.

Though STW-T considers the technical skills of applicants, it also is seeking to enroll those who lack the technical competency needed for jobs in the local IT labor market and would benefit from the training. For example, STW-T staff reported that students in the Salesforce Administration program typically have prior work experience that may be in the area of computer services, but their skills are outdated.

As discussed in Chapter 1, program applicants included in the study were randomly assigned to either a program group that could access STW-T programs or a control group that could not (but can access other similar services in the community). Exhibit 3-2 shows the demographic characteristics of enrollees in the program group, using self-reported data from the study's Baseline Information Form (BIF) completed during intake. Overall, these data show that STW-T serves a diverse group, but older, underemployed or unemployed long term, and with high levels of education.

As shown, more than half (58 percent) of the program group were White and one-fifth were Asian. About one-fifth (19 percent) were legal residents rather than U.S. citizens, and twice that number (40 percent) spoke a language other than English at home. The average age was 47, and almost one-third (30 percent) were age 55 or older. About two-thirds had been married at some point (40 percent were married and 15 percent were widowed, divorced, or separated at the time of enrollment), likely reflecting their older

age. Three-quarters (76 percent) did not have children who were living with them. STW-T enrolled about twice as many women as men.

STW-T program enrollees are well educated. A large majority (81 percent) had a bachelor's or master's degree. An additional 6 percent had a technical or associate's degree, and 12 percent had some college but no degree. Notwithstanding that education, 78 percent of STW-T enrollees were unemployed at the time of enrollment; 35 percent had not worked in more than a year. Among those who were working, average weekly earnings were $351. One-quarter were receiving some public benefits at the time of enrollment, with 10 percent receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and 16 percent receiving Unemployment Insurance benefits.

Relatively few (27 percent) said that they would take a job if the pay was low. Despite entering a program focused on the technology sector, fewer than half (40 percent) said they had a preference for a job related to the training. Fewer than 15 percent of enrollees identified childcare, transportation, or health or disability limitations as being barriers to their ability to work.

Exhibit 3-2: Selected Characteristics of Program Group Members at Baseline, JVS Skills to Work in Technology

Characteristic	Outcome
Demographic Characteristic	
Gender (%)	
Female	68.2
Male	31.8
Race (%)	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.0
Asian	19.7
Black or African American	12.9
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.7
White	57.8
Multi-race or other	8.8
Hispanic ethnicity (%)	11.7
Age (%)	
24 years or younger	0.7
25 to 34 years	17.5
35 to 44 years	23.8
45 to 54 years	28.0
55 years or older	30.1
Average age (years)	46.5
Citizenship (%)	
U.S. citizen	80.8
Legal resident	19.2
Speaks language other than English at home (%)	40.0
Family Status	
Marital status (%)	
Married	40.4
Living with a partner	6.0
Widowed/divorced/separated	15.2
Never married	38.4
Number of own children in household age 18 or younger (%)	
None	76.4
One child	12.5
Two children	9.7
Three or more children	1.4
Education	
Education level (%)	
Less than high school	0.0
High school diploma or GED	1.3
Technical or associate's degree	6.0
Some college credit but no degree	11.9
Bachelor's or master's degree	80.8

Exhibit 3-2: Selected Characteristics of Program Group Members at Baseline, JVS Skills to Work in Technology (continued)

Characteristic	Outcome
Currently enrolled in school or training program (%)	
High school or GED program	0.0
Vocational, technical, or trade school	2.0
2- or 4-year college	3.9
Another training program	1.3
Employment	
Employed (%)	
Currently employed full time (30+ hours)	7.2
Currently employed part time (<30 hours)	14.5
Not employed (%)	
Employed in last 12 months but not employed currently	43.4
Longer than 12 months since last worked	34.9
Average weekly earnings ($)	351.32
Factors That Affect Employment	
Average hourly rate a job must pay for respondent to take ($)	24.54
Job preferences (%)	
Will take any job, even if pay is low	27.2
Prefers the kind of job that relates to training	39.6
Limits to ability to work	
Finding quality, affordable childcare	6.6
Transportation problems	15.3
Health or disability	11.3
Felony conviction (%)	2.0
Public Benefits	
Receiving any public benefit (%)	25.3
Type of benefits received (%)	
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	0.0
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	10.0
Unemployment Insurance	16.0
Section 8 or public housing assistance	2.0

SOURCE: Ready to Work Baseline Information Form.
NOTE: Statistics in this table are computed based on those Jewish Vocational Service program group members who completed the BIF for the given question (e.g., gender). Sample size is 153 and includes all program group members randomly assigned through October 3, 2016.

3.4   Organizational Structure and Staffing

Across the entire organization, JVS has approximately 70 staff members organized into several different program areas: Financial Service Programs and Healthcare Programs, which offer training in their respective sectors; High School and Bridge Programs; Job Search; and Client Services, which covers general supports provided to participants in other programs and "Positive Mindset," a behavioral health training that helps job seekers with motivation and self-confidence (discussed more below).

At the time of the site visit, six JVS staff members were working exclusively on STW-T as part of the Technology Programs area. The area is led by the Director of Technology, a position created during the implementation of the RTW grant specifically for the purpose of managing the new STW-T programs. Other staff dedicated to STW-T include a Program Manager, two Program Coordinators responsible for leading two of the three STW-T programs (Business Administration Bootcamp and Salesforce Administration), a Lead Instructor who provides instruction on the job search components for all three STW-T programs, and a Program Assistant. A third Program Coordinator position, for leading Digital Marketing, was vacant at the time of the site visit; other staff were taking responsibility for leading it.

A number of staff members from other program areas and other individuals also support STW-T. Most notably, the technical skills training for the three STW-T programs is not provided by full-time STW-T staff. Rather, JVS engages an instructor for Salesforce Administration on an hourly basis to provide training on-site at JVS. For Digital Marketing, JVS purchases seats in classes at the for-profit technology training provider General Assembly, located in the same building as JVS. The Business Administration Bootcamp's Microsoft Office training is provided by a JVS staff member from another program area who dedicates part of her time to STW-T. Finally, as discussed below, STW-T incorporates components of the Positive Mindset curriculum, which are led by staff from JVS's Client Services program area.

For the Business Administration Bootcamp in San Pablo, JVS offers the program through a partnership with the San Pablo Economic Development Corporation (EDC), a small organization with five full-time staff members. San Pablo EDC provides the location for the training and some staff time to help JVS with logistics.

JVS considers employers to be important partners in the STW-T program. In developing the initial design, JVS interviewed 25 local employers (including Twitter, the University of California San Francisco, eBay/PayPal, Zynga, Macys.com, and Sephora) about their hiring practices and how job candidates can demonstrate their skills during their job search, and interviewed other employers in developing each of the three programs. JVS has continued to solicit input from employers while operating STW-T, including a regular advisory group, which among other things, has helped it determine what technical skills trainings to offer.

3.5   Recruitment and Enrollment

This section describes JVS's strategies for conducting outreach and recruiting applicants for STW-T. It also describes the application and intake processes by which participants enter its programs and the RTW study, including random assignment to either the program or control group, as described in Chapter 1. Through August 2016, after approximately one year of a three-year enrollment period, 132 participants

had enrolled in STW-T's program group, or 26 percent of its study target enrollment of 500 (with an equal proportion in the control group).[28]

3.5.1   Recruiting Participants for JVS Skills to Work in Technology

JVS enrolls participants for its STW-T programs shortly before each class begins. JVS's recruitment strategies include both recruitment for specific upcoming classes and general outreach for STW-T or other JVS programs. JVS continuously gathers information on how applicants have heard about and connected with the program, and revises its outreach strategy based on that information. Its main strategies for recruiting applicants for STW-T include the following:

- *Events.* In-person recruitment by both STW-T staff and staff from other JVS program areas at events in the community such as job fairs has been one of its most effective recruitment strategies. For example, JVS collaborates with organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and with Bay Area Workforce Development specialists to present at their job clubs and host workshops. In addition, JVS hosts public events, including guest presenters who talk about IT-related topics such as "How to Get a Career in Tech," and uses them as an opportunity to promote STW-T.

- *Outreach through partnerships*. JVS conducts outreach and provides flyers to partners in the Bay Area that can direct appropriate prospects to JVS's programs. Among the partners that have been active in providing referrals to STW-T are the YWCA in Marin County, the San Francisco LGBT Community Center, and the Contra Costa Workforce Investment Board. JVS also has a partnership with the City College of San Francisco, working with its career counselor and administrator to recruit participants for STW-T.

- *Electronic outreach and social media.* JVS staff have found Craigslist, Monster.com, and a JVS email listserv to be useful for recruiting for all STW-T programs. With Monster.com, STW-T staff identify specific resumes of interest and send emails to individuals who appear to be a good fit, asking whether they are interested in one of the JVS training programs. Staff also have used LinkedIn and targeted ads on Facebook. For Salesforce Administration in particular, JVS staff actively recruit via social media and online forums on the Community platforms that Salesforce makes available to its customers, employees, and other users for communicating and networking. JVS's website offers an online interest form for the STW-T programs. When recruiting for a new class, JVS staff reach out to website visitors who have submitted these forms.

- *Internal referrals.* Going through JVS's intake process for general services, staff may identify clients who would be appropriate for STW-T, and refer them to apply.

- *Newspapers.* An article about STW-T appeared in *The San Francisco Chronicle* that, though not intended as a recruitment effort, led to a large number of applicants to the program. However, staff reported that subsequent print advertisements placed in another local paper, *The San Francisco Examiner,* did not lead to a large number of new applicants.

- *Outreach through therapists and counselors.* A final strategy is outreach to mental health and behavioral health therapists and counselors in the community. JVS staff explained that because some long-term unemployed individuals seek counseling for depression and other mental health issues, therapists provide an opportunity to identify and refer those who may be a good fit.

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[28]   JVS's total target enrollment for the RTW grant is 801.

STW-T staff reported that both Salesforce Administration and Digital Marketing have generated strong interest among potential applicants; Business Administration Bootcamp less so. STW-T staff also reported that they had received more applications for the Salesforce Administration and Digital Marketing programs than for the Bootcamp.

Staff also report that some applicants they recruited for the programs had greater barriers to employment than anticipated. Staff reported that as San Francisco's unemployment rate fell, workers who remained unemployed often had barriers affecting their employability, such as lower technical skills than their competition in the labor market. As highly skilled workers move to San Francisco, less skilled workers face stiffer competition for the more attractive jobs. Staff also reported higher levels of mental health barriers among those interested in STW-T than anticipated. (Some applicants self-disclose mental health barriers, and others present behaviors such as anger or poor communication.)

3.5.2   Enrollment Process for JVS Skills to Work in Technology

Exhibit 3-3 (below) depicts the steps in the STW-T enrollment process, from program recruitment to the first day of services. JVS holds general information sessions weekly for the range of programs it offers, and sessions specific to STW-T once or twice a week (when there are upcoming STW-T classes). Potential participants who hear about or are referred to a STW-T program may attend one of these information sessions to learn more about JVS's services and programs but are not required to do so.

At the session, they are directed to complete an online application for the particular STW-T program in which they are interested, or to submit an interest form online if that program's next class is far enough off in the future that its application is not yet available.[29] Those who opt not to attend the information session can apply or submit an interest form online. Unlike many other RTW grantee programs included in this report, individuals choose the STW-T program for which they apply, instead of an assessment determining which services they will receive.

The online application asks about the applicant's background and related experiences, and it provides information about the RTW evaluation. Applications are specific to each STW-T program, but collect similar information. The STW-T Program Assistant screens each application and makes a preliminary determination of the applicant's fit based on eligibility criteria, prior related experience and skills, and interest in the IT industry.

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[29]   Applications typically are available about one to two months before each class starts.

Exhibit 3-3: JVS Skills to Work in Technology Enrollment Process

Recruitment ⬇	Potential applicants learn about Skills to Work in Technology through JVS outreach efforts or from one of JVS's partners. They also can be referred internally if they came to JVS for other services and were deemed more appropriate for STW-T.	
Information Session ⬇	Potential applicants attend a group information session: • If the program of interest is not scheduled to begin within the next month or two (so its online application is not yet open), applicants can attend a general JVS session and fill out an online interest form. • If the program of interest will begin soon, applicants attend a session specific to STW-T, where they are directed to apply online for the upcoming class. Some skip this session and apply directly online.	
Online Application ⬇	Applicants complete the online application specific to their program of interest. The online application collects background information, employment status, job goal, and anticipated barriers. Program Assistant or Program Coordinator screens each application for "fit" for the program.	➡ Not a good fit.
Assessments, Eligibility & Suitability ⬇	Applicants must meet the study criteria for unemployment status and must describe a job target relevant to the program of interest. • **Business Administration Bootcamp**—Must demonstrate interest and a relevant job target. Bachelor's degree preferred. Eligible applicants are invited to attend an in-person interview with the Program Coordinator to assess suitability for the program. • **Digital Marketing**—Relevant marketing or sales background preferred. Bachelor's degree preferred. Eligible applicants are invited to attend an in-person interview with a STW-T staff member to confirm suitability for the program. • **Salesforce Administration**—Must demonstrate related prior experience and/or background. Computer literacy required. Applicant completes four technical assessments of comfort with computers and applications. Bachelor's degree preferred. Eligible applicants complete an online recorded interview to demonstrate their readiness for the program.	➡ Not eligible. Not suitable/ready.

Exhibit 3-3: JVS Skills to Work in Technology Enrollment Process (continued)

Program Enrollment	**Evaluation Session** Eligible and suitable applicants are invited to attend a group evaluation session, where they learn details about the evaluation study. Applicants who agree to participate in the study complete the consent form and BIF. **Random Assignment** Enrollees meet one-on-one with a STW-T staff member who conducts random assignment.	Does not consent; does not complete BIF.
	Program group member–is given a folder of information, including a participant handbook.	Control group member–is given a folder about alternative services.
Orientation	Program participants start class 1-2 weeks after random assignment.	

After this initial screening, the next steps are program specific:

- *Business Administration Bootcamp; Digital Marketing.* Applicants deemed appropriate for these programs based on the initial screening are invited for an in-person interview with the program-specific Program Coordinator. These one-on-one meetings are informal conversations aimed at further understanding applicants' appropriateness of fit for the program based on past experience and how the program will fit with and support them in pursuing their job goals.

- *Salesforce Administration.* Applicants complete four online technical assessments to gauge their digital and computer literacy in such areas as Microsoft Excel, use of web browsers, and the internet.[30] Potential participants who do not achieve requisite scores are screened out. Salesforce Administration applicants do not need to complete an in-person interview but they are required to record an online video interview in response to several pre-determined questions. This requirement is in part a means of having applicants demonstrate that they have the minimum computer skills needed to attend the training program.

Applicants who are a good fit for their program of interest attend a STW-T group session at JVS to learn about the evaluation. During the session, staff explain the study, review the programs, and administer the informed consent form and BIF. Those who consent to be in the study are randomly assigned in a one-on-one setting. Those assigned to the program group are given a folder with information about the program, including when the class starts (typically within a week or two). Control group members receive a folder informing them of other trainings and services available at JVS and in the community.

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[30] ProveIt® and Wonderlic™ assessments.

3.6   Program Services

STW-T operates as an umbrella over three separate programs that share a focus on serving long-term unemployed workers, employment in the technology sector, job search activities, and some type of technical skills training.

There is no assessment to determine which training and other services applicants will receive; rather, they apply to the specific STW-T program in which they are interested. Exhibit 3-4 presents a summary of the STW-T model, which is similar for the three programs.

> **Services and Supports Provided by**
> **JVS Skills to Work in Technology Programs**
>
> The following services and assistance are specific to the JVS Skills to Work in Technology intervention and available only to program group members:
>
> - Three technical trainings in information technology areas: Business Administration Bootcamp (Microsoft Office), Digital Marketing, and Salesforce Administration
> - Job search and job readiness activities that accompany and are coordinated with the technical training, including sessions designed to build confidence and motivation and job placement support from an employment specialist
> - Paid work experience "fellowship" positions as part of the Salesforce Administration program
> - Peer group activities where participants support one another in job search and networking
>
> Some of these activities, including the job search and readiness activities, are available to participants in other JVS programs, but not as part of a package of coordinated services.

Exhibit 3-4: Overview of the JVS Skills to Work in Technology Programs
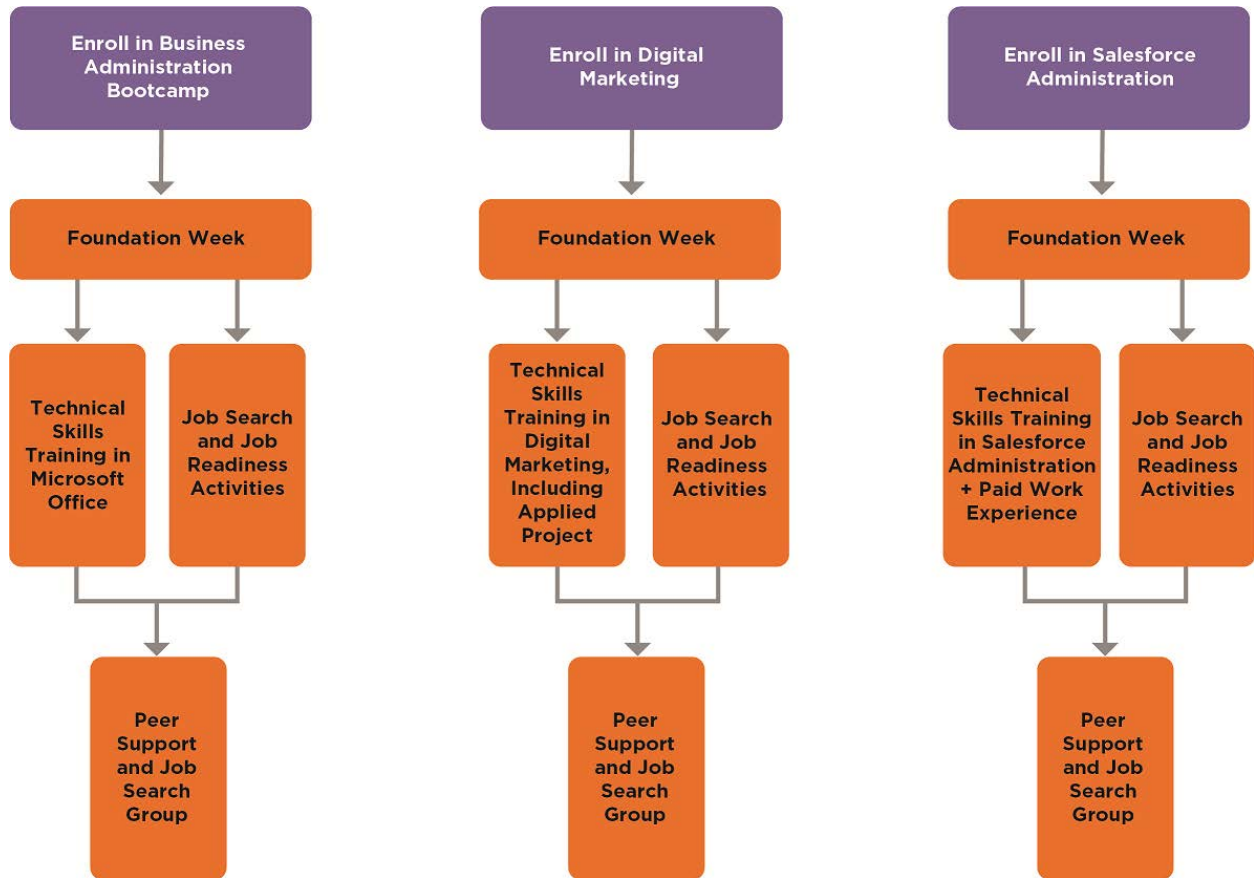
JVS developed the STW-T program offerings in large part based on input from its employer partners, and it continuously revises the details of their content based on feedback received from both employers and program completers. Though the three programs differ in length and in the technical skills training they provide, each has the same basic model:

- *Foundation Week.* Participants first attend a week of group meetings focused on team building, as well as personal and career exploration to prepare for job search.

