



# URBAN EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS DEMONSTRATION GRANTS IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION

## FINAL REPORT

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## Executive Summary

This report includes findings from a 2-year implementation study of the *Urban Employment Demonstration Grants for Youth and Young Adults*, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Chief Evaluation Office (CEO). In 2015, DOL's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) awarded seven urban cities with 2-year grants to develop projects to address the workforce needs of disconnected youth and young adults (ages 16–29) in U.S. cities and communities experiencing high unemployment, crime, and poverty rates, and low high school graduation rates: Baltimore, MD (\$5 million); Camden, NJ (\$1.99 million); Detroit, MI (\$5 million); Houston, TX (\$1.74 million); Long Beach, CA (\$2 million); North Charleston, SC (\$1.6 million); and St. Louis, MO (\$5 million). There was no uniform program model for sites to implement or test—grantees were given considerable autonomy in building the elements to be incorporated into their programs. The focus of the project was to provide an opportunity for innovation using the grant funds to enhance existing activities or develop new programs to improve workforce development services for disconnected youth with notable barriers. Communities identified their own plans and strategies on which to focus. No site implemented the same model for their program, although many of the same types of services were offered. Sites also had opportunities to develop approaches that were more tailored to the experiences and contextual barriers encountered by youth in their specific communities. The grant provided the opportunity for sites to develop program models and incorporate new services, or test additional ways of providing services to disconnected youth populations. Most sites developed program models that supported services beyond what typical WIOA programs are able to offer.

In October 2015, DOL's CEO contracted with 2M Research Services, LLC (2M) to conduct an implementation evaluation of the seven *Urban Employment Demonstration Grants for Youth and Young Adults* to document how the programs were implemented, perceived challenges and successes, and emerging lessons. The implementation evaluation explored how each site utilized the grant to develop a program model and execute their respective programs providing workforce development services to disconnected youth. The specific research objectives of the implementation evaluation were to

1. evaluate the extent to which each of the seven sites was able to develop urban youth employment projects in accordance with their proposed plans, and/or adjust their plans;
2. identify emerging practices and lessons learned from initial plans through full-scale implementation;
3. assess how issues of structure, the environment, partnerships, resources, organization, and programmatic interventions—including outreach, recruitment, engagement, specialized training, mentoring, job training, job placement, and job retention services—affected implementation and initial outcomes at the seven sites; and
4. determine the extent to which the sites were successfully recruiting and enrolling the participants who were most in need, based on the identified target populations, and identify the short-term outcomes of the sites' projects.

This evaluation examined the processes of implementing the demonstration programs over a period of approximately 12 months, from January 2016 to January 2017.<sup>1</sup> The implementation evaluation utilized a series of site visits, semi-structured conversations with the programs' principal leaders, and observations, along with limited quantitative data provided by programs on enrollment and job placement data to develop the study's key findings, a summary of which is presented below.

## Summary of Key Findings from the Implementation Evaluation of the Urban Youth Demonstration Grants

### Models for Program Implementation

Six of the seven sites created programs that deviated significantly from standard WIOA programs by building new models for providing workforce development services, and by adding elements and services not typically available to disconnected youth. These sites used the grant to pilot alternative approaches with the goal of enhancing the range of services and service provision networks. In these six sites, program implementers tested program models that rearranged the order of services to disconnected youth or young adults, or introduced new service models for disconnected youth. Some new program models included offering services within prisons before, and immediately after, release (Detroit); allowing participants to "shop" for only the services they want (Long Beach); and establishing a citywide integrated network of providers (Baltimore). Sites also used the grant to develop program components tailored to the specific economic and social context of disconnected youth in their respective cities. These components included cognitive behavioral change program and/or resiliency building activities, mentoring services, stipends, and tailored program recruitment approaches.

### Partnerships Developed for Program Implementation

Most of the core partners for program implementation in these communities came from preexisting relationships. Programs leveraged these prior partnerships to implement most of the core services offered by their programs. However, some communities did develop new partnerships for implementing the full range of services offered by the grant. Most new partnership development activities focused primarily on supplementing or obtaining additional supportive services, or wraparound services not covered by the grant funds. Six of the seven sites developed new partnerships for supportive services, including occupational skills training, legal aid, child support services, adult education, mental health services, and cognitive restructuring. Four sites developed new partnerships for additional wraparound services not supplied by the grant, while three sites developed new partnerships with community organizations that provided services, including life/employment skills, mentoring and antiviolence programming, clothing, entrepreneurship, and support in program recruitment.

### Program Services Offered

All sites' models offered program services which included a mix of soft skills and supportive services, adult education services, and occupational training, with soft skills building and resume assistance. Services or processes that were added with grant funding included provision of support services, including assistance with food, shelter, clothing; mental health services; legal aid; transportation, intensive case management; establishment of neighborhood-based community centers; mentoring; and

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of this report, almost all sites had received an additional 6 months to 1 year to complete implementation of the grant programs; this additional period of implementation is not included in this report.

additional efforts to integrate workforce development services, adult education, and case management/supportive service provision.

### Recruitment, Retention, and Engagement of Disconnected Youth

All seven sites perceived recruitment and engagement of disconnected youth as a challenge for their programs. Every program made modifications to their initial recruitment approaches. Case management staff reported that the simultaneous use of multiple strategies for recruiting, engaging, and retaining youth was more helpful to achieving their target goals. According to program implementers, approaches tested by sites with some success included utilizing community members and/or community-based organizations with knowledge of the local neighborhoods and credibility with disconnected youth as recruiters for the program, and developing a youth-based community center as an intake and workforce development program location.<sup>2</sup>

### Development of Employment Partnerships and Opportunities for Program Participants

Though program implementers used a variety of approaches to engage or develop relationships with employers, across all sites, they described this as one of the most challenging areas of implementation. All sites developed some new employer relationships to support hiring disconnected youth candidates, but sites also leveraged preexisting relationships. Sites that seemed to have more success placing participants in jobs described the significant time (6 months up to 1 year in advance) invested in developing employer relationships and mutually beneficial agreements in targeted industry sectors. Four sites developed alternative strategies which seemed to better enable them to develop and utilize employer relationships that supported full-time employment for disconnected youth, while balancing the challenges of local economic environments, including use of targeted, industry-sector career fairs developed for immediate and on-the-spot hiring/employment with employer partners; using occupational providers' industry-sector relationships to leverage employer partnerships and access jobs; and positioning the program as a reliable labor exchange-human resources partner for employers (with conditional employment agreements). Sites also developed strategies for addressing criminal background issues of participants, including expungement support. One site used an alternative two-stage, job interview approach to support youth with criminal backgrounds to obtain jobs.

### *Training and Employment Program Outcomes to Date*

Each site provided very limited data on their progress in some key areas over the course of implementation, including enrollment, matriculation to an occupational training program, and retention in a job for at least 60 days. In terms of job placement, the data suggest that most programs have had limited successes in placing individuals who remained in jobs by the 60-day mark, as only one of the sites had a retention rate of above 50 percent. However, three sites had a 60-day retention rate of 40 percent or higher. Program implementers were able to cultivate employer relationships that resulted in jobs for youth/young adult candidates in the manufacturing; construction (including solar and green fields); lead remediation; skilled trades; and healthcare sectors.

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<sup>2</sup> These community centers were generally adapted spaces not previously utilized for youth workforce services; i.e., no grantee site built a new building for this grant, but found formerly occupied spaces and created a new hub of workforce services for youth in local neighborhoods.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Understanding Disconnected Youth

In the aftermath of the Great Recession (2007–2009), youth unemployment in the United States reached its highest level since the Second World War. Only about half of young people aged 16 to 24 held jobs in 2013, and recent estimates suggest that about 1 in 5 people in this age range—6.7 million people—were neither working nor in school.<sup>3</sup> Referred to as disconnected youth, these youth have typically never worked, and are not in school or pursuing post-secondary education. These disconnected youth, ranging in age between 16 and 24,<sup>4</sup> typically lack the educational credentials, social skills, and social networks that can help them pursue meaningful careers—full-time employment in a career field with potential for living wage and advancement. They are also increasingly subject to structural changes in the labor market. Employment rates are especially low for young people without high school diplomas. Among young people who were not enrolled in school and did not have high school diplomas or GED certificates, approximately 40 percent were employed in October 2013. High rates of youth unemployment are a concern, given that experiencing problems in the labor market early on can have lasting effects.<sup>5</sup> Long-rooted sources of structural disadvantages in the U.S. economy, combined with institutional racism, have also had significant impacts on the employment prospects of youth, particularly for low-income minority youth. While recent data indicate that unemployment for young people between the ages of 16 and 24 is roughly twice the national rate, at 9.6 percent, African American youth had an even higher unemployment rate of 20.6 percent in July 2016.<sup>6</sup> Despite these circumstances, the economic and social potential of these youth, also referred to as “opportunity youth,” is a valuable resource to their local communities and the U.S. economy more generally.

In addition to lack of education and employment history, the disconnected youth population can be discussed in terms of the skill deficits and barriers to education and employment they experience. Overall, a lack of basic numeracy or literacy skills serves to hinder persistently disconnected youth in acquiring further education or skills training that may be necessary for employment, as they do not have the base knowledge on which to build. This is a significant barrier, as it is predicted that by 2018, 29 percent of jobs will require some type of secondary education or credential, excluding a college degree (e.g., some college with no degree, an associate’s degree, or other training).<sup>7</sup> Disconnected youth not only lack other forms of human capital, such as the soft skills needed for employability, but also the social networks that provide informal access to job sampling, career experiences, and employment opportunities in the mainstream economy.<sup>8</sup> Persistently disconnected youth also face additional barriers besides low educational attainment, including extreme poverty, family instability, homelessness,

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<sup>3</sup> Hossain, F., & Bloom, D. (2015). *Toward a better future*. New York: MDRC.

<sup>4</sup> Disconnected youth are typically described by the field and literature as being between 16 and 24; however, this project targeted youth that were slightly older, 16–29 years of age.

<sup>5</sup> Neumark, D. (2002). *How living wage laws affect low-wage workers and low-income families*. San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California. Retrieved from [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_302DNR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_302DNR.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017). *Employment and unemployment among youth – Summer 2017*. [News release]. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/youth.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Carnevale, A. P., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2010). *Help wanted: Projections of jobs and education requirements through 2018*. Retrieved from <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/fullreport.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Wright, V. R., Chau, M., Aratani, Y., Wile Schwarz, S., & Thampi, K. (2010). *A profile of disconnected young adults in 2010*. National Center for Children in Poverty. Retrieved from [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text\\_979.pdf](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_979.pdf)

substance abuse or mental health issues, and lack of access to critical resources such as transportation. Without connections to school, jobs, and supportive systems, disconnected youth are at risk to become more economically isolated and subject to intergenerational poverty, crime, and violence.

### The Impact of Declining Opportunities in Urban Cities on Disconnected Youth

Many urban areas present additional circumstances that further exacerbate the challenges faced by disconnected youth. Perhaps the most significant factor impacting the employability and labor force participation of disconnected youth, especially low-income minority youth, is the degree of deindustrialization and abandonment of urban cities throughout the United States. Over the last several decades, urban neighborhoods throughout the United States have experienced several economic, political, and cultural changes that have restructured the kinds of jobs available to residents. Due to economic restructuring, deindustrialization, downsizing, out-migration of the White middle class, and discriminatory policies which started in the 1970s, urban cities in America, particularly those on the East Coast and in the Rust Belt of the Midwest, experienced rapid decline. By the 1970s, growth in blue-collar factory, transportation, and construction jobs (typically held by men) declined as the jobs in these sectors moved to the suburbs or abroad, and the economy experienced a rapid expansion in the fields of technology and specialized service jobs; these positions often required a college education or specialized training. For example, in 1970, 34.4 percent of all jobs in the United States were in the manufacturing sector, and this sector was the largest employer of all working individuals. By 2010, only 9.8 percent of jobs were in manufacturing, and retail and food services had become the largest industry sectors employing individuals. Consequently, cities whose economies had been built on manufacturing were devastated by this shift in the economy. Manufacturing employed 41.0 percent of Detroit's workers in 1970, but only 11.3 percent in 2010. In Baltimore, manufacturing, which employed 28.6 percent workers in 1970, has virtually disappeared, employing only 4.7 percent in 2010.<sup>9</sup>

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, more than 13.9 million Americans live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty (defined as an area where the poverty rate is 30 percent or higher); 1 in 4 poor residents live in a distressed neighborhood in an urban inner city.<sup>10</sup> The effects of living in high-poverty communities are far-reaching and generational. These circumstances translate into significant barriers for disconnected youth, especially minority youth, who find themselves residing in neighborhoods with little infrastructure to support local businesses and with extremely limited access to resources needed for full-time employment in a career field with the potential for living wage and advancement.

Disconnected youth in urban areas may also face significant barriers due to the level of violence they experience in their neighborhoods, violence which may be caused in part by limited economic opportunities. The out-migration of jobs, coupled with increasingly weakened institutional structures

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<sup>9</sup> United States Census Bureau. (n.d.). County Business Patterns, 1970–2010. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cbp/data.html>

<sup>10</sup> United States Census Bureau. (n.d.). Census Bureau 2007–2011 American Community Survey, 5 year estimates. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html>

supporting urban neighborhoods, may exacerbate conditions where youth and their communities are subjected to ongoing cycles of related crime and violence.<sup>11</sup>

### The Urban Employment Demonstration Grants for Youth and Young Adults

To address the workforce needs and to improve employment outcomes for disconnected youth and young adults (ages 16–29), DOL’s ETA awarded the *Urban Employment Demonstration Grants for Youth and Young Adults* to seven urban cities: Baltimore, MD (\$5 million); Camden, NJ (\$1.99 million); Detroit, MI (\$5 million); Houston, TX (\$1.74 million); Long Beach, CA (\$2 million); North Charleston, SC (\$1.6 million); and St. Louis, MO (\$5 million), with a focus on developing emerging practices. The grants were established for an initial 2-year period; at the time of this report, six of seven sites had received an additional 6 months to 1 year to complete implementation of the grant programs. Grantees were identified based on participation in at least one federal place-based initiative that identified them as an area of compelling need (e.g., Promise Zone and Strong Cities, Strong Communities).

**Exhibit 1. Sites Selected for the Urban Youth Demonstration Grants Implementation Evaluation**

Site	Program
Baltimore, MD	One Baltimore for Jobs
Camden, NJ	Camden Corps Plus
Detroit, MI	DESC One-Stop and Summer Youth Programs
Houston, TX	Young Aspiring Professionals
Long Beach, CA	White House Long Beach Scholars Program/Youth Demonstration Project
North Charleston, SC	Education 2 Employment
St. Louis, MO	Career Pathways Bridge

This 2015 project provided funds to grantees to develop innovative approaches to addressing the workforce needs and to improve employment outcomes for individuals, particularly disconnected youth and young adults ages 16–29, in cities experiencing high unemployment, crime, and poverty rates and low high school graduation rates. The demonstration grants were used to enhance existing activities to improve social outcomes, sustainability, and livability in these areas.

Funding for the urban youth employment demonstration grant programs was awarded to the selected states’ Departments of Labor. These selected states then awarded funding to local-level grantees in the awardee cities. Local grantees worked closely with their state liaisons to develop and implement the grant programs. Each site had the same initial period for implementation: September 2015 to September 2017. With only a 2-year implementation window, programs had to begin almost immediately, with no uniform planning period for sites; therefore, grantees were given considerable autonomy in building the elements to be incorporated into their programs, and were not restricted by standard Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations. The sites were not restricted in any way from utilizing preexisting models of service provision for disconnected youth populations. Grantees identified their own plans and strategies on which to focus, but may have included models or

<sup>11</sup> Anderson, E. (1999). *Code of the street: Decency, violence, and the moral life of the inner city*. New York, NY: WW. Norton & Company.

approaches that have been evaluated in prior studies which showed promise, such as innovative outreach strategies, comprehensive summer jobs models, year-round employment models, career preparation and career education, work experience, career academies, and comprehensive and integrated skill development. It is important to note that there was no uniform program model for sites to implement or test; rather, the focus of the project was to provide an opportunity to use the grant funds for innovation in service provision to disconnected youth. However, there were some common underlying assumptions for the programs. All sites included existing community-based activities for education and skills development, targeting areas of compelling need. Programs were developed to leverage a range of partnerships (preexisting and new) with the goal of drawing on the compounding effect of cooperative arrangements and focusing resources in targeted locations. Additionally, each grantee developed a program which targeted industry sectors and occupations identified as growth areas, developing services and training to support specific well-defined career pathways for youth. All sites developed full-time employment in targeted sectors, with jobs meeting a baseline wage goal of at least \$9 per hour. Sites also intended to develop program components and processes to respond to the specific local socioeconomic and environmental context of disconnected youth in each city.

As such, the demonstration grants, referred to from this point on in this report as “programs,” were operated by organizations with different management structures and resources, and in different local contexts. Across the sites, the characteristics of participants also varied to some extent as well. Programs had different lengths, offered various levels of follow-up services, and reflected both the local youth culture and socioeconomic context of each city differently. These programs were unique in that none of the sites used or developed the same program model for service provision.

### Implementation Evaluation of the *Urban Employment Demonstration Grants for Youth and Young Adults*

This report discusses the findings of the implementation evaluation of the *Urban Employment Demonstration Grants for Youth and Young Adults*. The implementation evaluation explored how each site utilized the grant to develop a program model and execute their respective programs providing workforce development services to disconnected youth. The specific research objectives of the implementation evaluation were to

1. evaluate the extent to which each of the seven sites was able to develop urban youth employment projects in accordance with their proposed plans, and/or adjust their plans to what is needed at their respective sites;
2. identify emerging practices and lessons learned from initial plans through full-scale implementation, with a focus toward understanding the systems and partnerships;
3. assess how issues of structure, the environment, partnerships, resources, organization, and programmatic interventions—including outreach, recruitment, engagement, specialized training, mentoring, job training, job placement, and job retention services—affected implementation and initial outcomes at the seven sites;
4. determine the extent to which the sites were successfully recruiting and enrolling the participants who were most in need, based on the identified target populations, and identify the short-term outcomes of the sites’ projects.

This evaluation examined the processes of implementing the demonstration programs over a period of approximately 12 months, from January 2016 to January 2017. At the time of the second site visit for the

study, January 2017, six of the seven sites had completed approximately 1 year of program implementation; the seventh site had completed approximately 6 months of activity. As noted previously, all sites except for one received an extension of their original period of performance past the end of the evaluation period; thus, this report only captures implementation from the initiation of the grant until approximately 6 months before the end of the grant for most programs.

### Implementation Evaluation Framework and Research Questions

To answer these research objectives, the implementation evaluation considered the following:

- *Systems characteristics*, including how sites leveraged existing and/or built new partnerships with employers, education institutions, community-based and faith-based organizations, shelters, the foster care system, criminal justice agencies, and others
- *Organizational characteristics*, such as program leadership, capacity and experience of the managing organization, and an organization’s knowledge of, and responsiveness to, local youth culture
- *Programmatic characteristics*, such as outreach and recruitment, engagement, addressing cognitive behavioral change, program structure and logistics, and staff interactions with participants
- *Environmental/community level characteristics*, such as responsiveness to place-based issues, engagement of local communities, impact of and ability to tailor programmatic elements to local youth culture, and other local contextual information

Exhibit 2 presents the overarching research questions which were developed to answer the research objectives for the study, and their relationships to the study typology described above.

#### Exhibit 2. Research Questions for the Implementation Evaluation

Systemic Characteristics	<i>What partners were engaged for the grant? Were there new partners engaging for the first time?</i>
	<i>What roles did the partners play in the development of grant-funded activities and projects?</i>
Organizational Characteristics	<i>What leadership/capacity do programs need to support program implementation?</i>
Programmatic Characteristics	<i>What components or enhanced components were provided with grant funding?</i>
	<i>What program services were offered (including education and job training, workforce development strategies, and companion services)?</i>
	<i>What techniques were used to connect participants to jobs?</i>
	<i>What types of jobs were accessed and were they quality jobs (e.g., summer jobs, internships, full-time jobs, with benefits or additional skills training)?</i>
	<i>What were the challenges encountered in implementing the plans developed and how were those challenges addressed?</i>
Environmental/Community Characteristics	<i>How did programs incorporate or respond to the specific local socioeconomic and environmental context of disconnected youth (e.g., access to transportation, training/education, geographic location/isolation of youth)?</i>
	<i>How was the local community involved/engaged in the program?</i>

### Research Methods and Data Sources

The study utilized a multimethod evaluation approach featuring primarily qualitative methods, with limited quantitative data collected from demonstration programs. The evaluation built on the body of literature on disconnected youth, workforce development, and prisoner reentry, as well as emerging findings on best practices for community-centered and place-based initiatives. The implementation

evaluation drew on data collected during a set of semi-structure conversations with principal program leaders, selected program staff, observations, and a series of site visits to each of the participating programs at different points during implementation, document review, and analysis of a limited set of quantitative performance indicators obtained from programs. Each of these data sources is described below.

*Qualitative telephone interviews with key stakeholders and program implementers.* Semi-structured telephone interviews with representatives from each site were conducted to understand the structure, partnerships, resources, organizational development, and programmatic strategies proposed, and the extent to which these elements may have changed after the initial proposal/kickoff. Telephone interviews were also conducted with those responsible for oversight of the grants at various levels to begin to understand the implementation process and to collect additional data needed for planning the site visits. Respondents were the Federal Project Officers (FPOs) responsible for monitoring the grants; respective state Departments of Labor contacts; and various local-level contacts, including staff responsible for implementing programmatic activities and any key partners/contractors also involved in implementation.

*Site visits.* Two sets of site visits were conducted. The first visit took place after sites had completed approximately 6 months of active program implementation; the second visit was conducted after approximately 1 year of implementation. A series of observations and conversations with site's principal leaders was conducted. The research team had semi-structured conversations with lead program staff responsible for various aspects of program delivery, including recruitment, workshop and course instruction, supportive services, job placement and retention, and partnership development. While on site, the research team also conducted observations, as well as rapid ethnographic assessments to better understand the greater community contextual factors.

