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Literature Review

Evaluation Design and Implementation for Building Essential Skills through Training (BEST): Basic and Occupational Skill Development Initiative for Older Youth

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Introduction

The dynamic policy environment of the 1990s, which generated significant reform of the nation's welfare system, focused increased attention on the link between workforce development and poverty reduction. In this context, many employment initiatives focused exclusively on adult workers, while others targeted school-age youth. However, comparatively few initiatives focused predominantly on older youth (Center for Law and Social Policy, 2003). In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, unemployment of older youth stood among the highest in the nation in 2001. As such, it became critically important to address the needs of this population as part of a comprehensive workforce development strategy. The BEST Initiative for Older Youth is noteworthy in that it is specifically tailored to older youth (ages 18-24) who face barriers to employment and self-sufficiency that straddle the worlds of both adults and youth (Lerman, 1996). Specifically, these may include significant educational deficits, limited job experience, sporadic labor force attachment, and potentially child care and family support responsibilities. Programs that target this population must provide flexible services that effectively identify and respond to these diverse needs.

Program Background

In 2001 state education and job training agencies in the state of Massachusetts, including the Commonwealth Corporation, initiated a statewide effort, Building Essential Skills through Training (BEST), to support regional projects that sought to equip front-line workers with skills to facilitate career mobility while meeting labor demand in key industries and sectors. The BEST Initiative for Older Youth, funded in 2003, seeks to build on the initial model by promoting regional workforce development programs for older youth. More specifically, the BEST Initiative for Older Youth is designed to fulfill the following purposes:

- Support integration of basic education services, employability skills development, occupational training, and youth (and adult) workforce development systems;
- Address the needs of older youth in the areas of academic skills attainment, acquisition of a high school diploma or GED, and increased employability skills development leading to specific employment opportunities;
- Conduct creative demonstration programs;
- Address the workforce development needs of Massachusetts employers, industries, and sectors; and
- Coordinate program funding with other youth and workforce development efforts.

A Request for Proposals was issued in November of 2002; of the thirteen proposals that were submitted in response, seven projects were funded in February 2003. These programs target a variety of industries sectors, including health care, culinary arts, banking and trades, and are located in diverse community contexts. Most projects aim to serve between 40 and 60 youths, and have initiated program implementation and training.

In October 2003, Abt Associates Inc. was retained by the Commonwealth Corporation to conduct an evaluation of the BEST Initiative for Older Youth. The evaluation will synthesize information across the diverse BEST program designs to identify common challenges and promising practices of the first program year. To the extent possible within the timeframe of the evaluation, the project will document program outcomes for both youth participants and involved employers. The evaluation is

also designed to provide insight into the development of new institutional linkages and partnerships as well as describe the preliminary outcomes of these capacity-building efforts across sites. The evaluation will ideally provide important insight into the development of future strategies for both program initiatives and research.

Literature Review

As part of the assessment, Abt Associates has conducted a brief literature review on workforce development and youth training and employment programs. The goal of the review is to summarize relevant research and program initiatives to identify effective practices, common challenges, and comparable outcomes. By establishing a broader framework for the BEST program we are able to design, implement and interpret our evaluation in a more informed context.

Abt Associates structured the literature review to respond to the following primary research objectives:

- Provide an informed context for a first year assessment of the BEST Youth Initiative;
- Identify *design* and *implementation* concerns that constituted critical issues for program policy makers and practitioners; and
- Identify best and/or promising practices seen as important descriptors of effective programs.

The identification of relevant articles, studies, and other literature was conducted mainly through the use of electronic and supplemental bibliographic searches. Our search criteria was guided by the recognition that the BEST Initiative for Older Youth operates at the cross roads of youth and adult workforce development strategies. We drew broadly upon information from both adult and youth workforce development efforts, as well as education and training initiatives that proved relevant to the context and goals of the BEST Initiative. In short, although not all articles reviewed focused explicitly on workforce development for older youth, they all include valuable information related to program context, design, or implementation that prove relevant to the BEST Initiative for Older Youth.

Many of the resources we identified were reviews or summaries of previously conducted research. These articles described promising practices or compiled information from various studies of program models. Although some of these articles provided clear definitions of expected and actual program outcomes, others provided less defined or less rigorous descriptions of program success. Of the papers in which studies were conducted, few findings were based on rigorous evaluation of program performance and even fewer employed statistical analysis in their studies. Instead, program findings were based largely upon outcomes assessments and anecdotal evidence of diverse workforce development program models.

Overview of Key Findings

A review of relevant literature suggests that there is a continuum of workforce development program designs that vary in intensity and focus. Some program models, often referred to as human capital development, aim solely to increase educational attainment of program participants. Others, known as labor force attachment models, are designed to place participants in employment positions as soon

as possible (Hamilton 2002). Still others employ more selective job placement procedures that focus on opportunities for career growth and advancement. Selecting the most appropriate model depends on several factors, including the needs of the target population as well as the availability of financial, organizational and support resources.

These various program designs should not be viewed as competing models, but instead should serve as a menu of opportunities to develop services that best reflect both local needs and the realities of operating within resource constraints and political environments. Although there is evidence to suggest that more intensive, long-term interventions produce more productive outcomes, our discussion is based on the recognition that programs, for a variety of reasons, will continue to operate at many points along this spectrum.

In this context, we have identified several design themes that characterize effective workforce development initiatives. Broadly, successful program designs tend to adopt a holistic outlook that emphasizes the provision of education, training and support services that flexibly address individualized service needs (Brandeis, 1993; Poppe, 2003; Strawn, 1998). Specifically, our literature review suggests that promising programs tend to integrate some combination of following elements when addressing the range of needs potentially facing this target population. In the following sections, we discuss each of these promising components in more detail:

- Provision of comprehensive and flexible services (Brandeis, 1993; NGA, 1998; Poppe, 2003; Strawn, 1998);
- Establishment of partnerships with employers or industry sectors (James, 1997 and James, 1999; National Governor’s Association, 1998; Strawn, 1998);
- Integration of a work-based learning component (Grobe et al., 2001; Houghton, 2001; James, 1997 and James, 1999; National Governor’s Association, 1998; Strawn, 1998; Taylor, 1997);
- Development of motivational elements that target the needs of older youth (James, 1997 and James, 1999; National Governor’s Association, 1998; Strawn, 1998); and
- Provision of long-term services that promote retention and advancement (Brandeis, 1993; Conway, 2003; James, 1997 and James, 1999; Poppe, 2003; Taylor, 1997).