- *Technical skills training.* Participants next begin their technical skills training—Microsoft Office, digital marketing, or Salesforce administration supplemented with IT business analysis, depending on the program. Two of the programs include a work-based component: Digital Marketing includes an applied project for an employer; Salesforce Administration arranges a paid short-term position at the employer's worksite ("fellowship").

- *Job search and job readiness activities.* Concurrent with the technical skills training, participants engage in job search and job readiness activities, including developing a career action plan. After training is complete, participants continue to focus on job search. They also participate in peer groups to support one another in job search and networking.

All three programs follow this basic model, but the details vary within this framework. Exhibit 3-5 summarizes the schedule and components for the three STW-T programs under the RTW grant. The remainder of this section describes the components of the STW-T programs in more detail, including how they vary.

Exhibit 3-5: Characteristics of JVS Skills to Work in Technology Programs

Program	Schedule	Job Search and Job Readiness Components	Technical Skills Training Components
Business Administration Bootcamp	**Foundation Week**: 5 days (9:00 am-3:30 pm) **Program**: 5 additional weeks (1 day/week 9:00 am-12:00 pm; 2 days/week 9:00-3:00 including 2-3 hours/week technical training) **Total hours**: About 90	Weekly career planning meetings; career exploration; personal branding; employer events; resume and cover letter assistance; job search strategies; interviewing and networking skills	Weekly sessions on Microsoft Office applications (Excel, Word) provided by JVS staff member
Digital Marketing	**Foundation Week**: 3 days (9:00 am-5:00 pm) **Program**: 10 additional weeks (2 days/week, with 3½ hours/day job readiness and 2 hours/day technical training) **Total hours**: About 130	Two career planning meetings; career exploration; personal branding; employer events; resume, cover letter, and job application assistance; interviewing and networking skills	Instruction provided by General Assembly Applied project for a real company
Salesforce Administration	**Foundation Week**: 5 days (9:00 am-3:30 pm) **Program**: 15 additional weeks (1 day/week job readiness, plus 1 full week midway into the program; 3 days/week technical training) **Total hours**: About 380	At least two career planning meetings; weekly career development class covering similar topics as for the other programs focused on Salesforce-related careers	Salesforce-Certified Administrator or App Builder instruction provided by consultant to JVS using official Salesforce curriculum Paid work experience placement with an employer ("fellowship")

3.6.1   Foundation Week

Each of the three programs begins with a Foundation Week that meets for three to five days. For Business Administration Bootcamp and Salesforce Administration, participants attend every day of the week for about six hours each day. For Digital Marketing, participants attend only three days during that week, and JVS uses an abbreviated curriculum for this program.

Foundation Week has three sets of activities summarized here and described in further detail below:

- *Peer support.* One of the primary purposes of the week is for participants to get to know others in their class. To achieve this, the class establishes peer groups and small group activities to support and learn from one another as they go through the technical training and job search activities.

- *Personal branding.* With a goal of developing a brief narrative about their past experiences and career goals, participants develop a professional pitch they can use in communicating with potential employers. This activity in part aims at helping long-term unemployed participants who may be discouraged to focus on their strengths and passions.

- *Career exploration.* Activities focus on exploring a possible target job. Participants engage in activities to understand the industry and requirements for this job, including their expectations and responsibilities.

3.6.2   Technical Skills Training

The technical skills training varies across the three STW-T programs.

Business Administration Bootcamp

Technical skills training is not a central component of Business Administration Bootcamp. Of the 90 total program hours provided over six weeks, about 10 to 15 hours are dedicated to training on Microsoft Office programs (particularly Word and Excel), which is considered necessary for participants to meet basic employer needs. Participants needing additional training can complete self-paced modules on their own time. During the first week, the instructor administers an assessment to determine the skill level of the class and thus the training needed.[31] JVS also makes accounts available to Bootcamp participants for online training through Lynda.com, which allows participants to receive additional self-paced training, if they are interested, at the computer labs at JVS or at home. The Microsoft Office training is led by a JVS Technical Training Instructor who is not part of JVS's Technology Programs staff and who dedicates only part of her time to STW-T.

Digital Marketing

The Digital Marketing training is provided by General Assembly, a for-profit computer programming training provider in the same building as JVS. JVS purchases seats in General Assembly's Digital Marketing class. Though the training is not tailored to STW-T's participants, a General Assembly program manager serves as a point of contact for JVS staff and communicates with them about STW-T participants' needs or concerns with their performance.

The 10-week class typically involves two weekly two-hour sessions, delivered through a combination of lectures and hands-on activities. Each session covers a different topic. Examples of the topics covered

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[31]   ProveIt® for Microsoft applications.

include general marketing, business, and customer strategy; different channels for marketing; search engine optimization and Google AdWords; social media ads (e.g., Facebook and Twitter); content strategy; using information to develop customers; A/B testing; email marketing; Google Analytics; and key performance indicators. The instructors have professional experience in the field. Though General Assembly provides a lesson plan and base materials, the instructors are expected to tailor the course based on their own experience.

Part of the instruction is an applied project, in which participants are expected to create their own advertising campaigns and strategies for a project company—an employer that benefits from the participant's work. Participants are responsible for finding their own project company. Many of General Assembly's students not in STW-T are employed and use their current employer. Because STW-T's participants typically are unemployed, they must identify an employer at the beginning of the program to serve this role. General Assembly helps those who have difficulty finding a suitable employer on their own.

Salesforce Administration

The Salesforce Administration completers can sit for two certifications: the basic Salesforce Administrator certification (known as ADM 201) and the basic Salesforce App Builder certification.

A contracted Salesforce instructor delivers the training to each class three days a week over about a four-month period. The first phase of the training generally follows the official Salesforce Administrator curriculum, delivered over approximately seven weeks (including introductory content and exam preparation). The Salesforce instructor starts with an overview of Salesforce's cloud-based structure, its implications for how data are stored, and understanding the end-user experience, all of which provide context for the Administrator training. The training then covers the basics of Salesforce administration. The instructor supplements the official curriculum with other materials from Salesforce that are publicly available.

Evolution of the STW-T Programs

In its DOL proposal, JVS envisioned providing services within three separate "tracks":

- Track 1: A short-term (e.g., 5 weeks) Bootcamp for under- or unemployed workers who need guidance and support in their job search but not re-training or additional technical skills.
- Track 2: A combination of the job search curriculum and short-term (3-6 months) skills training in technology.
- Track 3: A combination of the job search curriculum and a long-term (1-2 years) training program leading to a degree or credential, offered in partnership with a city or community college.

When STW-T started, it offered Bootcamp classes under Track 1 that included no specific technical training. The first Bootcamp offered after the start of random assignment followed this model. However, shortly thereafter, JVS staff began considering ways to restructure the Bootcamp program, largely because they found that the job search skills it provided were insufficient on their own to make its long-term unemployed participants competitive in the labor market. To secure employment, program participants needed to be able to demonstrate up-to-date skills or certifications. Staff also reported that they believed adding training might increase interest in the program, which had been lower than anticipated.

In response, by the time JVS offered the next Bootcamp class (4 months later), it had been re-conceptualized as **Business Administration Bootcamp** and incorporated training on general office support and administrative skills that could be used in a broad range of companies. This was the model in place at the time of the research team's site visit in September 2016. (Since the site visit, JVS made subsequent changes that will be described in future reports.)

JVS developed **Salesforce Administration** and **Digital Marketing** under Track 2.

JVS has yet to offer a Track 3 program, due to difficulties finding a college to serve as a partner. In addition, JVS staff anticipate some difficulties in recruiting for such a program relative to the other STW-T programs, given the longer length of the training. However, JVS is planning a Track 3 program, which it expects to offer in the near future in partnership with a local community college.

The second phase of the training focuses on IT business analysis, which uses curriculum JVS developed with an outside expert. Participants also work on an independent project in an area of their interest. The business analysis material is tied directly to this individual project, and students are expected to give a class presentation at the end of the course.

Participants are assessed throughout the course to test their knowledge and understanding. Their individual project also helps the instructor assess their understanding of course material. At the end of the program, students take the ADM 201 exam. STW-T provides funding to take the exam up to two times. Participants who do not pass on the first attempt meet with the instructor to discuss possible areas to work on before taking the exam again. The program also helps students who passed the ADM 201 certification exam to prepare for the Salesforce App Builder exam. If a participant did not take the ADM 201 exam twice, the program can provide funding for the App Builder exam.

3.6.3   Job Search and Job Readiness Activities

As part of the RTW grant, JVS developed a job search and job readiness curriculum for all three STW-T programs. The curriculum was based on an existing JVS curriculum. Staff described the adaptations largely as making the curriculum's activities more interactive. JVS has since begun to use the new curriculum in some of its other programs, too. For the STW-T programs, delivery of the curriculum begins during Foundation Week and continues concurrently with the technical skills training. This core curriculum includes an individualized career action plan and activities aimed at improving participants' motivation and self-confidence.

Finally, after they have completed the training and the job search and job readiness curriculum, program completers attend peer support groups focused on persisting and succeeding with their job search plans.

Core Curriculum

The goal of the job readiness and job search core curriculum is to provide participants with the tools necessary to get a job in IT. Components of the curriculum include developing a well-defined concept of their target job, a job-ready resume and cover letters, a LinkedIn profile, a "personal brand" and "elevator pitch," networking skills and strategies, and interviewing skills. The same instructor delivers the curriculum across all three of the STW-T programs, with some modifications made for Salesforce Administration and Digital Marketing.

For the Business Administration Bootcamp, the core curriculum:

- Focuses for two weeks on identifying each participant's target job and learning about tools for finding job openings related to it. These activities provide context for the next step: developing a resume and cover letters. The later weeks focus on interviewing skills (including mock interviews), networking, and employer events.

- Helps participants develop professional networking strategies. Throughout, staff arrange for guest panelists from the business community, including potential employers, who can provide a "real-world" perspective. Potential employers have ranged from larger technology-focused companies to small businesses.

- Provides mechanisms for peer feedback. For example, participants comment on one another's resumes, and present and critique one another's personal career narratives in small groups. The instructor groups participants into Networking Action Teams, whose members stay together

throughout the six weeks so they can provide support and input, as well as hold one another accountable throughout the program.

Salesforce Administration and Digital Marketing activities are similar, but differ in order and pacing. Staff reported that participants in these two programs are often more advanced in their job search skills and can move through the activities more quickly. In addition, the activities have to be balanced with the technical skills training. In both programs, time is set aside each week for the job search and job readiness activities.

- In the longer Salesforce Administration program, a week is dedicated exclusively to developing a resume and cover letter and a list of companies to which participants would like to apply. As the end of the program nears, job search and readiness activities are increasingly emphasized.

- Staff reported that many participants in the Salesforce Administration and Digital Marketing programs are transitioning into a new field. As a result, participants may not be prepared to focus on a target job until they have progressed through much of the skills training.

- In Salesforce Administration, JVS takes advantage of an active online community of Salesforce users. This community organizes in-person and online events. Staff reported that the Salesforce community is particularly helpful with networking, as well as helping participants understand the value they can bring employers through the combination of their Salesforce Administrator training and previous work experience.

Across all three programs, STW-T staff hold office hours for one-on-one help during job search. During that time, staff provide help with mock interviews, resumes, and information about networking events. Participants can also access resources in JVS's technology center, such as computers and tutorials, or any of JVS's general services, such as public workshops or labs on subjects such as interviewing, resumes, and networking.

My Career Action Plan

JVS uses an individualized career action plan it calls My Career Action Plan (MyCAP) as a tool in job readiness activities. The MyCAP document lays out each participant's goals related to self-development (exploration of values and goals and some focus on self-care) and to job search (resume development, networking, and self-marketing). MyCAP includes a timeline for these goals and for check-ins with STW-T staff on progress. MyCAP also specifies activities for the participant to help meet the goals, including a training plan, which may include extra online skills training through Lynda.com.

Participants complete the MyCAP in one-on-one meetings with a STW-T staff member (e.g., the Program Coordinator) serving as the Employment Specialist for their program. The timing of the initial meeting, when MyCAP is developed, differs by program but is generally in the third week, so that participants have already spent some time in group sessions considering their employment goals and exploring their potential target job.

During follow-up MyCAP meetings, the Employment Specialist monitors each participant's progress. MyCAP is considered a "living document" in that staff and the participant update it regularly to reflect changes to the participant's goals and activities. In addition, all STW-T staff have access to the MyCAP. For example, while working with a participant on job readiness activities, the Lead Instructor reviews that participant's MyCAP in order to tailor activities to his or her background and goals.

The number and timing of the follow-up MyCAP meetings also differ by program. In Salesforce Administration and Digital Marketing, only the initial meeting and one follow-up occur while the participant is going through the technical training; in the Business Administration Bootcamp, the Employment Specialist checks in with participants weekly.

Positive Mindset

JVS incorporates a cognitive behavioral therapy–based component into STW-T, which it calls "Positive Mindset," aimed at addressing motivation and self-confidence. For the RTW grant, JVS engaged a Marriage and Family Therapy Specialist to develop Positive Mindset. JVS has since begun also using it for other programs.

For STW-T, the activity consists of six 1-hour sessions, scheduled as part of the job search and readiness activities and usually delivered over six weeks. Positive Mindset is taught by JVS staff from outside the STW-T program. Staff described Positive Mindset's activities as teaching participants to regain control over their circumstances and adopt healthy coping mechanisms by recognizing their own reasons for being unemployed, and then helping them come up with alternative ways to think about their unemployment.

Peer Support

After completing the job search and readiness core curriculum and the technical skills training, participants attend peer support groups, facilitated by a STW-T staff member. These groups meet once per week for three hours and are designed to provide structure and accountability during job search. The group checks in on how each participant is doing with job applications and networking and discusses any issues that arise in the job search. The group also focuses on improving job search strategies.

At the time of the site visit, STW-T programs were assigning participants to one of two groups, depending on the amount of additional preparation for job search they needed. Participants considered more job ready, and therefore less in need of help improving their job search strategies, were assigned to a higher-level "Mastermind" group focused on promoting accountability in their job search activities. Others were assigned to a group that gave more attention to continuing to improve resumes and other materials. In whichever group they are assigned, in each session participants lay out their planned steps in their job search, and then at the next session they hold one another accountable for what they said they would do.

Job Development

At the time of the site visit, responsibility for outreach to new employers was shared among several of STW-T's managers. They arrange events with employers such as mock interviews, and sometimes bring in guest speakers from area companies. These events help build JVS's relationships with employers who may have openings, and participants have occasionally submitted applications to employers they met at such events.

STW-T staff reported that private temporary staffing agencies are an important source of jobs. Because STW-T participants have little recent work experience, it can be difficult for them to compete with more experienced applicants for permanent positions. These temporary positions allow them to gain needed experience. JVS also has found temporary placements for Business Administration Bootcamp participants through the University of California San Francisco's Temporary Employment Program, which is similar to a temporary staffing agency but for the university. Through other programs, JVS also has connections

with employers in the healthcare and banking industries that sometimes have relevant job openings in office administration or technical office positions.[32]

3.6.4   Work-Based Training

Salesforce Administration includes a paid work experience position, known as a "fellowship," at an employer with Salesforce needs. Fellowship participants are paid $20 an hour. Most fellowships are 20 hours per week for one to three months. STW-T pays for up to 80 fellowship hours via a third-party staffing agency that serves as the employer of record. Employers pay for any hours worked beyond 80.

STW-T staff reach out to employers to arrange the fellowships, including talking with employers about their Salesforce needs that can be filled with a fellow. STW-T staff match the participants to the fellowships, based in part on participant preferences, but the participants themselves then need to apply to the employer. Fellowships have been arranged with both for-profit and non-profit organizations. As part of their fellowships, participants meet in a group for two hours each week to discuss their experiences.

3.6.5   Other Supports

JVS does not itself provide a robust set of other supports as part of STW-T. Instead, JVS uses referrals to other services within or outside JVS as needed. This choice to use referrals was based on JVS's judgment that STW-T would not be serving a largely low-income population in need of additional supports (unlike some other RTW grantee programs). Program staff have reported that generally this appears to indeed be the case. Some participants have needed transportation assistance, in which case STW-T usually refers them to an American Job Center.

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[32]   JVS is increasing its job development capacity; in July 2016, after the site visit, it added a new Employer Engagement Manager position for STW-T.

4. RochesterWorks!—Finger Lakes Hired Program

This chapter describes the Finger Lakes Hired program operated by RochesterWorks! After an overview of the grant, it describes the context and goals of the program, its target population, the characteristics of its enrollees, its organizational structure, and its process for recruitment and enrollment. The final section describes the program services provided by Finger Lakes Hired, including assessment, occupational training, employment readiness activities, work experience opportunities, job search assistance, one-on-one support from program staff, and financial assistance.

4.1   Grant Overview

RochesterWorks!, the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) for the City of Rochester and surrounding Monroe County in western New York, received a $5.2 million Ready to Work (RTW) grant to develop and operate the Finger Lakes Hired program. The program provides sets of customized services to assist long-term unemployed or underemployed workers in finding jobs in the healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and information technology (IT) fields. RochesterWorks! also operates the local American Job Center (called the Career Center), which houses and supports Finger Lakes Hired.

Central to the Finger Lakes Hired program is the role of the Education and Employment Specialists who work one-on-one with program participants to complete an assessment that identifies each participant's individual employment goals and then tailor a plan to help achieve those goals. The plan identifies activities that could include occupational training, with tuition and other supports provided by the grant; employment readiness activities focused on building job search skills and addressing social and emotional issues related to long-term unemployment (primarily a one-week workshop available through the Career Center); work-based training, including on-the-job (OJT) training; and job search assistance. The specific sequence and mix of services is based on each participant's needs and preferences.

Participants can receive occupational training from many providers in the region; if they enroll in training at one of three local community colleges participants receive additional academic support from a grant-funded College Liaison located at the college. For participants enrolled in training, Finger Lakes Hired also includes financial assistance for transportation, tuition, and training-related materials and a needs-based payment of $50 per week.

4.2   Program Context

Through the Career Center, RochesterWorks! provides job search assistance, career guidance, and training opportunities for adults and youth, as well as assistance to local businesses in hiring employees. The Career Center has two locations in Rochester.

RochesterWorks! is using the RTW grant to operate Finger Lakes Hired. The program focuses on the healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and IT sectors because the latter two are long-term mainstays of the local economy and offer job opportunities for workers with upgraded skills, and because of the former's steady growth and multiple training and reemployment opportunities. RochesterWorks! partners with two other WIBs to operate Finger Lakes Hired elsewhere in the region: Finger Lakes Works serves Seneca, Ontario, Wayne, and Yates Counties; GLOW Works serves Genesee, Livingston, Orleans, and Wyoming Counties. Much of the grant's service area is rural, excepting the city of Rochester. Unless otherwise noted, this RTW evaluation of Finger Lakes Hired focuses only on grant activities in Rochester and Monroe County—that is, activities operated by RochesterWorks! itself.