*Document review and assessment of administrative data.* To further contextualize the implementation process of each of the sites, a selected set of administrative and programmatic information was gathered and reviewed. This information included a very limited set of items, such as program recruitment materials provided by the FPOs, grantees, and partners, including copies of outreach materials, intake assessments, materials on program participation, job placement, and retention efforts. Tools developed by the sites to collect profile information on program participants were also included. Additionally, quarterly reports submitted by grantee sites to their state and federal monitors were collected. The quarterly reports included narrative information about the grants as well as quantitative metrics to track overall progress. Quantitative measures included number of enrollees, number of participants receiving industry-recognized credentials, number placed in post-secondary education, and number placed in un/subsidized employment (i.e., served as an at-a-glance way of gauging program progress).

*Qualitative and quantitative analysis.* The findings for the study were developed through rigorous analysis using NVivo qualitative analytical software to systematically develop key themes and findings. The research team conceptualized and developed the findings through a constant comparison approach using both inductive and deductive coding and analysis techniques. The research team developed a codebook, based on the research questions, which was used to code all of the data. Inter-rater reliability statistics were reviewed to confirm a uniform coding approach as the analysis was conducted. After coding of the transcripts was completed, analysis was conducted using the NVivo

software. The thematic narrative discussion of these qualitative findings, integrated with key findings from the additional quantitative analysis on key performance indicators, is presented in this report. Due to the limited quantitative data to emerge from the sites, only direct performance indicators, provided by programs on program enrollment and job placement, were reviewed.

### Organization of the Report

This report begins by providing an overview of the program models implemented in the seven grantee cities, highlighting some of the similarities and differences in the models. It also provides an overview of the modifications made to programs to best adapt to their local context and the needs of the participants. Next, this report presents in-depth discussions of program implementation activities, starting with the partnerships that were developed for program implementation. The report then focuses on the programmatic elements and processes used by sites, including recruitment, retention, and engagement of disconnected youth within these programs; the approaches sites took to support youth, reduce barriers, and provide the necessary intensity of case management; and the approaches used for the development of employment opportunities and job retention supports for disconnected youth. To conclude, the report discusses sustainability of program operations, including whether sites can carry all, or a portion, of their programming into the future.

## Chapter 2. Operational Characteristics of Programs: Models Developed for Program Implementation

The grant provided the opportunity for sites to develop program models and incorporate new services, or test additional ways of providing services to disconnected youth populations. No site implemented the same model for their program, although many of the same types of services were offered. Sites also had opportunities to develop approaches that were more tailored to the experiences and contextual barriers encountered by youth in their specific communities. Most sites developed program models that supported services beyond what typical WIOA programs are able to offer. This chapter describes the service models developed by sites, the services offered by those models, and new program components added through grant funds.

### Source of Program Models

Six sites created programs that deviated significantly from standard WIOA programs by building new models for providing workforce development services and adding elements and services not typically available to disconnected youth. These sites used the grant to pilot alternative approaches with the goal of enhancing the range of services and service provision networks; program implementers tested program models that rearranged the order of services to disconnected youth or young adults, or introduced new service models for disconnected youth. Some new program models included offering services within prisons before, and immediately after, release (Detroit); allowing participants to “shop” for only the services they want (Long Beach); and establishing a citywide integrated network of providers (Baltimore). In contrast, the seventh site St. Louis, used the grant to add more occupational training tracks to its preexisting WIOA model, but also attempted, unsuccessfully, to implement local community centers for recruitment and service provision.<sup>12</sup> Based on the document review of sites’ program applications and interviews with program implementers, the program models selected by sites primarily originated from implementers’ experiences with preexisting models for providing services to disconnected youth, and previous limited pilot testing and consultation on alternatives for providing workforce development services to youth audiences, as well as a local assessment of missing components from existing operations.

The scope and scale of program models differed across sites as well. Five of the seven sites established a service goal of an average of 400 or fewer participants, with some exceptions. Service goals were determined by each site based on assessments of programmatic resources as well as programmatic goals. Camden and Houston opted for smaller service goals (approximately 100 participants) with an expanded range of services that would take a participant a year or more to complete. North Charleston opted for a service goal of 250 for their program. Two sites, Detroit and St. Louis, established a service goal of more than 800. Three sites (Camden, Houston, and St. Louis) developed models that were approximately 12–16 months in length; these models included GED or adult education classes, incremental testing to achieve numeracy and literacy, paid work experiences PWEs, and occupational training that varied in duration. Other sites developed program models that were designed to be shorter

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<sup>12</sup> Lessons learned from this unsuccessful attempt, along with those sites that were successful using this approach, are discussed in Chapter 6.

in duration for a participant, with the goal of moving participants from soft skills training to either a PWE or occupational training in a year or less.

Six of seven sites utilized a fairly linear program service model, where participants completed programmatic activities in a prescribed sequence. One program utilized a model which developed a menu of services from which participants could select options for soft skills development, occupational training, PWEs, employment, adult education completion, and cognitive restructuring skills. Services offered were based on the needs and wants expressed by the youth, who selected the options they preferred. After the orientation, participants did not have to start the program with the same activities; thus, the path to program completion was unique for each individual. In four of the programs, services progressed with a standard process that moved from recruitment to enrollment with preemployment workshops typically preceding other activities. However, three of the sites used models which got youth engaged in a PWE fairly quickly to provide income and an initial job sampling experience.

All sites offered program services that included a mix of soft skills and supportive services, adult education services, and occupational training, with soft skills-building and resume assistance often available throughout the entire process. For all of the program models, the goal following occupational skills training was for participants to achieve full-time, unsubsidized employment, typically with some job search assistance from the program staff. Participants could find employment through efforts in which the program supported the job search and placement of the candidate, or via self-directed searches. Additional information on the structure of program service models is provided in the Appendix. Exhibit 3 provides a brief overview of the programs and their target audiences, by site.

**Exhibit 3. Urban Youth Demonstration Program Overview, by Site**

<b>PROGRAM OVERVIEW</b>	<b>Baltimore</b>	<b>Camden</b>	<b>Detroit</b>	<b>Houston</b>	<b>Long Beach</b>	<b>North Charleston</b>	<b>St. Louis</b>
<b>Dollars Awarded</b>	\$5 million	\$1.99 million	\$5 million	\$1.74 million	\$2 million	\$1.6 million	\$5 million
<b>Target Audience</b>	Residents 16–29 years; un- or under-employed; low educational attainment with three barriers, including criminal backgrounds, from most economically distressed neighborhoods	Residents 16–24 years; unemployed; low educational attainment or work experience	Residents 18–30 years; un- or under-employed; recently incarcerated individuals (returning citizens)	Residents 16–29 years unemployed; low educational attainment or work experience	Residents 18–26 years; unemployed; low educational attainment or work experience; in most economically distressed neighborhoods	Residents 16–29 years; unemployed; low educational attainment or work experience	St. Louis City and County residents 16–30 years; target long-term un- or under-employed
<b>Target Industry</b>	Healthcare, manufacturing, transportation & warehousing, construction, IT, automotive	Healthcare IT, advanced manufacturing, carpentry and construction, accommodation & food service	Manufacturing, IT, specialty trades, logistics, culinary/food service, carpentry and construction	Manufacturing, logistics, construction, civic, nonprofit	Healthcare, goods movement, IT	Healthcare, manufacturing, transportation & logistics, IT, hospitality, specialty trades	Manufacturing, transportation, construction, retail/ hospitality, technical & scientific services
<b>Target Wage Goal</b>	\$11/hr.	\$9/hr.	\$9/hr.	\$10/hr.	\$13.10/hr.	\$10/hr.	\$9/hr.
<b>Local Lead Implementing Organization</b>	Mayor’s Office of Employment Development: Oversees local youth employment development efforts	Rutgers University and Center for Family Services: Both have extensive experience in serving local disconnected youth	Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation: Experienced local workforce development agency, new to working within prisons	HGAC/Workforce Solutions; Dynamic Educational Systems, Inc/ Exodyne, Inc.:	Pacific Gateway: Public agency serving all ages with skills development and job training	PYC/Eckerd Kids: Organization that typically provides services in support of youth WIOA programs	St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment and Metropolitan Education and Training Center: Typically work to retrain dislocated workers

## Modifications to Program Service Delivery Models

The data provided an opportunity to examine the program models for additional distinguishing characteristics that may have impacted the ability of communities to implement program services, and to describe the implementation process. To this end, there is some emerging data about the kinds of modifications made to program models over the course of implementation. Over the period between the first and second site visits, approximately 6 months, all sites refined their implementation approaches. All sites experienced challenges with their program models, ranging from recruiting youth, to difficulties keeping youth engaged in the originally proposed program service delivery approach, to challenges transitioning youth to occupational providers when programming components were completed. This discussion highlights common structural strategies used by programs to address challenges experienced in implementation.

**Revisions to Program Models.** Most sites made program modifications, which consisted of limited refinements and moderate modifications of their approaches, to address the challenges mentioned above, but two sites did not. One site determined early in its implementation process that its program service delivery model simply would not produce the intended outcomes and therefore made significant revisions to their program model. Implementers in Camden described the initial proposed model as too structured for the target population, and noted that they believed the program model was written from a very academic perspective, and not a pragmatic one, given the target population. Program implementers significantly restructured the program model, and the partners providing services, to reformulate an approach to GED completion, occupational training, and employment that would keep youth engaged for a longer term (12 months or more) program. Additional discussion of changes made by this site are described below.

Another site, Houston, faced significant challenges with its model, which was initially designed to provide participants with a PWE, OJT, and then a full-time unsubsidized position, all with the same employer partner (with multiple partners for each of the program's targeted career/industry sectors) for small cohorts of enrolled youth participants. The intention of the model was to provide incoming participants with an immediate PWE that would then ideally lead into an OJT experience. Houston was unable to get the model to function as intended due to a change in the local economy that limited its ability to secure employers in the targeted industry sectors. The intent of the model was to develop cohorts of participants to advance at the same time with the same employer through the PWE-OJT cycle. The site staff struggled with the timing of getting a sizeable cohort ready for, and started on, their PWE. A high number of participants were enrolled but then dropped off due to lack of activity, which left the program with a serious recruitment challenge. To try to address these structural issues, Houston adjusted their model to direct participants to the adult education/credential course until a cohort could be built, while seeking additional employer partners for the PWE and OJT experiences.

Modifications made by other sites were more moderate. For example, due to challenges in getting participants enrolled quickly enough before their release from jail, Detroit modified its program model to provide more of the program's services to returning citizens post-release. Long Beach implementers reordered its services to encourage youth to engage in preemployment workshops and sometimes PWEs before its leadership retreat weekend to compensate for difficulties in scheduling the facilities (an off-site camp retreat location) for this cognitive behavioral change programming.

## Program Components Added with Grant Funding

The grant offered sites an opportunity to develop additional program components that had, in many instances, never been provided before. Some programs either expanded the kinds of services provided, or increased the frequency of services provided. Overall, principal program leaders and program staff described the grant as an opportunity to broaden the range of supportive and wraparound services provided to disconnected youth. Services added by sites include the following:

- *Transportation.* In all sites, program implementers added grant resources to provide transportation services for disconnected youth. Most often, sites added bus fare cards or gas cards to their program offerings to support youth commuting from their neighborhoods to program activities, OJTs, job interviews, and jobs when obtained. Some sites attempted to test alternative solutions to linking disconnected youth to jobs. Houston piloted the use of an Uber driver to get disconnected youth to training and job sites early in the program. The model was later modified to provide van services for a 3-week period covering the PWE for program participants. Some sites also matched funds up to a certain amount to help participants purchase a used car.
- *Legal services.* Three of the programs specifically added an enhanced legal services component which either expanded the scope of legal services available to disconnected youth or enhanced the approach used to deliver services. North Charleston's and Houston's programs expanded legal services to provide more support for expungement costs; both also included pre-trial intervention programs. Baltimore changed the service model used to centralize the provision of legal services with one network-wide, highly experienced partner; the partner traveled to the programs sites to meet one-on-one with program participants to offer legal consultation that covered issues such as taxes, housing, unpaid bills, and expungement.
- *Mental health.* Mental health was another service area receiving specific attention; three sites specifically added program staff or a specialized partner to program offerings to meet the needs of program participants. While all sites included some approach for making a referral to mental health services for disconnected youth, North Charleston and Baltimore added special staff or partners supported by the grant—such as mental health and substance abuse counselors—to their programs, and St. Louis developed a training and protocol for staff to better identify potential issues and make referrals.
- *Financial literacy.* Three sites also added specific programming focused on increasing the financial literacy of disconnected youth, provided as part of preemployment training.

Most sites also developed alternative components or processes for recruitment and outreach to disconnected youth. Additional details on the development of these program components follows in the discussion of recruitment approaches in Chapter 4. All sites also used the grant funding to support individual case management time for working with disconnected youth; case management program staff were either specifically hired for the program or their time was allocated to more intensive case management and supportive service provision.

The next discussion presents an overview of the programmatic services offered by programs as a part of their service delivery models. Additional details about how services were provided as a part of program implementation, and challenges faced by programs, are discussed in subsequent chapters.

## Services Offered by Program Models

While program models varied, sites provided the same types of core services to disconnected youth. Common programming components for all sites included soft skills, which, depending on the site and training provider, were tailored to reflect the desired skills of certain targeted industry sectors; occupational training; supportive services; and an employment placement component. Across the sites, programs also used the grant funds to defray the costs of materials or clothing to support job-seeking and employment, as well as additional services like childcare or supporting the cost of obtaining birth certificates for employment. Services offered by the programs included the following.

*Recruitment.* Community outreach, word-of-mouth, social media use, and the creation of neighborhood community centers were approaches used by most sites to identify and connect with disconnected youth. Almost every site attempted to develop some type of community-based outreach to identify and recruit disconnected youth; some programs developed accompanying media campaigns for the program.

*GED/adult education.* While GED/adult education services were a part of every program model, the degree to which it was a mandatory requirement to obtain a GED varied across the sites. Some sites strongly encouraged participants to utilize program services to obtain a GED. For example, GED classes were a required element of both Camden's and Houston's programs. Other sites made GED attainment optional.

*Soft skills/preemployment skills.* Soft skills training focused on skills needed for successful employment, such as arriving on time, dress code, and how to interact with a supervisor or other employees. In some sites, additional skills were offered to support success in the workplace, such as specialized trainings on how to best understand and adapt to the different types of relationships in a work environment, such as a construction crew. Some programs included ongoing assessment and reassessment of skills, especially during PWE and OJT experiences.

*Supportive services.* Sites offered a range of supportive services, but common services offered across most sites included transportation assistance; legal assistance, specifically expungement services (in Detroit, this also includes knowing your rights as a returning citizen); referrals to, or assistance in, applying for other social service programs; substance abuse referrals; and assistance obtaining official identification documents to support full-time employment, such as birth certificates and driver's licenses. All sites also offered assistance with fees for books, uniforms, and testing. Additional services offered by only some of the sites included childcare; mental health assessment (PTSD and trauma); and support for housing or to address persistent hunger.

*PWE/OJT.* Sites differed in terms of the use of PWEs and OJTs as a means for youth to gain preemployment experiences. PWE and OJT were formal components in the service models of only three of the seven programs (Long Beach, Houston, North Charleston). Even though PWE and OJT were formal components of the sites' program model, implementers in Houston and North Charleston described the challenges in getting an employer to support a PWE or OJT. Long Beach is the only site that did not seem to have much difficulty with the PWE or OJT components of its service model. Program implementers described a preexisting program where they had developed employer partners for OJT through a citywide media campaign which served as a valuable resource for OJT experiences for their program.

*Occupational Training and credentials.* Occupational training offerings differed by site, but were tailored to the specific occupations and industries targeted by each site. Common occupations across sites included Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA); construction, skilled trades such as welding; and hospitality. Participants at three of the sites received National Retail Federation (NRF) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration-10 (OSHA10) credentials—more universal credentials—as a part of their training programs, in addition to those offered by a specific occupational training, to make youth more attractive candidates for employers. One site offered contextual learning, which linked its adult education and occupational training components.

*Case management services.* All sites also used the grant funding to support individual case management time for working with disconnected youth; case management program staff were either specifically hired for the program or their time was allocated to more intensive case management and supportive service provision. Across all sites, program implementers discussed the impact of grant funding in terms of the amount of additional time it afforded them to support the intensive level of services required by disconnected youth with significant barriers.

Exhibit 4 presents a summary of the program components developed by sites. Additional details on the service pathway for each site’s programs are included in Appendix A.

**Exhibit 4. Specific Program Components Developed, by Site**

<b>PROGRAM OVERVIEW</b>	<b>Baltimore</b>	<b>Camden</b>	<b>Detroit</b>	<b>Houston</b>	<b>Long Beach</b>	<b>North Charleston</b>	<b>St. Louis</b>
<b>New or Existing Approach</b>	New: Developing a comprehensive network	New: Holistic, intensive support for participants	New: Jail-based workforce development	New: Adult mentors/ case managers at all steps, plus immediate PWE	New: Human-centered design for participants to “shop” for only the services they need	New: Community-based centers with wraparound services and intensive case management	Existing: Expanded WIOA/ displaced worker offerings
<b>Unique Program Element</b>	Development of city-wide network of services	One-Stop services housed in youth center	Correctional facilities/ One-Stop partnership that starts program while participant is still incarcerated and transitions to community	Instead of case managers, youth mentors are assigned to participants	Menu of self-directed program services developed; leadership retreat	Cognitive restructuring curriculum; youth community centers developed; coaching and mental health counseling provided directly to participants	Five neighborhood centers established for recruitment
<b>Structure of the Program</b>	Self-directed/ cohort-based	Self-directed	Self-directed	Cohort-based	Self-directed	Self-directed	Cohort-based
<b>GED Completion Required</b>	Varies	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
<b>OJT Used</b>	Varies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Core Supportive Services Offered</b>	Transportation; legal; mental health; uniforms, books, and fees	Transportation; uniforms, books, and fees; meals	Transportation; mental health; uniforms, books, and fees; housing support	Transportation; legal; uniforms, books, and fees	Transportation; mental health; uniforms, books, and fees; meals	Transportation; legal; uniforms, books, and fees	Transportation; mental health; uniforms, books, and fees
<b>Specific Approaches for Remediating Criminal Background Issues</b>	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No

## Program Components and Processes Developed Specifically to Respond to the Local Context

Some sites also used the grant to develop program components and approaches that were specifically targeted to respond to the economic and social context for disconnected youth in their respective cities. These components were developed to provide services tailored to the local urban experiences of disconnected youth. The components developed included the following:

- *Cognitive behavioral change program and/or resiliency building activities.* Long Beach and North Charleston developed and offered a cognitive behavioral change program and/or resiliency activity, and hired specialized staff to provide these services; program implementers described adding this component as a way of mitigating some of the deeper issues experienced by disconnected youth. Detroit built a program component and partnership to teach participants strategies for resiliency and how to contextualize their experiences and move forward in finding stable employment.
- *Mentoring services.* Camden developed a partnership and mentoring component with a conflict resolution-violence prevention program; the partnership provides mentorship and training to youth, in response to the high rate of crime and violence that youth are exposed to in the city. Detroit developed a special partnership with a nonprofit comprising former returning citizens to provide peer-to-peer mentoring to program participants.
- *Use of stipends.* Recognizing that youth culture tends to have expectations for immediate benefits, some providers in Baltimore, and the programs in North Charleston and Camden, built in small incentives or stipends for participants to incentivize small wins and to help keep participants engaged and moving forward toward program completion and employment.
- *Tailored recruitment approaches.* Four of the seven sites developed approaches to recruitment of disconnected youth that were more tailored to a local context. Baltimore developed an approach to engage smaller nonprofit neighborhood organizations with deep connections to the most disadvantaged neighborhoods to support community outreach and recruitment of disconnected youth. Camden and North Charleston developed youth-specific community centers for the recruitment and service provision to youth. St. Louis developed satellite centers for its program to serve as recruitment centers in communities where disconnected youth were most likely to reside. Exhibit 5 provides a summary of these components developed to respond to local conditions, by site.

**Exhibit 5. Program Components Developed to Respond to Local Conditions Experienced by Disconnected Youth, by Site**

PROGRAM OVERVIEW	Baltimore	Camden	Detroit	Houston	Long Beach	North Charleston	St. Louis
Programmatic Features Developed for the Local Context							
<b>Stipend or Incentives Offered (not PWE)</b>	Varies	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
<b>One-on-One Mentoring Offered</b>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
<b>Resiliency/Cognitive Restructuring</b>	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Neighborhood-Based Youth Centers Developed for the Grant</b>	No	Yes: One central program location where education, soft skills, tutoring are all offered	No	No	No	Yes: Two community centers established in areas of need	Yes: Five neighborhood locations, though not all utilized regularly
<b>Neighborhood-Based, Community Partner Recruitment Approaches</b>	Yes: Community-based recruiters located throughout the city	Yes	No	No	No	No	No

## Chapter 3. Systemic Characteristics of Programs: Partnerships Developed for Program Implementation

Strong organizational partnerships between workforce development programs and diverse local actors can be critical to effective and comprehensive workforce service delivery. Due to the impact of the local and economic context of the cities where they live, barriers and challenges faced by disconnected youth may differ greatly. Therefore, partnerships that engage diverse sectors can be important to developing structural solutions that can address local challenges, while also connecting youth to new resources and employment or educational opportunities. Partnerships can also provide the opportunity for local communities to be involved in building resources to stabilize and support youth in continuing their career paths and achieving full-time employment. Important consideration should be given to the types of partnerships that can engage local communities and develop the most robust service offerings for disconnected youth—services tailored to reflect the local socioeconomic challenges and opportunities of urban cities. It is also important to develop the types of partnerships that can engage local communities.

This chapter discusses how existing employment and training resources were leveraged by sites and what roles partners played in the development of grant-funded activities and projects, as well as instances where programs engaged new partners for the first time. It highlights the types and roles of partnerships developed for the programs, the major areas of collaboration, and any changes or challenges to partnerships that impacted the implementation of the program in each site.

