



Findings on Youth Employment Training Best Practices

Prepared for the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation

Emily Boer Drake, MPA
Steven LaFrance, MPH

LaFrance Associates, LLC
251 Kearny Street, Suite 301
San Francisco, CA 94108
(415) 392-2850
www.lfagroup.com

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I. Introduction

Background

In 1994 the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation used funding from the Department of Labor to replicate the Argus Learning for Living program at the John R. Grubb YMCA in Des Moines, IA and Capital Commitment, Inc. in Washington, DC. An evaluation determined that the replicating sites implemented the Argus program successfully.¹ However, due to priority changes in the types of programs funded by the Department of Labor, it was not possible to continue funding the replication sites.

Since the initial Argus replications, the federal government overhauled the welfare system in 1996 and enacted the Workforce Investment Act in 1998. These two changes led to funding for a wide variety of employment training programs with diverse program components and theories of change. There is now once again interest and funding available to replicate a youth employment training program like Argus. In order to ensure that the Eisenhower Foundation implements a program that encompasses best practices and lessons learned by the Youth Employment Training field since the last set of replications, the foundation engaged LaFrance Associates, LLC (LFA). LFA was charged with researching best practices among youth employment training programs with the goal of determining whether there are any new program components or approaches to consider adding to the existing Argus model.

Evaluated Programs

The Eisenhower Foundation was especially interested in finding new programs that had been positively evaluated with an experimental or quasi-experimental design. This charge proved to be challenging. The majority of youth employment training programs that LFA encountered have not undergone rigorous evaluations. Additionally, among the handful of programs that have been evaluated in a methodologically sound manner, few are found to have consistently positive outcomes.

The one program in the youth employment training field that has been consistently positively evaluated is the long standing federally funded Job Corps program. As stated in a recent Child Trends report that reviewed evaluated employment programs, “Job Corps was the only program that increased the long-term earnings of participants as a whole.”² It is regarded by the youth employment training field to be unique in that it is able to consistently demonstrate a positive effect on employment outcomes for its participants. It is worth noting here that Argus and Job Corps share many similar program components—both try to serve as one-stop shopping and provide education, training, counseling, and life skills for their clients. While there are some key differences between the programs, most notably Job Corps’ residential component, Argus should be encouraged that its model is in line with a program that has been positively evaluated and is often regarded as the “gold standard” of employment training programs. More information about the Job Corps program and evaluations can be found in the Appendix.

¹ More information on the specific findings from this evaluation is included in the “Argus Program Model” section.

² Jekielek, Cochran and Hair (2002). “Employment Programs and Youth Development: A Synthesis.” Child Trends.

Due to the lack of programs that have been rigorously evaluated and found to have positive outcomes, LFA broadened the scope of research to encompass programs that utilize best practices even if they have not been positively evaluated. The report focuses on new program components that the Eisenhower Foundation may want to consider including in the youth employment training replications, and provides background, including any evaluations, on the programs that have already offered those components.

Report Overview

This report contains the following sections:

- **Research Methods:** A discussion of the methodology and description of research materials used to gather information for this report.
- **Argus Program Model:** A summary of the Argus program model, including existing education and vocational components of the Learning for Living program and a discussion of the replication evaluation.
- **Findings:** A report on other youth employment training programs throughout the United States. This section includes a discussion of how Argus compares to Job Corps, a large federally funded program that has been positively evaluated. It also presents a list of components that the Argus program can consider adding or enhancing from the existing program. These components were gathered from other youth employment training programs, some of which have been formally evaluated.
- **Appendices:** At the end of the report is a comprehensive list of the websites, papers and other sources used in the research of this report. There is also a brief summary of each program discussed and cited throughout the report.

II. Research Methods

This section describes LFA's criteria for including programs to in this research and provides an overview of the sources for information on best practices among youth employment training programs. A detailed list of sources is included in the Appendix at the end of this report.

Criteria for Program Inclusion

LFA began the research process by casting a wide net and looking for youth employment training programs that generally met the following criteria:

- A significant vocational training/work component with major goals related to employment outcomes.
- Population served is similar to Argus: Age 14-21, low income, and high risk of not finishing high school.
- In general, must have a component that is not currently included in the Argus model, or is an enhancement of an existing Argus component.
- Emphasis was placed on including programs that started in the mid 90s or later.
- Programs that were positively evaluated. If found, those were included even if they did not contain a new component or started before the mid 90s.

Overview of Sources

LFA used several sources to find youth employment training programs that met the above criteria. General internet searches were conducted on best practices in the field. LFA also visited the websites of national evaluation and social policy organizations, including Mathematica, Manpower Development Research Corporation, Public/Private Ventures, the Urban Institute, and Child Trends. These websites pointed LFA to specific programs that had been evaluated as well as overarching trends in the field of youth employment training.