As shown in Appendix Exhibit B-3, the population in Monroe County was about 750,000 in 2014, with about one-third residing in Rochester, a moderate-size city. Three-quarters (74 percent) of the population was White and 15 percent was Black or African American. Monroe County's population is relatively well educated: 36 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher (the national average is 29 percent). The median household income in 2014 was approximately $53,000; 15 percent of county residents lived below the federal poverty level, a proportion in line with the national average.

Rochester and its surrounding areas have experienced economic difficulties over the past decade. The recession in Rochester occurred gradually starting in the early 2000s as some of the region's largest employers, including Eastman Kodak, Xerox, and Bausch and Lomb, laid off employees due to changes in their industry. According to staff, that these economic shifts were already under way dulled the impact of the national recession in 2008-2009 in the region. Finger Lakes Hired staff reported that the economy has improved since, although generally more slowly than in other parts of the country. The annual unemployment rate in 2015 when the RTW grant began was 5.2 percent, an improvement from a peak of 8 percent in 2010.[33]

Several sectors targeted by the RTW grant are identified by the Monroe County Economic Development Division as part of a strategy to attract industry clusters to the region, including manufacturing, IT services, telecommunications, and biotechnology and medicine.[34] According to the New York Department of Labor, 4 of the 10 largest private-sector employers in the Finger Lakes region are healthcare providers. The economic forecast is strong in several healthcare occupations, including Nursing Assistants, Home Health Aides, Licensed Practical Nurses, and Registered Nurses, according to one study.[35] This same study has shown unfilled jobs in manufacturing in applied integrated technologies/mechatronics; tooling and machining; and optics, photonics, and imaging and a need in IT for Computer User Support Specialists, Systems Analysts, Network and Computer Systems Administrators, and Software Developers.

4.3   Target Group and Program Group Characteristics

Finger Lakes Hired targets workers who are unemployed for at least 27 weeks, underemployed (i.e., working part time or below skill level and earning less than 80 percent of previous wages) for at least 27 weeks, or a combination of both.[36] Additionally, they must have an interest in employment in the advanced manufacturing, healthcare, or IT sectors and have at least a high school diploma or GED. There are no income guidelines, although only low-income participants can access certain of the financial assistance supports (see Section 4.6.7).

As discussed in Chapter 1, program applicants included in the study were randomly assigned to either a program group that could access RTW grant services or a control group that could not. Exhibit 411 shows the characteristics of program group members as reported on the study's Baseline Information Form.

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[33] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Data*.

[34] Monroe County Economic Development Division.

[35] Finger Lakes Workforce Development Board, GLOW Workforce Development Board, and Monroe County/Rochester Workforce Development Board, 2016.

[36] Finger Lakes Hired established enrollment targets for each of the target groups specified under the Ready to Work grant; 85 percent are expected to be long-term unemployed; 10 percent other unemployed, which includes underemployed; and 5 percent incumbent workers. Incumbent workers are excluded from the RTW evaluation.

The program enrolled more women than men (56 percent versus 44 percent) and almost twice as many enrollees were White as were Black or African American (56 percent versus 32 percent). The average age of program enrollees was 46, and about 60 percent were age 45 and older. Forty-four (44) percent of program participants had never married, whereas almost one-third (31 percent) were married. Almost half of the participants (47 percent) reported that they had children under age 18 residing in their household. Almost all enrollees were U.S. citizens (95 percent).

Reflecting the targeted industries of the grant, program enrollees were well educated overall; 45 percent of Finger Lakes Hired enrollees reported having a bachelor's or master's degree as their highest degree attained, and one-quarter had some college credit but no degree. Smaller proportions of enrollees had other credentials, such as technical or associate's degrees (16 percent) or a high school diploma or GED (14 percent). Per the eligibility criteria, none had less than a high school diploma or GED. At the time of enrollment, 8 percent reported they were enrolled in another school or training program.

Most Finger Lakes Hired enrollees (89 percent) were not employed at the time of enrollment, reflecting the program's emphasis on serving unemployed workers. Half of enrollees had been employed in the previous 12 months but were not currently working, and more than one-third of enrollees (38 percent) had not worked in more than a year. Among the 11 percent who were working, weekly earnings averaged $385. Half of enrollees were receiving public assistance: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) was most common (34 percent), followed by Unemployment Insurance (UI; 22 percent).[37] Less common were housing assistance (12 percent) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (7 percent).

About equal proportions of enrollees said that they would take any job even if the pay was low (43 percent) and that they preferred a job related to their training (40 percent). Health or disability limitations, transportation, and childcare were not identified by most enrollees as being barriers to their ability to work (12 percent, 11 percent, and 7 percent, respectively).

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[37] This does not include workers who may have already exhausted their UI benefits.

Exhibit 4-1: Selected Characteristics of Program Group Members at Baseline, RochesterWorks! Finger Lakes Hired

Characteristic	Outcome
Demographic Characteristics	
Gender (%)	
Female	56.1
Male	43.9
Race (%)	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.0
Asian	0.8
Black or African American	32.2
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.0
White	56.2
Multi-race or other	10.7
Hispanic ethnicity (%)	5.7
Age (%)	
24 years or younger	3.3
25 to 34 years	17.1
35 to 44 years	20.3
45 to 54 years	31.7
55 years or older	27.6
Average age (years)	45.7
Citizenship (%)	
U.S. citizen	95.1
Legal resident	4.9
Speaks language other than English at home (%)	7.4
Family Status	
Marital status (%)	
Married	30.6
Living with a partner	5.0
Widowed/divorced/separated	20.7
Never married	43.8
Number of own children in household age 18 or younger (%)	
None	53.2
One child	22.0
Two children	17.4
Three or more children	7.3
Education	
Education level (%)	
Less than high school	0.0
High school diploma or GED	13.8
Technical or associate's degree	16.3
Some college credit but no degree	25.2
Bachelor's or master's degree	44.7

Exhibit 4-1: Selected Characteristics of Program Group Members at Baseline, RochesterWorks! Finger Lakes Hired (continued)

Characteristic	Outcome
Currently enrolled in school or training program (%)	
High school or GED program	0.0
Vocational, technical, or trade school	2.3
2- or 4-year college	2.3
Another training program	3.8
Employment	
Employed (%)	
Currently employed full time (30+ hours)	3.3
Currently employed part time (<30 hours)	7.4
Not employed (%)	
Employed in last 12 months but not employed currently	51.6
Longer than 12 months since last worked	37.7
Average weekly earnings ($)	385.50
Factors That Affect Employment	
Average hourly rate a job must pay for respondent to take ($)	15.46
Job preferences (%)	
Will take any job, even if pay is low	42.6
Prefers the kind of job that relates to training	40.2
Limits on ability to work (%)	
Finding quality, affordable childcare	6.9
Transportation problems	11.0
Health or disability	12.4
Felony conviction (%)	8.9
Public Benefits	
Receiving any public benefit (%)	52.9
Type of benefits received (%)	
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	7.4
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	33.6
Unemployment Insurance (UI)	22.1
Section 8 or public housing assistance	12.3

SOURCE: Ready to Work Baseline Information Form.
NOTE: Statistics in this table are computed based on those RochesterWorks! program group members who completed the BIF for the given question (e.g., gender). Sample size is 130 and includes all program group members randomly assigned through October 3, 2016.

4.4   Organizational Structure and Staffing

Finger Lakes Hired is housed within the Career Center operated by RochesterWorks!, the lead organization for the RTW grant. RochesterWorks! uses the RTW grant funding for two full-time Education and Employment Specialists, three half-time College Liaisons, and a Project Manager and to support portions of salaries for Career Center staff.[38] The role of the Education and Employment Specialists is to assess participants' employment interests and goals, determine appropriate steps to pursue them, and address potential barriers to achievement. The full-time Project Manager develops relationships with employers to cultivate work experience and employment opportunities for program participants and works with the Education and Employment Specialists to fill these positions.

Three local community colleges—Monroe Community College, Finger Lakes Community College, and Genesee Community College—partner with RochesterWorks! on the Finger Lakes Hired program. The grant provides half-time funding for one College Liaison at each college to provide support and assistance to participants enrolled in occupational training there.[39] Liaisons also identify and refer potential Finger Lakes Hired applicants to the Education and Employment Specialists for eligibility screening.

Finger Lakes Hired is also supported by RochesterWorks! staff at the Career Center. The Career Center Manager supervises the Education and Employment Specialists and facilitates coordination and communication with other Career Center staff. As discussed below, Career Center staff also make referrals to the program and assist with the weekly Finger Lakes Hired group orientations. RochesterWorks! management provides grant oversight, monitors performance, and offers guidance on programmatic or strategic issues as they arise.

4.5   Recruitment and Enrollment

This section describes the strategies used to recruit applicants and enroll them in the program. This includes enrollment in the study and random assignment to either the program or control group as described in Chapter 1. Through August 2016, after approximately one year of a three-year enrollment period, 120 participants had enrolled in the Finger Lakes Hired program group, or 20 percent of its target study enrollment of 610 (with an equal proportion in the control group).[40]

4.5.1   Recruiting Participants for Finger Lakes Hired

RochesterWorks! uses three strategies to recruit applicants for Finger Lakes Hired: referrals made by Career Center staff, referrals from community partners, and outreach to public assistance recipients. Each is described below.

Career Center Referrals. RochesterWorks! Career Services Advisors (who are not part of the Finger Lakes Hired program) identify possible applicants as part of their standard interactions and meetings with Career Center customers. Education and Employment Specialists routinely remind Career Center staff about Finger Lakes Hired to encourage referrals, and they report that Career Services Advisors

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[38] Two additional Finger Lakes Hired Education and Employment Specialists are located at the Finger Lakes Works and GLOW Works, but the geographic areas covered by these WIBs are not included in the evaluation. They are supervised by the Finger Lakes Hired Project Manager, however.

[39] The community colleges supervise the College Liaisons and offer training to Finger Lakes Hired participants as they would for the general public, but otherwise the colleges are not actively engaged in program operations.

[40] RochesterWorks!'s total target enrollment for the RTW grant is 1,500.

understand the program requirements and have been referring eligible individuals. To refer a potential applicant, Advisors complete a Finger Lakes Hired referral form and forward it to a Specialist for follow-up. The Education and Employment Specialists also recruit potential participants directly at the Career Center through presentations they make at regular Career Center workshops.

Partner Referrals. RochesterWorks! staff inform its organizational partners and other community organizations about Finger Lakes Hired and encourage them to refer potential applicants to the program. College Liaisons at the three partner community colleges make referrals. The Education and Employment Specialists also receive referrals from Operation Transformation Rochester (a city-led anti-poverty initiative that serves residents seeking employment or training) and other training providers, such as the local Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).[41]

Outreach to Public Assistance Recipients. RochesterWorks! staff also attempt to identify long-term unemployed and underemployed public assistance recipients. The program mails letters to UI claimants who are about to exhaust their benefits. The letter introduces the Career Center and encourages claimants interested in healthcare, advanced manufacturing, or IT to contact an Education and Employment Specialist for more information about Finger Lakes Hired. For SNAP recipients, RochesterWorks! includes an insert in an existing SNAP mailing from the Monroe County Department of Human Services. The insert describes the Finger Lakes Hired program, including services available, eligibility, and contact information,

Other Strategies. In addition to these strategies, the Finger Lakes Hired website provides information on the industries targeted by the RTW grant and common occupations within each industry, information on training and services available, and contact information for the Education and Employment Specialists.

Finger Lakes Hired staff reported that it is more challenging to recruit eligible applicants than they had originally expected when they applied for the grant. One issue reported by staff (and confirmed by employment data presented in Section 4.2) is that the number of workers in the region who have been unemployed for long periods appears to have fallen. When RochesterWorks! applied for the grant, older, highly educated and experienced workers who had been laid off were common applicants for Career Center services. This population's education and work experience fit well with the grant's goal to target workers who could attain middle- or high-skill jobs in the H-1B industries of healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and IT. Staff reported that since that time, however, many of those workers either found work or stopped searching. As a result, staff reported that those seeking RochesterWorks! services now are more likely to be younger and less educated, with a more sporadic work history. With fewer Finger Lakes Hired–eligible applicants seeking RochesterWorks! services, pressure has increased on staff to recruit through other channels.

Staff also reported that recruitment for Finger Lakes Hired has faced some sector-specific issues that reflect changes in the local labor market. For example, staff report some applicants do not view manufacturing as a desirable industry to work in due to negative perceptions of manual labor. Staff have also found that some younger job seekers are not willing to start at a pay level appropriate to their skill

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[41] BOCES were established by the New York State legislature for the purpose of sharing educational programs and services among the state's school districts. BOCES offer career and technical training programs for high school students and adults, literacy programs, and education-related services for individuals with disabilities. There are 37 BOCES in New York. For more information see http://www.boces.org.

level in manufacturing and work their way up as they gain experience. Staff are working to overcome these perceptions by promoting opportunities in emerging manufacturing industries such as optics and photonics, which may have fewer negative perceptions and offer opportunities for advancement. Recruiting candidates interested in IT has also been challenging. The combination of rapidly changing technology and job requirements has made it more difficult to identify candidates with the skills and work experience to warrant consideration. This has become increasingly challenging as those long-term unemployed workers with any type of IT background have either been reemployed or retired following the 2008-2009 recession.

Going forward, RochesterWorks! is considering additional recruitment strategies. One approach is to search the Career Center's database to identify current and former customers who may be eligible for Finger Lakes Hired and to contact them directly with information about the program. In addition, RochesterWorks! may try to collaborate with local entities such as the housing authority and Latino-serving organizations to reach workers who might qualify for the program but are not yet aware of it.

4.5.2   Enrollment Process for Finger Lakes Hired

The enrollment process begins with a pre-screening by the Education and Employment Specialists, as shown in Exhibit 4-2. During the pre-screening, which generally occurs by telephone, the Specialist provides information about Finger Lakes Hired, determines whether the potential applicant would meet the eligibility criteria, and informally assesses whether he or she would be a good fit for the program (i.e., interested in the industry and committed to finding employment). If the individual is determined preliminarily eligible, the Specialist registers him or her for the weekly Finger Lakes Hired group orientation session.

For the orientation, the Education and Employment Specialist provides an overview of the Finger Lakes Hired program, including eligibility requirements, industries and occupations available, and expectations of participants. These staff also review services available through the RochesterWorks! Career Center, such as workshops. Finally, the staff provide information about the RTW evaluation and access to the program via random assignment. Finger Lakes Hired orientations take place every Friday at the Career Center and last 60 to 90 minutes. Specialists also have the flexibility to conduct these enrollment activities outside of the Friday orientation, if an interested potential applicant cannot attend it.

Following the overview, the Education and Employment Specialist meets individually for 5 to 10 minutes with each potential applicant to confirm eligibility and then develop a short, initial plan. This plan identifies job search or computer skills workshops and assessments such as ACT's WorkKeys® at the Career Center that may be of interest. It is intended to help applicants consider next steps in their employment search should they not enroll in Finger Lakes Hired.

After the one-on-one meetings, the Education and Employment Specialist explains the study to those who are eligible and interested. Applicants who consent to participate in the study complete the Baseline Information Form (BIF) and are randomly assigned. Those assigned to the program group are scheduled to meet again with an Education and Employment Specialist within a week. Those assigned to the control group are referred to the Career Center:

- *Control group members* can access other services through the Career Center, including meeting with Career Center staff to discuss the job search process and possible next steps such as attending workshops (including the Career Connect workshop discussed below) and updating their resume and cover letter. Control group members also can access services through Operation Transformation

Rochester (discussed above) and can pursue occupational training through the community colleges or other local providers.

- *Program group members* return to the Career Center within one week of the orientation to meet with the Education and Employment Specialist for an assessment of their interests within the healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and IT industries. The Specialist works with each participant to identify an employment goal that fits within the industries and occupations supported by the grant, customize a set and schedule of program services appropriate for that participant, and document next steps in an individualized Employment Plan.

Exhibit 4-2: Finger Lakes Hired Enrollment Process

Recruitment ↓	• Program website; referral from RochesterWorks! Career Services Advisor, college, or another organization; mailing to UI claimants and SNAP recipients.	
Pre-Screening with Education and Employment Specialist ↓	• Phone conversation to determine basic eligibility and assess fit. • Eligible candidates register for Friday group orientation session.	→ Would not meet basic eligibility criteria.
Finger Lakes Hired Orientation ↓	• Information about Finger Lakes Hired program and Career Center workshops and services. • In one-on-one meeting, Specialist confirms applicant's eligibility and identifies in brief plan Career Center activities should applicant not be enrolled in Finger Lakes Hired. • Applicant completes consent form and Baseline Information Form. **Random Assignment** Program group member–schedules first meeting with Education and Employment Specialist.	→ Is not eligible; not a good fit for program. → Refuses consent form; does not complete BIF → Control group member– may access services in Career Center only
Initial Meeting with Education and Employment Specialist	**Program Services Begin** • Each program group member returns to Career Center for assessment of his/her job interests. • Specialist helps identify employment goal, determine program services, and document next steps in Employment Plan.	

4.6   Program Services

As described in this section, for all program group members, the first program activity is an assessment to identify each participant's education and employment background, skills, needs, and employment goals. Based on the results of the assessment, the Education and Employment Specialist then works with the participant to tailor an individualized Employment Plan to those needs and preferences.

As shown in Exhibit 4-3, the activities that make up the Employment Plan include (1) occupational training lasting less than two years in healthcare, advanced manufacturing, or IT; (2) employment readiness activities to build job search skills and address social and emotional issues related to long-term unemployment (primarily a one-week workshop available through the Career Center; (3) work-based training with an employer, including OJT training; and (4) job search assistance focused on locating immediate employment. Education and Employment Specialists also provide one-on-one assistance and support to participants throughout their time in the program.

Services and Supports Provided by the Finger Lakes Hired Program

The following services and assistance are specific to the Finger Lakes Hired intervention and available only to program group members:

- Assessment of prior job search efforts and the need for skill development, job search assistance, and/or supports
- Ongoing one-on-one job search assistance and support from an Education and Employment Specialist
- Financial assistance for occupational training in healthcare, advanced manufacturing, or IT
- Access to a College Liaison, if enrolled in a community college program
- Access to paid work-based training through work experience tryouts and on-the-job training
- For low-income participants enrolled in occupational training, transportation assistance and needs-based payments

The program also provides priority enrollment in an existing one-week job readiness workshop that is also available to other Career Center customers.

There are no specific requirements regarding which services a participant will receive, but typically those who are ready for immediate employment will work with staff on job search; those seeking and needing a specific technical skill will attend occupational training; and those who need to improve their skills in looking for and keeping a job are enrolled in job readiness classes. At this point in the Finger Lakes Hired program implementation, use of the work experience positions has been limited.

Exhibit 4-3: Overview of the RochesterWorks! Finger Lakes Hired Program

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│  Enrollment into RochesterWorks! Finger Lakes Hired │
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                    │Assessment│
                    │Conducted by│
                    │Education & │
                    │Employment │
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Occupational Training
- Short-term certificate programs
- Associate's degree programs

Financial Assistance
Grant funds for tuition, transportation, and needs-based payments ($50/week)

Employment Readiness Activities
- One-week 5 Steps to Rapid Employment workshop
- Other workshops at the Career Center

Open to Career Center Customers

Work-Based Training
- Work experience tryouts (2-4 weeks)
- On-the-job training (6-32 weeks)

Job Search Assistance
Individualized, provided by the Education & Employment Specialist

One-on-One Support from the Education & Employment Specialist
Provides ongoing individualized assistance with job search and other issues as needed

Participants can move between occupational training, employment readiness activities, work-based training, and job search assistance in any sequence.