This discussion is followed by a series of supporting appendices. In Appendix A we provide a matrix that summarizes the key elements of articles reviewed for this report. Appendix B includes profiles of four innovative programs that illustrate key themes identified in the literature review. In Appendix C we provide a bibliography of consulted research. Appendix D presents brief abstracts, highlights, and bibliographic information for each of the reviewed articles.

Design Theme: Provision of comprehensive and flexible support services

Workforce development programs that target older youth face the ongoing challenge of providing services that effectively target a highly diverse population with varying employment and supportive service needs. Older youth, as a transitional age group, may face barriers common to both youth and adults. Moreover, programs that aim to engage disconnected youth must be aware of common risk factors—including family poverty and welfare receipt, low parental education, living in single or no parent households, having a child before age 18, and dropping out of high school—that tend to predict long-term disconnection among youth (Aron and Zweig, 2003). Programs that target this population must provide services that bridge youth and adult issues, including educational deficits,

limited job experience, childcare and family responsibilities, and loose job market attachment. This array of potential obstacles suggests that successful interventions must extend beyond traditional workforce development strategies to incorporate a more holistic array of personal support services.

One research report that studied several youth-focused workforce development programs concluded “a coherent array of programs is usually needed to serve the multiple and varying needs of the at-risk youth population” (Brandeis, 1993). In a recent study of youth-oriented workforce development programs, child care, transportation, case management and crisis intervention were key participant needs (Partee, 2003). Health and parenting responsibilities were additional supportive service needs associated with youth (Brandeis, 1993). Programs developed a number of responsive services, including child care support and individual counseling, to meet these needs. Although youth need easily accessible services, program staff do not necessarily have to provide them in-house. Co-location of staff from outside agencies or referrals to specific service providers could successfully address these issues.

In addition to addressing the challenging personal needs of the program population, this comprehensive design strategy can also help decrease program attrition and ultimately increase job placement and retention (Strawn 1998; Poppe, Strawn and Martinson 2003). Responding to immediate obstacles, such as transportation or child care barriers, can prevent these barriers from interfering with program attendance or employment. For example, some workforce development initiatives have launched van services or carpooling programs to address transportation issues; others have assisted participants in accessing reduced priced transportation vouchers. Comprehensive service provision can also help address underlying challenges to self-sufficiency, such as mental health issues or inexperience with financial management. Indeed financial management education or information is increasingly included in workforce development training curriculums.

Finally, it should be noted that one of the keys to the success of any comprehensive service strategy is effective case management. Successful case management strengthens the program’s capacity to assess client barriers and provide referrals or direct services to meet identified issues. Strong case management can also help case managers best understand participants’ skills and needs to assign them to the most appropriate program activities. The Portland, Oregon site of the National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies (NEWWS), for example, relied on case management to make initial activity assignments. Unlike straight labor force attachment models, the Portland program offered time-limited education or training to participants that could most benefit from short duration training (Hamilton 2002). Without effective case management, staff in this program would not have been able to identify appropriate activities and build as effective individualized service plans. Moreover, the mixed service strategy this program employed proved to yield some of the most effective and long-lasting outcomes of welfare to work programs to date.

Design Theme: Establish close ties with employers

Developing strong partnerships with industry groups or employers proved a critical component of effective workforce development programs (James, 1997 and James, 1999; National Governor’s Association, 1998; Strawn, 1998). Highly targeted industry-specific or sectoral strategies demonstrated particularly positive participant outcomes in several areas including: improved earnings through increased wages and increased work hours, better benefits, and improved outlook on employability and job prospects (Poppe, 2003; Radenmacher, 2002). The success of these sectoral strategies appears to be linked to a win-win partnership in which employers gain access to untapped

labor pools, which facilitates their abilities to address challenging hiring needs, and practitioners participate in industry discussions related to hiring requirements, credentials, advancement potential, and employer expectations. These discussions not only help practitioners target program services to meet employer and participant needs, but also enabled them to assist participant and employers in adjusting behaviors to support program goals (Radenmacher, 2002).

In general, long-term commitments from and sustained immersion with an employer, groups of employers, or industry clusters helps practitioners create programs that:

- Clearly identify industry demand;
- Involve employers in program design to ensure that training is responsive to employer needs;
- Ensure a high level of employer and industry knowledge;
- Increase practitioners' understanding of business needs and expectations;
- Build long-term partnerships that may minimize hiring "cycles";
- Customize services to meet both employer and participant needs; and
- Enable practitioners to provide on-site support for new hires.

The literature provides a number of general principles that can assist programs in establishing effective partnerships with employers. When *identifying* potential employers with which to work, initiatives should (1) use labor market and economic analysis to identify industries with unmet demand; (2) identify their own unique assets and challenges in serving a particular industry; (3) avoid duplicating the role of other local workforce institutions or initiatives; and (4) choose an employer or industry with which staff or the program have a history of engagement/partnership (National Governor's Association, 2001; Radenmacher, 2003). To *initiate* relationships with employers, programs need to demonstrate how the program will benefit the employer. Making a case to the employer's social conscience is not always an effective strategy, so providing a coherent business rationale of how the partnership can benefit the employer facilitates involvement (Radenmacher, 2002). Further, programs should be aware of common internal employer challenges. For example, there are frequently a variety of decisionmakers within one company, and one decisionmaker may not have complete knowledge about entry-level hiring needs and skill requirements. Additionally, despite genuine interest in workforce development programs, employers often face resource constraints that affect their processes, behavior, and overall willingness to initiate new projects (Radenmacher, 2003).

Once a program-employer partnership has been *established*, agreement among stakeholders on both the goals of the initiative and the roles of each stakeholder in achieving these goals is critical (Taylor, 1997). Ongoing communication and clear delineation of each partner's responsibilities can facilitate this effort. For example, to benefit both participants and employers, programs need to identify industry sectors' unique screening, training, and post-training needs. Programs can use existing industry knowledge to design screening processes that identify appropriate potential employees, and can use industry input to ensure that the content and culture of program training are consistent with industry norms. For employers to successfully *perform* their role in the partnerships, programs should consider identifying a staff liaison to maintain employer relationships and provide technical assistance that supports ongoing learning opportunities for program participants (National Governor's Association, 2001; Taylor, 1997; Radenmacher, 2002).