### Partnership Arrangements Developed for Program Implementation

Pre-existing relationships were the sources of most of the core partners for program implementation in communities. Programs leveraged these prior partnerships to implement most of the core services offered by their programs. However, some communities did develop new partnerships for implementing the full range of services offered by the grant, and some of the communities engaged a mix of old and new partners to provide core programmatic services. Most new partnership development activities focused primarily on supplementing or obtaining additional supportive services, or wraparound services not covered by the grant funds, but identified as important programmatic offerings. Two of the seven grantees Detroit and Baltimore, developed completely new partnerships with organizations and service providers that had not been a part of the system of workforce development services for disconnected youth. For these sites, the larger goal of using the program to support the development of new systems and approaches for providing workforce development services to disconnected youth, combined with more innovative programmatic models, required the addition of partners with different resources and expertise. Four sites, Camden, Long Beach, North Charleston, and Houston, developed partnerships that included a combination of previous partners and new ones, while St. Louis leveraged preexisting relationships to develop the partnerships used for the major programmatic components offered. Overall across all the programs, core partnerships to implement the program were typically composed of the following entities:

- A lead implementer who provided overall leadership, and in most cases, soft skills development, and/or case management; (often a social service agency or workforce development agency)
- A niche partner(s) (on average, two) that provided occupational training or adult education

- A niche partner to assist either with expanding the range of supportive services offered, a unique service developed specifically for the grant (e.g., mentoring) or with job placement or the development of employer relationships.

A civic/local government partner was only present in two of the seven sites, while a partner from the local police department was included in only one site, and later withdrew.

Six of the seven sites developed new partnerships for supportive services, including occupational skills training, legal aid, child support services, adult education, mental health services, and cognitive restructuring. Four sites developed new partnerships developed for additional wraparound services not supplied by the grant, while three sites developed new partnerships with community organizations that provided services including: life/employment skills, mentoring and anti-violence programming, clothing, entrepreneurship, and support in program recruitment.

A brief summary of the types of partners and relationships is provided below, primarily to highlight the types of partnerships developed and roles partners played in the development of grant-funded activities and projects. Exhibit 6 provides additional details on the development of partnerships not discussed below.

## Summary of Local Partnerships Developed for Program Implementation

### Baltimore

The IB4J program was implemented using a series of new partnerships developed specifically for the program. The partnership approach at this site was unique, as the lead implementer for the program, the Baltimore Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED) developed a citywide network of services for disconnected youth from preexisting providers who had been working in silos. 1B4J used a multitiered approach with a set of 12 occupational training providers, 4 broader, network-wide service partners, and 4 community connectors. The 12 occupational providers offered the full range of programmatic services to disconnected youth, including program recruitment, support for on-the-job training (OJT), employment hiring, and retention services. Each provider also recruited its own pool of disconnected youth in targeted neighborhoods across the city. The four network-wide partners offered adult education services, legal aid, mental health services, and child support adjustments (including right-sizing and driver's license reinstatement) to participants across the network. The four community connectors, drawing on their deeper and more credible relationships with the most disadvantaged communities in the city according to program staff, provided support for outreach to and recruitment of disconnected youth and additional barrier reduction services.

Over the course of implementation, the biggest challenge was overcoming the tendency to only work within silos with preexisting partners and use the network. The 1B4J partnerships offered more robust services, with partners who had more expertise and capacity; this was highlighted by MOED to

**Exhibit 6. Overview of Partnerships Developed or Enhanced to Provide Key Programmatic Services, by Site**

<b>PARTNERSHIPS OVERVIEW</b>	<b>Baltimore</b>	<b>Camden</b>	<b>Detroit</b>	<b>Houston</b>	<b>Long Beach</b>	<b>North Charleston</b>	<b>St. Louis</b>
<b>Partnerships Developed and Services Offered</b>							
<b>New Partnerships Developed for Primary Programmatic Services</b>	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N
<b>Organizations for Primary Service Provision</b> (primary implementers)	MOED; 12 occupational skills training providers <sup>13</sup>	CFS; Rutgers University	DESC/SER Metro; Michigan Department of Corrections	Workforce Solutions, DESI, Harris County Department of Education	Pacific Gateway	PYC/ Eckerd Kids	SLATE & MET Center
<b>New Partnerships Developed for Supportive Services</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
<b>Services Offered by New Supportive Service Partners</b>	Occupational skills training, legal aid, child support services, adult education, mental health services	Occupational skills training, food assistance, community service opportunities	Rehabilitation services, cognitive restructuring, adult education	Transportation, shelter housing	Leadership/cognitive behavioral change training, occupational skills training	Food assistance, cognitive behavioral change training, some occupational skills training	N
<b>New Partnerships Developed for Additional Wraparound Services</b> (for unmet needs)	Y <sup>14</sup>	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N
<b>Partnerships Developed for Occupational Training</b>	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
<b>Partnerships Developed with Community Organizations</b>	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N
<b>Services Offered by Community Partners</b>	Recruitment, life/employment skills	Mentoring & anti-violence	Clothing, entrepreneurship	n/a	n/a	Recruitment, food assistance	n/a

<sup>13</sup> See the following section and/or Appendix A, Baltimore Summary Profile for a complete list of training partners

<sup>14</sup> Some of these partnerships were developed by individual training partner organizations.

encourage the use of the 1B4J network. The early and widespread adoption of using the network's legal aid services in particular, according to program implementers, was a notable catalyst for program partners to seek services provided by the network, develop stronger cross-partnerships for other services, and stronger cross-referrals for participants seeking occupational training or specific wraparound services. Program implementers, supportive service case managers, and occupational training partners all indicated that, over time, partners found the network concept to be extremely valuable, and they were willing to support the network and help it continue to develop.

### Camden

The Camden Corps Plus (CCP) program was implemented using a series of primary formal partnerships for all core programmatic services, along with a set of secondary, informal relationships that were used to leverage additional access to a broader range of wraparound resources for youth. The secondary, informal relationships were developed exclusively for the program. The partnerships that supported the primary core of program services for CCP came from the Center for Family Services (CFS), a well-established local nonprofit organization with extensive experience with disconnected youth and families; and Rutgers University – Camden, which was responsible for the adult basic education and occupational skills training elements. Six other entities were contracted to provide occupational training for the program. Implementers described that the partnerships developed to execute the CCP program were both strengthened and broadened to include new partnerships that provided program participants with enhanced wraparound services, including mentoring, that went beyond the scope of services initially proposed. According to program implementers, the primary partnership between the co-lead implementers was strengthened and enhanced through the grant as they worked to develop a more integrated system of services for disconnected youth.

### Detroit

The Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation (DESC) One-Stop Program was implemented using a series of primary and secondary partnerships, including leveraging relationships with Detroit's corporate and local business community. The primary relationships supporting the grant were among four formally contracted partners: Michigan Talent Investment Agency, which provided oversight for the grant; DESC, which oversaw one-stop services and supported employment skills, job searching, and placement for the program; its subsidiary, Service Employment Redevelopment Metro (SER Metro), which provided outreach and recruitment, soft skills development, oversaw occupational training, and supported case management and supportive services for program participants; and Michigan Department of Corrections (MDoC), which provided access to eligible inmates, transferred them to the facilities where one-stop operations have been established, and facilitated both policy permissions and space for one-stop prison-based staff and services, especially classroom space for training courses. The primary partnership arrangements supported the provision of the program's core services. A secondary set of partnerships was developed to provide additional supportive services for the program participants, although not all the partners equally supported the program, according to the primary program implementers, who described challenges in obtaining access to mental health services and adult education services from program partners.

Over the implementation period, the partnership between MDoC, DESC, and SER Metro underwent a series of challenges and adjustments. Difficulties were encountered in obtaining access to inmates, securing space within prisons to provide services, and coordinating the timing of services being provided

before release, as well as obtaining access to data systems that allow tracking of participants' cases and status once enrolled in the program. The addition of a subject matter expert on MDoC procedures and returning citizens worked to support maintaining the primary partnerships and problem-solving program processes to meet these challenges.

### Houston

The Young Aspiring Professionals (YAP) Program was implemented using a series of partnerships, a very limited number of which were developed specifically within the context of the program. The partners providing primary program implementation services included Workforce Solutions, the workforce development board arm of the Houston-Galveston Area Council which had oversight responsibilities for the program and coordinated the partnerships for implementation; Dynamic Education Systems, Inc. (DESI), which was responsible for providing the core program services elements; Harris County Department of Education, which was the adult education services provider; and My Brother's Keeper, a local organization that supported outreach efforts for the program. Workforce Solutions also provided support for the OJT component of the program, and provided technical assistance when DESI brought a business developer on staff. Local staff indicated that all of these primary entities had worked together previously, though in different capacities. Over the course of implementation, the partnerships and responsibilities changed somewhat. My Brother's Keeper left its role in supporting outreach for the program. A limited number of informal partners were also developed to support additional wraparound services, particularly for transportation. Most additional relationships developed to support program implementation occurred with businesses recruited to provide the paid work experience (PWE) and OJT components of the program.

### Long Beach

The Long Beach Scholars Program featured a partnership arrangement with a lead implementer, Pacific Gateway, that facilitated the core programmatic services for the program, and acted as a lead convener for additional secondary partners leveraged for PWE, OJT, and occupational training. The core partnerships for implementation also included Leadership Long Beach, which provided leadership, resiliency, and mentoring training; Memorial Hospital, a lead provider of patient care training; and the Long Beach Mayor's Office, which provided a limited series of large-scale mentorship opportunities for disconnected youth. Leadership Long Beach and the Mayor's Office were new partners, while Pacific Gateway and Memorial Hospital had a longer standing relationship with each other. This site is unique in that it was the only program that included a local government partner in its primary partnerships for core program implementation. According to program implementers, the Mayor's engagement in the program was based on the economic value of disconnected youth to the future growth of the city, as well as the Mayor's experiences as a disadvantaged youth.<sup>15</sup> Pacific Gateway leveraged a series of preexisting relationships with the network of service providers it typically works with for WIOA in order to access supportive services for the program. Over the course of implementation, the primary partnerships changed somewhat, due to the inability of the Mayor's Office to engage at the level initially planned. While support from the Mayor's Office for the program was still provided, the level of programmatic support was diminished due to planning challenges. Program implementers believed their relationships had been strengthened through the program. In particular, Leadership Long Beach became

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<sup>15</sup> Long Beach Office of the Mayor. (n.d.). *Biography: Mayor Robert Garcia*. Retrieved from: <http://www.longbeach.gov/mayor/about/meet-mayor-garcia/>.

interested in additional future engagement with Pacific Gateways to provide services to youth and engage the Long Beach business community to find opportunities for disconnected youth.

### North Charleston

The Education 2 Employment (E2E) program was implemented using a series of primary and secondary partnerships, some of which were developed specifically for the program with the intent of creating ways for local organizations that provide youth services to collaborate and offer more wraparound services. The primary relationships for the grant were among four formally contracted partners: PYC/Eckerd Kids;<sup>16</sup> SC Works, a system which provides employment services and adult education; a mental health counselor; and the North Charleston Police Department (NCPD), which implemented the Steps Toward a New Direction (STAND) program.<sup>17</sup> The primary partnership arrangements supported the provision of the program's core services, including workforce development/soft skills training, adult education, occupational training, and some supportive services such as transportation. PYC/Eckerd Kids and SC Works collaborated extensively in the past. New relationships were developed to engage the mental health counselor and the NCPD.<sup>18</sup> The secondary partnerships developed for the program provided additional wraparound services. These partnerships were generally with community-based organizations that service low-income and/or youth populations, but also included local businesses, where relationships were developed and leveraged to create opportunity for PWEs and additional wraparound resources for participants.

The primary partnerships were modified by the withdrawal of the NCPD from the program about half way through the grant cycle. No formal reason for withdrawal was given, other than changing departmental priorities, but PYC/Eckerd Kids continued to seek NCPD support from individual police officers through informal relationships. Despite this circumstance, the partnerships developed to execute the E2E program were broadened beyond those typically used for WIOA services for youth to incorporate complementary partners providing new services. When asked about the strength and value of these partnerships, PYC/Eckerd Kids staff indicated that the future goal is to further solidify these partnerships, and the services provided by them, as a part of a revised service provision approach for disconnected youth.

### St. Louis

The Career Bridge Pathway (CBP) program was implemented primarily through a co-partnership that supported the provision of all core programmatic services. The partnerships that supported the primary core program services for CBP were Metropolitan Education and Training (MET) Center and St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE) Center—both organizations are Workforce Investment Boards. The lead co-implementers leveraged their preexisting referral networks for supportive services for disconnected youth. A secondary partner for the grant, St. Louis Community College, provided support in data management. The partnerships for the program were limited to the two co-implementers; each could choose to identify/utilize additional occupational trainers to support career

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<sup>16</sup> The program is being implemented by PYC/Eckerd Kids, a subsidiary of Palmetto Youth Connections (PYC), and is overseen by the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG). The grant activities were originally implemented directly through the BCDCOG, but were later subcontracted out to PYC/Eckerd Kids.

<sup>17</sup> The STAND program was initially geared toward those with criminal histories, especially drug offenses, who were looking to change their path in life. More information can be found here: <http://www.northcharleston.org/STAND.aspx>

<sup>18</sup> North Charleston is the only program site to have had the local police as an initial partner for the local program.

development and occupational training in career tracks offered by each site, but no additional city/countywide partnerships were developed for implementation of programmatic services.

The relationship between the co-implementers, while preexisting, did not support the implementation with strong fidelity to the model developed for the program. Additionally, it was suggested that while the co-implementers had worked together previously, operational silos existed within the CBP program. There is little evidence to indicate that the relationships established for the program were strengthened over the course of program implementation, based on conversations with program staff. The limited partnerships for the program also did not provide an opportunity for additional innovations in service provision to youth—particularly opportunities to engage in new partnerships with other types of community partners, including other local organizations serving youth, civic partners, or community-based organizations.

### Context for Leveraging Preexisting Partnerships for Program Implementation

The findings suggest that at sites where there are at least some preexisting relationships between the primary or core implementing partners, the program served as an opportunity to enhance the partnerships as sites problem-solve together with their partners over the course of implementation. This enhancement often took the form of more communication and interfacing between partners, increased collaboration to address common goals, and/or more responsibility sought by each partner in terms of service delivery or programmatic activities.

While programs were implemented utilizing preexisting relationships in most of the sites, there is some suggestion that the nature of these preexisting relationships differs across sites. As described by program leaders, those sites where the core partners had not just worked together, but had a previous record of collaborating around big issues, were well-positioned to take on some of the troubleshooting involved in implementing the program. Principal leaders also described previous experiences in co-ownership of a project and experience with significant collaborative troubleshooting and intensive program stand-up efforts as important to partnerships for their programs. Participants in partnerships that were described as thriving recounted mutually identified strengths that each partner contributed to the program implementation efforts, and the willingness to accept and respond to the need for flexibility to implement the program, as positive factors supporting implementation successes.

However, in some sites, the preexisting relationships were seemingly not enough to support a robust program. In St. Louis, where the city and county had previously worked together, the relationship did not appear to be positive; there seemed to be a high degree of competition between the partners. Comments from program staff at different levels of implementation indicated that the partnership was not as strong as it could be due to underlying tensions between these partners.

### New Partnerships Developed for Program Implementation

Across all sites, new partnerships were typically developed for additional wraparound services and employment experiences. In all sites except one, lead implementers actively pursued informal relationships with smaller nonprofits serving youth or low-income audiences, organizations with specialty expertise in mentoring or cognitive restructuring, and other civic organizations, to develop additional supports for program participants. For example, Camden's program implementers actively sought partnerships with local organizations serving youth—local informal partnerships that were developed specifically for the program included a partnership with Cure4Camden, an anti-violence

organization. The partnership with Cure4Camden was leveraged from its original focus—providing training on conflict resolution for program participants—to serving as a key partner in providing mentors for CCP youth. In Detroit, a partnership was created with parole officers working most closely with program participants to provide support for communication and program outreach. Long Beach implementers attempted to strengthen service provision and citywide partnerships in adult education services and housing assistance for youth, two areas where services were underdeveloped or challenging for youth to access.

## Chapter 4. Programmatic Services Offered by Programs: Recruitment, Supportive Services, and Case Management Approaches

Youth workforce development programs that serve disconnected youth often struggle with the recruitment and engagement of potential program participants. Because of the nature of being disconnected—having little to no interaction points with educational entities, social service organizations, or other workforce development programs—disconnected youth are often difficult to find and engage. It may be challenging to attract youth participants due to a combination of factors, including lack of trust, barriers they face, or the pull of street culture. Even the most well-designed programs may not be successful if they cannot bridge the culture gap with youth to make an authentic connection wherein youth feel their experiences are respected and understood, and trust exists between youth and adults. Given that disconnected youth often face barriers that may impede long-term engagement, such as homelessness; food insecurity; lack of reliable transportation; or criminal background issues. This chapter provides a high-level discussion on how programs implemented recruitment approaches, provided supportive services, and provided case management to a disconnected youth population with significant barriers through their programs. It begins with discussion of strategies used by communities for recruitment of disconnected youth into youth workforce programs.

### Recruitment, Retention, and Engagement Strategies Used for Program Implementation

#### Approaches for Connecting with Disconnected Youth

All seven sites noted recruitment and engagement of disconnected youth as a notable programmatic challenge. Every program made modifications to their initial recruitment approaches. According to case management staff, the simultaneous use of multiple strategies for recruiting, engaging, and retaining youth was more helpful to achieving their target goals. This discussion presents an overview of the recruitment, retention and engagement strategies used by programs.

#### *Community Recruitment and Word-of-Mouth*

Every site engaged in some type of community-based outreach, recognizing the need to engage youth in their local neighborhoods to begin to build trust and connections with youth. Camden, Houston, North Charleston, and St. Louis engaged in street outreach, with staff (or contracted agencies) going into the neighborhoods, handing out and posting flyers, and talking to people, local businesses, churches, and social service organizations/nonprofits. Long Beach used this approach in a more informal fashion with local partner organizations, while Baltimore relied on its formal partnerships with small community-based organizations.

Five of the seven sites had other ways of recruiting simultaneously, such as media (e.g., radio ads, billboards, advertisements on buses) and social media; working with partner organizations with more street credibility; or doing more creative community outreach. For these sites, the combination of neighborhood-based community outreach, coupled with a strong system for receiving referrals from community partners, seemed critical in finding the target population for this grant. Once enrollment steadily increased, most sites noted that word-of-mouth referrals were also key. Sites often had participation from siblings, cousins, and friends who inquired about the program on behalf of prospective participants.

### *Social Media and Media Approaches*

Only one site intentionally utilized social media as a means of recruitment and engagement. North Charleston's E2E program created Facebook and Instagram accounts to both recruit participants by posting and sharing program updates and "friending" and tagging their participants in photos, and to keep participants engaged by providing an extra means of communication should a participant disengage from the program. Staff also noted that social media helped provide a sort of non-monetary incentive, in that they could post congratulatory photos upon completion of program elements. This allowed family and friends of the participants to see their accomplishments and often provide additional encouragement. Other sites that did not utilize social media typically mentioned intentions to start or a desire to do so in the future.

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**Whenever we have someone who does really well, if we're Facebook friends with them, we'll do a status and we'll tag them so then all of their friends see how fantastic they are at this one area or that they got this credential. . . some of them maybe are shy or they don't want to brag at least, but then if someone else is bragging on them, that's like, 'well, she didn't have to post that on Facebook but she did. So I know that... maybe she is my cheerleader.'**

**- Program Case Manager**

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Three sites also used other forms of media to recruit and engage youth. St. Louis hired a marketing firm to create fliers and cards to utilize during outreach efforts, as well as a radio advertisement to play locally. Detroit created commercials that were played on televisions within prisons to advertise its program for returning citizens. North Charleston had billboards around the city and large signs on city buses, as well as at the major bus interchange stations, appealing to potential participants. However, only Detroit (which had a captive audience) believed these media tactics influenced recruitment outcomes. Even before North Charleston realized the billboards were not garnering as much interest as hoped, they had integrated other means of recruitment, such as community-based outreach and the development of two youth community centers into their approach. St. Louis also had radio and TV advertisements, bus advertisements, and billboards, yet continued to struggle to recruit disconnected youth in the intended target age range. In short, the payoff from these media tactics did not seem to be worth the resources needed to implement them.

### *Neighborhood Community Centers*

Camden, North Charleston, and St. Louis all established neighborhood-based community centers as home bases from which to run their operations as a new recruitment approach. Camden had one main hub, North Charleston had two locations, and St. Louis established five community centers. These sites chose to adapt spaces originally used for other purposes to develop new, youth-focused, local community service centers for recruitment and service provision, with the goal of increasing participant recruitment, engagement, and retention.

Camden and North Charleston staff felt that the neighborhood-based center was very successful, and something they wanted to continue to utilize in the future, noting that many youth who would go to a smaller space with a friendly feel, such as these centers, may not have gone to a larger, less personal

organization, even if offered similar activities. For Camden and North Charleston program implementers, the primary success of the neighborhood centers was the creation of a safe space where students felt comfortable coming to and interacting with staff, completing program activities, and participating in a positive youth culture alternative to that found on the streets or in gangs. Staff in both locations described how the centers created a greater sense of community.

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**The students have been really positive in being here. They seem to be really glad that they're here . . . we're more cohesive now. We're not just like, "so and so's in that class, but he's part of our program." We're all together, all the time. You saw downstairs. [We] and all of our staff and all the students, they come in and out. They're in the classrooms with the teachers. It's a very family atmosphere kind of thing.**

**- Principal Program Implementer, Supportive Services Lead**

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Program staff in Camden and North Charleston described the steps in their process of developing their community centers. Staff in both locations discussed the importance of finding a space youth were willing to travel to, the structure of the activities within the space being designed to reinforce a positive youth culture, and the importance of staff in the centers with specific knowledge and authenticity in local youth culture. North Charleston strategically placed its youth community centers in two neighborhoods where the centers could be accessed via walking or major public transportation routes, but in locations where youth could access them without having to cross gang lines; Camden located its center in a neighborhood easily accessible by a major public transportation route. Program staff in both of these locations discussed their processes of continually developing these youth community centers so that they could be “branded” by youth as a youth space, reflecting a welcoming aesthetic and the local youth culture. Sites included displays of youth art and youth wish boards, and a participant-developed logo for the center was used on posters and promotional materials for the program. According to staff interviewed, program offerings at the community centers at these two sites were framed to be sensitive to the pull of street culture by offering safe spaces, and often incentives, so that program participation was a more attractive activity than street culture, such as gang activity.