4.6.1   Assessment

Within a week of program entry, the participant meets with the Education and Employment Specialist to be assessed. The assessment consists of reviewing the participant's employment objectives and job search efforts to date, educational and employment background, and personal circumstances (e.g., family responsibilities, transportation access).

The assessment also identifies the participant's employment goals. If a participant is unclear about a sector of interest or specific job, the Education and Employment Specialist will recommend additional assessments, such as WorkKeys, an O*NET online exercise, or skills surveys through Job Zone. These can give the participant information about occupations that would be a good fit for his/her skills and abilities. The participant works with the Specialist to identify possible jobs of interest within the industries supported by the grant given the results of the assessments. It may take several meetings before they can identify the participant's employment objective and next steps.

The assessment also identifies potential barriers to participation in the Finger Lakes Hired program and employment. Education and Employment Specialists reported that following a long period of unemployment, participants may be in debt or cash strapped and may need financial assistance to cover childcare or transportation while they look for work, or access to a computer and internet to prepare for and conduct a job search.

The Education and Employment Specialist offers guidance to the participant to identify possible ways to address barriers, such as asking family to help with childcare or choosing a training provider with convenient hours and an accessible location. The Specialist also determines whether the participant is eligible for and enrolled in any public assistance or, if pursuing occupational training, qualifies for federal financial aid outside of the RTW grant or grant-provided needs-based payments and/or tuition assistance (see Section 4.6.7).

At the conclusion of this first meeting, the Education and Employment Specialist and participant create an Employment Plan that documents the participant's short- and long-term employment goals; assignment to program activities; and support services and financial assistance.

4.6.2 Occupational Training

Some Finger Lakes Hired participants enroll in occupational training as a first activity, typically when they need additional skills and/or a credential for a specific job of interest. At the time of the site visit for this study, staff reported that about one-third of participants pursued occupational training as an initial activity. For those participants assigned to training, the Education and Employment Specialist provides information about available programs and training providers, length of training, resulting credential, tuition and other expenses (e.g., books, uniform, exam fees), schedule, and location. Once the participant chooses a specific training program, the Education and Employment Specialist sets deadlines tied to the class start date for the participant to complete paperwork for the training provider and Finger Lakes Hired.

Finger Lakes Hired provides financial assistance to attend a broad range of classroom and online programs offered by a variety of training providers. To be eligible for that financial assistance, participants must attend training at a provider that is on the New York State Department of Labor Eligible Training Provider List, meaning the institution and course are eligible to receive Individual Training Account (ITA) funds to pay for the tuition, as authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).[42] Within Monroe County, 21 providers including community colleges, BOCES, and private training providers are on this list and each offers a number of programs for the healthcare, advanced manufacturing, or IT sector.

The length of training and resulting credential depend on the training provider and program pursued. Options range from short-term certificate programs in information technology and healthcare to longer-term postsecondary degrees. Finger Lakes Hired limits the length of training it will cover to two years (due to the length of the RTW grant period); participants in postsecondary degree programs can pursue either an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree (if transferring credits). Common trainings pursued by participants in each of the sectors, as described by Finger Lakes Hired staff, are shown in Exhibit 4-4 and discussed below.

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[42] The Eligible Training Provider List is maintained by the New York State Department of Labor and includes those providers qualified to receive ITAs from customers seeking training. To be qualified, a training provider's program must be evaluated and approved by the local WIB. ITAs are vouchers given to those who need occupational training to become gainfully employed or re-employed. The list was originally created to comply with the 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and continued under WIOA. It can be found here: https://applications.labor.ny.gov/ETPL/Details.faces, accessed September 30, 2016.

Exhibit 4-4: Common Examples of Programs Pursued by Finger Lakes Hired Participants

Program	Length	Credit, Resulting Credential	Training Provider(s) Commonly Used by Participants
Healthcare			
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)	2 months	Non-credit, certificate	• Rochester Educational Opportunity Center • Finger Lakes Community College
Phlebotomy	3 months	Non-credit, certificate	• Monroe BOCES
Medical Office Assistant	6 months	Non-credit, certificate	• Monroe BOCES • Greece Community Education
Medical Secretary	6 months	Non-credit, certificate	• Rochester Educational Opportunity Center
Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN)	10-12 months	Non-credit, certificate	• Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES • Isabella Graham Hart School of Practical Nursing • Rochester Educational Opportunity Center • Genesee Valley BOCES
Advanced Manufacturing			
Lean Six Sigma	1-2 semesters	Non-credit, certificate	• Rochester Institute of Technology • Monroe Community College
Precision Tooling	2-4 semesters	For-credit, certificate or degree	• Monroe Community College
Optical Systems Technology	1 year	For-credit, certificate	• Monroe Community College
Precision Machining Accelerated	22 weeks	For-credit, certificate	• Monroe Community College
Information Technology			
A+, Network+, and Cisco	1 week to 6 months	Non-credit, certificate	• ONLC Training Centers • Monroe BOCES • Monroe Community College
Microsoft Certified Solutions Developer	4 months	Non-credit, certificate	• ONLC Training Centers
Information Technology	2-4 semesters	For-credit, associate's degree	• Monroe Community College
Computer Systems	4 semesters	For-credit, associate's degree	• Monroe Community College
Computer Science	About 4 semesters (if transferring credits)	For-credit, bachelor's degree	• State University of New York Empire • State University of New York Brockport

- *Healthcare.* Staff reported that the most common trainings are in the healthcare sector, particularly Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN). Participants have also pursued Phlebotomy, Medical Office Assistant, and Medical Secretary. These healthcare trainings result in a certificate, not college credit. Of the three community college partners, Finger Lakes Community College offers the most healthcare trainings, including CNA and LPN. Rochester Regional Healthcare System, which operates several hospitals and other facilities in the area, runs its

own LPN program. The local BOCES offer healthcare training, including LPN, Phlebotomy, and Medical Office Assistant, whereas the Rochester Educational Opportunity Center offers LPN, CNA, and Medical Secretary. In addition to participants pursuing (non-credit) certificates, a minority have enrolled in two-year degree programs such as Registered Nurse (RN). Because of the higher tuition for this program, Finger Lakes Hired requires that the program and the student qualify for a Pell grant prior to enrollment.

- *Advanced Manufacturing.* Staff reported that Finger Lakes Hired participants have enrolled in the Precision Tooling certificate and degree programs and the Precision Machining Accelerated program that results in an one-year college certificate. These programs are for credit and offered at Monroe Community College. In addition, participants have pursued Optical Systems Technology, offered by Monroe Community College, which results in a certificate, as well as the non-credit Lean Six Sigma certificate program offered by Monroe Community College and the Rochester Institute of Technology.

- *Information Technology.* Participants can attend a range of IT programs. Non-credit certificate programs pursued by participants include Microsoft Certified Solutions Developer offered by online training provider ONLC Training Centers, and A+ and Network+ offered by Monroe Community College, the local BOCES, and ONLC. The length of the A+ and Network+ programs, as well as a number of other IT trainings, can vary depending on the student's prior experience in IT. Participants with a professional background in IT typically enroll in one-week "bootcamps" designed to upgrade skills and provide certificates. Those with little to no prior experience in IT enroll in longer programs that might last six months, during which they gain a foundation in IT, as well as skills in specific IT areas. Some participants have enrolled in Monroe Community College's Information Technology associate's degree program and the Computer Science bachelor's degree program offered by the State University of New York.

When RochesterWorks! applied for the RTW grant, staff anticipated that most occupational training would take place at one of the community colleges. For this reason, the grant funds a College Liaison at each college to complement the role of the Education and Employment Specialist by ensuring that participants can access all college and external resources to promote program completion. When a participant is referred to training at one of these institutions, the Education and Employment Specialist notifies the College Liaison, who in turn reaches out to the participant to introduce various services and resources including these:

- Assisting students in navigating the college's required tuition payment schedule. Specifically, the College Liaisons serve as an effective intermediary with the campus registration and finance offices so they do not drop Finger Lakes Hired enrollees while RochesterWorks! is processing their tuition payments, which takes longer than for the typical student.

- Assisting students with accessing supports provided by the Finger Lakes Hired program. This includes completing monthly attendance forms and requests for supportive services for those receiving needs-based payments (see Section 4.6.7); submitting receipts and documentation for textbooks or certification exams, tuition bills, and recent grades; and retrieving needs-based payments from RochesterWorks! to deliver to Finger Lakes Hired participants on campus.

- Advising participants on class schedules and options for training, and guiding them to on-campus resources such as tutoring.

RochesterWorks! also envisioned that the College Liaisons would support outreach and recruitment for Finger Lakes Hired, this role emerging gradually as the College Liaisons became increasingly familiar with its programs and the students. Though the community colleges were intended to be the program's primary training providers, only about one-quarter of Finger Lakes Hired participants who attended training in the first year of operations did so there, according to staff. The other providers varied, based on the industry and course of study the participant selected. The Education and Employment Specialists reported that going forward, they plan to encourage community college enrollment over other providers, because the tuition is lower. Community colleges also offer academic resources (e.g., tutoring, academic advising) in addition to the grant-funded College Liaison.

4.6.3   Employment Readiness Activities

Given that the Ready to Work grant program's target population is workers who have been unemployed for a long period, Finger Lakes Hired provides employment readiness activities designed to improve participants' skills in looking for employment, as well as addressing emotional and social issues. These activities are primarily a range of workshops operated by the Career Center.

The primary employment readiness activity for the Finger Lakes Hired program is the week-long *5 Steps to Rapid Employment* workshop.[43] RochesterWorks! has used the *5 Steps* curriculum since 2012, and it is available to all Career Center customers (including those in the study's control group).[44] Finger Lakes Hired participants, however, receive an admission preference into *5 Steps* if the class is oversubscribed for the upcoming session. RochesterWorks! currently has four staff who have been externally certified as *5 Steps* instructors and six who are certified as *5 Steps* coaches.

> **"5 Steps to Rapid Employment" Curriculum**
>
> **Step 1:** Understanding how beliefs and emotions influence actions and overcoming negative beliefs; recognizing and addressing fear; identifying a support circle.
>
> **Step 2:** Identifying life and work values; developing options to broaden job possibilities.
>
> **Step 3:** Developing language to communicate to employers what skills and abilities the candidate brings to employers; identifying references; developing resumes.
>
> **Step 4:** Structuring the job search, including creating a weekly schedule with goals and tasks.
>
> **Step 5:** Interviewing skills; building a professional network; and keeping a job once obtained.

At the time of the site visit, staff reported that approximately 20 percent of Finger Lakes Hired participants had enrolled in *5 Steps to Rapid Employment*. The workshop is geared towards unemployed individuals who have lost confidence in their professional capabilities, making their job search difficult. Workshop attendees develop resumes and cover letters and practice interviewing skills, but the curriculum also addresses the emotional and social aspects of looking for employment. Steps 1 and 2 help attendees identify and overcome negative perceptions of themselves, which staff reported can come from long periods of unemployment. In addition, attendees identify their work and life values, and consider

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[43]   The nationally available *5 Steps* curriculum was developed by Jay Block, a career coach and author of the book *5 Steps to Rapid Employment: The Job You Want at the Pay You Deserve*. Instructors of *5 Steps* participants must be certified to use the curriculum. Certification for *5 Steps* instructors includes in-person and online training, as well as an exam; certification for *5 Steps* coaches involves attending the five-day workshop and taking an exam. Recertification occurs annually.

[44]   RochesterWorks! adopted *5 Steps* in 2012 after searching for a curriculum that met the needs of adult learners, provided a comprehensive job search strategy, and could be delivered in a relatively short (one-week) period of time. RochesterWorks! served as a pilot site for developers of the *5 Steps* curriculum as they were testing and finalizing it.

using those values to refine the type of job to search for. Steps 3, 4, and 5 are about the mechanics of the job search, including contacting employers, highlighting skills, gathering references, developing values-based resumes, and interviewing. The curriculum also helps attendees create a job search schedule with weekly goals and tasks, and it offers strategies for networking and overcoming obstacles during the search.

The workshop is offered once a month for five consecutive days. Class runs from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, followed by two to three hours of online homework that prepares for the next day's content. The average class size is 20, though up to 24 can be accommodated. Instruction is a blend of lecture, class discussion, and small group work. Completers receive a RochesterWorks! certificate of completion and have the option of working individually with a certified *5 Steps* coach, who assists them in applying the *5 Steps* principles to finding a job.[45] Completers can also attend bi-weekly groups in which a *5 Steps* instructor and a RochesterWorks! staff member provide information on industries and employers in the area, as well as job openings.

In addition to the *5 Steps* workshops, Finger Lakes Hired participants may also attend other Career Center workshops not specific to the Finger Lakes Hired program. They commonly attend two-hour sessions on resume development and review, cover letter development, interviewing skills, job search management, handling disclosure of a disability to an employer, and using LinkedIn to network and job search.

4.6.4 Work-Based Training

Finger Lakes Hired offers two types of work-based training experiences—work experience tryouts and OJT placements—which are intended to provide participants with job experience, but they also offer employers the opportunity to work with a participant as a prospective employee before making a hiring commitment. Both are still getting under way in the Finger Lakes Hired program and had been used by only a small number of participants at the time of the site visit.

- *Work experience tryouts* are short term, lasting two to four weeks, during which the Finger Lakes Hired participant works for a business in the participant's selected target industry (healthcare, IT, or advanced manufacturing) in the same or a similar role to one they might be hired for. The Finger Lakes Hired program uses grant funds to pay the participant's salary through a third-party company, and the program covers benefits, insurance, and any background screening the business requires. At the end of the tryout, the employer can decide to hire the participant or not.

- *On-the-job training* placements last 6 to 32 weeks and are customized to meet each participant's skill development needs. OJT contracts typically require a formal training plan, which can be provided by the employer based on company-specific needs. Alternatively, the Education and Employment Specialist can assist the employer in developing a relevant training plan for the participant. Finger Lakes Hired reimburses the company for wages paid during this OJT period based on a sliding scale. Smaller companies (fewer than 50 employees) may be reimbursed up to 90 percent of the participant's wages; medium companies (51–250 employees), up to 75 percent; and large companies (250+ employees), up to 50 percent. Finger Lakes Hired caps the reimbursement at $25,000, and employers send invoices for payment on a monthly basis.[46]

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[45] Education and Employment Specialists are certified *5 Steps* coaches for Finger Lakes Hired participants.

[46] DOL defined the company sizes and reimbursement percentages in the RTW grant solicitation.

Work experience tryouts and OJTs may be identified by participants, who may locate businesses with positions relevant to the skills they would like to develop. Alternatively, they may be identified by the Finger Lakes Hired Project Manager or the Education and Employment Specialist. The Project Manager regularly contacts and meets with businesses as part of a general effort to inform employers about Finger Lakes Hired and its available resources, and to identify current or future employment opportunities for participants. Outreach to businesses by the Education and Employment Specialists generally occurs when a specific participant is interested in or needs a work experience opportunity. In many instances, these more targeted contacts tend to complement the broader employer outreach and relationship-building effort that is the primary responsibility of the Project Manager.

Regardless of who identifies the potential placement, the next step is for the Education and Employment Specialist to contact the business and determine whether there might be a fit between the opening and the participant. In some cases, a participant may have already applied or interviewed for a job with an employer, and then the Education and Employment Specialist follows up to describe the two work experience options.

These positions are also intended to help participants "get a foot in the door" with a prospective employer. When a business agrees to create a place for a participant, the Education and Employment Specialist assists the business in the completion of paperwork, which includes documenting the job description, the length of the position, and the participant's qualifications and forms needed to process the reimbursement to the employer. The Education and Employment Specialist also remains in contact with the employer, checking periodically during the participant's tryout or OJT to help address personnel issues as they arise and to learn from the employer whether the participant has any skill gaps that need to be addressed.

4.6.5 Job Search Assistance

Some Finger Lakes Hired participants, particularly those with skills and experience to directly enter the labor market, focus primarily on the program's job search assistance. Though a portion of them enroll in occupational training, employment readiness activities, and work experience prior to or as part of their job search, participants are encouraged to job search throughout their tenure in the program. The Education and Employment Specialists provide one-on-one assistance to participants in structuring their job search. They suggest steps a participant can take to explore job opportunities and apply for jobs, and they set a schedule for the participant to complete those activities. If participants demonstrate a commitment to job search activities, the Education and Employment Specialists will meet with them regularly, typically every two to four weeks.

Some common job search activities include these:

- Researching local businesses to identify employers of interest, not only for the jobs available but also for their culture and alignment with the participant's values.

- Researching occupations via the internet, Job Zone, and O*NET or through conversations with people in the field, in order to broaden the types of positions the participant is applying for, particularly if he or she did not find employment in prior search efforts.

- Developing a resume and cover letter tailored to a specific position or employer and having it reviewed by the Education and Employment Specialist.

- Attending job fairs organized by the Career Center or other organizations.

- Reviewing jobs posted on a web-based job board exclusively for Finger Lakes Hired participants.

- Getting assistance in applying for jobs.

Identifying potential jobs is a coordinated effort of the Project Manager, the Education and Employment Specialists, and the Finger Lakes Hired participant:

- *Project Manager.* The external face of the program, the Project Manager contacts businesses in the healthcare, IT, and advanced manufacturing industries targeted by the grant to inform them of Finger Lakes Hired, the types of qualifications of its participants, and the work experience tryout and OJT opportunities that may be available to employers. In the process of presenting the program to businesses, the Project Manager often identifies potential job openings at these companies for participants. The Project Manager provides this information to the Education and Employment Specialists and may offer an introduction to the employer when appropriate.

- *Education and Employment Specialists.* The Specialists also monitor job announcements that come through the Career Center. Some businesses with an open position approach Finger Lakes Hired staff to see whether they can recommend anyone. The Education and Employment Specialist reviews the roster of active job-seeking Finger Lakes Hired participants. If the Specialist does not find anyone appropriate for the position, it is posted on the web-based Finger Lakes Hired job board. This online website, maintained by the Education and Employment Specialists and accessible to current and past participants, lists job announcements in the program's target industries.

- *Program Participants.* Staff reported that when participants identify a job or employer of interest, they typically discuss what they know about the role and business, the work environment, wages and benefits, and the work location. The Education and Employment Specialist shares what he or she knows about the employer as well, and together they discuss whether the job and workplace align with the participant's goals and personal factors such as transportation, schedule, and work environment. If the participant is considering applying, the Education and Employment Specialist often will contact the employer, sometimes working with the Project Manager to facilitate an introduction. When the Education and Employment Specialist contacts the employer on behalf of a participant, the Specialist and employer discuss the particular participant, potential job opportunities, and work experience tryout and OJT options available as part of the Finger Lakes Hired program. Staff reported that employers vary in their responses to the outreach: some are eager to review a participant's application, whereas others are slow to respond or do not respond at all.

When a participant secures employment, the Education and Employment Specialist asks that the participant touch base about two months after the job starts. If the job is going well, the Specialist exits the participant from the Finger Lakes Hired program. If the job is not going well or if it is a "survival" job—one the participant took just to make ends meet, rather than a long-term position—the Specialist keeps the participant enrolled in Finger Lakes Hired and follows up monthly to discuss any progress in searching for a job that aligns with the employment objectives the participant defined during the initial assessment.