Design Theme: Integration of a work-based learning component

Integrating work experience in workforce development programs not only helps participants learn and apply job-related skills, but also acculturates them to the work climate, employer expectations, and professional responsibilities. Throughout the workforce development literature, both employers and practitioners cited participants' poor "soft skills" (e.g., communication skills, and interpersonal relations) as an impediment to employer satisfaction and retention. Several strategies articulated in the literature, including simulated work conditions, role-playing, credentialing, mentoring, and linking learning directly to the workplace can be particularly effective in helping participants better understand the work environment and employer expectations. As noted in the discussion below, these strategies can be integrated either in the classroom or while on the job.

Simulated work conditions. Programs that tie training to the workplace or simulate work-like conditions when not in a work setting can establish the discipline of the workplace and reinforce teamwork and professional behavior throughout training (Houghton, 2001; James, 1997 and James, 1999; National Governor's Association, 1998; Strawn, 1998; Taylor, 1997). Moreover, because participants may be new to the physical environment of a workplace, replicating this environment during training can help make an employee comfortable, eliminate an element of unfamiliarity, and establish what is acceptable in this setting (Houghton, 2001).

Role-playing. Role playing, or gaming the employer's role, helps participants understand the role of a manager and the complexity and importance of management decisions (Houghton, 2001). When an employee understands a manager's role, she also better understands how to "be managed."

Credentialing. Credentialing provides participants a means of showing employers that they have a standardized set of capabilities (Strawn, 1998; Taylor, 1997). Employers in many industries often look for employees who have skills beyond those designated by a high school diploma. Credentialing of these skills not only facilitates advancement within a company, but allows participants greater mobility between companies because they have a documented set of transferable skills and a more established understanding of the work environment

Mentoring. A relationship with an experienced co-worker can provide the added support a participant needs to develop in a job and to understand both the norms and the challenges of the workplace (AYES, 2003d; Taylor, 1997). Jobs for the Future identified two mentoring strategies—training superiors in mentoring skills, and teaching participants to seek out constructive mentoring relationships—that could help participants realize the benefits of mentorships (Taylor, 1997).

Linking learning directly to the workplace (James, 1997 and James, 1999; National Governor's Association, 1998; Taylor, 1997). By using contextual learning, or drawing direct links between both academic and job training and the workplace, participants can understand the function of skills as they directly apply to employment. In addition to increasing participants' familiarity with employment-related vocabulary, it also helps them understand the types of tasks they will be performing on the job. Moreover, the direct implications of contextual learning can help engage participants who may not have excelled in more isolated academic pursuits.

Design Theme: Development of motivational elements that target the needs of older youth

Workforce development programs that target older youth have the dual concerns of preparing participants for the “real” working world while also being developmentally appropriate. Many youth have limited or no labor market experience prior to entering workforce development programs, and even those who have had employment experience often face challenges in developing labor market attachment. In order to ensure the long-term success of their graduates, programs need to foster commitment to self-sufficiency and sustained labor market attachment. Because youth are often still maturing as individuals, including developing their senses of responsibility and self-esteem, they may benefit from age-appropriate strategies aimed at engaging them in these goals. Thus, programs may need to incorporate motivational elements that help engage youth in program activities and foster commitment to workforce development goals.

In its *Guide to Program Design Options for Serving At-Risk Youth*, Brandeis University recognizes the need to design age-appropriate program strategies, including components that increase motivation (Brandeis, 1993). Motivational elements may come in a variety of forms. Setting high expectations for program participants may serve as one method (Grobe, 2003; James, 1997 and James, 1999; National Governor’s Association, 1998; Partee, 2003; Strawn, 1998). Not only do high expectations set the tone for the challenges of the real world, but they also encourage participants to commit serious time and effort to participation. When participants have invested more of themselves into the program, they have more at stake and thus greater incentive to achieve.

Incentives for success may also come in more tangible forms. The American Youth Policy Forum encourages the use of formal recognition or monetary rewards in youth development programming (James, 1997 and James, 1999). These concrete reinforcements also parallel the work experience, in which wages are clearly tied to work hours and increases hinge on job performance.

A third approach to increasing motivation is helping youth participants to develop meaningful relationships with caring, competent adults (James, 1997 and James, 1999; Partee, 2003; Taylor, 1997). An adult whom a youth trusts and has contact with on a regular basis can model appropriate behaviors for the youth, including commitment to responsibilities, goal development, and sustained employment. Such an adult also acts as a source of reinforcement, by providing positive feedback for achievements and negative feedback when a youth needs to improve behavior. Finally, meaningful adult relationships can encourage greater accountability by asking questions about program participation, personal progress, or other responsibilities. In this manner, a youth has a person whom he respects and to whom he feels a sense of responsibility.

It should be noted that motivational components should still be implemented within the real-world boundaries of a work environment. Positive forms of motivation and reinforcement, while important for this target population, should not supercede the responsibilities a youth will face on the job. As such, they must be carefully integrated into the larger work-based learning strategy.

Design Theme: Provision of services that promote retention and advancement

To help individuals achieve true career progression, the literature emphasizes the importance of services that assist participants in developing a career path and addressing ongoing barriers that impede career progression. Some of these services are integral components of the program curriculum and prepare participants to seek quality jobs and understand advancement resources.

Other services provide ongoing support that extends beyond upfront education, training, or placement services. Both retention-oriented services provided during training and post-placement support can contribute towards labor market stability.

Workforce development literature identifies two tiers of entry-level positions: one that requires basic work-related soft skills, and a second that requires additional competencies such as literacy, communication, or problem-solving skills. As the requirements for this second, more advanced tier of entry-level jobs continue to rise, it is increasingly important for employees to develop “navigational” skills that help them understand how to succeed and advance in a particular job or company (Taylor, 1997). To be effective, these skills must be applied on the job. However, pre-placement services that explain how to identify and access key navigational resources, such as supervisors or mentors, would equip participants with advancement strategies.