St. Louis program staff, conversely, felt that the neighborhood centers were too much work and not worth the effort when enrollment continued to be sluggish throughout the initial phases of the grant. Staff noted that they struggled to furnish five individual centers with the necessary furniture and technology; indeed, some of the community centers felt industrial and old, and not welcoming. One location with some of the lowest enrollment was co-located with a Department of Human Services office, so the stigma was that it was a government building, what one program staff member called a “sterile environment,” and thus likely repelled participants. St. Louis staff mentioned that they felt very limited in what spaces were available to them, as well as how to procure furniture and equipment; however, program staff interviewed here described their inexperience in working with this population, and thus may not have known what type of environment would best engage their target population.

## Programmatic Features Designed to Support Youth Engagement

Understanding at the onset the difficulty in keeping this population of young people engaged in long-term programming, six of seven sites ensured that some element was structurally built into the program model to encourage youth to continue participating, even as barriers presented themselves, or as participants hit roadblocks in their progress. Programs offered students the ability to work incrementally toward program completion, offering credentials and other achievable milestones prior to completing an entire occupational skills training program; incentives to reward engagement and progress; and supportive connections and culture for youth. The following discussion provides an overview of program features used by sites to support youth retention and engagement.

### *Incremental Program Milestones and Credentials*

Two sites developed their programs structures to feature well-delineated achievement milestones that were linked with a significant incentive or certificate of completion to keep youth engaged and motivated. This strategy was used by some occupational training providers in Baltimore, but was a specific program feature for North Charleston. North Charleston program implementers intentionally designed the program in smaller segments linked with a progressive financial incentive that increased in value as youth achieved each program milestone. Three other sites utilized a flexible scheduling approach to assist in keeping youth engaged for the duration of their programs. These sites encouraged the completion of program components in tandem with other program activities—a participant could work to complete a credential while simultaneously completing preemployment/soft skills courses. According to program implementers, the benefit of this type of approach was providing youth with a sense of completion, which helped lessen motivational barriers and the mindset barrier that a program takes too long to complete. Staff indicated that the credential then acts as an interim reward to boost confidence and encourage the participant to continue in the program. These approaches were developed to offer an immediate return on the time invested by participants who may be tempted to engage in crime or other activities because they offer short-term gain in comparison to the workforce development program.

### *Use of Incentives or Stipends*

Some sites utilized various forms of incentives to reward participant engagement and bolster program progress. Camden, Detroit, Houston, and North Charleston all offered some form of financial incentives, most in the form of a regular stipend for participating. All sites noted that these stipends and incentives, though never equivalent to the money that could be made in part-time employment, were still critical in keeping participants engaged, as they offered them some kind of security, knowing that they could have ownership over what they did with their money.

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**Those monetary payments make them feel like they're making progress in the program even if we haven't been able to set up a work experience or something like that. They don't feel like they're coming and getting nothing. They're still getting some money. Still having some money in their pocket to do stuff with, or buy diapers or whatever it is . . . So, it's keeping them motivated long enough for us to get them the work experience or the training and stuff like that.**

**- Case Manager**

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As described above, North Charleston also offered participants financial incentives for achieving score increases on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), WorkKeys completion, NRF credential completion, GED attainment, earning other credentials from other area workforce development organizations, and for maintaining employment for 60 days or longer.

### Providing Supportive Services for Addressing Youth Barriers Among Program Implementers

The most common barriers facing disconnected youth are well-known from the literature: transportation, criminal justice involvement/background issues, mental health issues, unstable housing/homelessness, food insecurity and hunger, low educational and skills attainment, and young parenting.<sup>19</sup> Each of these barriers presented at the seven demonstration grant sites. Program staff indicated that transportation and legal aid assistance were offered across many sites, and childcare was also addressed at two sites. Because these demonstration grants had more flexible parameters than traditional youth workforce development funding, some sites were able to devise creative strategies for addressing, or at least helping to alleviate, barriers faced by disconnected youth. Four sites also attempted to address barriers related to homelessness or hunger.

*Transportation.* Though all of these urban cities struggled with transportation, Houston arguably faced the greatest challenge, given the vast geographical expanse it occupies compared to the other six cities, and the fact that many construction jobs occur outside Houston proper, far from any available public transportation options. Houston made several creative attempts to assist their participants in overcoming the transportation hurdle. At the beginning of the program, the program informally partnered with an Uber driver, who offered to become the go-to driver for participants getting to their PWEs, and offered to waive toll charges. However, because this was only one driver, when that individual could not continue, that tactic no longer worked. Next, the Houston team set up a ride share vanto take participants from their homes to the PWE site; however, this service only lasted as long as the PWE, which was slated to be 3 weeks, after which participants had to come up with their own transportation.

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**I know one of the biggest challenges for Houston is just the sheer geography. This is a huge city that's spread out and really where our target population lives is not where the jobs are . . . Our transit system is not as advanced as some other cities that provide great connections between communities and employers . . . So, one of the things that we are doing when they get to the OJT piece of it, we're telling them you've got to start—if they don't have a vehicle or solid means of transportation—you've got to start saving to get a car. That's one of the things that we work with—I forget the name of the credit union that allows them to set up an account and start saving and they give them some type of incentive if they save so much to help them buy a car.**

**- Program Implementer**

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<sup>19</sup> Treskon, L. (2016). *What works for disconnected young people: A scan of the evidence*. New York: MDRC.

While Houston’s ride share and Uber partnership were not long-term solutions for barrier reduction, staff at this site were at least very aware of the hardships Houston’s geography can present to participants needing transportation.

*Legal services.* Prior to the onset of the program, Baltimore, North Charleston, and St. Louis identified the need among disconnected youth to be able to utilize legal aid services for various issues; previous misdemeanors on their record and dealing with child support and/or arrearages were most common, but legal services offered by these programs were able to address these and other legal barriers as well. Baltimore developed an approach which provided its program participants with a more comprehensive range of legal services while also relieving the burden of seeking legal services. The legal aid partner traveled to meet participants at the occupational provider for one-on one in-depth consultations on a broad range of issues, including child support arrearages, an excess of parking tickets and subsequent warrants, and landlord-tenant issues.

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**I think it was like three hundred and something people have gone through the assessment, the full legal assessment, so that’s—I mean that’s a lot of them. That’s nearly half of all of the enrollees for occupational skills so yeah, we’ve just gotten really good feedback from that and we see that expungements are happening and that people are getting help with all sorts of things—landlord-tenant issues, any debt issues, consumer issues.**

**- Program Implementer**

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North Charleston, which focused on expungement services, also tried to mitigate the potential barrier of access to these services; after helping participants make an appointment, the program offered bus vouchers and sent participants to the location of the legal services provider.

*Identification documents.* A barrier that may not always initially come to mind but which was brought up by several program staff personnel is that many disconnected youth lack basic identification documents; they likely do not have a driver’s license, and depending on their home life situation and relationship with their family, may not have access to a social security card or birth certificate which is needed to procure state identification required for employment or access to other social services. Many sites mentioned that this barrier became a significant time burden on staff since resolving this issue may involve attempting to track down and contact family members, or applying through the state to have documents reissued.

*Homelessness and hunger.* Program implementers described the reoccurring barrier among disconnected youth to struggle with food and housing insecurities at some point. Youth who face chronic or intermittent homelessness, or even couch-surfing, have a much more difficult time staying engaged and focused in workforce development programs. As an example, program staff in several sites described the challenges of youth with unstable housing situations. Even though a youth may want to attend the program, overnight temporary shelter, including couch-surfing, may mean that the youth is in a location too far away from the program center, or she/he may not have known the bus routes to take from an unknown area of town. Hunger can be equally as harmful to efforts to engage in program activities. In attempting to address hunger, Baltimore, North Charleston, and Camden sought a local

partner to provide meals to youth during program sessions. Camden also partnered with a local food pantry; participants are required to complete weekly community service, and the food pantry was a location in which participants could complete community service hours. Upon completion of community service, the pantry would allow participants who needed their services to take home a box of food as well, thereby serving both the organization and the participants.

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**I guess we always kind of knew that food and clothing and housing were big needs for our participants. But that's something that, even just them being here, and we see them every day, it's like, "I'm hungry." You have some people who are fine in that way, and other people who are really—they're hungry. They need some food. Like I said, we've looked into how can we do this in a sustainable way. Because I can't just buy you pizza every day. That's not gonna assist, and it's not sustainable as a program. But it's also not sustainable for the person. That's not gonna do him or her any favors.**

**- Program Manager**

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Houston was one of the few sites able to address homelessness, due to the availability of more local resources. Staff there partnered with Covenant House, a local youth shelter, to not only assist those that came into the program and needed to find stable housing, but also to obtain referrals from Covenant House, given that many of the youth coming into the shelter fit the target profile for these programs.

### **Approaches for Case Management Provided by Programs**

According to staff across all sites, the style of case management employed by each program greatly impacted the level of engagement demonstrated by participants. Though not the only factor to affect engagement and retention, staff across all sites noted that having a personal touch and building trusting relationships between participants and staff contributed to participants remaining engaged.

#### **Intensity of Service Provision**

Due to the range of barriers presented in these local programs, a common theme shared by program case management staff in all sites was the need for more personalized services for disconnected youth. Overall, even highly experienced staff described themselves as being underprepared for the case management time needed for youth participants. At all sites, there was widespread acknowledgment that this population requires a highly intensive level of case management and support, often even before a participant is stable enough to fully commit to a training and/or education program. Program implementers described their own additional insights into the fact that, even with a program offering more supportive services and with more individual case management time, there is no single program model that works for every youth; youth required very tailored approaches and supports to advance them towards educational and employment goals.

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**I think that... one of the biggest lessons we've learned is this whole individualized approach kind of thing. That you can't just build a program and then expect people**

**to go through it the way you mapped it out for them. That it's gonna be mapped as it goes, kind of thing. That this 'meet you where you are' kind of approach that we've long had with social service, is the best practice for education as well, particularly for this specific age set.**

**- Program Manager**

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A related challenge in providing such intensive and individualized/personalized case management is that it is more time- and resource-consuming than offering a rigid, standardized model. Program leaders in all seven sites described the challenge of managing the grant's resources to support the staff time needed to support youth.

The intensity of case management services offered by the programs also caused program implementers in six of the seven sites to reflect on the staff utilized for direct service provision to program participants. According to program staff in six of the seven sites, effective case management requires staff experienced with the wide-ranging challenges of working with disconnected youth and able to make authentic connections with youth.

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**I think that things came up that made us realize that staffing these programs is really important because you have to have people that first understand this age group. You have to have people that have not just a willingness but real enthusiasm for working with this age group because these kids read you. They read you and they know if you're for real or not. That is, having a caring adult is so important for this age group that if that isn't in place that can be a real detriment to your program.**

**- Program Manager**

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Repeatedly, program staff, including principal leaders and case management staff described the need to have staff with the right combination of experiences, attitude and training working with youth to provide the intensive case management services needed by many program participants. Outside of simply needing more time and staff resources to implement these intensive and individualized case management models, programs also need staff with the capacity to play many roles, including case management skills to interact and create trust with participants.

## Chapter 5. Programmatic Services Offered by Programs: Employment and Career Development for Program Participants

The overarching purpose of these programs has been for participants to secure employment and earn a living wage, whether that results from occupational skills training, experience gained on PWEs, postsecondary education, or a combination of any of the program's services. Developing employer partnerships that support disconnected youth successfully transitioning from educational and occupational training to full-time employment is a critical process in building community-based systems that support workforce and economic development. This chapter discusses the types of relationships developed for job opportunities and the strategies the programs used to identify jobs and support job placement. It also presents data on the degree to which programs have been able to transition disconnected youth into educational or occupational training, and then into jobs. It will also describe some of the perceived challenges and successes experienced by program implementers in working with employer partners and guiding disconnected youth to obtaining full-time employment in a career field with potential for living wage and advancement.

### Development of Employment Partnerships and Opportunities for Program Participants

To achieve the goal of employment for disconnected youth, the implementers of each program needed to build relationships with both preexisting and new employer partners to encourage hiring of disconnected youth. A variety of approaches were used to engage or develop relationships with employers; however, across all sites, program implementers described this as one of the most challenging areas of their implementation.<sup>20</sup> All the programs used a combination of preexisting and new partnerships or relationships with employers to support the hiring of disconnected youth. Three of the sites, Camden, Houston, and Detroit, needed to pursue the development of new partnerships because there were not as many preexisting relationships in place for the industry sectors identified by their programs. The Houston program in particular required the development of a large number of employer relationships to support the program model's direct linkages between the initial PWE, OJT, and full-time employment components, to support the number of proposed youth participants based on program implementers' description of the service model.<sup>21</sup>

Programs developed varying types of partnerships and relationships with employers to support the hiring of disconnected youth. Three of the programs used a strategy of identifying key partners in the industry sector targeted by the program, and built specific partnerships with these employers, which translated in to first-look opportunities, special considerations for disconnected youth candidates, or hiring agreements to support a certain percentage of qualified candidates. The remaining program implementers developed a broader, looser network of employers in the specific industry sectors that would be supportive of hiring disconnected youth, with varying levels of commitment from employer

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<sup>20</sup> One underlying assumption for each program was to identify and target the most promising industry sectors expecting significant growth in the local or regional economy that would offer accessible/attainable job opportunities via adult education, occupational training, and/or achievement of an industry-recognized credential.

<sup>21</sup> Houston experienced significant challenges with the development of these partnerships which caused their model to cease functioning for a period. The model was revised, but the challenge in establishing enough employer partnerships to support a PWE, OJT, and employment with the same employer for a cohort of youth still existed at the time of the implementation evaluation.

partners. For example, Detroit program implementers were in the process of developing a series of relationships with representatives from the restaurant and food service industry to create what it calls a “Chef’s Table”—employers who are willing to hire qualified returning citizens who have completed training in the culinary arts through Detroit’s program.

Four of the sites worked with both the public and private sector to make an explicit economic argument for employers seeking disconnected youth as new hires. These sites made presentations to city or county officials, regional employment boards, and chambers of commerce to present the program and seek out mutually beneficial partnerships with employers. Long Beach, Baltimore, Detroit, and North Charleston are sites where program implementers have made explicit attempts to meet with these sectors to develop employer partnerships. For example, Detroit program implementers met monthly with a council comprising CEOs from large Detroit-based companies that was developed specifically for the program. These companies took part in the program by pledging to provide job opportunities to returning citizens and other underserved populations. North Charleston and Long Beach worked with the local chamber of commerce to highlight the program to build additional employer partner relationships and support for the program. Both MOED and occupational training partners in Baltimore have convened meetings with industry representatives to develop commitments to include disconnected youth in the construction boom the city anticipates with the development of new corporate headquarters of major companies.

### Developing Employment Opportunities for Disconnected Youth

Transitioning disconnected youth to full-time unsubsidized employment opportunities was the goal for each of the programs, and sites reported developing a range of approaches to support the transition from training to full-time employment. Overall, implementers in each of the seven programs supported the job search and placement of disconnected youth; however, each utilized slightly different approaches. The general support that was provided included preparation of resumes, mock interviews, and in some sites, working with a job placement specialist to identify and pursue a full-time employment opportunity, often with an employer partner identified by the program. None of the sites utilized any type of temporary job hiring firm, or similar strategy, to find full-time employment opportunities for disconnected youth. Some sites used strategies where they placed youth in work experiences with an employer that would potentially have a broad range of full-time employment opportunities the youth could transition to once the credential or occupational training was completed. For example, program implementers in St. Louis described finding work experiences for youth interested in the CNA field in related areas with entry-level positions; because organizations tend to fill open positions with current employees, youth would have an opportunity to apply for and transfer within the organization to the full-time employment in the CNA field.

An emerging finding suggests that sites had different approaches to placing youth in full-time employment opportunities which influenced the purpose and depth of employer relationships. Some sites approached the placement of youth in jobs as a matching effort, where program implementers matched the youth candidate to a specific employer and/or specific position that seemed to be a good fit. In contrast, other sites matched employers to a pool of youth candidates to interview and hire. Programs using the latter approach believed it was a better use of resources, increased the likelihood the employer would make a youth hire, and could be structured to support multiple job searches at

once for the youth candidate, based on their own independent data and comparisons to efforts matching individual youth to an individual employer.

Program implementers generally used strategies that relied primarily upon leveraging preexisting employer relationships to support the hiring of program participants that included:

- Use of job/career development staff and databases to create and identify potential employers and jobs
- Use of OJTs and PWEs as pipelines to employment
- Use of occupational providers' industry sector relationships to leverage employer partnerships and access jobs
- Use of targeted industry sector career fairs developed for immediate and on-the-spot hiring/employment
- Development of relationships with employers for conditional employment requirements

It should be noted, however, that these approaches were also used with employers that were identified as potential new partners, particularly the last three strategies listed.

*Use of job/career development staff and databases to create and identify potential employers and jobs.* While all sites utilized this strategy, it was the main job placement strategy for four of the seven programs: Long Beach, Houston, Detroit and St. Louis. This strategy generally entailed the use of the lead program implementer's preexisting job development staff, resources, and employer relationships. Some sites, like St. Louis, Houston, and Long Beach, used a combination of staff and a designated job developer to identify potential employment opportunities for youth. This process involved extensive daily searching of available databases and postings to identify job leads for youth candidates, which were then passed to a case manager or job developer so that the youth could apply for the jobs directly. Case management staff then provided an intensive level of support to help disconnected youth navigate the application and hiring process, including checking with employers on the status of the hiring process, and working with disconnected youth through multiple attempts of applying and interviewing for jobs.

Programs using this approach, especially those using it exclusively, attempted to build the existing state or regional databases they had access to by identifying new employers in the targeted industry sectors of the program, but some faced challenges with the robustness of the available data and translating it into actual relationships with employers. The timing of these efforts was also a challenge for some programs. For example, the Houston YAP program needed to hire a job developer to identify, develop, and search databases and other sources for jobs and employers willing to establish the program's linked work place experience and employment components. The program staff spent significant time trying to create and build the databases to be used to identify opportunities. The main challenge for Houston was the timing of these efforts, which were ongoing while youth completed the occupational training; thus, the transition to an employment opportunity was not always available when the youth were ready for it.

Job development staff in these programs were engaged in a constant process of trying to expand relationships for hiring and solidifying partnerships. Some sites attempted to augment this approach by developing special hiring agreements with employer partners identified through this process. For example, Long Beach identified a new employer partner in the hospitality industry and negotiated a first-look agreement stipulating that the employer would provide the program with a list of all job

openings 2 weeks before making the openings public, and would give disconnected youth candidates a first-look interview.

An emerging finding suggests that programs that used this approach described themselves as having more employment pipelines and eventual positions for youth employment if the database and employer partnerships were established well in advance of youth reaching the point of readiness to transition to a job. On average, the data suggest that 6 to 9 months of advance time may be needed to establish additional partnerships with potential employers to supplement any existing job database.

*Use of OJTs and PWEs as pipelines to employment.* While four of the programs included OJT as an explicit component of their programs' workforce development models, the number of OJTs actually utilized by sites seemed to be fairly limited, based on comparisons implementers described making between their original plans and what actually occurred. Some sites described challenges in getting employer partners to commit to OJT; however, Long Beach implementers were able to leverage a previously established and well-publicized OJT campaign that was favorably received by potential employers. A series of bus wraps and billboards feature a three-sentence slogan and a picture of a youth engaged in an occupation: "He/She needs a job. You need a candidate. We pay the wages." The approach garnered the attention of employers, who then contacted Pacific Gateway about their ability to offer subsidized employment for qualified youth candidates. Based on the occupational trainings offered by programs and employment obtained by youth, as described by program implementers, OJTs were not viable options for leveraging employer relationships into full-time employment for disconnected youth, with the exception of construction-related careers and specialty trades (welding and brickmaking), and careers in solar, energy efficiency installation, weatherization, and similar jobs.

*Use of occupational providers' industry sector relationships to leverage employer partnerships and access jobs.* In two of the sites, the program model called for occupational providers to be the main sources of valuable employer relationships that could be leveraged for access to jobs for disconnected youth. In these models, occupational providers worked with their longer term, preexisting relationships in the respective industries to identify willing employer partners. In this approach, youth obtained access to jobs via the relationships, most of which were preexisting between training providers and the employment sector they targeted. Training providers identified partners with potential job openings, and once the youth completed the occupational training and was ready for work, they could apply for positions with these targeted employers. Lead implementers and training providers worked collaboratively to support resume development and interview preparation when this approach was used.

Some program implementers developed specific agreements that support the hiring of disconnected youth candidates to augment the relationships with some of their employer partners. For example, occupational training providers in the weatherization, solar, green fields, and lead abatement industries developed relationships with a limited number of employer partners in one site to support the direct hiring of youth candidates. Employer partners signed a community workforce agreement, where the employer partners agreed to use the occupational training provider as a first source for all their hiring for positions, to pay a wage 10 to 15 percent more than the targeted salary for the program, and implement inclusive hiring practices and policies. In exchange for this, the occupational provider provided customer outreach to help the local business grow and marketed them as socially responsible, given the commitment they made to local hiring.

There were also some instances where an occupational training provider was building a relationship with a new industry sector to support the program. For example, one of the occupational providers in Baltimore established new trainings for careers in welding or as a Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Machinist. This occupational training provider described the process of meeting with potential employers and union representatives to identify workforce needs and the desired skills and relationships needed for youth to gain employment in these areas. These relationship development activities took a year, well in advance of any actual job placements.