4.6.6 One-on-One Support

In addition to the upfront activities of assessment and developing an Employment Plan, and regardless of the specific activities Finger Lakes Hired participants pursue, they receive ongoing individual support from the Education and Employment Specialists for the duration of their time in the program. Specialists advise on a variety of issues specific to each participant's needs, which may change over time in the program. For example, some participants have lost confidence in themselves after an extended period of

unemployment, so the Specialist may counsel them in that area or refer them to other resources at the Career Center or elsewhere.

While enrolled in training, if a participant starts to have difficulty attending class—for instance, because the cost of transportation becomes prohibitive or the class schedule makes childcare difficult—the Education and Employment Specialist can discuss alternatives that still allow the participant to pursue his or her goals. Options might include selecting a different training provider closer to home or with a different schedule, or identifying lower-cost transportation options or a different childcare provider. If a participant has a disability that requires an accommodation in order to enroll in a training program, the Specialist can help navigate the process of seeking assistance from the state's Adult Career and Continuing Education-Vocational Rehabilitation office.

The Education and Employment Specialists reported considerable variation in participants' level of program engagement. Some participants are highly motivated to find a job, and they commit themselves to the process; others are slow to decide on an industry to pursue and a course of action, despite guidance from the Specialist. Participants in the latter group may be unresponsive and inactive in the program for periods of time. The Education and Employment Specialist's frequency of contact with them varies accordingly. Actively engaged participants—which staff defined as those applying to five or more jobs each week—receive a phone call or email from the Specialist every two to three weeks, or they can meet with the Specialist in person at RochesterWorks! The Specialist asks the participant about his or her progress in pursing the activities in the Employment Plan and whether any issues have arisen that call for guidance or assistance. If participants are not actively looking for jobs, often because they are enrolled in training, the Specialist contacts them by phone or email about once a month.

Although the Education and Employment Specialists do schedule additional appointments with participants to check in, it is up to participants to follow through in attending the meetings and dedicating time to looking for work. For those who are motivated to make progress, the Specialist will work with them as frequently as possible. Consistent with the terms of the RTW grant, if a participant does not communicate with a Specialist for 90 days, the participant is dropped from the program. However, participants who remain in touch and are making concerted efforts to reach their employment goals can remain enrolled in Finger Lakes Hired for as long as is needed, until they become employed.

4.6.7   Financial Assistance and Other Supports

Finger Lakes Hired provides a range of financial and other supports to participants. First, Finger Lakes Hired covers the cost of tuition, textbooks, and certification exams for all participants enrolled in training. If participants and the training they are pursuing are eligible for any type of financial aid (such as a Pell grant), they will first apply those funds to the cost of tuition and Finger Lakes Hired will pay the balance, upon receipt of a bill and course syllabus or schedule.

Second, low-income participants who are enrolled in an occupational training program can receive a needs-based payment of $50 per week.[47] This typically is used for childcare or other living expenses, and there is no cap on the total amount a participant can receive. In addition, the Finger Lakes Hired program

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[47]   For Finger Lakes Hired, RochesterWorks! uses the WIOA definition of "low-income," which is that the individual either is receiving public assistance or is below 100 percent of the federal poverty level or below 70 percent of the standard living level during WIOA's look-back period. RochesterWorks! chose a different look-back period, ending at the time the participant applies for the supportive service.

offers transportation assistance to facilitate participants' attending the occupational training. Those who rely on a car receive a $25 gas card for every 200 miles traveled, with a maximum of four gas cards per month. Those who take public transportation receive a monthly bus pass worth $56 or single-ride passes, whichever option is cheaper.

Finally, regardless of the activities participants are attending, the Education and Employment Specialists also work with them to apply for public benefits, if they do not already access them. These benefits can include SNAP, Medicaid, housing assistance, childcare grants, and Social Security Disability Income.

5. Worksystems—Reboot Northwest

This chapter describes the Reboot Northwest (NW) program operated by Worksystems, Inc. (WSI) and its two partners. After an overview of the grant, it describes the context and goals of the program, its target population, the characteristics of its enrollees, its organizational structure, and its process for recruitment and enrollment. It focuses specifically on the organizational and community partnerships key to the implementation of Reboot NW services. The final section describes the program services provided by Reboot NW, including assessment, career planning and employment readiness, occupational training, work-based training, job search assistance, and other supports.

5.1   Grant Overview

Worksystems, the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) for Multnomah and Washington Counties in Oregon, received an $8.5 million Ready to Work (RTW) grant to develop and operate Reboot NW. The program aims to connect underemployed and long-term unemployed workers and veterans to skilled positions in the fields of information technology (IT) and advanced manufacturing. Worksystems operates Reboot NW in partnership with two other WIBs from two states, Clackamas Workforce Partnership in Oregon and Workforce Southwest Washington in Washington State.

Reboot NW is designed to promote employment in IT and manufacturing by providing participants with occupational training, employment readiness and job search assistance, and work-based training (e.g., on-the-job training). Career Coaches work one-on-one with each participant to complete an assessment identifying the participant's employment goals, develop an individualized service plan, and coordinate services and supports throughout a participant's tenure in the program. Participants may attend the grant-funded Career Link employment readiness "bootcamp" designed to promote peer support, increase participants' readiness to work, and introduce them to industry experts. The program also includes assistance on behavioral health issues, provided through two contracted partners. Funds from the Reboot NW grant cover tuition for occupational training programs, as well as assistance with transportation and other supports.

5.2   Program Context

Reboot NW is administered across the Portland (Oregon)-Vancouver (Washington) metropolitan area under the aegis of the Columbia-Willamette Regional Workforce Collaborative, a coalition of three WIBs. The three are Worksystems, the Clackamas Workforce Partnership, and Workforce Southwest Washington (WSW).[48] Reboot NW is a new program, but it builds on a previous regional collaborative called ProSTEP, funded by earlier U.S. Department of Labor grants and involving the same three partners. Worksystems is the lead agency for Reboot NW.

Worksystems oversees the public workforce system across Oregon's Multnomah County (which includes the city of Portland) and adjacent Washington County (see Exhibit 5-1). The Clackamas Workforce Partnership oversees the workforce system in Clackamas County, Oregon, which borders Multnomah County to the south. WSW, located in Vancouver, Washington, across the Columbia River from Portland, oversees the workforce system in Clark County (which includes the city of Vancouver), as well as Washington's Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties.

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[48]   Workforce Southwest Washington was previously known as the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council.

Exhibit 5-1: Counties Served by Reboot Northwest and WorkSource Center Locations
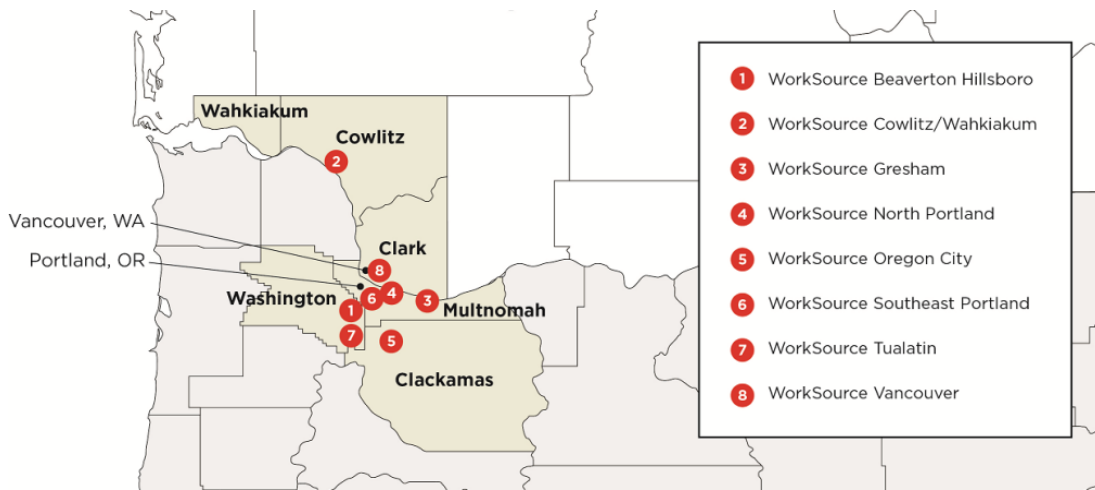
The American Job Centers (AJCs) in these six counties, known as WorkSource centers, administer Reboot NW services. In addition to the Reboot NW program, the WorkSource centers also provide job search assistance, career guidance, and training opportunities to adults and youth and connect job seekers to local businesses, as specified by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). There are eight WorkSource center locations across the six counties, all of which operate Reboot NW.

Throughout this chapter, we refer to the overall service area of Reboot NW as "Portland-Vancouver." As shown in Exhibit 5-2, when we discuss similarities and differences across the grant's service area, we use "Portland Metro" to refer to the region covered by Worksystems; "Clackamas," by the Clackamas Workforce Partnership; and "Southwest Washington," by WSW.

Exhibit 5-2: Geographic Areas Served by Reboot Northwest

Workforce Investment Board	Regional Label	Service Area
All	Portland-Vancouver	All
Worksystems, Inc.	Portland Metro	Multnomah (city of Portland) and Washington Counties, Oregon
Clackamas Workforce Partnership	Clackamas	Clackamas County, Oregon
Workforce Southwest Washington	Southwest Washington	Clark (city of Vancouver), Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum Counties, Washington

Portland-Vancouver is a geographically large area, with urban, suburban, and rural sections. Multnomah and Washington Counties are urban and suburban; Clackamas County is largely suburban and rural; and Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties are largely rural. The total population for Portland-Vancouver in 2014 was about 2.2 million, with about 1.3 million of that in and around Portland itself (see Appendix Exhibit B-4). Portland Metro has grown substantially, with in-migration from Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle. Staff report that this demographic change has created a significant competition for local residents, as more highly educated workers have moved to the area and are vying for the higher-paying jobs.

Overall, the region is largely White, ranging from 77 percent to 94 percent across the six counties. Residents of Portland Metro and Clackamas are also well educated, with large proportions holding a bachelor's degree or higher (40 percent and 32 percent, respectively). The residents of Southwest Washington are less educated (14 to 26 percent hold bachelor's degrees across the counties). Although median household incomes of between $45,000 and $65,000 are relatively high across the region

compared with the United States as a whole, in Cowlitz, Multnomah, and Wahkiakum Counties, more than 18 percent of residents are living below the federal poverty level (versus the 2014 national average of 16 percent).

Like the rest of the country, the recession's effects on Portland-Vancouver were most pronounced in the late 2000s, with the largest increases in unemployment rates occurring across the six counties between 2008 and 2009. During the recession there were substantial declines in employment, particularly in construction and manufacturing sectors. In Clackamas and Portland Metro, unemployment increased from approximately 5 percent to 10 percent from 2008 to 2009.[49] In Southwest Washington, unemployment rates averaged around 8 percent in 2008 and increased to an average of around 14 percent in 2009.[50] Also like most of the country, most Portland-Vancouver counties did not reach their pre-recession unemployment levels until 2015. By the time the RTW grant began at Worksystems in 2015, the unemployment rate was around 5 percent in both Portland Metro and Clackamas and between 6 and 9 percent in Southwest Washington.[51]

IT and advanced manufacturing were identified as high-priority industries by Worksystems and are anticipated to grow substantially across the region over the next 10 years, with Computer Technician and engineering positions growing by more than 20 percent in some areas.[52] The main employers in Portland Metro include IT companies such as Intel and Simple and advanced manufacturing companies such as Boeing, ESCO, and Precision Castparts Corp., which is also a major employer in Clackamas. Clackamas also has several other manufacturing employers including Optimize Technologies; Blount International, which makes chainsaws; and large food processors such as Bob's Red Mill.

5.3   Target Group and Program Group Characteristics

Reboot NW targets underemployed and long-term unemployed workers and veterans. To be eligible for the program, applicants must be unemployed for 27 or more weeks (and have lost their job on or after December 1, 2007); underemployed (defined as having lost their job on or after December 1, 2007, and since been unable to obtain full-time work equal to their previous wages or responsibilities); or an unemployed veteran[53] or eligible spouse. Applicants also must be age 18 or older and legally able to work. Finally, they need a high school diploma or GED and must have interest and/or experience in the IT or advanced manufacturing sectors.

Reboot NW staff generally characterized the individuals they serve as "career changers" who have some transferrable skills but want to move to a new industry or career; or as mid-career professionals whose skills have become stale, meaning they are already connected to the program's target industries but need to update their skills and build confidence and motivation for a job search.

As discussed in Chapter 1, program applicants included in the study were randomly assigned to either a program group that could access Reboot NW's services or a control group that could not (but could access other similar services in the community). Exhibit 5-3 shows the demographic characteristics of

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[49]   State of Oregon Employment Department.

[50]   U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Data*.

[51]   Washington State Employment Security Department; State of Oregon Employment Department.

[52]   State of Oregon Employment Department.

[53]   Worksystems targeted veterans for Reboot NW because it anticipated that 4,500 inactive soldiers stationed at a local base would soon need civilian jobs, training, and work readiness services.

members in the study's program group, using self-reported data from the study's Baseline Information Form (BIF) that applicants completed during the intake process for the program.

The program group included far more men than women (74 percent versus 26 percent). Consistent with the region as a whole, a large majority of the participants were White (77 percent), followed by those who identified as multi-racial or other (8 percent), Asian (7 percent), and Black or African American (7 percent). The average age of Reboot NW participants was 45, with more than one-quarter over age 55 and only 1 percent age 24 or younger. Most participants were U.S. citizens (91 percent). Almost half (45 percent) reported being married and 22 percent were widowed, divorced, or separated. Nearly 40 percent of Reboot NW enrollees were veterans (not shown).[54]

Reflecting the RTW grant goals, Reboot NW enrollees were a relatively well-educated and older group, but primarily were unemployed at the time of enrollment. More than half of them reported having a bachelor's or master's degree (54 percent); 14 percent, a technical or associate's degree; and 21 percent, at least some college credit without a degree. Few participants were working (22 percent), and 33 percent of Reboot NW participants reported being unemployed for longer than 12 months. Among Reboot NW participants who were employed at the time of enrollment, weekly earnings averaged about $334.

At the time of enrollment, nearly half of Reboot NW participants reported that they were willing to take a low-paying job (47 percent); half reported that they preferred a job that related to their training (50 percent). Nearly half (47 percent) reported receiving some type of public benefits. The most commonly accessed benefit was the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (28 percent), followed by Unemployment Insurance (22 percent).

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[54]   According to I-Trac, the Worksystems management information system, this figure includes unemployed veterans and long-term unemployed veterans as of October 2016.

Exhibit 5-3: Selected Characteristics of Program Group Members at Baseline, Worksystems Reboot Northwest

Characteristic	Outcome
Demographic Characteristics	
Gender (%)	
Female	25.9
Male	74.1
Race (%)	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.7
Asian	6.9
Black or African American	6.5
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.0
White	76.6
Multi-race or other	8.2
Hispanic ethnicity (%)	7.9
Age (%)	
24 years or younger	1.3
25 to 34 years	24.6
35 to 44 years	22.9
45 to 54 years	25.4
55 years or older	25.8
Average age (years)	45.0
Citizenship (%)	
U.S. citizen	91.2
Legal resident	8.8
Speaks language other than English at home (%)	19.7
Family Status	
Marital status (%)	
Married	45.4
Living with a partner	2.9
Widowed/divorced/separated	21.8
Never married	29.8
Number of own children in household age 18 or younger (%)	
None	69.4
One child	13.5
Two children	10.9
Three or more children	6.1
Education	
Education level (%)	
Less than high school	0.0
High school diploma or GED	10.9
Technical or associate's degree	13.8
Some college credit but no degree	21.1
Bachelor's or master's degree	54.3

Exhibit 5-3: Selected Characteristics of Program Group Members at Baseline, Worksystems Reboot Northwest (continued)

Characteristic	Outcome
Currently enrolled in school or training program (%)	
High school or GED program	0.0
Vocational, technical, or trade school	3.6
2- or 4-year college	9.6
Another training program	2.8
Employment	
Employed (%)	
Currently employed full time (30+ hours)	8.7
Currently employed part time (<30 hours)	12.8
Not employed (%)	
Employed in last 12 months but not employed currently	45.9
Longer than 12 months since last worked	32.6
Average weekly earnings ($)	333.97
Factors That Affect Employment	
Average hourly rate a job must pay for respondent to take ($)	19.31
Job preferences (%)	
Will take any job, even if pay is low	47.4
Prefers the kind of job that relates to training	50.2
Limits to ability to work	
Finding quality, affordable childcare limits ability to work	6.3
Transportation problems limit ability to work	16.9
Health or disability limits ability to work	10.1
Felony conviction (%)	5.5
Public Benefits	
Receiving any public benefit (%)	47.4
Type of benefits received (%)	
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	2.1
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	27.5
Unemployment Insurance	22.1
Section 8 or public housing assistance	3.8

SOURCE: Ready to Work Baseline Information Form.
NOTE: Statistics in this table are computed based on those Worksystems program group members who completed the BIF for the given question (e.g., gender). Sample size is 250 and includes all program group members randomly assigned through October 3, 2016.

5.4   Organizational Structure and Staffing

As noted above, Worksystems and its two WIB partners operate the Reboot NW program through their local WorkSource centers, at a total of eight locations. Worksystems operates out of five centers in Portland Metro; Clackamas Workforce Partnership out of a center in Oregon City, Oregon; and WSW out of two centers, one each in Vancouver and Kelso, Washington.

The key staff for the program are the Career Coaches. There is typically one Career Coach in each WorkSource center. Clackamas, however, has several part-time Coaches.[55] The Career Coaches are responsible for intake and random assignment, enrollment, assessment, and ongoing coordination of service needs with participants. Each of the three regions also hired one or two instructors to teach the Career Link bootcamp offered to participants (a total of four instructors across the three regions). The Worksystems Project Director holds monthly meetings with the Program Coordinators in each region, to address management and program issues and coordinate service delivery.

Reboot NW has several organizational partners. Worksystems contracts with Cascadia Behavioral Health, a non-profit provider of health and housing services throughout Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties. Cascadia provides behavioral health services for Reboot NW, including trainings for staff, presentations at Career Link classes, and private consultations with participants. WSW contracts with Cascade Community Services to provide similar services in its region. Worksystems also contracts with the marketing firm Fish Marketing, to develop and operate a grant-wide website and marketing campaign.

Finally, the Portland Metro and Clackamas regions work with the local housing authorities. Clackamas, in particular, has a partnership with the Housing Authority of Clackamas County. Clackamas has included staff from the Housing Authority in workforce activities including monthly team meetings attended by Career Coaches and other WorkSource staff to connect customers receiving training to housing assistance. The Housing Authority allocated $200,000 of funding for short-term rental vouchers for Reboot NW participants in Clackamas. The vouchers provide up to two years of rental assistance.

5.5   Recruitment and Enrollment

This section describes the strategies used to recruit applicants and enroll them in the Reboot NW program. It also describes the processes by which participants enter the program and the RTW study, which includes random assignment to either the program or control group, as described in Chapter 1. Through August 2016, after approximately one year of a three-year enrollment period, 249 participants had enrolled in Reboot NW's program group, or 50 percent of its target study enrollment of 500 (with an equal proportion in the control group).[56]

5.5.1   Recruiting Participants for Reboot NW

Reboot NW's recruitment approach involves centralized outreach and marketing led by Worksystems, as well as more targeted strategies and partnerships at the regional and local levels. The different types of recruitment strategies are described below.

