

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 33-09
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TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS

FROM: JANE OATES *Jane Oates*
Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Release and Availability of Employment and Training Administration (ETA)
Occasional Paper 2010-03: *Reinvesting in America's Youth: Lessons from
the 2009 Recovery Act Summer Youth Employment Initiative*

1. Purpose. To announce the release and availability of ETA Occasional Paper 2010-03:
*Reinvesting in America's Youth: Lessons from the 2009 Recovery Act Summer Youth
Employment Initiative.*

2. Background. On February 17, 2009, President Barack Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) into law. Through the Recovery Act, states received \$1.2 billion in funding for the workforce investment system to provide employment and training activities targeted to disadvantaged youth. States and local workforce investment areas responsible for implementing these youth activities were encouraged to use the funds to create employment opportunities for youth in the summer of 2009. To gain insights into these summer activities, ETA funded an implementation evaluation of the Summer Youth Employment Initiative (SYEI) funded by the Recovery Act.

3. Publication Description. This report describes the national context for implementation, provides an in-depth description of the experience of 20 selected local areas, and presents challenges and lessons on implementation practices that may inform future summer youth employment efforts. The evaluation analyzes (1) monthly performance data submitted to ETA by the states, and (2) qualitative data collected through site visits to 20 local areas.

Below are select findings that describe the national context of the SYEI implementation and overall impressions based on the 20 study sites. In addition to the findings below, the study identifies seven general challenges encountered by the 20 sites related to: 1) enrollment and eligibility, (2) recruitment of veterans and older youth, (3) recruitment of private sector employers, (4) green jobs, (5) job matching, (6) measurement of work readiness increases, and (7) innovative practices. However, it is important to note that not all sites experienced every one of these challenges, and many sites were able to address some of the issues. As a result, evaluators were able to identify lessons learned for future program implementation.

National Context

- More than 355,000 youth nationwide were enrolled in the SYEI, and states and local areas drew down more than \$717 million through November 2009, or almost 61 percent of the national allocation of \$1.2 billion in Recovery Act funds for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth services.
- Of these participants, over 345,000 enrolled during the summer months of May through September, and 314,000 were placed in summer jobs. In addition, almost 13 percent of all enrollees were placed in work experiences outside the summer months. By comparison, local areas served a total of slightly more than 250,000 youth through comprehensive services offered by the regular WIA formula-funded youth program during the entire 2008 program year, at a cost of \$966 million.
- The majority of participants were in-school youth (63 percent), a group largely composed of those ages 18 or younger. A total of almost 9 percent of all those enrolled through November, or nearly 31,000 participants, fell within the newly added 22- to 24-year-old age range. It was challenging to enroll veterans—only 671 veterans (0.2 percent) were enrolled nationwide through November 2009.
- Nationwide, local areas reported that just under 75 percent of youth achieved a measureable increase in their work readiness skills while participating.
- State reports indicated a completion rate for summer work experience of more than 82 percent among those for whom data were available through November 2009.

Overall Impressions from the 20 Study Sites

- Although there were inevitable challenges, the SYEI was implemented successfully without any major problems. Sites were able to recruit sufficient numbers of youth to fill the program slots, to place them in employment, and to provide additional services.
- Administrators and staff in the study sites reported that the SYEI had a threefold effect. First, they got money into the hands of needy families. Second, youth and their families spent the disposable income earned through SYEI jobs in their depressed local economies. Third, youth gained valuable work experience, increasing their human capital and long-term job prospects.
- Youth valued the opportunity to hold a job, gain work skills, and build their résumés. They also valued the exposure to professional environments and mentoring adults. Many were enthusiastic about having money and being able to help their families in tough economic times. In the absence of the initiative, many reported they would be competing for jobs with more experienced adult workers or doing nothing productive over their summer break. Although youth had some important feedback on key ways to improve the summer initiative,

their most common complaint was that the initiative was too short and offered too few work hours.

- Employers were overwhelmingly positive about the initiative. They felt that the experience of mentoring a new employee was worth the effort and almost unanimously agreed that they would participate again if given the opportunity.

4. Inquiries. To view an abstract of this publication, as well as to download the executive summary and full report, visit the ETA Occasional Paper Series Web site at: <http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm>.