*Use of targeted industry sector career fairs developed for immediate and on-the-spot hiring/employment.* Two of the sites developed a new approach to help support the hiring of disconnected youth from their respective programs: career fairs with a range of employers, held immediately at the point of program participants' completion of training and certification. Program implementers in both cities using this strategy developed an approach where they scheduled a regular series of career fairs for youth graduating from their training programs and invited their employer partners to the fairs. This career fair typically occurred on the same day as graduation; the employer partner attended the job fair to interview candidates. For example, in North Charleston, the E2E program used a series of job fairs held shortly after a disconnected youth completed occupational training in multiple fields. While not all disconnected youth were immediately hired, the placement rate was described by program implementers as high. For those youth who were not immediately hired from a career fair, the program had a partnership to utilize the services of a business developer who worked with both E2E staff and the disconnected youth to identify full-time employment opportunities.

*Developing relationships with employers for conditional employment requirements.* Another strategy used by program implementers in two sites was the development of specific hiring agreements or arrangements with employer partners, typically larger businesses, to provide first looks at positions or to agree to set aside a certain percentage of positions for qualified candidates from the program. As described above, Long Beach implementers negotiated an agreement like this with both their co-implementer, a major hospital, and with a hospitality services firm. Program implementers in Baltimore also had similar types of arrangements in place with some targeted employers.

### Approaches for Mitigating Criminal Background of Youth Candidates with Employers in the Hiring Process

Program implementers in Baltimore and Detroit developed some specific practices to support the hiring of disconnected youth with criminal backgrounds. In Baltimore, some occupational training providers, who facilitated the hiring of youth candidates through their industry-based relationships in weatherization, solar, green fields, lead abatement, and construction trades, developed a combination of agreements, procedures, and review processes to support the hiring of those youth with criminal backgrounds. As a part of their partnership agreements, employers did not look at a criminal record until after conducting an in-person interview. The employer also agreed to follow Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidance on Title VII of the Civil Rights Act in how they evaluate a criminal record, and agreed to not have any blanket restrictions on any felony convictions. Program implementers used a field work interview, which was part of a two-stage interview process, where youth could demonstrate skills proficiency to an employer in a field environment. The occupational training provider paid the wages of the youth for the 1 day the participant was in the field with that employer demonstrating their skills with the team. Employers pledged to take a holistic approach for the

hiring decision after interviewing the candidate and observing their skills in the field. Program implementers using this strategy described it as a more holistic approach which supported youth getting jobs, and was also a way to educate and reassure employers about the quality of the youth candidate, despite previous background issues. Outcomes described by program staff using this approach included continued engagement of the employers, who were satisfied with job candidates' performance, and higher rates for placing disconnected youth in jobs using this two-stage approach in comparison to a single one-on-one interview, based on the site's own assessment of its placement rate before and after adopting this approach.

In Detroit, where all the program participants in the DESC One-Stop Program have a criminal record, a combination of training and conversation with employers was used to mitigate the potential impact of a criminal background. Program case management staff provided a specialized training to participants on their rights in the hiring process, what information they are required to reveal, information that an employer cannot ask about, and how to best address questions about their period of incarceration. At the same time, job development staff with the program worked to identify employer partners who were background friendly, and worked to help educate employers on what is relevant to consider in evaluating a candidate, with the goal of a more holistic assessment of the program participant. The program also partnered with a nonprofit organization solely comprising formerly incarcerated men who have found general stability post-incarceration to provide peer-to-peer counseling on overcoming some of the motivational challenges in looking for work when one has barriers due to a criminal background.

#### Educational, Training and Employment Program Outcomes to Date

Each of the programs provided some very limited data on their progress in some key areas over the course of implementation, including enrollment, matriculation to an occupational training program, and retention in a job for at least 60 days. It should be noted that only two programs, Baltimore and St. Louis, described themselves as being at full implementation at the time of the second site visit. Three programs, Houston, Detroit, and Long Beach, described themselves as being at near full implementation, while Camden had less than 1 year of full implementation at the time of the second site visit due to unforeseen delays. Exhibit 7 provides an overview of the enrollment, employment, and job retention data for each of the sites. As the exhibit illustrates, four of the seven sites have exceeded goals for participant enrollment, two sites have achieved 91 percent of their goals, and the one remaining site is at 71 percent of its goal.

The data also indicate that at this point in their implementation cycles, sites have experienced varying levels of success in the number of participants who have completed an industry training. Two sites have met or exceeded their goal, while three sites have at least 40% of the participants who have met their goal, except for Detroit, and Long Beach, where slightly more than one-third of participants have completed an industry training. In terms of job placement, the data suggest that most programs have had limited successes in placing individuals who are in jobs at the 60-day mark. Four sites have a retention rate of 43 percent or higher, with one of these sites having a 68 percent job retention rate. Three of the sites had a rate of less than 20 percent. However, given that all the programs have received an extension of their implementation timeline, this limited success may also be due to programs needing more time to transition youth to occupational training and jobs.

*Industry sectors where youth find and keep jobs.* Program implementers were able to cultivate employer relationships that resulted in jobs for youth/young adult candidates in the manufacturing; construction

(including solar and green fields); lead remediation; skilled trades; and healthcare sectors. Program implementers described the fact that these areas typically had deeper preexisting industry relationships that could be utilized to support hiring disconnected youth. At the same time, the data suggest that building new relationships with these types of employers may have been easier in the sense that they were more receptive to the idea of hiring disconnected youth. Program implementers stressed that one of the key factors in building relationships with employers that translated into jobs was making the case for disconnected youth as well-prepared and trainable employees; for these particular fields, these qualities, combined with the occupational training and/or credential the youth received, may have been appealing enough for employers to make a hire.

Exhibit 7. Selected Employment and Retention Metrics, by Site (as of March 31, 2017)<sup>22</sup>

Program Measures as of March 31, 2017	Baltimore <sup>23</sup>			Camden			Detroit			Houston			Long Beach			North Charleston			St. Louis		
	Total	Goal	% Goal Met	Total	Goal	% Goal Met	Total	Goal	% Goal Met	Total	Goal	% Goal Met	Total	Goal	% Goal Met	Total	Goal	% Goal Met	Total	Goal	% Goal Met
Participants to be enrolled	1075	700	154%	80	113	71%	808	890	91%	106	100	106%	381	350	109%	228	250	91%	1481	1200	123%
Participants receiving industry-recognized training	684	400	171%	43	102	42%	227	590	38%	51	80	64%	55	149	37%	148	63	235%	301	500	60%
Participants receiving industry-recognized credential	669	525	127%	9	51	18%	168	384	44%	15	64	23%	39	82	48%	95	43	297%	176	375	47%
Participants receiving a high school diploma or GED	n/a	n/a	n/a	3	11	27%	0	50	0%	0	64	0%	44	39	113%	12	10	120%	22	180	12%
Participants placed into subsidized employment	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	67	1%	4	0	n/a	69	80	86%	278	262	106%	25	85	29%	2397	800	300%
Participants placed into unsubsidized employment	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	47	0%	75	289	26%	4	25	16%	49	176	28%	76	85	89%	690	780	88%
Participants placed in post-secondary education	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	11	0%	227	390	58%	0	25	0%	47	52	90%	66	85	78%	0	150	0%
Average hourly wage at placement – per hour	\$13.40	\$11	122%	n/a	\$9	0%	\$10.61	\$9	118%	\$13.88	\$17.5	79%	\$11.8	\$13.1	90%	\$10.11	\$10	101%	\$10.36	\$9	115%
Participants retaining unsubsidized employment for 60 days	127	295	43%	0	33	0%	37	202	18%	1	25	4%	64	132	49%	42	62	68%	257	546	47%
Participants who do not commit serious misdemeanors or felonies (Detroit only)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	635	757	84%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

<sup>22</sup> This data is through March 31, 2017; however, due to extensions, all sites have continued with the programs beyond this date. Many metrics, especially employment placement, which is often the last step, will likely increase.

<sup>23</sup> Note that due to the unique program model developed in Baltimore, many of the measured metrics differed from other sites. Some participants were placed into employment directly from a supportive service provider; note that this table includes totals for all occupational skills training providers as well Community Connectors and Adult Education.

*Post-employment services offered by programs.* The implementation evaluation analyzed data from five sites that had implemented employment placement components of their programs for at least 60 days. As described previously, one of the sites, Camden, experienced significant delays in beginning its implementation, and was a full 6–9 months behind the other sites; and another site, Houston, experienced some significant environmental and design challenges to its model which continued to impede program progress. In most of these sites, program implementers offered a set of post-employment follow-up contacts and procedures for disconnected youth who had found full-time employment. Common services included ongoing case management and follow-up contacts to confirm the youth was still employed and to assist in mitigating any problems the youth might be experiencing in adjusting to a new work environment. Some sites extended these services to include a more comprehensive follow-up with both the employed youth and employer partner. For example, in Baltimore, some occupational providers monitored youth to assess their ongoing accountability while employed, and contacted the employer to assess their experience with the youth hire. The goal of the process was to provide more immediate counseling and issue mitigation if needed to encourage job retention and to help employers feel the partnership with the occupational provider was providing quality hires. Additional ongoing case management services may include ongoing training and support for services like financial management and savings, in addition to communication and accountability. The training provider schedules a follow-up meeting with both the youth and the employer with the first few weeks of the hire, and then conducts additional follow-up with the employer and youth quarterly, for up to 2 years after the hire.

Across sites, program implementers acknowledged that the first job a disconnected youth is hired for may not be the full-time employment opportunity they remain with, due to challenges the youth may face in transitioning to a new work environment and its expectations, or challenges of ongoing barriers that are difficult to resolve. All sites described processes of working with youth to identify issues that prevented the youth from staying in a full-time placement, helping them with how to improve, and supporting the hiring process for the disconnected youth on a following attempt to secure a full-time job. In some cases, despite completing an occupational training program, a disconnected youth was not ready for full-time employment. In these instances, case management staff worked with youth to find additional skills development classes, PWEs or internship opportunities, or even additional referrals for barrier reduction services to continue preparing youth for full-time employment.

## Chapter 6. Key Program Implementation Challenges and Lessons Learned

This chapter provides insight into the perceived challenges encountered in implementing the program plans developed by each site and how those challenges were addressed. It describes the most common implementation challenges faced by program sites, and includes discussion of the strategies used, and emerging lessons learned, by sites in problem-solving these challenges. While none of the sites in the program developed or utilized the same type of model to provide workforce development services to disconnected youth, sites did experience some common implementation challenges. The implementation challenges highlighted in this discussion were experienced by at least three of the grantee sites. This chapter describes these challenges and the kinds of solutions or responses program implementers developed to address them. It presents a detailed discussion of critical challenges experienced by some sites to help provide an understanding the obstacles faced and the resources that may be needed to implement this type of grant.

The areas where sites experienced the most challenges in implementing the program models developed for the grant included (1) overcoming the significant barriers disconnected youth face in order to prepare them for program participation, (2) recruitment and retention of disconnected youth, (3) keeping youth engaged in service models/programs with longer time frames, (4) case management approaches for those participants with the most barriers, and (5) development of employer partnerships and job placement pipelines/processes.

### Implementation Challenge 1: Advancing Youth with the Most Significant Barriers Past Initial Orientation

Given the focus of the grant on targeting disconnected youth who faced the most barriers, program implementers often experienced challenges keeping these youth enrolled and engaged in their programs. Some programs anticipated this challenge, while others made modifications to their models to improve retention.

#### Emerging Lessons Learned:

*(1). The role of well-trained and appropriate staff needed for individualized case management for targeted youth.* For programs experiencing this challenge, implementers first described the significance of having well-trained staff who not only have experience with the population, but also a passion for engaging with them. Sites that seemed better positioned to adjust to the intensive level of individual services needed by youth are those in which the program staff are highly experienced, informed, dedicated, nonjudgmental, and able to empathize with youth. Characteristics identified by both program leadership and program staff, especially those working in the areas of program recruitment, case management, and soft skills training, focused on staff having (1) a respect for youth and the potential of disconnected youth, despite their current circumstances; (2) a strong level of commitment to working with and mentoring youth; (3) motivation, creativity, and tolerance for assisting youth with ongoing problems; (4) the ability to find solutions to reduce the range of barriers (which are sometimes persistent) youth faced in completing educational or occupational training; and (5) a willingness and ability to work with the disconnected youth population. In sites where staff lacked these characteristics, significant problems existed in recruitment and advancing youth through educational and occupational training programs.

Based on observational data, these sites were less able to retain the youth they had recruited, and were more likely to be working with youth that were facing fewer barriers.

*(2). Optimization of program service delivery models to meet the needs of youth.* Three of the sites revised their program models or components of their program models to either streamline services further or modify the order of program services to keep youth engaged, especially in programs with longer occupational trainings. Some programs intentionally sought to meet the more immediate needs for youth to have a job and income, while others selected more flexible methods for providing services. A uniform consideration across these sites was revisiting the overall program timeline for advancing youth to completion; when possible, program implementers attempted to optimize the timeline and some programs chose to incentivize stages of program completion as a part of this strategy. Some programs also determined that creating cohorts added additional time to their process; these programs modified the cohort approach so that only some of their programmatic activity was focused on small groups such as occupational training classes. For example, Camden implementers concluded early on that a cohort-based model would not work for the program. They moved away almost entirely from a cohort-based model, noting that the inflexibility of the program structure, as it was previously designed, was not suitable for meeting participants' needs.

## **Implementation Challenge 2: Recruitment and Retention of Targeted Disconnected Youth**

While all seven sites noted recruitment and engagement of disconnected youth as a challenge, four of the sites developed strategies which allowed them to meet the challenges of program recruitment within their local environments.

Emerging Lessons Learned:

*(1). Developing approaches that use youth and or former community members who are familiar with the local youth culture as an effective recruitment strategy.* Some sites utilized community members with knowledge of the local neighborhoods and credibility with disconnected youth as recruiters for the program. Sites using this approach developed recruitment strategies that hired program staff with similar backgrounds from local communities to engage in word-of-mouth conversations to build trust and then engage youth in program activities. These young adult staff members canvassed the targeted neighborhoods, engaged in conversations with disconnected youth about their situations, and shared information about the program. The program recruitment strategy was designed based on the perceived neighborhood credibility of the community member and their ability to connect to youth through shared experiences as a former disconnected youth in the local community.

Other sites implemented this type of approach by leveraging relationships with community partners widely acknowledged by community members and their own organizations as having perceived credibility with disconnected youth and a presence in local communities. At one site, the program partnered with a community anti-violence street outreach organization comprising young adults who teach and provide conflict resolution and who work in the neighborhoods where they grew up. In another site, very small community organizations recognized by the neighborhood were used to connect to youth through outreach to recruit for the program. In both cases, community partners' relationships with the local community and their status as credible messengers (based on members' previous experiences) was leveraged to invite and refer disconnected youth to the grantee's workforce development program.

*(2). Developing youth community centers for recruitment and service provision.* This strategy was developed to respond to the fact that disconnected youth in many of the sites were unwilling to seek workforce development services at traditional One-Stop or similar locations, due to youth perceptions that these locations were government buildings meant for others and that there would be no services for them, as described by program implementers. The data suggest that specific resources and relationships are needed for successful development of local youth-focused community centers. For this strategy to be successfully implemented, programs will need to identify and develop staff and/or partners with specific knowledge and authenticity in local youth culture. Some main features of these youth community centers included

- locations that were easily accessible to youth (either within walking distance or on major public transportation routes);
- integration of positive youth culture in design and activities of the youth center space;
- locations that were visually appealing to youth and branded by youth as safe youth environments;<sup>24</sup> and
- program staff embedded in youth centers with specific knowledge and understanding of local youth culture.

Sites that used this approach located youth community centers in areas that youth were willing to travel to, based on a local assessment of public transportation resources and barriers, and the understanding of local neighborhood dynamics. For example, one site strategically placed its small youth community centers in locations where youth could access them without having to cross gang lines. Program implementers in two of the three sites using this approach described the activities taking place in these spaces so that they could be “branded” by youth as a youth space, reflecting a welcoming aesthetic and the local youth culture. These sites included displays of youth art and youth wish boards, and a participant-developed logo for the center was used on posters and promotional materials for the program. Additionally, program offerings at the community centers were framed to be sensitive to the pull of street culture by offering safe spaces, and often incentives, so that program participation was a more attractive activity than participating in gang activities. The programs developed by implementers who described their youth centers as meeting the objective of youth recruitment and engagement also provided opportunities for youth to learn about and embrace their own empowerment through cognitive behavioral change programming designed to empower and motivate youth, as well as group activities, like community service, which were often co-facilitated by youth enrolled in the program.

Staffing of the community centers was another important aspect impacting the ability of youth centers to meet the objective of increasing participant recruitment and enrollment. According to ground-level and program management staff in sites that encountered fewer implementation challenges with this approach, staffing should reflect authenticity in local youth culture and provide a caring and understanding environment. Two of the three sites using youth centers staffed the centers with either adults with past experiences similar to disconnected youth, or young adult professional staff who

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<sup>24</sup> In the two sites that felt the approach was successful, program implementers and youth participants perceived the locations selected for the youth centers as safe to travel to and gather in based on local assessments of relative crime, local practices, and gathering patterns of youth in local neighborhoods.

understood the dynamics of the local youth culture and neighborhoods, and had case management experience serving a youth population.

*(3) Usefulness of creating trusting environments and caring cultures to support recruitment and retention of disconnected youth.* According to program implementers, key factor contributing to the ability of programs to recruit and retain disconnected youth is the existence of a caring and supportive environment, as experienced by the youth. To provide this type of supportive environment, programs provided experienced staff, as described above, in key positions. Another emerging practice included the incorporation of counseling and mentoring services to support participants' success. Additionally, emerging practices featured intentional efforts to adopt and reflect aspects of the local youth culture, and offered innovative ways to create a sense of safe environment and comradery.

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**I also think I learned that the culture you create within the program, the staff in particular, and the way we work with the students, with the participants, is very significant to the success of it. I think there've been a lot of experiences for our participants, educationally and otherwise, where they have gone through the system without having a person, an adult figure or supportive figure who's been there for them and who really is assessing their needs, and then building around them.**

**- Program Manager**

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Programmatic offerings to support a safe environment included selecting program spaces where environments could be tailored with art work, reminders of goals, and items such as clothing personalized with the logo of the program, to reflect youth aspiration. Aesthetically appealing to youth, these materials and art pieces reinforced a sense of belonging to a positive alternative. For example, in Camden, to create a sense of youth engagement, empowerment, and a safe space for Camden youth, the program encouraged young participants to develop "wish boards" and artwork, reflective of their perspectives and goals, to hang in the program centers.

### **Implementation Challenge 3. Keeping Youth Engaged in Long-Term Workforce Development Programs**

A challenge faced by all the sites was how to keep youth engaged in programs that have longer cycles required for completion. As described previously, one approach sites used to meet this challenge was to modify the structure to shorten the length of program or provide more flexibility. Additional strategies used by some programs to address the challenge of keeping youth engaged over the long term focused on challenging or redirecting the expectations concerning the value and standards of success youth have due to street culture are described below.

Emerging Lessons Learned:

*(1). Approaches for challenging and replacing or co-opting youth street culture to support participant engagement.* Some programs utilized creative ways to engage youth in their programs over the long term, specifically to balance the length of time to program completion against the pull of toxic cultures many urban disconnected youth are subject to. Programs attempted to create a culture of support

around youth that instilled self-empowerment, respect, and responsibility, as well as a culture of winning by committing to the program, despite temporary setbacks. A few types of approaches were used to challenge the toxicity of urban youth culture. Two sites intentionally built in cognitive behavioral change curriculum at the beginning of their programs, that came before any additional programmatic activity, to help youth refocus and identify new goals and expectations for themselves. Another site spent a great deal of time building a supportive alternative culture within the program for youth participants. This was achieved through specialized sessions where youth shared their goals, circumstances, and barriers with collective support and problem-solving from peers and program implementers (counselors), as well as through the adoption of colors and a logo the participants could embrace as an alternative to local gangs. The program was also structured to provide small monetary incentives on a weekly basis for program attendance, and program activities were developed where youth could serve as leaders (for example, community service projects). Another program attempted to counter the desire for immediate success by segmenting the program into smaller milestones, for which participants received a certificate of completion and a progressive monetary incentive as each new goal and program milestone was achieved.

*(2) Strategies that can be used to incentivize small wins as youth are trying to adopt a new culture of work.* The sites used a few different strategies to support youth as they adopted a new set of expectations and responsibilities in moving to full-time employment. Three of the program models were constructed to engage participants in a PWE within 2 weeks of program enrollment to support adoption of a work culture and provide career exploration opportunities. These PWEs were typically in smaller local businesses, where youth could be mentored informally by a staff person. In one site, the PWE lasted between 100 and 150 hours, providing youth with both income and an opportunity for a positive work experience. Three other sites used smaller incentives to pay participants for attendance over the course of the program. As mentioned previously, one program segmented its cycle into smaller sessions with milestones which were rewarded with a sizable progressive incentive upon completion.

#### **Implementation Challenge 4. Resources Required for More Intensive, Individualized Case Management and Supportive Services for the Targeted Population**

At all sites—though some have not been able to fully execute this—there was widespread acknowledgement that this population requires a highly intensive level of case management and support, often even before a participant is stable enough to fully commit to a training and/or education program.

Emerging Lessons Learned:

*(1). Development of approaches tailored to youth in provision of services.* To address this challenge, sites adopted strategies to deal with the issue of getting a youth stable before full program participation. For example, Baltimore implemented a whole new tier of partnerships—community connectors—which are organizations that have the capacity to provide more intensive barrier reduction and stabilization services for youth before they meet with a service provider. North Charleston, Camden, and Long Beach described spending time assessing the readiness of youth at various intervals and then adjusting the flexibility of the program timeline, or they simply made the decision that youth were not yet ready and required a referral to other services. It is important to note that in these instances, program staff tried to implement warm handoffs and find ways for the youth to stay connected to the program even while getting other services.

## Implementation Challenge 5. Development of Employer Partnerships and Job Placement Pipelines/Processes

Developing employer partnerships and subsequent processes to transition youth from training to full-time employment was one of the most challenging components of implementation for all sites, aside from recruitment.