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[55]   At the beginning of the grant, Clackamas had one full-time Coach and three part-time Coaches. At the time of the site visit, it had two full-time Coaches and one Coach who mostly had transitioned to another assignment, but continued to work with a small number of Reboot participants.

[56]   WSI's total target enrollment for the RTW grant is 1,000.

Grant-Wide Recruitment Strategies

Worksystems contracted with Fish Marketing to design a Reboot NW website and create materials for both print and digital advertising. All three regions use the same marketing materials. The Reboot NW website includes background on the program, a description of the study, and eligibility requirements. Interested visitors can complete an online program eligibility questionnaire and access contact information for the Career Coach at their preferred WorkSource center location.

Worksystems also works with the State of Oregon Employment Department to identify potential applicants through the Unemployment Insurance system who have been unemployed for at least six months. Reboot NW then sends a mailing to this group, providing information on the program.

Regional Recruitment Strategies

Each of the three regions receives grant funds for its recruitment efforts, and the Program Coordinators in each region can decide how to use these funds. Thus far, Clackamas has used its funds primarily to print marketing materials. The Clackamas Workforce Partnership also uses its partnership with the Housing Authority for recruitment. Career Coaches hold orientations at the Housing Authority site, and Reboot NW sent a mass mailing and email blast to about 4,000 people served by it.

In Southwest Washington, a Marketing and Outreach Coordinator works on media and news releases, publishes success stories, and handles media engagement. WSW places local bus ads that frame Reboot NW as a "fast track for your career" and mention training opportunities and available support services.

Local Recruitment Strategies

Each Career Coach is responsible for recruitment at his or her local WorkSource center. Coaches use a variety of recruitment methods that include the following:

- *Referrals from the workforce system.* The most common method of recruitment for Reboot NW is referrals from within the WorkSource center system. Coaches inform other WorkSource staff about the Reboot NW services and target population. Some Career Coaches use the general information sessions held at the WorkSource centers to recruit for Reboot NW. For example, one Career Coach schedules Reboot NW information sessions to immediately follow the weekly general session and invites anyone who might be eligible for the program and interested in IT or advanced manufacturing to stay.

- *Referrals from partner organizations and training providers.* In Portland Metro, Career Coaches receive referrals from organizations within the Aligned Partner Network, a network of approximately 30 organizations and agencies, including the WorkSource centers, that serve common participants. Also, across all regions, training providers send referrals to Reboot NW. In some cases, they refer their trainees to Reboot NW to find on-the-job training or internship opportunities (particularly for manufacturing trainings that require cooperative work experience to complete) or for assistance with job search. Other times, applicants are referred to Reboot NW before they enroll in training to access its funding resources and supports.

- *Community outreach.* Career Coaches also rely on word of mouth and community outreach. They hang tear-away posters and flyers in locations such as libraries, grocery stores, and community centers. Coaches also do more-targeted outreach in the community, at existing IT and advanced manufacturing groups for networking or job seekers, industry-specific career fairs, and conferences or other industry events. Some Coaches have formed longer-term referral relationships with the leaders of regularly held local networking or job seeker groups. One Coach described how she strategically

reached out to a tech networking group 27 weeks after a round of layoffs at Intel, when those who were laid off would become eligible for Reboot NW. Other Coaches attend career fairs and other industry events more sporadically.

- *Oregon employment database.* Coaches are expected to use the State of Oregon Employment Department database called "iMatchSkills," an online job-matching tool that allows any WorkSource customer to post a professional profile, including skills and work history, and connect to potential jobs. Employers can also access the database to search for potential candidates. Coaches use the tool to identify potential Reboot NW participants. They are able to view resumes in the database, as well as search and filter based on criteria such as industry or career interests. Anyone who appears eligible is mailed information about the Reboot NW program.

Overall, though Worksystems has been able to meet its grant enrollment goals, Career Coaches also reported difficulties in maintaining a steady stream of interested and eligible applicants. There are periods of increased interest, generally aligned with the grant-wide marketing pushes, but there are also slow periods. The improving economy has made recruitment even more challenging, as workers who would be potential Reboot NW applicants find employment on their own.

5.5.2 Enrollment Process for Reboot NW

Exhibit 5-4 illustrates the enrollment process for Reboot NW participants. Potential applicants who are recruited or referred to Reboot NW meet with a Career Coach, who determines their basic eligibility and assesses their interest in the Reboot NW program. Potential applicants who go to the Reboot NW website take an online questionnaire to determine their basic eligibility.

Those interested in the program attend a Reboot NW information session at one of the WorkSource centers. Group program information sessions are held regularly, generally weekly or bi-weekly, for 45-90 minutes, though the schedule and length vary among the Career Coaches and are based on recruitment flow. During the information session, the Career Coach provides a general overview of the Reboot NW program, including program background, eligibility criteria, target industries, benefits, staff roles, and services provided. The Coach also introduces the evaluation and the random assignment process. Before leaving the session, attendees complete a Skills and Training Questionnaire to assess "fit" for the program. This questionnaire requests information on basic demographics, educational background, recent employment history, wages, and target occupations.

Interested attendees schedule a one-on-one follow-up session with a Career Coach to move forward with Reboot NW enrollment. At that meeting, the Coach determines their eligibility and assesses their fit for the program, in part based on the Skills and Training Questionnaire. Staff reported that the assessment of fit is relatively subjective. One of the central aspects of fit is an applicant's level of interest and experience in IT or manufacturing, although demonstrating skills that can be applied to the IT and/or advanced manufacturing sectors can be sufficient.

If applicants are determined to be eligible for Reboot NW, the Coach explains the study and obtains their informed consent to participate in it. Those who consent complete the BIF and are randomly assigned. Participants assigned to the program group sign a Statement of Program Participation and Understanding, in which they commit to adhere to program expectations (i.e., consistent attendance and participation in required training activities) and to schedule career planning activities, "Career Mapping," and an assessment. Participants assigned to the control group instead receive a list of alternative services available at the WorkSource center and in the community.

Exhibit 5-4: Reboot Northwest Enrollment Process

Recruitment ⬇	Potential applicants learn about Reboot NW through the program website, a referral from WorkSource, a referral from another organization, or other outreach efforts.	
	Basic eligibility and interest are assessed by the Coach or through an online eligibility questionnaire. ➡	Not likely to be eligible.
Information Session ⬇	Potential applicants attend a Reboot NW information session held at one of the WorkSource centers. Career Coach gives a presentation on program eligibility, program services, and the study. Attendees complete a Skills and Training Questionnaire.	
	Interested attendees make an appointment with a Coach for an intake meeting.	
Follow-up Intake Meeting with Career Coach ⬇	Applicant attends an appointment with the Career Coach to complete the intake process. Career Coach confirms eligibility and collects necessary documentation. ➡	Not eligible.
	Applicant completes the study's consent form and Baseline Information Form. ➡	Refuses consent form; does not complete BIF.
	Career Coach randomly assigns each study participant. Program group member–sign Statement of Program Participation and Understanding and determine next steps. ➡	Control group member– given a folder about alternative services.
Start Assessment and Career Planning Process	Participant meets one-on-one with Career Coach to complete an assessment (including "Career Mapping") and develop an individualized Career Plan.	

5.6   Program Services

Reboot NW program services are designed to assist participants in obtaining the skills and credentials relevant for employment in IT or advanced manufacturing. As shown in Exhibit 5-5, after a "Career Mapping" session, the Career Coaches conduct an assessment to develop an individualized employment plan, called a Career Plan, specifying the Reboot NW services that each participant will receive. They also coordinate supportive services and financial assistance for the participants.

Reboot NW participants attend the grant-funded Career Link employment readiness "bootcamp" designed to promote peer support, increase readiness to work, and introduce attendees to

Services and Supports Provided by the Reboot NW Program

The following services and assistance are specific to the Reboot NW intervention and available to program group members only:

- Assessment of career goals and the need for skill development, job search assistance, and/or other supports
- Career Link workshop providing industry information and job search skills
- Ongoing one-on-one job search assistance and support from a Career Coach
- Financial assistance for occupational training in IT or advanced manufacturing
- Access to work-based training through on-the-job training and paid work-based experiences
- Access to Reboot Network alumni group
- Supportive service assistance, including on behavioral health issues, transportation, and access to housing vouchers

industry experts and recruiters. Participants also have access to grant-funded occupational training programs; can engage in work experience and on-the-job-training opportunities; and obtain job search assistance from Career Coaches. Regardless of the mix of services they access, all participants receive ongoing support from their Career Coach, typically meeting at least monthly, with frequency depending on the participant's interests and needs. The Reboot NW services are described in detail below.

Exhibit 5-5: Overview of the Worksystems Reboot Northwest Program
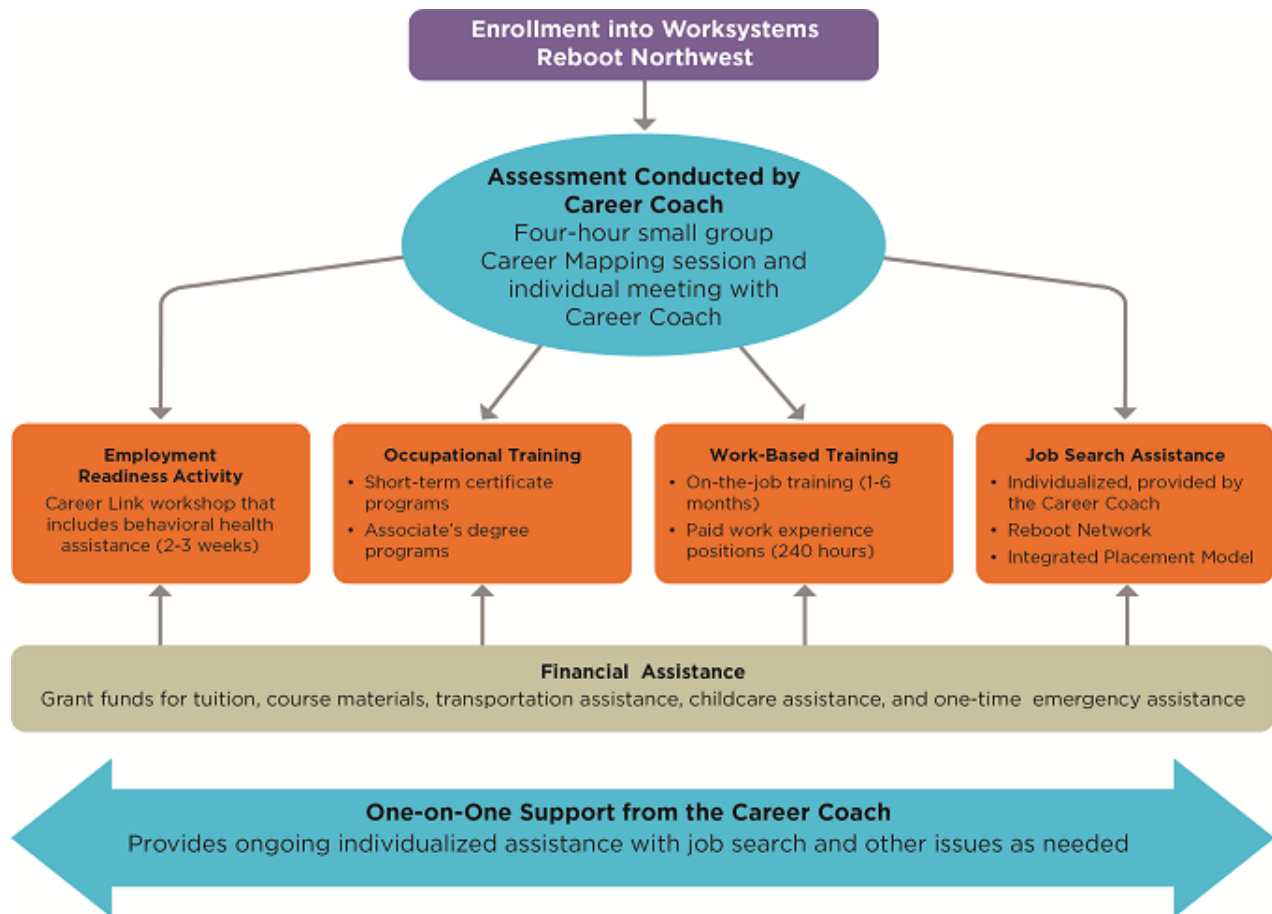
5.6.1   Assessment

The first step in the Reboot NW program is developing a Career Plan based on an assessment. Participants complete a four-hour small group session, called Career Mapping, designed to help participants determine their career path and goal. All participants engage in Career Mapping, and it is typically the first step in the Reboot NW assessment. If a participant already has a clear idea of which training and career he or she wants to pursue, or if there are insufficient program enrollments to create a group, Career Mapping activities might be combined with career planning in a one-on-one session between the participant and Career Coach. In Southwest Washington, participants complete Career Mapping activities on the first day of the Career Link bootcamp; participants in that region who do not attend Career Link can access an online Career Mapping session.

The Career Mapping session starts with a warm-up exercise conducted in a group setting to create a timeline of "career significant" events in participants' lives. This exercise is intended to shift their mindset from a "job" to a "career." Then participants split into pairs to interview each other about strengths, interests, and skills; present the results of these interviews to the larger group; and discuss what

types of employer settings and jobs do and do not work for them. The information is written onto a flip chart or poster board that the whole group can view.

Each participant comes out of the session with a list of job titles, and possibly employers, that he or she is interested in. Coaches reported that the peer input and interactions with other attendees in Career Mapping are particularly important.

After the Career Mapping session, each participant works individually with his or her Coach to create an individualized Career Plan. The Career Plan lays out steps to accomplish the goals developed during Career Mapping. The Career Plan also specifies the appropriate next step and identifies needed support services to take that step. If they determine the participant would benefit from additional career exploration or needs to improve job readiness or build networking skills, he or she enrolls in Career Link.

Alternatively, participants with experience in the target industry and well-defined career goals might be ready to enroll in an occupational training program immediately after Career Mapping and the Career Plan. Participants who are job ready can start an immediate job search or can engage in work-based training.

5.6.2   Career Link: Job Readiness Workshop

Reboot NW offers a two- to three-week job readiness bootcamp called Career Link, a course designed for and available to Reboot NW participants only. Participants enroll as a cohort and attend all classes with that group. The course is designed to prepare enrollees for a career in manufacturing or IT through industry exposure, opportunities to develop a supportive peer network, and skill building for job search. Although Career Link is of limited duration, it is presented as an ongoing opportunity to establish and build a professional network. As of October 2016, staff reported that based on their records about half of Reboot NW participants enrolled in Career Link, and they typically attend prior to their enrollment in occupational training.

Though the Career Link course is similar in all three regions, it varies in length and schedule, with most versions providing approximately 60 hours of instructional time over two or three weeks.[57] Participants are expected to join in session activities, complete take-home assignments, and provide feedback to other group members.

Career Link provides instruction on a range of job readiness topics. These include establishing a "Career Ladder Action Plan" to identify interests, abilities, and strategies for filling in skill gaps; labor market analysis and trends in the target sector; self-marketing strategies such as networking and the elevator speech; strategies for effective formal and informal interviewing; communication and active listening skill development; strategic resume and cover letter writing; in-person and online networking opportunities (e.g., LinkedIn); and soft skills and strategies for succeeding in the workplace.

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[57]   The course schedule is the most notable difference between regions. In Portland Metro, Career Link occurs from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm for two weeks. Cohorts start one to two times per month and alternate locations between Washington and Multnomah Counties. In Clackamas, the course is scheduled from 8:00 am to 12:00 noon for three weeks. In Southwest Washington, Career Link is seven sessions over three weeks: four are delivered in the first four consecutive days, followed by one week off, then three more consecutive days. In Clackamas and Southwest Washington, the flow into the program is slower, so they offer Career Link less frequently.

Career Link activities include the following:

- *Employer site visits.* Several times during Career Link, participants attend "career exploration experiential visits" at an employer worksite. These visits often include employee panels when current employees share details about their positions and career paths. Instructors work with the employer to choose employees who hold similar roles to those the Career Link participants are interested in pursuing.[58]

- *Guest speakers.* Employers, recruiters, training providers, and other guest speakers are invited to Career Link to discuss skills, trends, and hiring practices in their industries.

- *Building peer relationships.* The peer relationships developed during Career Link are an important aspect of the course, and instructors encourage participants to develop rapport with one another through candid and honest discussion. Staff reported that it can be difficult for participants to approach the job search on their own, so working with others in a similar situation helps them feel more comfortable networking and enables them to build professional relationships. Aside from classroom activities, participants are encouraged to remain in contact with one another after the program ends (see discussion in Section 5.6.5 below).

- *Final project.* At the conclusion of the Career Link course, participants complete a final project or exam. Southwest Washington's exam includes a series of mock interviews: in person, over the telephone, and over Skype. In the Portland Metro region, participants complete a brief presentation summarizing the next steps in their job search and their biggest takeaways from the course.

5.6.3 Occupational Training

Reboot NW participants can attend occupational training at community and/or state colleges or at private training providers. As of October 2016, administrative reports from Worksystems indicated that more than half of participants had enrolled in training activities. The timing of occupational training varies. As discussed in Section 5.6.1, some participants enter the program with clear training goals and enroll in training as their initial activity.

To be eligible for tuition assistance for Reboot NW, participants must attend an approved training from an eligible training provider, meaning the course and institution are eligible to receive Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to pay for the tuition, as authorized by WIOA.[59] Participants can also be eligible for Reboot NW tuition assistance for any training under 40 hours if it is reasonably connected to the target occupations of IT and advanced manufacturing. The Reboot NW Eligible Training Provider List includes more than 100 training programs at a number of providers.

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[58] In Clackamas, employer site visits occur weekly. In Portland Metro, there are generally three site visits per two-week cohort. In Southwest Washington, employer visits are offered quarterly in person; virtual visits via Skype are also made available for those in remote areas.

[59] The Eligible Training Provider List includes those qualified to receive ITAs from customers seeking training. To be qualified, a training provider's program must be evaluated and approved by the local WIB. ITAs are vouchers given to those who need occupational training to become gainfully employed or re-employed The list was originally created to comply with the 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and continued under WIOA. The Portland Metro and Clackamas area list may be found here: http://www.careerbridge.wa.gov/Search_Program.aspx?cmd=clear&etp=true. The list for the Southwest Washington WIB may be found here: https://www2.worksourceportlandmetro.org/TrainingProgramsEligiblility.aspx.

There is no formal cap on the funding level for tuition and training-related costs. Each WorkSource center has a set budget and enrollment goal, but Coaches and Center Managers have flexibility to use the resources as they see fit. The Worksystems overall budget for Reboot NW assumes costs averaging $3,500 per participant, and staff use this as a guideline in determining the package of services an individual can receive, including tuition assistance from RTW. Reboot NW may also leverage funds for tuition from WIOA or other grant-funded programs at the WorkSource center, when a participant meets those eligibility requirements. Exhibit 5-6 presents a list of common training programs pursued by Reboot NW participants.

- *Information technology.* Reboot NW participants have enrolled in a variety of IT training programs at community colleges and private training providers, and staff report that training in this sector is more commonly pursued than in advanced manufacturing. Reboot NW participants commonly enroll in coding, software development, and web design trainings. Some IT training providers offer several programs designed for beginner, intermediate, and advanced programmers. Trainees may also pursue IT training to advance in a specific skill or computer language such as Python, HTML, or CSS without necessarily gaining a formal degree. Certifications and non-credit training programs require less time to complete, usually several months, versus as long as two years for most degree programs.