Additionally, placement strategies that target key industries or occupations are linked to higher future earnings (Poppe, 2003). Certain industries, such as construction, manufacturing, and transportation, often offer higher earnings. Even within the service sector, key industries, including health and education, provide relatively higher wages. Moreover, certain occupations, including clerical or production, tend to offer greater earnings potential than others, such as sales. Access to higher quality employers (e.g., firms with lower turnover and more competitive wages) can also increase the return on job tenure. These findings suggest that workforce development programs should encourage program participants to be selective, to the extent possible, in job placement, and, where possible, should focus on particular industries or occupations that offer the most opportunity for advancement (Poppe, 2003). In the Portland NEWS site (profiled briefly in Appendix B of this report), for example, program participants were encouraged to wait for jobs that paid more than minimum wage and offered a good chance for stable employment, one factor that may have contributed to the positive employment and earnings outcomes for program participants (Hamilton, 2002).

Post-placement services, including ongoing counseling support, sequential credentialing, and skill-upgrades, also can help participants manage work-life conflicts, retain employment, and achieve career progression. Despite the benefits of selective job placement, some participants may need to accept lower quality placements to gain necessary job experience. In these instances, ongoing skills upgrading is critical. In specific, skills upgrading efforts should focus on basic skills, such as reading and writing, and postsecondary occupations credentials. Basic skills improvements help determine workers’ wage increases, and also enable workers to obtain jobs that promote more formal and informal opportunities (such as on-the-job training) for wage growth (Poppe, 2003). Credentialing, in particular, sends clear signals about workers’ competencies, which employers rely on when making hiring and promotion decisions. Postsecondary credentials provide uniform industry benchmarks with which to gauge worker skills; however, third-party credentialing of more basic work-related skills could also benefit lower-skilled workers and potential employers (Taylor, 1997).

More generally, post-placement support should help participants transition from training to employment, and should provide ongoing resources that help resolve work-life conflicts that can impact retention. The intensity of these services varies considerably across programs. Some programs structure periodic telephone calls with program participants to ascertain their satisfaction with employment and identify any barriers that may interfere with continued employment. Other programs maintain in-person case management contact on a regular basis to provide ongoing support and referrals. Still other models create job coach positions that provide on-site assistance to graduates during their initial time on the job. Successful post-placement support also connects workers with

other services that respond to identified barriers and provide progressive assistance as participants advance in educational or employment pursuits (Conway, 2003; James, 1997 and James, 1999).

Implications for the Evaluation

The research findings identified through the literature review provide useful context for the assessment of the BEST Initiative for Older Youth. These findings will inform the development of data collection instruments and will help frame key evaluation objectives. The following discussion describes the implications of review findings as they relate to the evaluation.

Provision of comprehensive and flexible services. Research indicates that successful workforce development initiatives blend program models and provide flexible services to meet diverse participant needs. In our review of the program and operations it will be important to gain insight into initial needs analyses and the planning steps taken to precisely understand the characteristics and programmatic needs of their target population.

Establish close ties with employers. Promising programs established strong partnerships with employers or industry sectors and tailored training to existing labor demand. In interviewing key program stakeholders it will be valuable to understand the steps taken to establish and solidify a working relationship with employers and the extent to which they are emerging as “win/win” partnerships.

Integration of a work-based learning component. Successful work-based learning components address both occupational competencies and soft skills that contribute to employment success. Efforts to replicate “on-the-job” situations during training to acclimate participants to the unfamiliar responsibilities, protocol, and other expectations of the workplace environment provide opportunities for applied learning. To this end, the evaluation will seek to identify efforts that are being made to proactively acclimate participants to the work environment and employer expectations.

Development of motivational elements that target the needs of older youth. The youth participating in the BEST Initiative are likely to face a wide array of barriers to employment related to both traditional workforce development challenges and developmental needs of maturing youth. As part of our site visit interviews, observation, and document review, the evaluation will seek to document efforts to foster commitment to self-sufficiency and sustained labor market attachment among this transitional age group.

Provision of long-term services to promote retention and advancement. Workforce development programs face the challenge of developing strategies that address often intangible job retention barriers to help participants succeed beyond initial placement. Our evaluation will examine post-placement employment stability and those initiatives that have been put in place to promote longer term job retention and labor force attachment.

Appendix A

Matrix of Articles

Author	Title	Publication Organization	Employer Engagement/ Industry-Specific	Service Mix/ Program Design	Critical Program Elements
Aron, Laudan and Janine Zweig.	Educational Alternatives for Vulnerable Youth: Student Needs, Program Types, and Research Directions	The Urban Institute		✓	✓
Bos, J., F. Doolittle, D. Goldsmith, C. Miller, K. Porter, F.M. Tseng, M.P. Vencill	Working with Disadvantaged Youth: Thirty-Month Findings from the Evaluation of the Center for Employment Training Replication Sites	U.S. DOL Employment and Training Administration		✓	✓
Brandeis University, Heller Graduate School	A Guide to Program Design Options for Serving At-Risk Youth	US DOL Youth Research & Technical Assistance Project	✓	✓	✓
Brown, D., S. Maxwell, E. DeJesus, & V. Schiraldi	Barriers and Promising Approaches to Workforce and Youth Development for Young Offenders	Annie E. Casey Foundation		✓	✓
Chicago Federation of Labor and the Center for Labor & Community Research	Creating a Manufacturing Career Path System in Cook County	Chicago Federation of Labor and the Center for Labor & Community Research	✓	✓	✓
Conway, M. & L. Zandniapour	Industry-Based Employment Programs: Implications for Welfare Reauthorization and Key Survey findings	The Aspen Institute			✓
Dale, N., A.J.L. Baker, D. Racine, & T.J. Smith	Lessons Learned: What the WAY Program Can Teach Us About Program Replication	American Youth Policy Forum		✓	✓
Freedman, S., Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation	The National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies: Four-Year Impacts of Ten Programs on Employment Stability and Earnings Growth	DHHS (ACF/ASPE), ED (Office of the Undersecretary, Office of Vocational and Adult Education)		✓	
Grobe, Terry, with John Niles and Ephraim Weisstein	Helping All Youth Succeed: Building Youth Development Systems in Our Communities	Commonwealth Corporation: The Center for Youth Development and Education		✓	✓