Emerging Lessons Learned:

*(1). Adequate planning time for developing targeted employer relationships.* The timing for the development of employer relationships was perhaps the most important factor for sites experiencing success in placing disconnected youth in jobs that have the potential for career advancement in a specific field. The site visit data suggest that this development can take place from 6 months to 1 year in advance of OJT or a job being offered, depending on the occupation. The timing of relationship development and the ability to frame the arrangement as mutually beneficial seemed to also be important factors in developing these relationships.

*(2). Use of multiple approaches for developing a range of partnerships and job pipelines.* Another emerging finding is the utilization by program implementers of two or three distinct approaches to developing employer partnerships and a pipeline of potential jobs for youth. Sites that described themselves as having momentum in transitioning youth to full-time employment used more than one strategy to develop employer relationships to support hiring disconnected youth. In these sites, career fairs or strong industry partnerships were supported by job developers as a secondary strategy to support youth candidates seeking employment. Securing full-time employment as quickly as possible was the goal, and if the first strategy didn't prove to be successful on the initial attempt, these programs moved to their secondary strategy while waiting for additional opportunities for disconnected youth. In these sites, youth were typically hired in 30 days or less from program completion.

*(3). Value of targeted employer partnerships and hiring agreements.* Some sites were able to develop more robust job pipelines for youth, based on hiring agreements they were able to leverage with employer partners. These agreements resulted in disconnected youth having first looks at jobs before they were posted for the public, or the inclusion of additional procedures to help overcome criminal background issues.

## Chapter 7: Efforts Towards Sustainability of Program Operations

These programs were relatively short, and sites did not have the opportunity to devise a comprehensive plan for program sustainability; however, even with the limited timeframe for program implementation, some program implementers felt they had identified program components, approaches for implementation, or partnerships that were worthy of future consideration, or merited inclusion in similar programmatic efforts in the future. Two sites—Baltimore and Long Beach—began this endeavor specifically with the purpose of creating a systems-level change that could carry on beyond the life of this grant. North Charleston, Camden, and Detroit acted very intentionally in testing out new or modified models of program implementation and service provision, hoping to create a model that could be utilized under future funding streams (most likely WIOA dollars) to attain positive outcomes for disconnected youth. Several elements factor into whether a program or model can justify future incarnations, including the following:

- Resources and staffing for program implementation, including intensive case management services and staff with the right skills sets to meet the needs of disconnected youth with complex barriers
- Contextual factors, including changes in the local economy and limits of local transportation systems which can pose challenges to program sustainability
- Partnerships: Many sites developed or leveraged partnerships they perceived as critical to implementing either new program components or supporting improvements in implementation efforts which would be important for sustainability.

### Potentially Sustainable Program Features

Due to the overall challenges in the youth workforce development environment in finding sufficient funding to sustain an entire program, the sites that were discussing sustainability were doing so in the context of identifying program components that were perceived to have resulted in improved short-term outcomes—based on their own internal data and implementation experiences—and applying them to future endeavors.

Exhibit 8 highlights program elements and partnerships identified by program implementers as those they would sustain for future programming.

### Potentially Sustainable Partnerships, Relationships, and Networks

Arguably one of the most logical pieces of these programs to carry forward into future endeavors are partnerships. These relationships, whether new or preexisting, can transcend funding sources and be adaptable to modifications. The following are partnerships that many sites indicated were important to sustain for future programming efforts.

*Civic Partnerships.* All sites except St. Louis specifically indicated that their civic relationships, typically with the Mayor’s office, were important to program implementation and ultimate success. In Baltimore, for example, the MOED served as the main implementer and was the impetus for forming the full network of providers within the city; MOED was not involved in day-to-day activities, but instead provided cohesion and structure to what could have been a very unwieldy task for a smaller organization with less infrastructure and local influence. Indeed, the network that MOED established is strong enough that some provider partners felt that it could be sustained without direct funding, but

Exhibit 8. Highlights of Sustainable Program Elements and Partnerships<sup>25</sup>

Site	Sustainable Program Elements	Partnerships Critical for Sustainability
<b>Baltimore</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing the 1B4J network: With initial challenges resolved, the 1B4J network can be sustained with minimal funding, or at least funding that can come from various sources, as it primarily requires the buy-in and participation from partners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training provider partners</li> <li>Supportive service partners (adult education, legal services, child support)</li> <li>Community connectors for recruitment</li> </ul>
<b>Camden</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrative program elements with intensive case management</li> <li>Neighborhood-based youth center</li> <li>Using electronic platforms for adult education</li> <li>Youth mentoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementer with strong case management capacity</li> <li>Adult education support teachers and tutors</li> <li>Occupational skills training partners</li> <li>Community partners providing mentoring</li> </ul>
<b>Detroit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership between implementing organization and MDoC: This allows the smooth transition of services pre- and post-release, so participants already know who they can reach out to for assistance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MDoC (including parole officers)</li> <li>Michigan Rehabilitation Services</li> <li>City of Detroit</li> <li>CEO Corps</li> </ul>
<b>Long Beach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Civic relationships (e.g., partnership with the Mayor)</li> <li>Leadership retreat at onset of program activities</li> <li>Allowing participants to “shop” for services they want instead of pushing them through one particular program that may not be best suited for every person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mayor/Mayor’s Office</li> <li>Leadership Long Beach</li> </ul>
<b>North Charleston</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated program services (as opposed to referring out to other organizations)</li> <li>Neighborhood-based youth centers</li> <li>Cognitive behavioral change programming</li> <li>Substance abuse/resiliency counselor</li> <li>Approach for incentivizing small wins/completion of program milestones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community-based organization partners to provide additional wraparound services (e.g., hot lunches)</li> <li>Substance abuse/mental health/resiliency counseling partner</li> <li>Employer partners supporting career fairs</li> </ul>

could instead have MOED (or some other entity) act as a cohesive power to assemble the forum, which could be ideal for future endeavors.

<sup>25</sup> Houston and St. Louis are not included in this table, as each site indicated either that they did not plan to sustain many/any program elements, or the program model, and initial outcomes were weak; thus, staff were not able to indicate any sustainable elements.

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**I think the partnerships definitely continue. I think . . . all the partnerships make sense almost like on their own terms. Even without dollars present. Definitely kind of mutually enforcing relationship around like referrals and connection. We're always looking for more community partners, and we're always looking to connect more supportive service providers and other partners who can too provide training in a different way that could be better suited for someone who comes in our door. . . I think the key is just kind of having a forum to keep bringing people together and having that someone play that convening role.**

**- Occupational Training Provider Partner**

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In Long Beach, the relationship was specifically with the Mayor himself, and the Mayor provided his time to inspire and instill confidence in participants. The Mayor also publicly voiced his support for the program, providing an additional layer of legitimacy. In Detroit, the City of Detroit was key in working with the implementing entity to implement the youth summer jobs portion of the program, and it was also involved in terms of placing some returning citizens in their lead abatement/blighted property razing efforts. In Camden, Houston, and North Charleston, the relationship with a Mayor's office was more informal, but still provided programs with support from their local government and officials, which can be a powerful leveraging tool if needed.

Lessons Learned: Establishing and maintaining a relationship with civic entities can be a powerful tool for program implementation. Civic relationships can provide legitimacy, support, and resources for the program, including access to employers.

*Supportive Service Partnerships.* Much of what made these programs different from traditional WIOA programs in terms of programmatic offerings were the partnerships forged to provide a broader range of supportive services, as well as more integrated supportive services to participants; these partnerships helped programs move toward a more holistic model, including offering additional wraparound services that addressed more challenging barriers, and providing comprehensive services that bolster engagement tailored to program participants. The most valuable partnerships were those that could provide services not typically available with standard WIOA funding, such as food provision and cognitive behavioral programming, as well as partnerships providing enhanced assistance for supportive services. Partnerships such as those that allow sites to procure bus passes at discounted rates, or support leveraging matching contributions for the purchase of a used vehicle for participants enhanced the ability of programs to support and sustain youth in their transitions to full-time employment.

*Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).* The importance of partnering with community-based organizations cannot be overstated, based on the experiences of program implementers. Even if only providing a small portion of services/supports to participants, CBOs often have a grasp on hyper-local context, which can be critical in outreach and recruitment. Baltimore, for example, partnered with Center for Urban Families (CFUF), a local CBO with extensive history and experience within Baltimore. CFUF became indispensable as a community connector, recruiting youth and helping them find the best occupational skills training program and soft skills training to fit their needs and wants. North Charleston's hot lunch provider and Camden's food pantry were also CBOs, familiar with the areas in which their community centers were based. The provider in Detroit that hosted cognitive behavioral

change courses was a CBO and familiar with the specific challenges faced by Detroit citizens and returning citizens.

Lessons Learned: CBO partnerships ultimately contribute to the capacity to have a more holistic program model that can meet more barriers faced by disconnected youth and a sustainable program or element. Civic partnerships, supportive service providers, and CBOs could all be considered determining factors in many sites' sustainability prospects. Additionally, it is important to note that sites had a strong combination of new partnerships, previously existing partnerships, and/or previously existing partnerships that were now offering a new or modified service. Potential for sustainability seemed to have more to do with implementer capacity than the number or type of partnerships they engaged in.

*Employer partnerships and job pipelines.* Many sites that found success in developing strong employer partnerships and in other methods of creating job pipelines for participants had preexisting relationships with local employers, sometimes in the form of an employer database, or via industry relationships through occupational providers. Sites that had to seek out and establish new partnerships with employers were often able to build an informal network, and ultimately place more than one youth participant, based on longer term relationship develop efforts that focused on understanding employer needs and how disconnected youth candidates could be a well-prepared workforce. The timing for developing new employer partnerships was a factor in having robust enough relationships in place to translate into actual jobs, as was establishing the potential of disconnected youth as reliable and qualified employees. Some sites used alternative job-seeking processes, including career fairs and field interviews, to support both youth employment and employer engagement.

Lessons Learned: Positive messaging regarding participants is crucial to marketing the program, building strong employer partnerships, and developing niche opportunities for youth to obtain employment. Sites that seemed to be more successful at placing participants in jobs had invested significant time (6 months up to 1 year in advance) in developing employer relationships and mutually beneficial agreements in targeted industry sectors. Employers seemed willing to engage in hiring disconnected youth, including those with background issues, when skills could be demonstrated and employers felt youth were both skilled and understood the workplace environment.

### Programmatic Challenges Impacting Sustainability

Contextual, “big-picture” factors play a critical role in whether a program can find life with a new source of funding in the future. Below are the three biggest contextual challenges to arise that had serious impact on the possibility of sustainability, as described by program implementers:

1. Suboptimal partners/non-functional partnerships. The St. Louis site faced this barrier. The two implementing factions—one in St. Louis City, one in St. Louis County—did not collaborate or cooperate as intended, and instead ended up implementing two different program models. The challenges overall in St. Louis, especially with the City implementers, were so great that the City entity was the only group out of all sites that stated that they would not attempt to sustain any parts of their programming. The primary challenge noted was the effort required to sustain the neighborhood centers. Additionally, the community outreach liaisons that they were partnered with were only marginally successful at recruiting disconnected youth; instead of changing tactics for recruitment, this site changed the target population to include older participants.

Lessons Learned: Other sites experienced severance with important partners, such as North Charleston losing their partnership with the police department, but were extremely judicious in selecting primary implementation partners. For example, Camden is another site that had two separate factions co-leading grant implementation, but both were entities that had worked together extensively and collaboratively in the past, and had a stronger alignment of goals.

A flawed model. One program site likely faced a great deal of their challenges due to a flawed program model and the changing economic conditions. As described previously, Houston's model was predicated on the idea of getting participants into immediate PWEs that would ideally then become OJT experiences, and then lead to full-time employment, all while the participants received soft skills training and adult continuing education in between working hours. Challenges the site faced with establishing enough partnerships and youth enrollment have been described previously.

Lessons Learned: While all the sites struggled with program components that were better on paper than when operationalized, most were able to make the necessary adjustments to modify their approaches relatively soon in the implementation process. For example, Camden identified the mismatch between its education provider and youth, and within a short period of time moved to develop a replacement program component. Early identification of program model flaws, combined with a willingness to move from program model features that do not work as intended to the development of modifications that directly address flaws is important for maximizing the grant opportunity.

2. Inappropriate staffing. Both St. Louis and Houston faced challenges due to staff. St. Louis was challenged with having staff who were inexperienced in, and unaccustomed to, working with disconnected youth. They were accustomed to dealing with dislocated worker clients that were older, had more experience, more skills, and were familiar with workplace culture (i.e., less challenging to address barriers for and to place into retraining programs and/or employment). Houston staff, while certainly passionate about their jobs, lacked strong leadership and overall capacity for program implementation. It is unsurprising that they experienced a great deal of staff turnover during the short grant period.

Lessons Learned: As discussed previously, staffing is critical to successful program implementation, and thus to program sustainability. Staff must have high capacity, passion, patience, and dedication. Anything less will not yield successful outcomes for the youth participants.

## Appendix A. Summary Profiles of Demonstration Program Sites

# Summary Program Profile: Baltimore, MD

## One Baltimore for Jobs (1B4J)

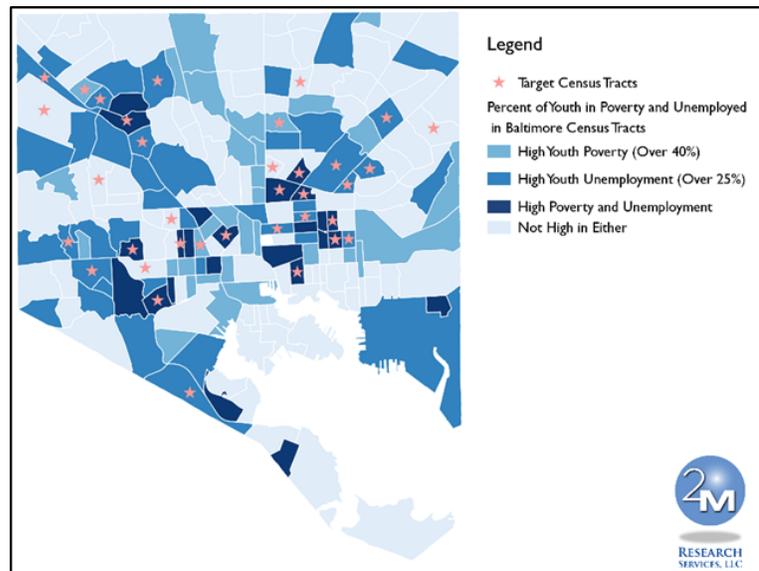
### Program Overview

One Baltimore for Jobs (1B4J) is designed to target unemployed and underemployed individuals in predominantly African American, low-income neighborhoods in Baltimore City, with an emphasis on areas impacted by the April 2015 civil unrest after the death of Freddie Gray while in the custody of Baltimore City police officers.

The demonstration grant is being used to pilot the restructuring and development of a collaborative city-wide network of occupational training providers, community partners, local government, and industry employers/representatives.

Partnerships in the 1B4J network include 12 occupational training providers in targeted industries with links to area employers; network partners, established to provide core supportive and barrier reduction services for adult education, legal aid, mental health services, and child support adjustments (including right-sizing and driver's license reinstatement); and 4 neighborhood-based Community Connectors who provide outreach and recruitment services. Industry sectors selected for the focus of the occupational training by program implementers have the most growth potential within Baltimore over the next 2–5 years: they include healthcare, manufacturing, transportation & warehousing, construction, IT, and automotive.

**Figure 1. Location of census tracts with high levels of disconnected youth in relation to the prevalence of youth living in poverty and unemployed, Baltimore**

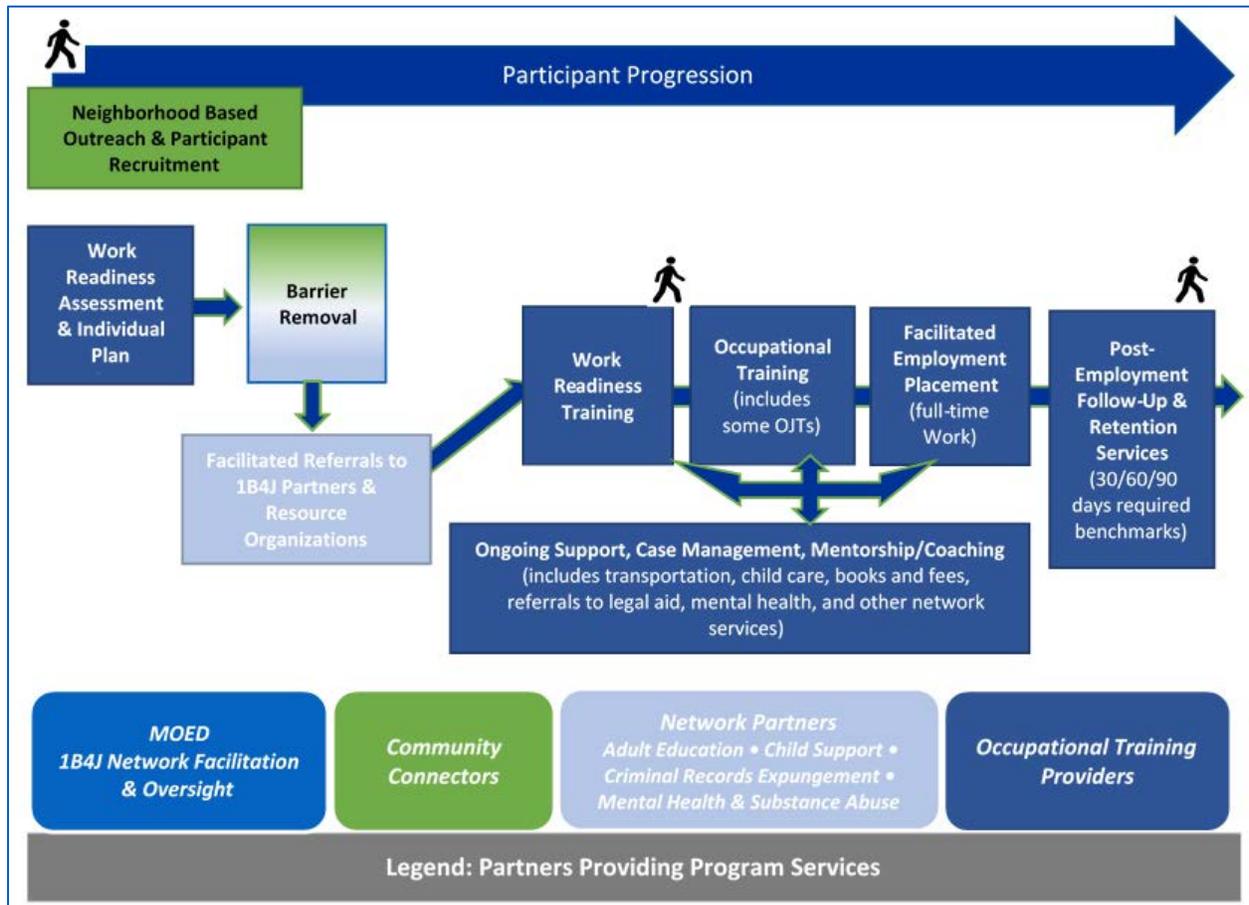


Data from the 5-year 2011-2015 ACS estimates. All ACS data and tract shapefile obtained from the Minnesota Population Center (2016).

Exhibit 1. 1B4J Program Summary

Targeted Youth/Young Adults	Service Goal	Target Wage	Targeted Industries	Key Implementing Partners																
16 to 29-year-olds, especially African American males, with barriers including criminal background	700	\$11/hr.	Healthcare, manufacturing, transportation & warehousing, construction, IT, automotive	<p><b>Lead Partner:</b> Baltimore Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED)</p> <p><b>Occupational Training Providers:</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Vehicles for Change</td> <td>New Directions</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Civic Works</td> <td>Bon Secours</td> </tr> <tr> <td>New Pathways</td> <td>Biotechnical Institute of Maryland</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Catholic Charities</td> <td>Jane Addams Resource Corporation</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Caroline Center</td> <td>Job Opportunities Task Force</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Humanim</td> <td>Maryland New Directions</td> </tr> </table> <p><b>Education/Supportive Services:</b> Department of Human Services (Child Support) Maryland Legal Service Center/Maryland Legal Aid Baltimore City Community College Baltimore Behavioral Health Systems</p> <p><b>Community/Neighborhood Partners:</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>BUILD Maryland</td> <td>Center for Urban Families</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ignoma Foundation</td> <td>Youth-Empowered Society</td> </tr> </table>	Vehicles for Change	New Directions	Civic Works	Bon Secours	New Pathways	Biotechnical Institute of Maryland	Catholic Charities	Jane Addams Resource Corporation	Caroline Center	Job Opportunities Task Force	Humanim	Maryland New Directions	BUILD Maryland	Center for Urban Families	Ignoma Foundation	Youth-Empowered Society
Vehicles for Change	New Directions																			
Civic Works	Bon Secours																			
New Pathways	Biotechnical Institute of Maryland																			
Catholic Charities	Jane Addams Resource Corporation																			
Caroline Center	Job Opportunities Task Force																			
Humanim	Maryland New Directions																			
BUILD Maryland	Center for Urban Families																			
Ignoma Foundation	Youth-Empowered Society																			

## 1B4J Participant Program Service Pathway and Key Partnerships



### Lessons Learned

- Relieving the burden of seeking legal services. The legal aid partner traveled to meet participants at the occupational provider for one-on one in-depth consultations on a broad range of issues, including (but not limited to) expungement; legal services were more robust and this approach also eliminated additional transportation costs for participants.
- Recruitment of disconnected youth. The arrangement of utilizing Community Connectors from local neighborhoods to engage with youth and their communities provided a neighborhood access point for the program and a warm handoff to an occupational provider for program enrollment.
- Providing longer term solutions to transportation. Some providers used the grant to leverage resources that would provide participants with matched savings for the purpose of purchasing cars to travel to work.
- Employer engagement in hiring disconnected youth. Providers worked to build relationships with employers (especially in trades and construction) up to 1 year in advance of participant placement to ascertain employer needs and build conduits to jobs for disconnected youth.