- *Advanced manufacturing.* Reboot NW participants have enrolled in a range of advanced manufacturing training programs to pursue certifications and degrees in drafting and engineering. Non-credit and certification programs tend to be shorter in length; degree programs, mainly in engineering, commonly take as long as two years to complete. There are fewer private training providers in the manufacturing field, so it is more common for participants to enroll in a community college program with Reboot NW funding.

Exhibit 5-6: Common Examples of Programs Pursued by Reboot NW Participants

Program	Length	Credit and Resulting Credential	Training Provider(s) Commonly Used by Participants
Information Technology			
Python, HTML, Java Script, CSS	12 hours to 16 weeks	Non-credit, certificate	• Code Fellows • PDX Code Guild • Hack University
Computer Support	40 hours	Non-credit, certificate	• Comptia • New Horizons
Web Design	1-2 years	For-credit; associate's degree or certificate	• Clackamas Community College • Portland Community College
Computer Information Systems	1-2 years	For-credit; associate's degree or certificate	• Mt. Hood Community College • Portland Community College
Network Computer Systems	1-2 years	For-credit; associate's degree or certificate	• Mt. Hood Community College • Clackamas Community College
Advanced Manufacturing			
Electrical/Electronic Engineering	1-2 years	For credit, associate's degree	• Portland State University • Mt. Hood Community College • Soldering.biz
Computer Aid and Drafting	1-2 years	Non-credit, certificate	• Portland Community College
Soldering	12-40 hours	Non-credit, certificate	• Soldering.biz
Occupational Health and Safety	30 hours	Non-credit, certificate	• 360training
Mechanical Engineering Technology / Technician	2 years	For credit, associate's degree	• Mt. Hood Community College • Portland Community College

In order to receive funding to pay for training through Reboot NW, participants must apply for an ITA. This is the same process used to fund ITA trainings through WIOA or other grant programs at the WorkSource centers. Only Reboot NW participants can access funding through the RTW grant, however. As described below, a committee determines whether Reboot NW resources are appropriate for the requested training, and it identifies other financing options such as Pell grants that could be used to fund the training. Staff reported that Reboot NW participants are generally able to receive the funding needed to attend occupational training, though they sometimes access sources outside RTW if available.

The process for applying for Reboot NW funds through the grant is as follows:

- *Assess career opportunities.* Applicants research their occupation of interest, including wages and the local job market, and examine training costs, length, and potential benefits if completed. As part of Portland Metro's scholarship application, they are also required to complete informal interviews with employers.

- *Choose an eligible training provider.* Each region has an online local Eligible Training Provider List where applicants can research training providers and compare options.

- *Assess financial resources.* Applicants complete a budget exercise to plan for the costs associated with training, such as transportation, childcare, books and other materials, and living expenses. As part of the application package, they also must verify they have applied for available financial aid/scholarships, including Pell grants. In Portland Metro, applicants use an online tool called the Propensity Planner, which allows creation of a test budget. Using that budget, applicants assess their ability to complete a training program without withdrawing due to financial hardship. Then they must explain how their chosen training program will lead to financial independence, based on the budget and starting wages of that occupation. In Southwest Washington, applicants complete a budget worksheet, which documents similar information.

The complete application is collected by the Coach and presented to a WorkSource center committee for review and approval of ITA funding.

In Clackamas, the process for obtaining ITA funding is less structured. Career Coaches help each participant to develop a Career Plan, which specifies an occupational training program. The Coach then submits a Payment Authorization Form to the WorkSource center manager, who approves the Reboot NW ITA funding.

5.6.4 Work-Based Training

Reboot NW services include two types of work-based training positions in IT or advanced manufacturing: on-the-job training (OJT), where the participant's wages are subsidized by the program as an incentive to the employer to train and hire the worker; and paid work experience training, where the participant works at an employer's worksite, but the wages are paid by Reboot NW directly. As of October 2016, staff reported that about 10 percent of Reboot NW participants had participated in an OJT or paid work experience, mostly the former.

On-the-Job Training

The OJT positions are based on a "hire first" model, in which full-time employment is expected for trainees once they complete the training. OJT positions are among the standard services available at WorkSource centers, although those for Reboot NW participants are funded by the RTW grant. For these positions, the OJT employer is reimbursed 50 to 75 percent of the wages earned for a one- to six-month training period or $5,000, whichever is less, and the participant is paid by the employer. Wages must be at

least $10 an hour, for 30 hours a week, for a minimum of one month, with an employer contribution towards health insurance. Under the "hire first" model, employment is not guaranteed, but employers commit that they have the intention of hiring the trainee in a permanent position of at least 40 hours a week at the conclusion of the training period.

WorkSource staff—either the Career Coach or another OJT-focused staff person[60]—develops a training plan based on the skills required for the position and the employer's estimate of the trainee candidate. Because the WorkSource centers offer OJT funding through other programs in addition to Reboot NW, centers have designated staff who work with employers to set up OJT opportunities. The OJT staff works with the Career Coach and the participant to identify an appropriate OJT opportunity and prepare the participant for an interview.

Paid Work Experience Positions

The paid work experience positions are developed specifically by the Reboot NW program and are designed to help its participants develop skills in a specific area. Reboot NW internships pay $15-$18 an hour and generally last for 240 hours (the equivalent of six full-time weeks). Participants can identify work experience positions and propose them to the Career Coach, or vice versa.

Staff reported that work experience positions have been more challenging to develop than OJTs, in part because it takes time to get employers onboard and to complete the necessary paperwork with them. Though Coaches can access the expertise of WorkSource staff who routinely set up OJTs, internships are more individualized and thus require more set-up and development time from Coaches. Reboot NW management would like to expand the internship offerings in the future and reported that working with larger employers that could host multiple positions could potentially create efficiencies in the process.

5.6.5   Job Search Assistance

Career Coaches also provide job search assistance, including interview preparation and resume review, for those program participants who have completed training or Career Link and/or are prepared to find employment. The amount of time Coaches spend on employment assistance depends on the participant's needs.

Some Coaches hold group sessions on employment-related topics. For example, one Coach holds a resume workshop series once per month for her Reboot NW participants, where she covers topics such as customizing a resume and getting through applicant screening systems.

Reboot Network

The Reboot Network alumni group serves as a way to maintain the peer support connections that participants established in their Career Mapping session and Career Link course. The goal for the Network is that each region would hold at least a monthly meeting, a monthly industry event (generally promoting an external event or activity), and a quarterly celebration. The specific structure of the networking groups varies from center to center.

- In Portland Metro, networking group meetings are held weekly for an hour and a half. The Coach sets an expectation that all participants who are not in training and not working should attend. For the first

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[60] In Portland Metro, the program Back to Work Oregon funds staff to assist in developing OJT plans, along with the employer-facing Business Services Team in each center. In Clackamas, there is an OJT team in the WorkSource center that handles OJT placements for Reboot NW and other programs.

half of the meeting, the Coach introduces a new topic, such as resume tips, effective interviewing, self-care, or getting ready for a job fair. Then she uses the second half of the meeting as more of a support group.

- In Clackamas, the Career Link instructor leads Reboot Network groups. The instructor holds group meetings twice a month for an hour and a half to two hours. Participants who are not employed or in training are supposed to attend, usually seven to nine individuals. The goal of the meeting is to check in on where people are and what they need. Activities include guest speakers (e.g., representative from a code school, an IT program recruiter) and group exercises, in addition to a chance to informally catch up after Career Link.

- In Southwest Washington, the Reboot Network plans monthly face-to-face opportunities. Sometimes these are closed group activities for Reboot NW alumni, and other times staff will invite special guests and/or community members to attend. The goal is to teach critical networking skills, observe and provide feedback on newly learned skills, and ultimately help build connections between the participants and their target industry.

Integrated Placement Model

In June 2016, WorkSource Oregon, which oversees all WorkSource centers across the state, launched its "integrated placement" model for employment assistance. All WorkSource customers are able to access these services, but the Coaches focus specifically on placing their Reboot NW participants. Each WorkSource center has a placement team, which includes Reboot NW Coaches, WorkSource job search navigators, and other WorkSource staff who work with customers in a job placement capacity. Staff providing job search assistance to RTW participants identify job leads from staff doing business-facing job development in "leads and needs" meetings. The meetings are held twice a month, once with the internal center-based team and once with regional business services staff who work directly with employers in the area. The meetings are an opportunity for Career Coaches to share information with employer-focused staff, so that job seekers can be paired with appropriate opportunities.

5.6.6 Other Supports

The Reboot NW program provides a range of other supports to participants. The funding each WorkSource center receives from the grant (average of $3,500 per participant) can be directed to tuition or support services or both. Staff use this as a general guide for determining the total level of assistance to be provided by Reboot NW, and support service funding requests are considered and approved case by case by Reboot NW management. The support services that Reboot NW participants can access include the following.

Behavioral Health Services. Staff reported that some Reboot NW participants experience depression or anxiety or acute stress, at least in part due to their unemployment. As discussed in Section 5.4, to address such issues, Reboot NW contracted with Cascadia Behavioral Health in Portland Metro and Clackamas and with Cascade Community Services in Southwest Washington for in-person group support and individual counseling. Staff from these providers give presentations at Career Link's opening and closing sessions in Portland Metro and Clackamas to let participants know about their services and how to access them. Cascadia hands out a self-referral form that allows participants to seek counseling without going through their Reboot NW Coach, protecting their privacy and creating a more comfortable environment for them to seek assistance. Worksystems receives quarterly reports from Cascadia indicating which participants have received its services, but no other information about the interaction is shared. Additionally, the Career Coaches have attended several trainings conducted by Cascadia to learn to address mental health issues safely and effectively in their work with participants.

Housing Assistance. As discussed in Section 5.4, the Housing Authority of Clackamas County has provided short-term housing vouchers for select Reboot NW participants.

Transportation and Other Assistance. The most common support service provided is transportation assistance (e.g., bus passes, gas cards) to help participants get to and from Career Link, training, and job interviews. The grant also can cover training-related items such as books or equipment; childcare; and one-time payments for emergencies such as utilities or rent.

6. Key Findings from the Ready to Work Implementation Study

The 2008-2009 recession brought new urgency to programs providing assistance to those who lost their jobs in the wake of the economic downturn. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) dedicated substantial funding to develop programs to move unemployed workers, particularly those experiencing long spells of unemployment due to the recession, back into the labor market. The Ready to Work (RTW) Partnership grants funded partnerships of workforce agencies, training providers, employers, and other organizations to provide a range of employment-related services customized to participants' needs. Per the DOL Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA), grantees were to provide three tracks of services: (1) immediate job search assistance, (2) short-term occupational training, and (3) longer-term occupational training, as well as work-based training.

DOL's Employment and Training Administration, in collaboration with the Chief Evaluation Office, sponsored a rigorous evaluation of the RTW grant program. Four grantees were selected for the evaluation based on their program design and scale: Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation (AAWDC), Jewish Vocational Service (JVS), RochesterWorks!, and Worksystems, Inc. (WSI). One grantee (JVS) is a non-profit organization, whereas the other grantees are workforce agencies. All four grantee programs targeted employment in information technology (IT); three focused on other industries as well, including advanced manufacturing (RochesterWorks!, Worksystems), bioscience (AAWDC), and healthcare (RochesterWorks!).

Based on in-person interviews with program staff and partners (site visits) and demographic information on program enrollees collected for the study, this implementation report examines the early operation of the RTW programs the grantees designed and implemented. The report primarily documents the characteristics of the programs' participants and service strategies during the first year of a four-year grant. The body of the report (Chapters 2-5) discusses the operational experiences of each of the grantees separately; the remainder of this chapter summarizes key findings and emerging themes related to the early implementation and operation of the programs across the four grantees. Exhibit 6-1 recaps the key dimensions of the grantees' programs, as well as the characteristics of the populations they served.

- **The grantees launched their programs, using the RTW resources to fund the range of services specified by the grant.**

Although they structured their programs in different ways, all of the grantees provided the service options specified by the SGA. These included job search assistance; occupational training, with tuition funded by the grant; work-based training; and employment readiness workshops, including geared towards the stresses that can accompany long-term unemployment. As discussed further below, at the time interviews were conducted for this report, participation in work-based training was lower than in the other program components. (Future reports will examine the participation patterns among enrollees in these activities, including how services were sequenced and the duration of participation.)

- **All grantees have been challenged to recruit participants from the population targeted by the RTW grant, and all have made outreach an ongoing priority.**

All four RTW grantees in the evaluation experienced some difficulties in identifying potential participants who both were underemployed or unemployed for long periods (generally more than 27 weeks) and had the experience and educational background required for middle-skill positions. Staff planned for a significant recruitment effort to make the target population aware of the RTW program. They reported,

however, that recruitment was more difficult than anticipated due to improvements in the economy after the grants were awarded in 2014. Employment data in each of the grantee local areas indicate that this was the case; grantee staff reported that as a result, their target population—more highly skilled unemployed workers—were finding employment on their own. This challenge was compounded by an evaluation design that necessitated over-recruitment in order to establish a control group.

To address these issues, the grantees used multifaceted approaches to recruitment. Some of these approaches were planned from the outset, but grantees also made adaptations and adjustments after the program was launched. All had grant-funded staff dedicate time to recruitment and/or hired other organizations to assist with recruitment. For example, AAWDC worked with AARP Foundation to recruit older workers, and Worksystems contracted with an organization to run an online digital marketing campaign on social media and design recruitment materials. JVS used electronic outreach methods, such as sending emails to individuals who had posted resumes on Monster.com and seemed appropriate to its program. One innovation was working with the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program to identify claimants with long spells of receiving UI, who could then be targeted for mailings and emails (RochesterWorks!, Worksystems). Overall, grantees varied in the extent to which they met their study enrollment targets using these strategies. Through August 2016 (approximately one year of a three-year enrollment period), the grantee programs had enrolled between 20 percent (AAWDC, RochesterWorks!) and 50 percent (Worksystems) of their study target enrollment.

- **In spite of these difficulties, grantees identified and enrolled their target population. Participants generally had the educational foundation required to pursue middle-skill positions yet were unemployed (some for long periods) when they enrolled.**

More than three-quarters of participants were unemployed at the time they enrolled in the program, and about one-third had been unemployed for more than a year. More than half of program enrollees had at least a bachelor's degree, with most of the others having some college experience.

There are other notable characteristics of the population served. First, because the RTW grants focused on individuals with prior work experience and education, most enrollees were older, with an average age of around 45 and at least one-quarter older than age 55. This older, mid-career group is a population that has typically been underserved by the workforce system,[61] and one that DOL and state and local workforce agencies have sought to serve more effectively in the past.[62] Second, reflecting their long periods of unemployment, except for JVS, about half of the participants were receiving some type of public benefit, primarily Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits. Finally, of the four grantees, RochesterWorks! served a more disadvantaged group, with 45 percent having at least a bachelor's degree and 53 percent receiving public benefits. JVS served the least disadvantaged group based on these measures (81 percent having at least a bachelor's degree and 25 percent receiving public benefits).

- **One-on-one assistance from grant-funded staff during all phases of the program was a key program service for three of the grantees.**

For AAWDC, RochesterWorks!, and Worksystems, grant-funded staff worked individually with participants to conduct assessments, develop individualized employment plans that specified program services, and provide ongoing support and assistance. Staff in these three programs indicated the tailored

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[61] Heidkamp, Mabe, and DeGraaf, 2012.

[62] Eyster, Johnson, and Toder, 2008.

guidance and support was a central program element, and that such individualized one-on-one support was not typically in the services provided through the AJCs. JVS took a different approach, enrolling participants directly in an IT training program at or coordinated by JVS, with one-on-one staff assistance delivered concurrently or coordinated with the technical training course.

- **Reflecting the needs of long-term unemployed participants, grantee employment readiness activities aimed to reorient participants to the work world as well as build job search skills and industry knowledge.**

Though there are differences across the grantees, these activities generally included setting employment goals; understanding the types of jobs and skills required for the target industry; identifying interests, abilities, and strategies for filling skill gaps; developing job search skills for the target industry, such as resume development and networking; and labor market analysis and trends in the relevant sector. Most also included a peer group component, where participants received feedback and support from others in the class. Three grantees (AAWDC, RochesterWorks!, Worksystems) provide a workshop (one to three weeks in duration) focused on building job search skills for a population without a recent work history. At AAWDC, all participants take the workshop as their first step in the program. Rather than a workshop, JVS introduces employment readiness activities, including goal setting, in its program-specific initial "Foundation Week"; subsequent sessions focus on building industry knowledge and enhancing job search skills that accompanied technical skills training. AAWDC and JVS used RTW grant funds to develop these activities, sometimes called "bootcamps," and Worksystems used funds to adapt a pre-existing bootcamp. RochesterWorks! uses a pre-existing workshop (that is open to non-RTW individuals) at the American Job Center.

- **The grantee programs also provided access to specialized assistance on mental or behavioral health issues, specifically designed for RTW participants.**

Explicitly recognizing the emotional and psychological effects that can result from long-term unemployment, the four grantee programs included services intended to address participants' mental health and self-confidence. In some cases, grantees contracted with an outside organization to provide assistance on mental and/or behavioral health issues. For example, AAWDC offered a three-hour workshop led by a licensed counselor that focused on the trauma of job loss and unemployment and strategies for coping with stress. JVS offered a six-session, cognitive behavioral therapy–based component designed to build confidence and motivation to find employment, developed specifically for its RTW program. For its existing employment readiness workshop, RochesterWorks! included similar topics on identifying and addressing negative beliefs and emotions that could affect a job search. Worksystems contracted with an outside agency to offer behavioral health services to participants and to provide staff training on dealing with mental health issues.

- **The grantees primarily relied on existing occupational training programs provided by community colleges or other training providers, with tuition paid by RTW funds.**

At this point in their operation, the four grantee programs primarily offer training to RTW participants that is short term (less than six months), although some make longer-term options (up to two years) available, as well. Other forms of tuition assistance would potentially be available to participants for these programs, which, depending on the training program, may include Individual Training Accounts offered through the Workforce Opportunity and Innovation Act or Pell grants. The RTW programs, however, were able to coordinate their tuition assistance with a range of other assistance, as discussed above,

including staff help identifying the appropriate training programs to achieve career goals and access to job readiness and job search services to facilitate moving from training to employment.

● **Though available, the paid work-based training positions were less frequently used than the other program services.**

Three of the grantees had a distinct paid work experience component (at JVS it was part of only one of the training offerings). These positions typically included either on-the-job training, where participants' wages are subsidized by the grant as an incentive for the employer to hire them, or a shorter-term work experience position, where the grantee program pays the participants' wages. Staff at some grantees report that fewer participants have been placed in these positions, particularly the paid work experience, than they had expected. One reason is that it took time in the early stages of the grant period to build staff expertise and connections with employers. Grantees focused on launching other program components first, such as developing and implementing the work readiness workshops and enrolling participants in occupational training. In addition, staff report that it is sometimes challenging to identify employers that can offer positions that are well suited for short-term employment. Moreover, when an employer has a suitable position, the grantee does not always have a participant who would be a good match for the opening. Aside from JVS, grantee staff reported that they intended to build this program service moving forward.