Author	Title	Publication Organization	Employer Engagement/ Industry-Specific	Service Mix/ Program Design	Critical Program Elements
Hamilton, Gayle	Moving People from Welfare to Work: Lessons from the National Evaluation of Welfare -to-Work Strategies	Manpower Research Demonstration Corporation		✓	✓
Harris, L.	WIA Reauthorization Recommendations on Title I Youth Provisions	Center for Law and Social Policy		✓	
Houghton, T. & T. Proscio	Hard Work on Soft Skills: Creating a "Culture of Work" in Workforce Development	Public/Private Ventures		✓	
James, Donna Walker (ed.); James, Donna Walker (ed) with Jurich, Sonia	Some Things DO Make a Difference for Youth: A Compendium of Evaluations of Youth Programs and Practices; and MORE Things that DO Make a Difference for Youth: A Compendium of Evaluations of Youth Programs and Practices, Volume II	American Youth Policy Forum			✓
Kahn, K.	Quality Care Partners: A Case Study	Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute	✓	✓	✓
Levin-Epstein, J. & M. H. Greenberg (Eds.)	Leave No Youth Behind: Opportunities for Congress to Reach Disconnected Youth	Center for Law and Social Policy			✓
National Governor's Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices: Employment & Social Services Policy Studies	Strategies to Promote Education, Skill Development, and Career Advancement for Low-Skilled Workers	National Governor's Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices: Employment & Social Services Policy Studies		✓	✓
National Governor's Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices: Employment & Social Services Policy Studies	Using Regional Skill Partnerships to Address Skill Shortages and Promote Job Retention and Career Advancement for Low-Income Workers	National Governor's Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices: Employment & Social Services Policy Studies			✓
Partee, G.L.	Preparing Youth for Employment: Principles and Characteristics of Five Leading United States Youth Development Programs	American Youth Policy Forum		✓	

Author	Title	Publication Organization	Employer Engagement/ Industry-Specific	Service Mix/ Program Design	Critical Program Elements
Poppe, N., J. Strawn & K. Martinson	Whose Job Is It?: Creating Opportunities for Advancement	Center for Law and Social Policy			✓
Radenmacher, I. (ed.), The Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program	Working with Value: Industry-Specific Approaches to Workforce Development. A Synthesis of Findings	The Aspen Institute	✓	✓	
Radenmacher, I. (ed.), The Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program	A Win-Win Approach to Workforce Development: Industry-Specific Initiatives & Advice on Working with Employer Partners	The Aspen Institute	✓		
Strawn, J.	Beyond Job Search or Basic Education: Rethinking the Role of Skills in Welfare Reform	Center for Law and Social Policy		✓	✓
Sum, A., Khatiwanda, I., Pond, N. & Trub'sky, M.	Left Behind in the Labor Market: Labor Market Problems of the Nation's Out-of-School Young Adult Populations	Alternative School Network			
Taylor, J.C.	Learning at Work in a Work-Based Welfare System: Opportunities and Obstacles. Lessons from the School-to-Work Experience	Jobs for the Future	✓	✓	✓

Appendix B

Project Profiles

Project: Dayton YouthBuild¹

Dayton YouthBuild, a member program of YouthBuild USA, is a workforce development program targeting 16–24-year-old juvenile offenders and at-risk youth. Established in 1999, it is a comprehensive program that focuses on education and training in construction-related skills. Its goals include preparing participants to receive a high school diploma instead of a GED, helping participants earn building trades certification from community colleges, and helping participants pursue productive lives and careers as an alternative to incarceration.

Dayton YouthBuild draws on a number of design elements emphasized by the BEST Youth Initiatives, including a focus on an older youth population that straddles the traditional “youth” and “adult” populations and sector-specific training. While the program targets a narrower population (i.e., juvenile offenders) it provides insight into a number of relevant themes addressed in the literature review through its provision of work-based, sector-specific training designed for youth.

Program design and description of model used: Dayton YouthBuild provides education, work-based and hands-on learning, life skills development, and job services in a targeted industry sector, comprising a “comprehensive” youth workforce development program model.

Size or scope of the project: Dayton YouthBuild, officially a charter school, is part of YouthBuild USA. At the time of the Annie E. Casey Foundation report, it served approximately 300 participants. Industry Sector: This program prepares students for the building trades, particularly construction and technology-based work.

Critical program elements: Dayton YouthBuild incorporates education, skills-building/job training, and job services in a model that: includes hands-on training; connects training and education to the job; provides work-based learning; promotes leadership development; integrates soft skills and life skills development; and provides post-program support over five years.

Youth service mix: In addition to the education, work-based learning, job training, and soft-skills development listed above, services include counseling (on-site counselor, special education teacher, and substance abuse counselor) and pre-program assessment of skills and interests to meet participant needs.

Key contextual factors that enhance learning: Staff members are trained to relate to program participants on a variety of levels, and the racial and ethnic composition of staff is similar to that of participants. Participants have the opportunity to observe the direct effects of their work in their communities, where they build and rehabilitate low-income housing. Finally, one of its “exemplary

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all information provided here about Dayton YouthBuild is from Brown et al., 2002.

practices” as identified by an Annie E. Casey Foundation report is that it “emphasizes the importance of understanding the economy and the various industries in which participants might work” (Brown et al., 2002, p. 19).

Project partners and their roles: Dayton YouthBuild partners with businesses, technology companies, academic institutions, and social service providers to provide work-based experience in their building trades-based field of interest. Partners include the juvenile justice system, which refers about 50 percent of participants; Sinclair Community College, which provides academic instruction and credentialing; and the Rotary Club.

Employer engagement: Information was not available on the particular strategies Dayton YouthBuild uses to engage employers.

Performance outcomes: The program data show that 87 percent of Dayton YouthBuild participants are placed in jobs, join the military, or continue their education. Dayton YouthBuild and YouthBuild USA also have been reviewed in descriptive studies that do not focus on performance outcomes.²

How the project was funded: Dayton YouthBuild is part of YouthBuild USA, a national nonprofit agency. YouthBuild USA provides its members pass-through grants from national funders. It also provides financial support to programs through a loan fund (YouthBuild USA, 2003).