## Summary Program Profile: Camden, NJ

### Camden Corps Plus (CCP)

#### Program Overview

CCP targets Camden City residents 16 to 24 years of age who are disconnected from education systems and the workforce, and who are facing barriers to completing work preparation or educational milestones. The program, as it is currently being implemented, calls for participants to participate in a year-long, full-time program. The first 6 months are designated for completing the adult education and soft skills portion, followed by 3 months of work sampling, and 3 months of internship. Participants are provided stipends while participating in the program.

Partnerships in CCP include the two lead co-implementers—Rutgers University - Camden is responsible for the adult basic education and occupational skills training elements, while Center for Family Services (CFS), a well-established local innovative nonprofit organization dedicated to uplifting individuals and families through an innovative continuum of care, is responsible

for providing supportive and wraparound services. CCP also includes partnerships with Camden Community College as a support for educational services and occupational training, as well as additional occupational training providers in six targeted industry areas: web design, Photoshop, and basic HTML coding; CISCO networking training; culinary arts/food service; healthcare (CAN); advanced manufacturing; and carpentry and construction. These are targeted industries and employment sectors projected for growth in the next 2–5 years in the Camden/Greater Philadelphia region.

**Figure 1. Location of census tracts with high levels of disconnected youth in relation to the prevalence of youth living in poverty and unemployed, Camden**

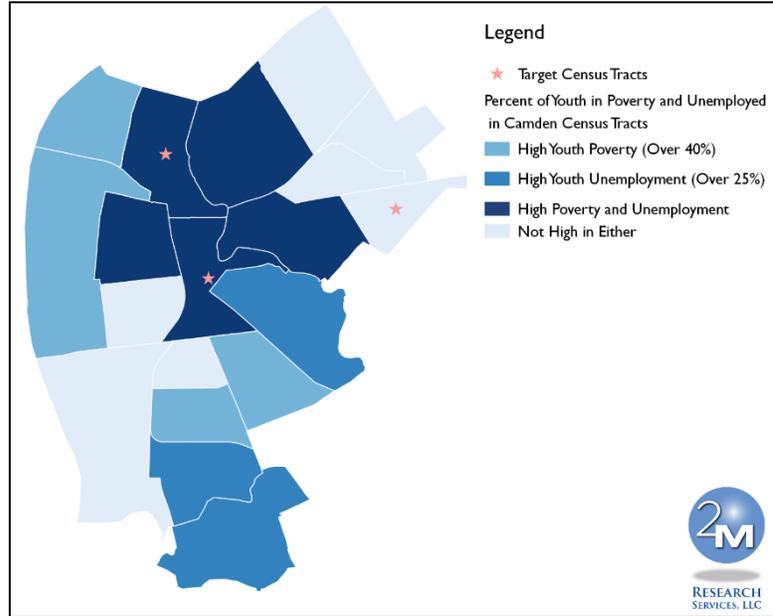
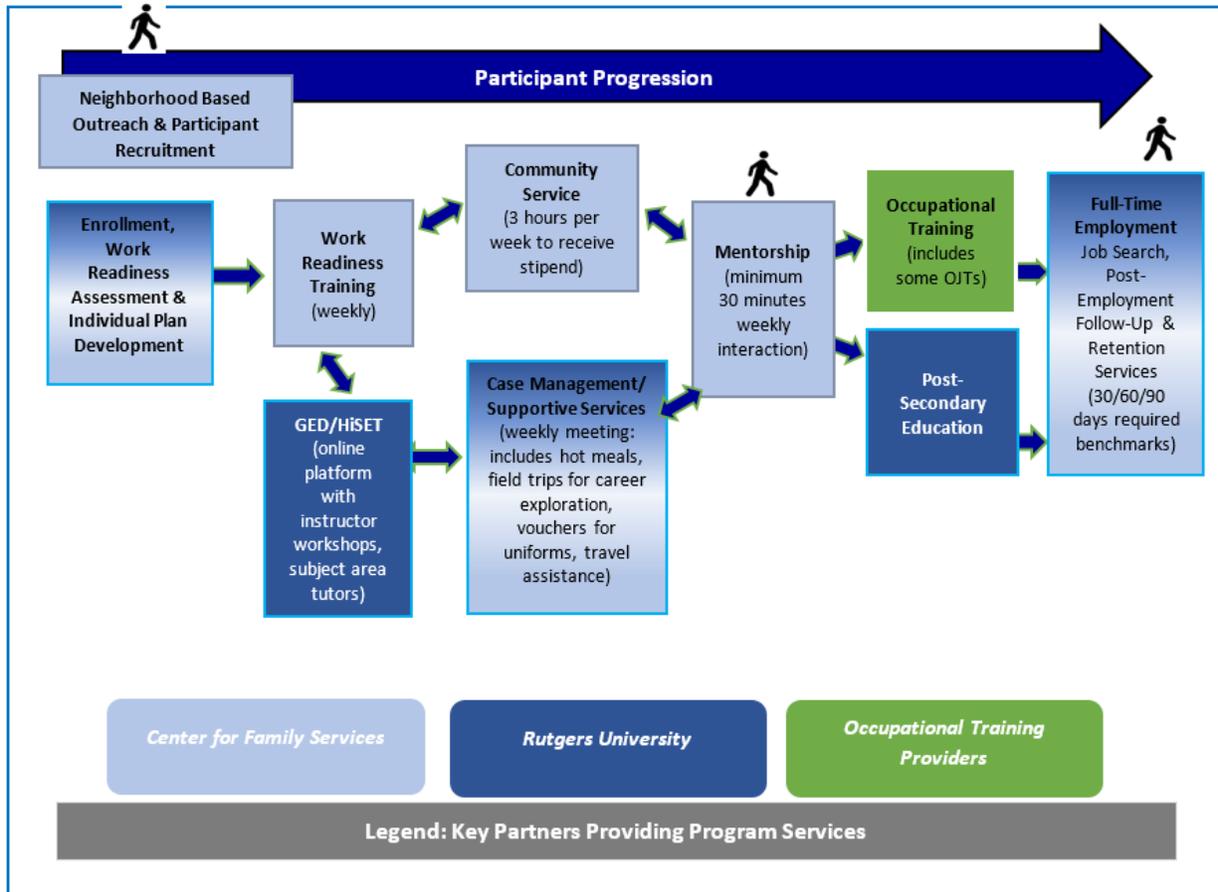


Exhibit 1. CCP Program Summary

Targeted Youth/ Young Adults	Service Goal	Target Wage	Targeted Industries	Key Implementing Partners
Minority youth 16–29	113	\$9/hr.	Healthcare IT, advanced manufacturing, carpentry and construction, accommodation & food service	<p>Lead Partners: Rutgers University Center for Family Services</p> <p>Occupational Training Providers: Hope Works Dream Center Cathedral Kitchen Camden Community College Parkside Business and Community in Partnership [PBCIP]</p> <p>Community-based Partners: Camden UP</p>

## CCP Participant Program Service Pathway and Key Partnerships



### Lessons Learned

- Program model as originally conceived did not work for the population. Program model was modified from a highly prescriptive, hyper-intensive, academic focus to a more flexible, condensed, and digestible program to better meet the needs of youth and keep them engaged longer term (see above for the revised program model).
- Increased flexibility needed to support GED/Adult educational services. Program shifted from placing participants in classes with an adult audience to use of digital platform for adult education provision combined with supplemental instruction and tutoring to make GED attainment more flexible and attainable for participants (platform accessible on mobile devices and computers).
- Recognizing and meeting need for youth mentorship. Integration of community-based violence's resolution program members as trainers and mentors for program participants. Mentoring occurs weekly; 92 percent of those with a mentor regularly attend and are progressing towards the next phase of the program.

## Summary Program Profile: Detroit, MI

Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation (DESC) One Stop

### Program Overview

DESC One Stop is a unique program in which career coaches and occupational training providers work with returning citizens who enroll in the program within 30–90 days of release to provide pre-employability services and occupational training to inmates before their release, and then continue training, soft skills, and additional workforce development with the returning citizens after their release, including targeted assistance with a career counselor to find full-time employment, with the goal of creating a smooth transition back into the community. Both low-level offenders and multilevel offenders are eligible for

the program. The target population is 18- to 30-year-old, minority, Detroit men (and some women) who are returning citizens in any of Michigan’s correctional facilities. The goal of this demonstration grant is to fundamentally change how workforce services are offered to soon-to-be returning citizens by providing services before inmates are released, allowing them to build skills and relationships while still in a correctional facility. They will then be prepared to more quickly enter the workforce and have an established relationship with someone on the outside to whom they know they can turn for help and resources.

Partnerships for implementation include DESC, which operates the one-stops; SERV, which provides career coaching and services to returning citizens; and the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDoC). Occupational training partners are arranged through SERV and training is available in targeted industry areas: manufacturing, IT, specialty trades, logistics, culinary/food service, and carpentry and construction.

**Figure 1. Location of census tracts with high levels of disconnected youth in relation to the prevalence of youth living in poverty and unemployed, Detroit**

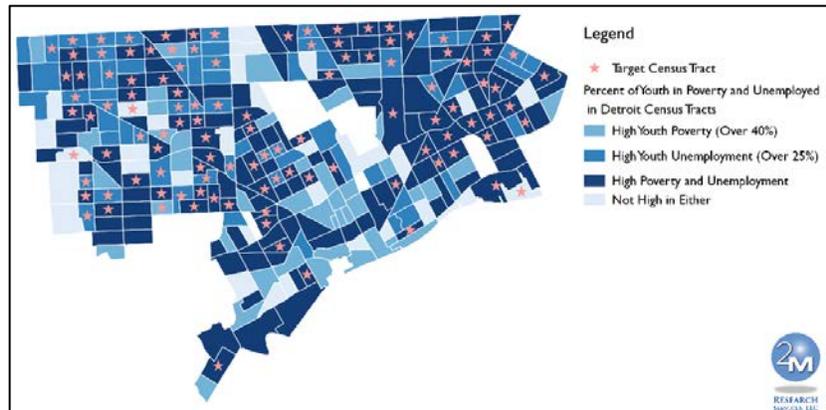
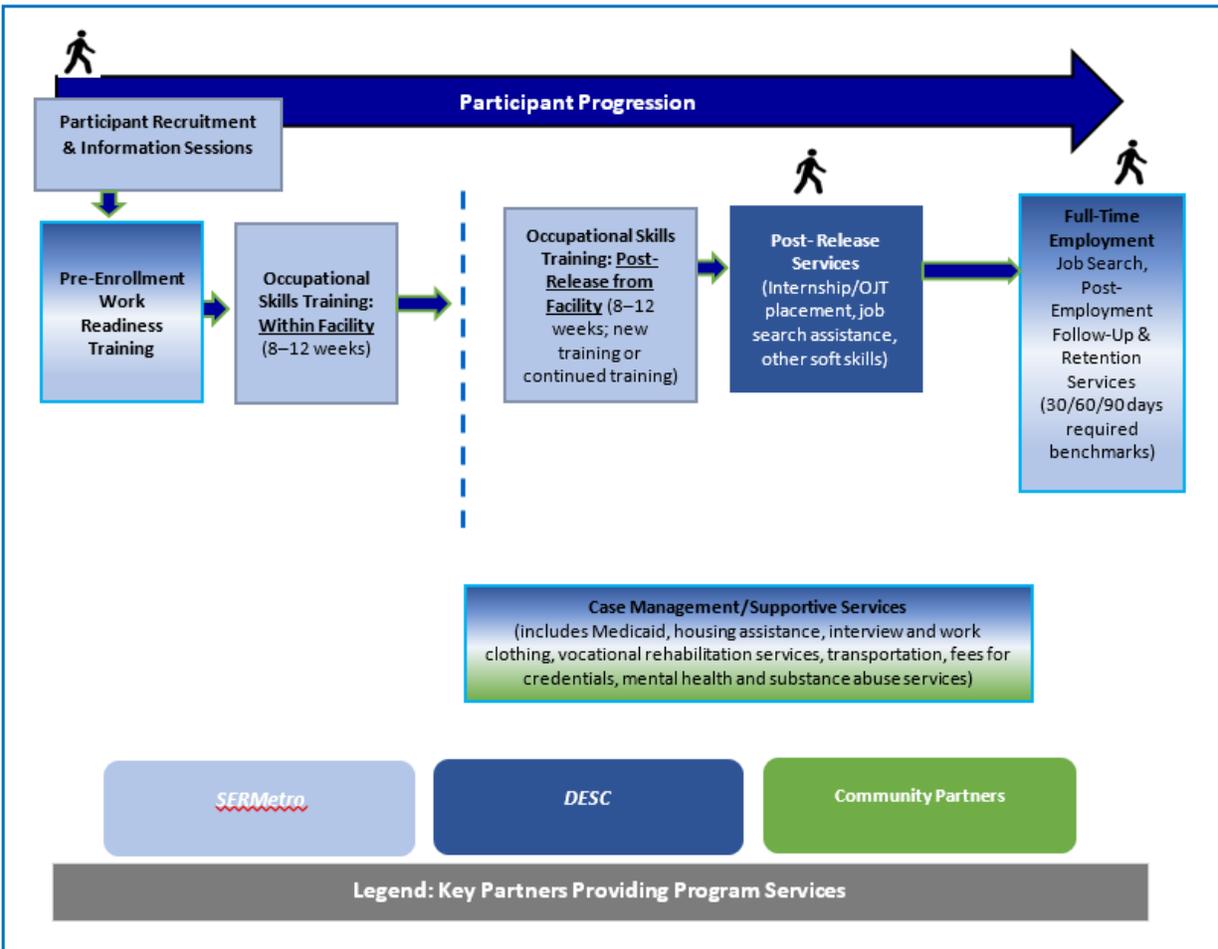


Exhibit 1. DESC One-Stop Program Summary

Targeted Youth/ Young Adults	Service Goal	Target Wage	Targeted Industries	Key Implementing Partners
<b>18- to 30-year-old, minority, Detroit men who are newly released former prisoners (returning citizens)</b>	390	\$9/hr.	Manufacturing, IT, specialty trades, logistics, culinary/food service, carpentry and construction	Lead Partners and Occupational Providers: Service Employment Redevelopment Metro (SER Metro). DESC Michigan Department of Corrections (MDoC)
				Community-Based Partners: Luck, Inc.

## DESC One-Stop Participant Program Service Pathway and Key Partnerships



### Lessons Learned

- General communication breakdowns between program staff and MDOC corrections officials concerning program vision and operational procedures. Identification of a local subject matter expert consultant with extensive knowledge regarding MDOC operations helped improve communications, as well as the processes needed to work with more institutions and obtain necessary space within the facilities.
- Delays in moving eligible prisoners to facilities where the services were offered. Program implementers and correctional officials worked together to modify transfer requirements for eligible participants to streamline transfer processes to move interested prisoners to the two facilities where services were housed.
- Alternative strategies developed to support engaging participants once they are released from prison. Program staff have reconfigured partnerships with the MDOC correctional system to partner with parole officers, who have now been trained to communicate more directly and effectively about the program, and provide support in helping returning citizens stay engaged with program services post-release.

# Summary Program Profile: Houston, TX

## Young Aspiring Professionals (YAP)

### Program Overview

YAP is a cohort-based model that combines adult basic education and occupational skills training with an initial paid work experience to help disconnected youth attain high school equivalency and gain real-world skills before being placed in full-time employment. The program targets minority youth, especially males, ages 16–24. After orientation, participants are routed to either educational services, where they work towards attaining proficiency in reading and math skills, or to a paid work experience (PWE), if an employer partnership has been established. Occupational training is provided during times when the youth is not receiving adult education, or while they are at their assigned jobsite for the PWE. OSHA 10 training is a part of the PWE. Disconnected youth get 2 days of OSHA 10 training and then immediately take the certification module during the first week on the job.

Youth work up to 20 hours per week; their remaining time is divided between job-readiness training, including soft-skills development, and adult education. After the completion of these two phases of the program, youth transition to on-the-job training (OJT) or a registered apprenticeship with an employer who provides additional occupational training and full-time employment.

Partnerships in YAP include Workforce Solutions, which has oversight responsibilities for the grant and coordinates the partnerships for implementation, and also provided support for OJT and business development elements; Dynamic Education Systems, Inc. (DESI), which implements core programmatic activities such as soft skills and mentoring; and Harris County Department of Education, which is the adult education services provider. The program targets the following industries: construction, manufacturing, logistics, and supportive services for civic and nonprofit entities.

**Figure 1. Location of census tracts with high levels of disconnected youth in relation to the prevalence of youth living in poverty and unemployed, Houston**

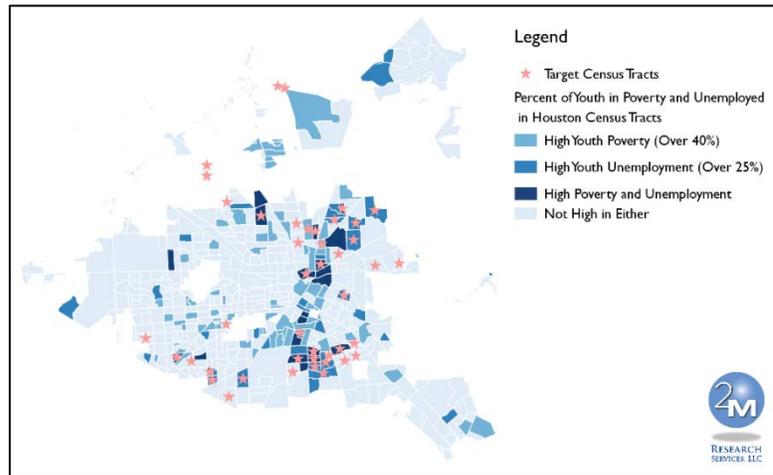
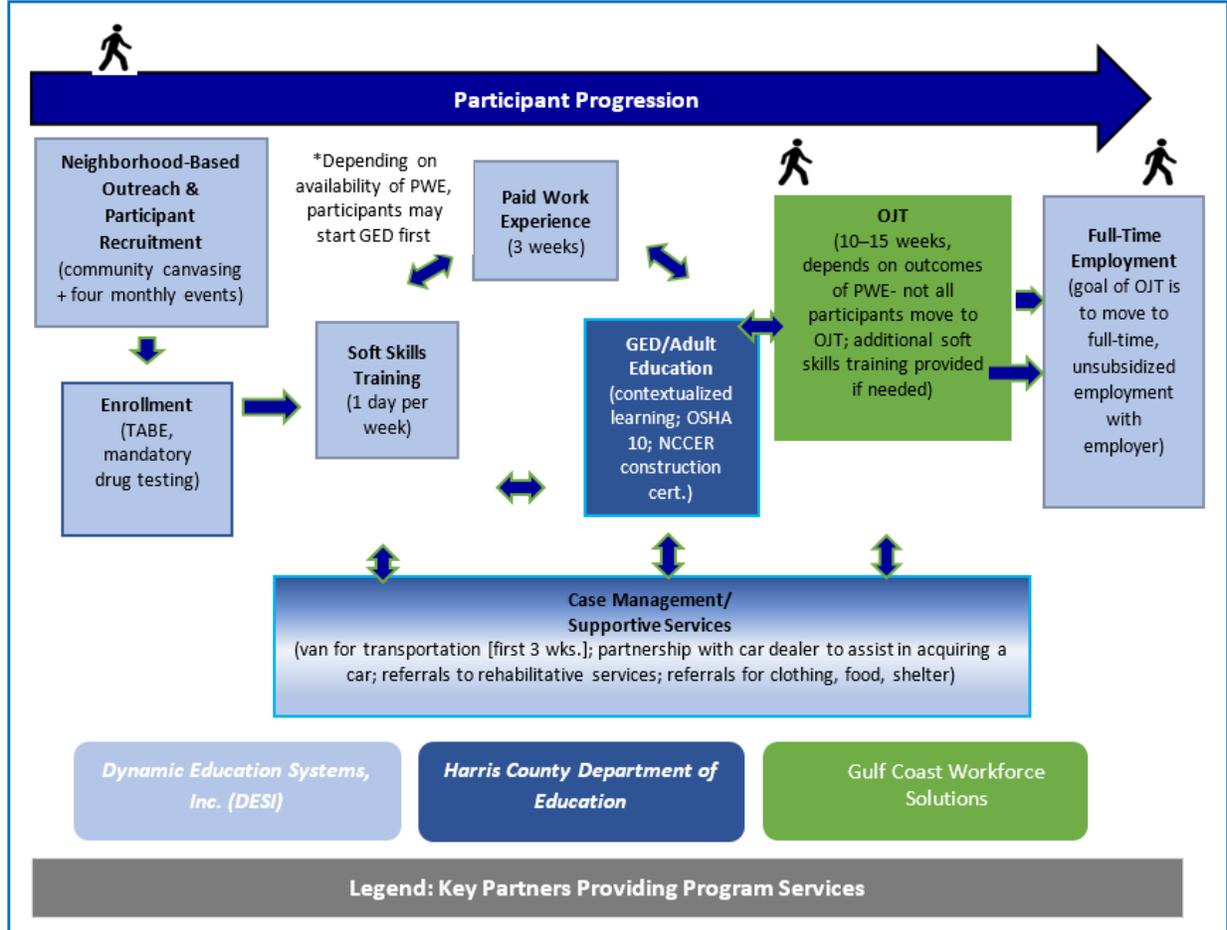


Exhibit 1. YAP Program Summary

Targeted Youth/ Young Adults	Service Goal	Target Wage	Targeted Industries	Key Implementing Partners
Minority youth 16–29, primarily males	100	\$17.50/hr.	Construction, manufacturing, logistics, civic, nonprofit	Oversight Partner: Gulf Coast Workforce Solutions
				Lead Program Partner Dynamic Education Systems, Inc. (DESI)
				Education Partner: Harris County Department of Education

## YAP Participant Program Service Pathway and Key Partnerships



### Lessons Learned

- PWE didn't result in OJT or employment for youth. The program experienced significant difficulty in finding high-quality employer partners to provide PWEs, especially as quickly as their model proposed; services were reordered to provide engagement in some program activity while implementers developed new requirements for employer partners and attempted to build employer relationships.
- Not enough time developing employer partnerships prior to attempts at placing youth. Program implementers struggled in getting business development staff for identifying and building partnerships with employers; thus, not enough relationships were established in advance of youth being ready for that component of the program. If youth weren't engaged in GED classes, youth simply left the program.