● **Some grantees worked with employers in relevant sectors both to support the design of the program and to help identify employment opportunities for participants.**

The grantees used different approaches to engage employers in their program. AAWDC established grant-funded "Industry Navigators," dedicated to building relationships with employers in the targeted industries, identifying job openings, and referring program participants to them for work-based training and employment. Each of its three staff focused on a different industry or region targeted by its grant. The RochesterWorks! Project Manager played a lead role in contacting and networking with employers. JVS staff engaged employers in program design, and its staff interviewed 25 local technology employers about their hiring practices and how job candidates can demonstrate their skills during their job search. Grantee program staff at JVS also worked to identify employment options beyond the large technology companies where competition for jobs is significant, including small businesses.

● **The grantees generally served wide geographic areas, which helped facilitate recruitment, but necessitated ongoing attention to coordination and consistency.**

Each grantee program operated in multiple counties and generally required partnerships with multiple workforce agencies. For example, Worksystems coordinated three workforce agencies in six counties across two states; AAWDC involved seven workforce centers that served residents of 12 counties and one city in Maryland. This breadth of operation has been critical in efforts to reach the desired scale of programs. However, the large geographical reach of the programs also created management issues. Program staff made efforts to provide consistent services across local administrative systems, labor markets, and employer bases and reported that this required ongoing coordination and communication. At times, grantees experienced difficulties communicating consistently with staff given their decentralized locations.

Conclusion

Overall, the grantees in the Ready to Work evaluation launched their programs, providing the range of services for long-term unemployed individuals, as specified by DOL. Though recruitment has been challenging, the grantee programs are using a multi-faceted outreach effort to identify and enroll well-educated and unemployed individuals, many who have been out of work for long periods.

Many of the grantee programs' services are specifically designed for the RTW population to find employment in the middle- to high-skill positions targeted by the grant, particularly employment readiness workshops, often with an emphasis on addressing emotional circumstances of those experiencing long-term unemployment; work-based training at an employer; and direct job search assistance. The grantees also funded tuition to attend existing occupational training programs, but these training programs were not generally developed specifically for the RTW grant program. Three of the programs featured a staff person who worked closely with participants to develop and guide a service strategy, and this was viewed by staff as a critical program component.

Future RTW evaluation reports will examine the impact of the RTW program services on participants' educational and economic outcomes, as well as additional implementation findings. For the impact study, this includes examining the effects of RTW services on: (1) short-term outcomes, specifically the receipt of training and other services and the attainment of educational credentials; and, (2) the longer-term outcomes that are expected to be produced from these short-term outcomes, including increased employment and earnings, improved household income and financial circumstances, and reduced receipt of public benefits.

Two additional reports are planned: (1) an interim report providing additional implementation information, including participation patterns in different program services (such as the activities attended and completion rates) and the further development of program activities such as work-based training, and program impacts within a short-term 18-month follow-up period; and, (2) a final report providing impacts within a longer-term 30-month follow-up period.

Exhibit 6-1: Key Dimensions of Grantees in the Ready to Work Evaluation

Program Dimension	Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation	Jewish Vocational Service (JVS)	RochesterWorks!	Worksystems, Inc.
Selected Characteristics of Program Group Members at Baseline	*Demographics*: About half male (53 percent); primarily Black (50 percent) or White (35 percent); average age of 47	*Demographics*: Mostly female (68 percent); primarily White (58 percent) or Asian (20 percent); average age of 47	*Demographics:* About half female (56 percent); primarily White (56 percent) or Black (32 percent); average age of 46	*Demographics*: Mostly male (74 percent); primarily White (77 percent); average age of 45
	Employment: 89 percent unemployed, 32 percent for more than one year; 42 percent receiving public benefits (mostly SNAP and UI)	*Employment:* 78 percent unemployed, 35 percent for more than one year; 25 percent receiving public benefits (mostly SNAP and UI)	*Employment*: 89 percent unemployed, 38 percent for more than one year; 53 percent receiving public benefits (mostly SNAP and UI)	*Employment*: 79 percent unemployed, 33 percent for more than one year; 47 percent receiving public benefits (mostly SNAP and UI)
	Education: 65 percent with bachelor's or master's; 16 percent with some college (no degree)	*Education*: 81 percent with bachelor's or master's; 12 percent with some college (no degree)	*Education*: 45 percent with bachelor's or master's; 25 percent with some college (no degree)	*Education*: 54 percent with bachelor's or master's; 21 percent with some college (no degree)
Recruitment Strategies	Program website provides eligibility and enrollment information; referrals from workforce centers and partner organizations; targeted advertising to and referrals of workers age 50 and older by grant partner AARP Foundation	Recruitment at community events and hosting public events to promote programs. Electronic outreach via Craigslist and social media; use of Monster.com to identify resumes of interest and send emails to appropriate individuals. Conduct outreach through partnerships with organizations and internal referrals from those applying to other JVS programs	Program website with program, eligibility, and enrollment information. Referrals from Career Center and grant-funded College Liaisons; referrals from partner organizations and other training providers. Targeted outreach to UI claimants and SNAP recipients	Grant-wide digital marketing campaign, UI mailing, and bus advertising. At each WorkSource center, Career Coach does local outreach to other workforce programs, community organizations, and training providers
Enrollment Level in Program Group (as of 9/1/2016)	181 (20 percent of total study target enrollment of 900)	132 (26 percent of total study target enrollment of 500)	120 (20 percent of total study target enrollment of 610)	249 (50 percent of total study target enrollment of 500)

Exhibit 6-1: Key Dimensions of Grantees in the Ready to Work Evaluation (continued)

Program Dimension	Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation	Jewish Vocational Service	RochesterWorks!	Worksystems
One-on-One Staff Assistance	Grant-funded Career Coaches administer assessments and work one-on-one with participants to customize program services and provide ongoing support	Participants work with instructional staff in each of the technical courses. Classroom activities include developing a career plan	Grant-funded Education and Employment Specialists work one-on-one with participants to conduct assessment, develop customized services, and provide ongoing support	Grant-funded Career Coach works one-on-one with participants to develop career and training plans and provide ongoing support
Job Readiness Activities	Participants first attend a two-week job readiness workshop addressing job search skills. Includes a public benefits eligibility screening, assistance with mental health issues, and a financial education session	Each program begins with a "Foundation Week" focused on team building among the class and personal and career exploration to prepare for job search. Subsequent activities, including career exploration and classes aimed at improving participants' motivation and self-confidence, are delivered concurrently with the occupational training	One-week workshop available at the Career Center focuses on building job search skills and addressing social and emotional issues related to long-term unemployment	Two- to three-week Career Link course focuses on building job readiness skills and peer support and provides exposure to employers and industry experts
Occupational Training	Short-term primarily non-credit certificate programs in IT or bioscience with tuition paid by grant program. Requirement that participant sit for industry-recognized certification exams (if applicable to program), with exam preparation assistance offered by program	Participants enroll in one of three training programs: (1) 6-week business administration course primarily focused on job readiness skills, supplemented with training on Microsoft Office programs; (2) 10-week program providing training related to digital marketing; (3) 16-week program providing technical training on how to administer the Salesforce® platform	Short- and long-term certificate and two-year degree programs in IT, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing with tuition paid by the grant program. For those enrolled in a training program at a partnering community college, on-site assistance with academic issues provided	Short- and long-term certificate and two-year degree programs in IT and advanced manufacturing, with tuition paid by grant program

Exhibit 6-1: Key Dimensions of Grantees in the Ready to Work Evaluation (continued)

Program Dimension	Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation	Jewish Vocational Service	RochesterWorks!	Worksystems
Work-Based Training	Short-term paid employment activities, funded one of two ways: (1) business pays participant's wages and is reimbursed by program or (2) program pays the participant directly	The Salesforce® Administration program includes paid work experience ("fellowship") positions with employers	Activities include (1) on-the-job training, with the grant subsidizing participants' wages, for a 6- to 32-week period; and (2) work experience "tryouts" of 2-4 weeks, with the grant covering participant's salary	Activities include (1) on-the-job training, with the grant subsidizing participants' wages; and (2) paid work experience positions of up to 240 hours, with the grant covering participant's salary
Job Search Assistance	One-on-one assistance from Career Coaches and weekly job clubs with other participants. Grant-funded Industry Navigators contact local businesses in the target industries to develop relationships that may lead to job opportunities	Same classes that cover job readiness activities also cover job search tools. After the occupational training, participants support one another in job search and networking in peer group activities	One-on-one assistance from Education and Employment Specialists. Project Manager contacts employers in the relevant sectors to identify job openings and connect participants to them	One-on-one assistance from a Career Coach who provides interview prep, reviews resumes, and connects participants to available employment opportunities. A networking alumni group provides ongoing peer support and a professional network

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Appendix A: Job Titles of Grantee Staff Interviewed for Implementation Study

Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation (AAWDC)—Maryland Tech Connection (MTC)

- President and CEO, Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation

- Chief Innovation Officer and Project Director, MTC

- Project Assistant, MTC

- MTC Career Coaches for all regions

- AAWDC Director of Quality & Compliance

- AAWDC Policy & Compliance Analyst

- Industry Navigators, MTC

- Manager of Discretionary Grants for Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland

- Partners:

  - Seedco *Earn*Benefits Specialists

  - Arundel Lodge Clinical Therapist

Jewish Vocational Services (JVS)—JVS Skills to Work in Technology

- Director of Tech Programs, JVS

- Client Services Manager, JVS

- Tech Training Program Coordinator (Salesforce), JVS

- Tech Training Program Coordinator (Bootcamp), JVS

- Lead Instructor, JVS

- Technology Program Assistant, JVS

- Salesforce Instructor

- Tech Trainings Program Manager, JVS

- Partners:

  - Education Programs Manager, General Assembly

  - Program Coordinator, San Pablo Economic Development Corporation

  - Program Specialist, San Pablo Economic Development Corporation

RochesterWorks!—Finger Lakes Hired

- Executive Director, Rochester Works!

- Technical Assistance and Training Manager, Rochester Works!

- Director of Community & Business Services, Rochester Works!

- Career Center Manager, Rochester Works!

- Project Manager, Finger Lakes Hired

- Education & Employment Specialists, Rochester Works!

- College Liaison at Monroe Community College, Finger Lakes Hired

- Senior Administrative Assistant, Rochester Works!

- Career Center Staff/Front Desk Staff, Rochester Works!

- Instructor for 5 Steps

- Partner:

    - Operation Transformation staff

Worksystems (WSI)—Reboot Northwest

- Senior Project Manager, Reboot NW at Worksystems

- Program Manager, Clackamas Workforce Partnership

- Director of Workforce Services, Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council

- Business Services Manager, Worksystems

- Director of Information Systems and Compliance, Worksystems

- Executive Director, Clackamas Workforce Partnership

- Reboot Northwest Career Coaches

- WorkSource Center Staff:

    - Program Assistant, WorkSource Portland Metro Central

    - Workforce Development Manager, WorkSource Portland Metro Tualatin

    - Workforce Development Coordinator, WorkSource Beaverton-Hillsboro

    - Workforce Development Director, WorkSource Beaverton-Hillsboro

    - Workforce Development Director, WorkSource Portland Metro Southeast

- Career Link Instructors

- Partner:

    - Career Coach and Admissions Representative, New Horizons

Appendix B: Characteristics of the Program Environment for Ready to Work Grantees

Appendix Exhibit B-1: Characteristics of the Program Environment for AAWDC, 2014

Characteristics	United States	Anne Arundel County	Baltimore City	Baltimore County	Carroll County	Calvert County	Cecil County
Total population	314,107,084	550,269	622,271	817,720	167,399	89,793	101,803
Race and ethnicity (%)							
White	73.8	74.8	30.3	63.9	92.8	81.5	89.3
Black or African American	12.6	15.7	63.0	26.8	3.2	13.1	6.9
Other race	13.6	9.5	6.7	9.3	4.0	5.4	3.8
Hispanic or Latino	16.9	6.7	4.5	4.6	2.8	3.1	3.8
Educational attainment[a] (%)							
No high school diploma	13.6	8.9	19.1	9.8	7.7	7.5	12.6
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	28	25.1	29.7	27.3	21.2	31.5	36.7
Some college, no degree	21.2	21.1	19.1	20	20.5	24.7	21.9
Associate's degree	7.9	7.3	4.4	6.9	7.9	7.0	7.1
Bachelor's degree	18.3	22.4	14.6	20.5	20.4	17.4	14.1
Graduate or professional degree	11	15.2	13.1	15.5	12.3	11.9	7.7
Median household income ($)	53,482	89,031	41,819	66,940	85,532	95,425	65,124
All people below poverty level[b] (%)	15.6	5.9	24.2	9.1	5.5	5.8	10.6
Unemployment rate, 2015 (%)	5.3	4.5	7.7	5.4	4.3	4.6	6.0
Unemployed, 2015 (#)	NA	550,269	22,725	24,228	4,034	2,215	3,203

Appendix Exhibit B-1: Characteristics of the Program Environment for AAWDC, 2014 (continued)

Characteristics	Charles County	Frederick County	Hartford County	Howard County	Montgomery County	Prince George's County	St Mary's County
Total population	150,960	239,253	248,029	299,269	1,005,087	884,764	35,702
Race and ethnicity (%)							
White	49.4	81.8	80.4	60.8	56.2	21.4	79.0
Black or African American	41.6	8.7	13.2	18.1	17.4	63.8	14.3
Other race	9.0	9.5	6.4	21.1	26.4	14.8	6.7
Hispanic or Latino	4.8	7.9	3.9	6.1	17.9	15.9	4.3
Educational attainment[a] (%)							
No high school diploma	8.4	8.3	7.1	4.8	8.7	14.4	9.0
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	31.3	24.7	28.4	14.5	14.2	26.6	31.9
Some college, no degree	25.9	20.1	23	14.7	14.5	22.7	21.7
Associate's degree	7.7	8.0	8.1	5.6	5.1	5.9	7.6
Bachelor's degree	16.7	23.2	20.0	30.9	26.5	17.7	17.2
Graduate or professional degree	10.1	15.6	13.4	29.5	30.9	12.7	12.5
Median household income ($)	91,910	84,480	81,016	110,133	98,704	73,856	88,190
All people below poverty level[b] (%)	7.6	6.2	7.7	5.1	6.9	9.7	6.8
Unemployment rate, 2015 (%)	5.1	4.5	5.0	3.9	4.0	5.3	5.0
Unemployed, 2015 (#)	4,096	5,867	6,847	6,872	21,777	26,048	2,701

SOURCES: 2014 data as reported by the American Community Survey 2010–2014.
2015 unemployment rate data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Number of unemployed in the United States for 2015 is unavailable.
NOTES: Data reported in the table are for 2014, unless otherwise noted.
a. Among those age 25 and older.
b. Among the entire population. Poverty status is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Accessed October 31, 2016,
http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/documentation_main/#doc2012.

Appendix Exhibit B-2: Characteristics of the Program Environment for JVS, 2014

Characteristics	United States	Alameda County	Contra Costa County	San Francisco City/County	San Mateo County	Santa Clara
Total population	314,107,084	1,510,271	1,841,569	829,072	739,837	1,841,569
Race and ethnicity (%)						
White	73.8	45.3	62.1	49.5	56.4	49.3
Black or African American	12.6	11.9	9.0	5.7	2.6	2.6
Other race	13.6	42.8	28.9	44.8	41.0	48.1
Hispanic or Latino	16.9	22.6	24.8	15.3	25.4	26.7
Educational attainment[a] (%)						
No high school diploma	13.6	13.3	11.0	13.3	11.5	13.2
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	28.0	18.9	18.9	13.1	16.8	15.4
Some college, no degree	21.2	18.9	22.4	15.2	19.2	16.9
Associate's degree	7.9	6.7	8.2	5.5	7.5	7.1
Bachelor's degree	18.3	24.6	25.2	32.2	27.0	26.1
Graduate or professional degree	11.0	17.5	14.3	20.7	18.0	21.3
Median household income ($)	53,482	73,775	79,799	78,378	91,421	93,854
All people below poverty level[b] (%)	15.6	12.9	10.7	13.3	7.6	9.9
Unemployment rate, 2015 (%)	5.3	4.7	5.0	3.6	3.4	4.2
Unemployed, 2015 (#)	NA	39,133	27,530	19,930	15,002	42,316

SOURCES: 2014 data as reported by the American Community Survey 2010–2014.

2015 unemployment rate data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Number of unemployed in the United States for 2015 is unavailable.

NOTES: Data reported in the table are for 2014, unless otherwise noted.

a. Among those age 25 and older.

b. Among the entire population. Poverty status is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Accessed October 31, 2016, http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/documentation_main/#doc2012.

Appendix Exhibit B-3: Characteristics of the Program Environment for RochesterWorks!, 2014

Characteristics	United States	RochesterWorks! Monroe County, NY
Total population	314,107,084	748,076
Race and ethnicity (%)		
White	73.8	76.2
Black or African American	12.6	15.2
Other race	13.6	8.6
Hispanic or Latino	16.9	7.7
Educational attainment[a] (%)		
No high school diploma	13.6	10.1
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	28.0	24.8
Some college, no degree	21.2	17.4
Associate's degree	7.9	11.7
Bachelor's degree	18.3	20
Graduate or professional degree	11.0	15.9
Median household income ($)	53,482	52,501
All people below poverty level[b] (%)	15.6	15.4
Unemployment rate, 2015 (%)	5.3	5.2
Unemployed, 2015 (#)	NA	18,863

SOURCES: 2014 data as reported by the American Community Survey 2010–2014.
2015 unemployment rate data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Number of unemployed in the United States for 2015 is unavailable.
NOTES: Data reported in the table are for 2014, unless otherwise noted.
a. Among those age 25 and older.
b. Among the entire population. Poverty status is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Accessed October 31, 2016,
http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/documentation_main/#doc2012.

Appendix Exhibit B-4: Characteristics of the Program Environment for Worksystems, 2014

Characteristics	United States	Clark County, WA	Cowlitz County, WA	Wahkiakum County, WA	Clackamas County, OR	Multnomah County, OR	Washington County, OR
Total population	314,107,084	438,272	102,072	4,016	384,697	757,371	547,451
Race and ethnicity (%)							
White	73.8	85.0	90.9	94.0	89.5	78.0	77.4
Black or African American	12.6	2.0	0.6	0.0	0.9	5.5	1.8
Other race	13.6	13.0	8.5	6.0	9.6	16.5	20.8
Hispanic or Latino	16.9	8.1	8.1	2.8	8.0	11.0	16.0
Educational attainment[a] (%)							
No high school diploma	13.6	8.8	12.9	7.3	7.2	9.9	9.5
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	28.0	25.9	29.8	35.2	23.8	18.9	19.1
Some college, no degree	21.2	28.2	31.8	33.7	28.6	23.4	23.3
Associate's degree	7.9	10.5	9.9	10.0	8.5	7.4	8.4
Bachelor's degree	18.3	17.3	10.0	10.2	20.8	24.6	25.8
Graduate or professional degree	11.0	9.2	5.6	3.7	11.2	15.7	14.0
Median household income ($)	53,482	59,551	46,571	44,500	64,700	52,845	65,272
All people below poverty level[b] (%)	15.6	11.8	18.4	21.9	9.7	18.1	11.8
Unemployment rate, 2015 (%)	5.3	6.4	7.6	9.1	5.2	5.0	4.8
Unemployed, 2015 (#)	NA	13,572	3,359	115	10,651	21,350	14,287

SOURCES: 2014 data as reported by the American Community Survey 2010–2014.

2015 unemployment rate data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Number of unemployed in the United States for 2015 is unavailable.

NOTES: Data reported in the table are for 2014, unless otherwise noted.

a. Among those age 25 and older.

b. Among the entire population. Poverty status is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Accessed October 31, 2016,
http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/documentation_main/#doc2012.