² YouthBuild USA also has been examined for its developmental outcomes, and its Welfare-to-Work program has been reviewed for outcomes and policy implications. Neither report contained performance statistics for the Dayton YouthBuild program or the national program as a whole. A national study of YouthBuild graduates is scheduled for release in February 2004.

Project: Portland Site, National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (NEWWS)³

Portland's welfare-to-work site, as studied by the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies, was a "quick-employment" program that incorporated unique elements of job selectivity and education and skills training for those participants in need of those services. While the literature in general tends to emphasize more in-depth and protracted interventions, the Portland design demonstrates that positive impacts can be generated through shorter-term interventions when implemented under fitting circumstances.

Portland's approach to workforce development illustrates the importance of understanding the program's target population and the economic context in which it operates. As the summary below indicates, participants' education levels and the strength of the local economy allowed for the use of a flexible range of shorter-term services that emphasized more immediate placement. Despite not being a long-term program, Portland's performance in the NEWWS study shows that a properly designed program can address its population's needs in the short term without compromising outcomes.

Program design and description of model used: Portland's welfare-to-work program was a rapid-entry, or quick-employment, program. However, unique to this quick-employment strategy was Portland's focus on placing participants into jobs with opportunities for advancement. It was not a youth-specific program.

Size or scope of the project: This program served two counties in the Portland area, Multnomah and Washington counties. Approximately 5,547 participants in the Portland program aged 21 and over participated in the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies between February 1993 and December 1994 as either a randomly assigned program or control group member (Scrivener, 1998).

Industry Sector: This program did not employ a sectoral development strategy.

Critical program elements: Portland's critical program elements included *selective* employment, or focusing on meaningful employment opportunities by placing participants in above-minimum wage jobs that had opportunities for advancement. It also enlisted case managers who had the discretion to direct participants to the most appropriate mix of short-term services, (e.g., skill-building and basic education) prior to job search activities.

Youth service mix: Portland's welfare-to-work program was not youth-specific. Rather, its service mix targeted a broader transitional population and included job search activities, short-term skill-building/basic education, case management, vocational training, work experience, and life skills training (Scrivener, 1998).

Key contextual factors that enhance learning: Portland's relatively small caseload, the fact that a relatively high percentage of its participants entered the program with a high school diploma or GED,

³ Unless otherwise noted, all information provided here about the Portland welfare-to-work program is from: Freedman, 2000.

and its relatively strong labor market made its environment more conducive to learning and positive outcomes (Scrivener, 1998).

Project partners and their roles: Partners were comprised of the welfare department and local service providers, including the local community colleges, chambers of commerce, JTPA agencies, and the state Employment Department (Scrivener, 1998).

Employer engagement: Information was not available on the particular strategies Portland used to engage employers, although the program's selectivity in job placement implies that considerable effort was made to craft strong partnerships with local companies.

Performance outcomes: In a random-assignment experimental study conducted by Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, Portland participants exhibited increased total earnings above control group levels and above the 10 other treatment groups, by approximately \$1,000 per year for 4 years. Portland also had the largest increases in stable employment among them. Finally, it demonstrated the "most consistent gains among different welfare populations" (Freedman, 2000).

How the project was funded: This program was publicly funded (federally legislated mandatory welfare-to-work program) (Scrivener, 1998).

Project: Project QUEST (Quality Employment Through Skills Training)⁴

Founded in 1992 in San Antonio, Texas, Project QUEST has won numerous awards⁵ and has been replicated four times in other southwestern cities (Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 2001). Project QUEST is a demand-driven, sector-targeted, long-term education and job training program for low-income San Antonio community members. It utilizes credentialing through community colleges to help participants build skills needed for career growth and to address the labor market needs of the San Antonio region. Its array of financial supports and other services allow participants to overcome barriers to remain in the program and focus on personal growth.

Although QUEST is not a youth-specific program, it exemplifies a number of key themes highlighted in the literature review. In particular, QUEST illustrates effective approaches to engaging employers and industries and to providing flexible and individualized participant services. QUEST began with the goal of addressing regional economic needs, identifying industry sectors with hiring needs that could potentially be met by economically disadvantaged members of the community. By gaining broad-based community support, crafting mutually beneficial relationships among stakeholders, and providing intensive and individualized services, QUEST has been recognized for successful employer buy-in and improved participant outcomes.

Program design and description of model used: Demand-driven, sector-targeted, long-term education and job training program that provides a comprehensive set of individualized services. QUEST is not a youth-specific program.

Size or scope of the project: Project QUEST is the product of collaboration between two community development corporations. The program, which has an average duration of 17 months per participant, had a \$4.1 million annual budget in 2001–2002 (Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 2001).

Industry Sector: QUEST uses a multi-sector strategy based on the labor market trends in San Antonio. It targets health care, business information systems/technology, and maintenance, repair and overhaul. It has chosen these sectors based on local employment demand, wage rate, availability of benefits, and opportunities for advancement.

Critical program elements: QUEST's employer-driven model, with its emphasis on credentialing, has contributed to both participants' and employers' positive outcomes. Specifically, preparing participants to meet industry- or job-specific credentialing standards ensures that training interventions directly reflect employers' actual hiring requirements and skill needs. At the same time, participants benefit from the credentialing process by acquiring competencies that are recognized and transferable beyond an initial placement.

Youth service mix: QUEST is not a youth-specific endeavor. The services it provides include high-level assessment, in order to match participants with appropriate jobs; certified technical skills

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all information provided here about Project QUEST is from Rademacher 2002.

⁵ These include the 2003 The Enterprise Foundation and The J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation Award for Excellence in Workforce Development and the 1995 Innovations Award from the Ford Foundation and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. (Project QUEST, 2003).

training; and counseling to develop life skills and personal growth (QUEST, 2003). It also provides support services, including the cost of tuition and fees, child care, books and supplies, transportation, utilities, and other costs, to ensure that participants are able to complete the program (Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 2001).

Key contextual factors that enhance learning: While QUEST provides participants with a variety of services and supports, it also requires considerable personal responsibility. Specifically, participants must: provide counselors with frequent updates on their classwork as well as their class attendance, attend weekly group meetings, and work in San Antonio in their industry of training for at least one year post-program (Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 2001).