# Summary Program Profile: Long Beach, CA

## Long Beach Scholars Program

### Program Overview

The Long Beach Scholars program targets minority residents 16 to 29 years of age who are disconnected from education systems and the workforce, and who are facing barriers to completing work preparation or educational milestones. The grant is being used to test a human-centered design approach to engage and direct disconnected youth toward developing a 1- to 2-year plan for pursuing initial employment and training experiences, and then higher paying employment.

The program features a very limited formal structure; once program enrollment activities are completed, disconnected youth can choose from a menu of options, including obtaining a GED, occupational training, and job sampling. The Long Beach

model is designed so that disconnected youth develop a self-directed plan that will transition them to the longer-term employment opportunity of their choice, by navigating a newly configured system of resources, work preparedness training, soft skills training, and internships. The program does include a paid work experience (PWE) of 30 hours per week for 120 hours in duration.

Key implementing partners for the program include Pacific Gateway and two additional primary partners: Leadership Long Beach, which provides a seminal leadership, resiliency, and mentoring training; and Memorial Hospital, which is the lead provider of patient care training. Pacific Gateway leads the recruitment efforts of disconnected youth; provides the workforce development training, case management, and barrier reduction services; and both provides and coordinates access to additional wraparound services such as adult education, child care, or transportation to assist disconnected youth while they are enrolled in the program. Pacific Gateway also coordinates the employment opportunities for disconnected youth. The program is also aided by the Mayor’s office, which supports a limited series of large-scale mentorship opportunities for disconnected youth. Targeted industry sectors include healthcare, goods movement, and IT.

**Figure 1. Location of Census Tracts with High Levels of Disconnected Youth in relation to the Prevalence of Youth Living in Poverty and Unemployed, Long Beach**

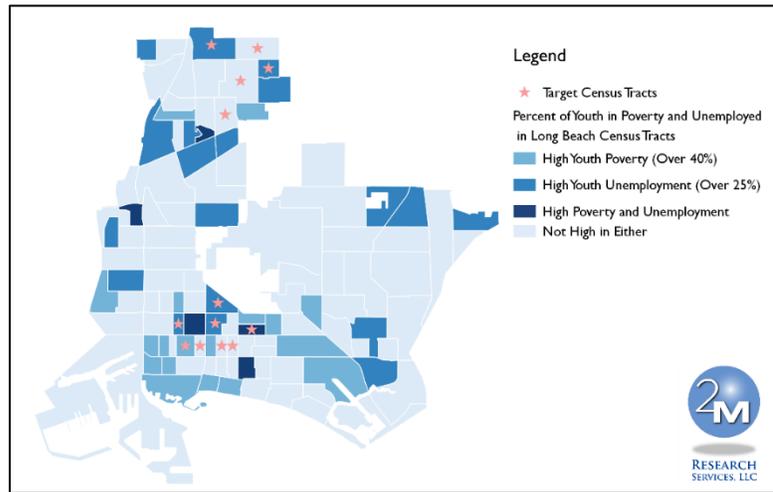
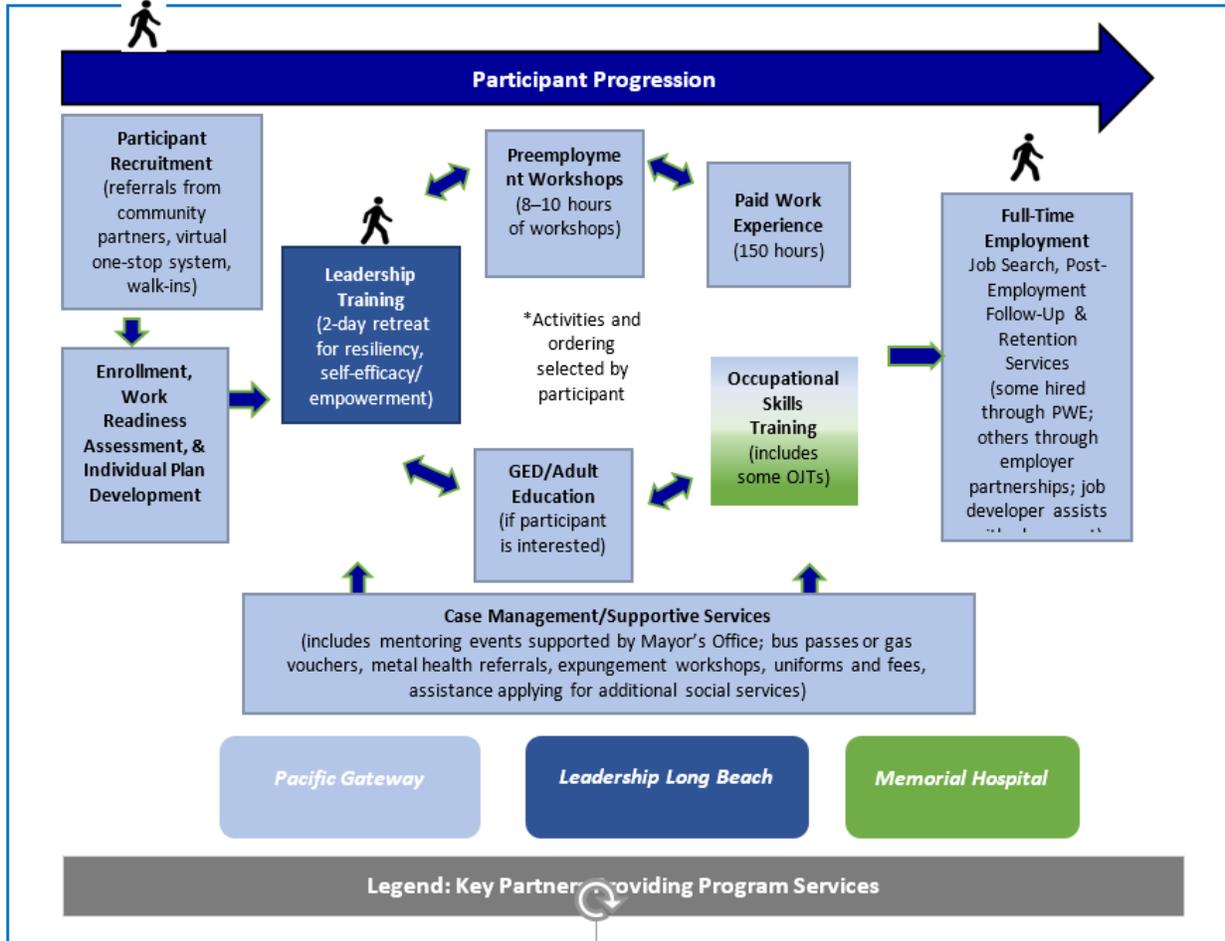


Exhibit 1. Long Beach Scholars Program Summary

Targeted Youth/ Young Adults	Service Goal	Target Wage	Targeted Industries	Key Implementing Partners
Minority youth 16-29 targeted from three lowest income zip codes	350	\$13.10/hr.	Healthcare, goods movement, IT	Lead Partner: Pacific Gateway Occupational Training Provider: Memorial Hospital Community-Based Partners: The Office of the Mayor, Leadership Long Beach

## Long Beach Scholars Program Participant Program Service Pathway and Key Partnerships



### Lessons Learned

- Challenges in scheduling leadership training and getting enrolled youth to attend the session. The model was modified to begin preemployment workshops and some PWEs to keep youth engaged until the participant had the opportunity to attend the leadership retreat.
- Challenges transitioning youth to occupational training. Not all the training providers were established and approved for the program in advance, causing delays in advancing youth through training.
- Increasing opportunities engage youth in specific training. The program model was modified to establish a required number of soft-skill and preemployment sessions, with the goal of maintaining consistency for those youth receiving services once enrolled.

## Summary Program Profile: North Charleston, SC

### Education 2 Employment(E2E)

#### Program Overview

Education 2 Employment (E2E) targets minority youth and young adults 16–29 years of age who are disconnected from education systems and the workforce, and face barriers to completing work preparation or educational milestones. The program provides services in two community-based youth centers, developed specifically for the grant. Each community-based youth center houses a lead career coach, another career coach, and adult education providers. A substance abuse counselor and career coach are on staff to provide coaching and mental health substance abuse counseling. A resiliency curriculum is utilized to help disconnected youth make and sustain the transition to adopting positive attitudinal behavior, self-respect, and personal empowerment.

Participants are provided stipends as markers for success in meeting key programmatic milestones that focus on program completion and employment.

Key partnerships for implementation include the lead implementer, Eckerd Kids, a subsidiary of Palmetto Youth Connections (PYC), a community partnership that provides case management, counseling, training, career pathway development and employment services for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth participants; an experienced substance abuse counselor and a career coach hired by the program; and SC Works, which supports adult education services.

Occupational training is provided by a loose network of employers and local colleges. The grant targets careers in healthcare, manufacturing, transportation and logistics, IT, hospitality, and specialty trades, sectors expecting significant growth in the Charleston regional economy.

**Figure 2. Location of census tracts with high levels of disconnected youth in relation to the prevalence of youth living in poverty and unemployed, North Charleston**

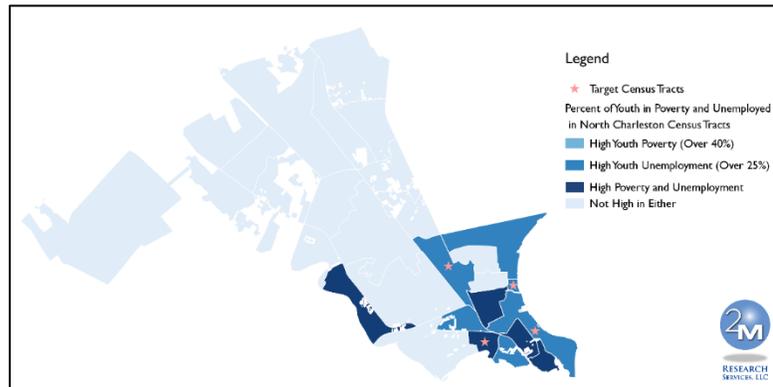
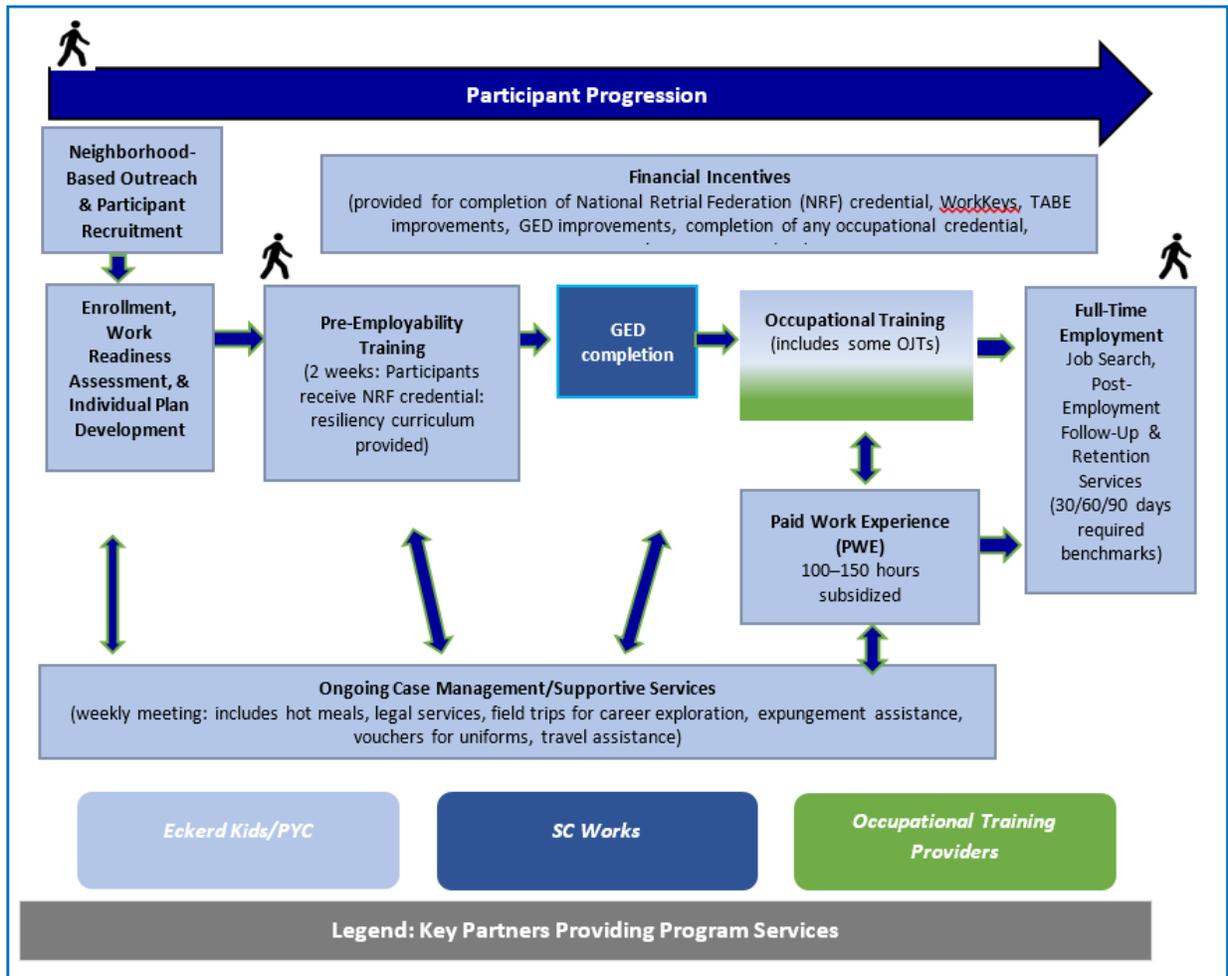


Exhibit 1. E2E Program Summary

Targeted Youth/ Young Adults	Service Goal	Target Wage	Targeted Industries	Key Implementing Partners
Minority youth 16-29	250	\$10/hr.	Healthcare, manufacturing, transportation & logistics, IT, hospitality, specialty trades	Lead Partners: Eckerd Kids/ Palmetto Youth Connections SC Works Substance abuse/coaching counselor Occupational Training Providers: Eckerd Kids/ Palmetto Youth Connections

## E2E Participant Program Service Pathway and Key Partnerships



### Lessons Learned

- Need to keep youth engaged in program over longer completion term. Program offers participants financial incentives for achieving certain goals and small wins, such as TABE score increases, WorkKeys score improvements, credential achievement, and employment retention.
- Partnerships with local employers to hire youth completing training. The program uses a series of job fairs, held shortly after a disconnected youth completes occupational training, with employers the program has built a relationship with.
- Need for a youth-focused approach for recruitment and service provision. The program intentionally developed two youth community centers for recruitment and service provision in two of the most poverty-stricken neighborhoods. The centers were developed to reflect a youth perspective that celebrates successes and identifies the center as a safe, non-judgmental place.
- Addressing youth motivation and self-empowerment for success. Developed a resiliency curriculum for participants, coupled with intensive group and individual counseling services to support youth goal setting and personal empowerment.

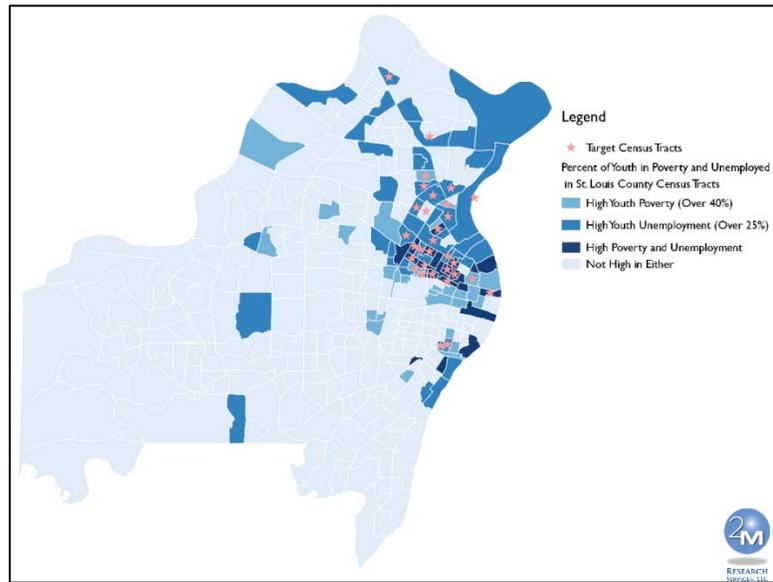
## Summary Program Profile: St. Louis, MO

### Career Pathways Bridge(CPB)

#### Program Overview

St. Louis’s CPB program is run jointly between St. Louis City and St. Louis County to offer career readiness and training assistance. CPB is primarily focused on young African American men, including those without high school diplomas, long-term unemployed or underemployed, and ex-offenders. CPB can be accessed in five different locations across the city and county (two in the city, three in the county). Program implementers experimented with developing these local satellite centers where youth could access program services. This program functions similarly to many WIA/WIOA programs: 26 youth come in to any of the locations to learn about the program and get enrolled. Based on participants’ interests and needs, they can be placed into a variety of programs, such as GED/high school equivalency; CNA or other healthcare credentials; CDL; optician training; building maintenance and HVAC; and more. Subsidized work experiences, on-the-job training (OJT), and internships are also made available to all participants. The grant allows for the incorporation of mental health and legal services within the scope of wraparound services. Due to challenges in recruiting disconnected youth, the program has expanded its target population to include African American men ages 29–40.

**Figure 1. Location of census tracts with high levels of disconnected youth in relation to the prevalence of youth living in poverty and unemployed, St. Louis County**



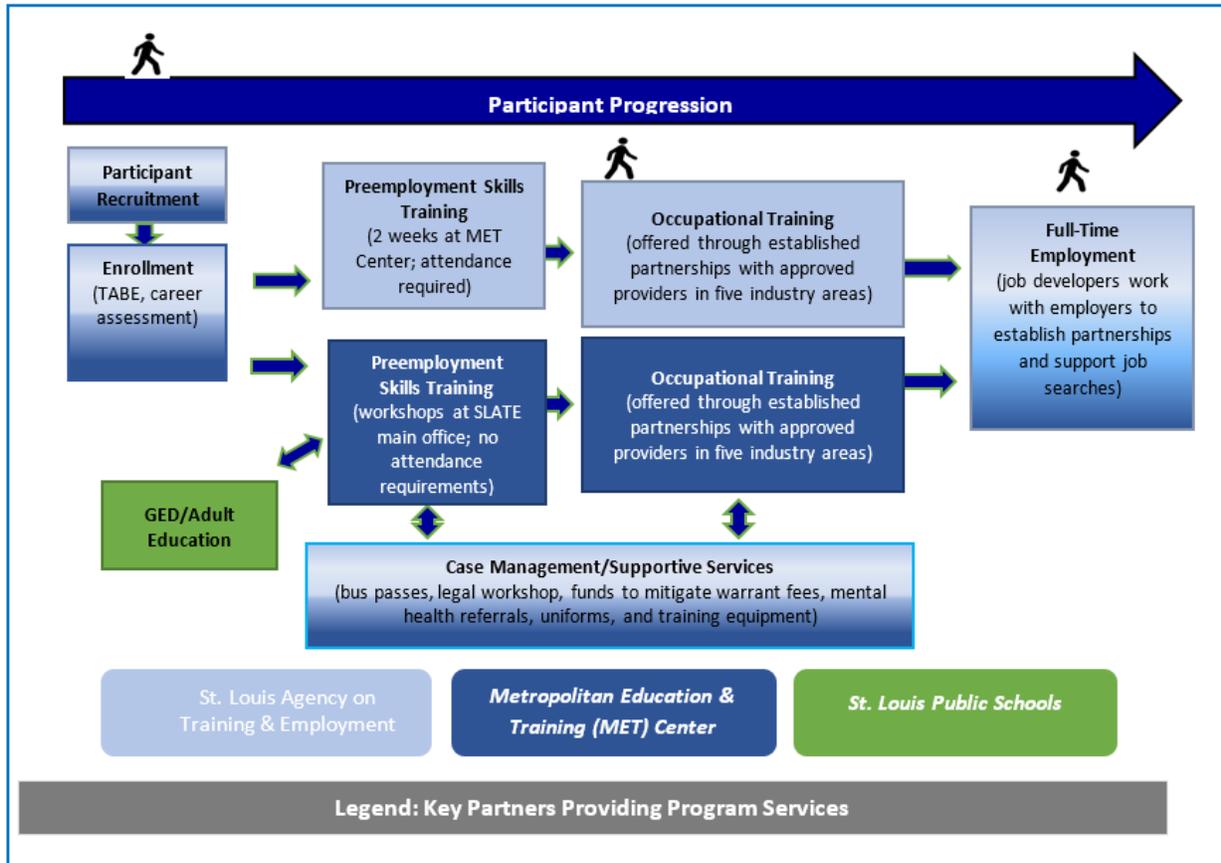
The key partners are the St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE) Center and the Metropolitan Education and Training (MET) Center, who are lead implementers within St. Louis City and St. Louis County. Additional key partners included St. Louis Public Schools, which provides an adult basic education instructor.

Exhibit 1. CBP Program Summary

Targeted Youth/ Young Adults	Service Goal	Target Wage	Targeted Industries	Key Implementing Partners
Minority youth 16–40, primarily males	1,200	\$9/hr.	Manufacturing, transportation, construction, retail/hospitality, technical & scientific services	Lead Partners: St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE) Center Metropolitan Education and Training (MET) Center  Education Partner: St. Louis Public Schools

<sup>26</sup> Workforce Investment Act (WIA) or Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA)

## CPB Participant Program Service Pathway and Key Partnerships



### Lessons Learned

- Importance of having staff with experience and willingness to work with disconnected youth. The St. Louis City component of the program had trouble in recruiting and working with disconnected youth due to staff self-admitted lack of experience providing services to a younger and more needy audience.