Project partners and their roles: Two community-based organizations initially partnered to create Project QUEST. Since that time, the program has further partnered with employers in target industries and community colleges to identify and respond to skill needs and credentialing requirements. The project also names over 12 public, private, non-profit, and educational institutions as supporters of the program (Project QUEST, 2003).

Employer Engagement: QUEST has helped further strengthen its relationships with local businesses by actively documenting and marketing its value and successes. For instance, it has provided occupational analyses to assist employers and performed return-on-investment calculations to demonstrate the program's value-added to the San Antonio economy. It summarizes its services to employers as: assistance in analyzing the skills required to succeed in specific occupations; customization of training programs to meet industry or business needs; and provision of qualified, motivated employees who possess the skills required to succeed in today's jobs (Project QUEST, 2003).

Performance outcomes: QUEST has an 83 percent placement rate and a 95 percent retention rate after 3 months (WIN, 2004). Studies of QUEST show that participation leads to increased earnings (including increasing number of hours worked by between 3.2 and 6.9 hours and increasing wages by 23-40 percent) over pre-participation levels and improved post-training benefits (Osterman and Lautsch, 1996). Annual earnings increased by between \$4,923 and \$7,457 per year (WIN, 2004).

How the project was funded: QUEST receives funding from a variety of sources, including city, state, federal, foundation and private resources (Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 2001).

Project: Automotive Youth Educational Systems (AYES)⁶

Begun by General Motors in 1995, Automotive Youth Education Systems (AYES) is an innovative approach to equipping youth with industry-based skills through a strong partnership structure. AYES, now an incorporated non-profit supported by leading automakers, takes a non-traditional approach to education and vocational skill-building. By partnering automotive dealers and high schools, it prepares students for entry-level automotive service positions through a school-to-work program. As automotive industry needs shift due to technological advances in vehicles, AYES provides a means of closing the industry's growing skills gap.

AYES has made a concentrated effort to know both its target population's needs and interests as well as the hiring and skill requirements of the automotive industry. Although AYES does not generally target the older youth cohort, its services to youth at the lower end of this age range provide insight into broader issues of youth workforce development programming. Its blend of programming elements prepares its participants for multiple educational and occupational opportunities that may be key for this transitional age. Further, its response to sectoral needs, through a unique industry-education partnership, is particularly noteworthy.

Program design and description of model used: Sectoral school-to-career program.

Size or scope of the project: The AYES program is currently located in 45 states and includes approximately 330 schools and 3800 dealers (AYES, 2003a).

Industry Sector: Automotive.

Critical program elements: The program identifies a number of elements that are key components of its work, particularly using a specialized, demanding curriculum designed for the automotive industry and providing mentoring from experienced professionals. Other elements include: using a process that is "benchmarked against industry needs which are, in turn, driven by consumer demand" (AYES, 2003d); linking industry skills to education; following participant progress through a set of assessments; and using a career ladder approach that prepares participants to either pursue more education or advance directly to the job market.

Youth service mix: AYES provides a variety of services: while working for a high school diploma, participants also take part in job shadowing and paid summer internships; one-on-one mentoring with an industry mentor; hands-on, work-based experience; contextual learning; and opportunities to receive dual credit from high schools and community colleges.

Key contextual factors that enhance learning: AYES integrates education and technical skills: students have the opportunity to apply their classroom learning to the workplace.

Project partners and their roles: Manufacturers (Honda, BMW, Audi, Volkswagen, Toyota, Nissan, Mercedes-Benz, GM, Mitsubishi Motors, Subaru); 14 private companies and foundation funders, as well as 30 state or metropolitan dealer associations and various state Workforce Development Commissions and Departments of Education; the National Auto Dealers Association

⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all information provided here about AYES is from AYES (2003d).

and local dealer associations (serving as mentors and employers); local secondary and postsecondary schools (AYES, 2003c).

Employer engagement: Dealers provide mentor relationships and internships to students and may hire participants after graduation. They benefit through access to a pool of entry-level job candidates with basic automotive service competencies.

Performance outcomes: AYES states that its goal is: “To encourage bright students with good mechanical aptitudes to pursue careers in the ever-changing fields of automotive service technology or collision repair/refinish, and to prepare them for entry-level positions or challenging academic options” (AYES, 2003b). No studies or evaluations of AYES have been conducted.

How the project was funded: AYES is an incorporated non-profit that is supported by leading automotive manufacturers, 14 private companies and foundation funders, and 30 state or metropolitan dealer associations and various state Workforce Development Commissions and Departments of Education (AYES, 2003b).

Project: STRIVE⁷

Developed in 1985, STRIVE has a distinct philosophy of workforce development which emphasizes job-readiness through attitudinal training and participant willingness to “turn their life around” (Partee, 2003, p. 9). Focusing specifically on at-risk older youth and young adults, it was one of the first programs of its kind to emphasize intensive, short-term training, quick-employment, and long-term post-program support (STRIVE New York, 2004a). Begun in East Harlem, STRIVE’s model has been replicated numerous times in the New York City area and has extended throughout the United States and to Europe.

STRIVE exhibits a number of key design themes identified in the literature review. First, it provides services that are designed to meet the broader needs of its target population while remaining flexible enough to meet individual needs. Second, the program integrates work-based learning components into its soft-skill development approach by simulating work conditions and using role-playing. Finally, STRIVE promotes retention and advancement by providing lifelong access to services, including its CareerPath career development service.

Program design and description of model used: STRIVE is an intensive, short-term (four-week) job-readiness program that particularly emphasizes attitude and soft-skills development. It provides job search techniques, rapid job placement, and long-term post-training services. STRIVE serves young adults (18-30) who are particularly at-risk and “chronically unemployed”: former substance abusers, high school dropouts, foster care system exiters, ex-offenders, single parents receiving public assistance, and the working poor.

Size or scope of the project: STRIVE New York and its eight partners in the STRIVE New York Network (NYN) place approximately 2,000 participants into employment each year (STRIVE New York, 2004b). STRIVE has 21 affiliate programs in the U.S. and London.

Industry Sector: Through its post-training career advancement services, STRIVE conducts its CareerPath program, which includes “career niche training.” The trainings currently offered through this program are Advanced Attitudinal Training, Advanced Office Proficiency, Computer Assembly & Repair, Brownfields Environmental Technology, Artisan Baking, Cisco Academy CCNA Network Certification, Grace Institute Administrative Training, Commercial Drivers License, Cable Installation, and Medial Encoding (STRIVE New York, 2004c).

Critical program elements: STRIVE has five program components: (1) Outreach and Intake; (2) Training; (3) Job Development; (4) Graduate Services (including career advancement services such as “CareerPath”); and (5) Social Services (which includes a gender-specific workshop at end of training for identifying and exploring barriers to self-sufficiency) (STRIVE New York, 2004d). The components of CareerPath, including attitudinal development, career planning, hard-skills training, basic skill building, and certifications, are often tailored to meet individual participants’ needs (STRIVE New York, 2004c). STRIVE’s focus on attitudinal development, which emphasizes self-sufficiency (STRIVE National, 2004), is one of the program’s most distinguishing features.

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all of the information on STRIVE is from Partee (2003).

Youth service mix: Intensive 4-week training program. Strong focus on soft skills; assistance from a job developer; post-placement career advancement program; on-site social services (individual counseling, case management, crisis intervention, advocacy) and referrals; 2-year follow-up and lifetime placement service and support.

Key contextual factors that enhance learning: Integrates work-based learning into its soft-skill development approach by simulating work conditions and using role-playing.

Project partners and their roles: STRIVE New York has eight partners in the NYN, including Discipleship Outreach Ministries, Inc., The Fortune Society, Henry Street Settlement, Multitasking Systems of NY, Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation (RDRC), South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corp. (SOBRO), Stanley Isaacs, and St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation. These partners integrate the STRIVE philosophy into their own programs and each specialize in various services (STRIVE New York, 2004b). STRIVE National provides central support to partners and affiliates.

Employer engagement: Job developers work to develop positive relationships with STRIVE employers (specific details on relationship development not available) (STRIVE New York, 2004d). STRIVE cites over 300 employers with whom it has established relationships.

Performance outcomes: The program has placed nearly 22,000 into jobs since its inception in 1985. In 2001, STRIVE produced 4,000 graduates, of which 3,000 were placed into jobs. It traditionally has a 75 percent placement rate of graduates and an average 70 percent retention rate 2 years after placement (STRIVE New York, 2004a). STRIVE's CareerPath program has documented a 35 percent increase in earnings among graduates (STRIVE New York, 2004c).

How the project was funded: In 2000/2001, STRIVE reported support from over 45 foundations, 18 corporations, churches, government, and in-kind contributions (STRIVE, 2001).

Project: Center for Employment Training (CET)⁸

CET, a nonprofit training and employment program, is located in 12 states and has 33 centers. Program participants range in age from 17 to 60 and are low-income, disadvantaged individuals, 50 percent of whom are high school dropouts. While CET serves youth through adult populations, its services to “disadvantaged youth” have been included in three experimental studies (cited below).⁹ (Much of the descriptive information about the CET program design has been gathered from the program’s website).

Program design and description of model used: CET provides a long-term, intensive, holistic, competency-based skills development and job training program.

Size or scope of the project: Located in 12 states and comprised of 33 centers, CET has served 100,000 people since its inception in 1967 (CET, 2004a).

Industry Sector: CET training is demand-driven (CET, 2004b) and operates across multiple sectors of the economy (e.g., automotive, health care, technology).

Critical program elements: CET is an open-entry, open-exit program that offers individualized training. According to James, 1997 and James, 1999, important program elements include its long-term nature, opportunities for self-paced basic education, job skills training, job search assistance, some life skills training and incentives (stipends tied to program performance), post-program support, and a holistic approach.¹⁰

Youth service mix: CET provides supplemental service such as opportunities for basic education (vocational guidance, vocational English as a second language, GED preparedness instruction, and high school diploma programs), job preparedness instruction, transportation services, child care, immigration services, federal financial aid, emergency assistance, and information and referral services (CET, 2004c).

Key contextual factors that enhance learning: Instructors are hired straight from industry, and training utilizes simulated work conditions and contextual learning (CET, 2004a).

Project partners and their roles: The program’s Industrial Advisory Board (IAB) is comprised of volunteer representatives from various industries, and it advises center directors and assists in fundraising and development efforts (CET, 2004b). The Technical Advisory Committee is also comprised of community members and advises CET on its occupational skills (CET offers training on 37 occupational skills) (CET, 2004d).

⁸ Unless otherwise noted, all of the information on CET is from Bos et al. (2003).

⁹ In addition to the Bos, 2003 study, the American Youth Policy Forum identified CET as a program that “makes a difference for youth” (James, 1997, 1999) based on two other experimental studies of services at CET’s original San Jose site.

¹⁰ James (1997; 1999) reviewed the study of the 1993 JOBSTART Demonstration for young high school dropouts conducted by MDRC. The San Jose CET site included in this study is the original CET program site.

Employer engagement: CET maintains relationships with local employers through Industrial Advisory Board(s). Volunteer representatives come from a variety of private sector institutions and provide networks into industries and employers (CET, 2004b).

Performance outcomes: In two major random-assignment studies in the early 1990's (the JOBSTART Demonstration for young high school dropouts and the Minority Female Single Parent Demonstration), the CET program was the only one that was able to increase the employment and earnings of disadvantaged youth (as cited in Bos, 2003, p. xi). In the 2003 MDRC random-assignment study of CET replication sites (Bos, 2003), those that maintained "high fidelity" to the CET model showed increased youth participation in training activities and increased completion of a training certificate, as well as substantial positive impacts for young women on percentage "ever working" and employment rates at follow-up. It is likely that these positive impacts carried through to total earnings although the sample precluded a statistically significant finding. Results for young men were generally negative or negligible. Sites maintaining medium to low "fidelity" generated negative or negligible impacts for everyone.¹¹

How the project was funded: CET receives 50 percent of its funding from government (local, state, national) and 50 percent from the private sector (CET, 2004a). The CET replication project was funded by the U.S. Department of Labor.

¹¹ According to Bos (2003), one notable contextual factor that may have affected performance outcomes was that demand for labor was particularly strong during this time and provided unusual job opportunities for low-skilled youth. MDRC is conducting a longer-term follow-up that will track participants through the recent economic slowdown and report on impacts in that context.

Appendix C

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