LFA also relied on the Promising and Effective Practices Network (PEPNet), an entity of the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC). PEPNet is a network of established youth employment programs that shares lessons learned on effective practices. It provides standards and a framework for youth programs to achieve quality, tools for programs to assess themselves against the quality standards, and recognizes programs that are especially successful according to the PEPNet criteria. Programs recognized by PEPNet are designated as Awardees. They have been through an application and peer review process to be recognized for their quality practices and are generally considered to be among the strongest youth programs. They must meet criteria in each of PEPNet's five areas: Purpose and Activities, Organization and Management, Youth Development, Workforce Development, and Evidence of Success. 96 programs have been designated as Awardees from 1996 to 2003.³ LFA reviewed each of these 96 programs to determine which ones might contain program components that could be added to the existing Argus model. It is important to note that while PEPNet does have a criterion called Evidence of Success, programs do not need to have undertaken a rigorous program evaluation in order to meet this requirement. Instead, the

³ PEPNet has not designated any new awardees since 2003 because NYEC is currently working on the PEPNet Enhancement Project. NYEC plans to develop a new recognition or accreditation process and is currently investigating different award and accreditation models and review techniques.

threshold appears to be much lower—programs need only to have collected some data that show progress towards their goals (e.g., a measurement of the percent of participants that are placed in jobs following the program).

III. Argus Program Model

This section summarizes the program components of the last Argus model as it was documented in the 1994 replication manual and provides a brief overview of the evaluation results from those replications.

Argus Program Summary and Components

The South Bronx Argus Community Learning for Living Program is a job training, placement and retention program for out-of-school inner city youth. The program provides comprehensive support for multiple issues. Argus describes itself as “a family-like community that recreates the nurturance, structure, values, education, skills and opportunities denied to the youth by their own families and communities.” Below are some points on Argus’ overall organizing principles and the specific services that the program offers.

Organizing Principles

- Belief that youth can and do grow and change
- Staff come from the same social, economic, and familial backgrounds as the youth, and are able to relate to the youth and be credible role models
- Creation of an extended family and community environment
- Strict boundaries and rules are established and enforced in regards to violence, drug use, dress code, and behavior. These boundaries give youth structure and prepare them for success in the mainstream job market.
- A high priority is placed on creating a staff that really care and take an interest in each and every participant.
- Argus is a day program, not residential
- One-stop shopping for all services, with all programs provided on-site
- Small class sizes (15-20 students)
- Promotion within the program is based on achievement, not on the amount of time the student has spent in the program

Program Components

- Academics
 - Basic education
 - GED preparation
 - Computerized learning
- Vocational Training and Assistance
 - Job training (specific programs are Building Maintenance or Computer Literacy & Office Automation)
 - Information sessions from potential employers
 - Field trips and tours of companies
 - Internships
 - Corporate etiquette
 - Communication skills
- Job placement

- Support for at least 90 days after getting new job. Staff follows up with participants and ensures they are arriving to work on time and there are no problems with the employer.
- Counseling/Life Skills
 - Individual counseling (each participant has a Primary Counselor/Case Manager and a Treatment Plan)
 - Health education (groups and individual counseling)
 - Group counseling (interpersonal skills, exploration of feelings, behaviors and attitudes)
 - Single-gender group counseling (sexuality, reproduction, gender roles, related themes)
 - Recreation/socialization
 - Anger management
- Health
 - Substance abuse counseling and prevention (but no detox or residential treatment)
 - Assistance with getting Medicaid/other health insurance
 - Argus Community Health Center (on site family and primary care clinic)
- Referrals to other services (housing, prenatal care, court advocacy, residential drug treatment, legal aid, transportation, etc)

Prior Evaluations of Argus

After the Argus program was replicated in two sites—the John R. Grubb YMCA in Des Moines, IA and Capital Commitment, Inc in Washington, DC—the Eisenhower Foundation secured funding to conduct an evaluation of how well the Argus program was replicated in both sites and the impact of the program on participating youth. Due to funding constraints, the evaluation design was based on comparison groups, rather than control groups with random assignment. Evaluators collected data on participant and comparison groups at the beginning of the program, and then again at a follow-up time period ranging from 11 to 27 months after the start of the program.⁴

The program was found to have been successfully replicated in both locations. The new sites adhered closely to the Argus model and were able to faithfully recreate the family community and no-nonsense policy towards drugs and violence that is at the core of Argus' program in the Bronx.

The outcome evaluation consisted of three cohorts, each one consisting of program youth in Washington, DC and Des Moines, IA and comparison youth in each city. The evaluation of cohort 1 demonstrated significant differences in employment status (Washington DC and Des Moines) and average weekly earnings (significant for Washington DC only). Cohorts 2 and 3 were aggregated and analyzed together within each city to compensate for small sample sizes. Amongst this group, the program youth from Washington DC were less likely to use drugs over time than their comparison counterparts. In Des Moines, the program youth from cohorts 2 and 3 were less likely to use drugs, get arrested, or rely on public assistance. In its final evaluation report, the Eisenhower Foundation states: “Taken together, these findings strongly support the Argus program model.”

⁴ The follow up time depended upon which cohort the youth were in.

IV. Findings on Best Practices in Youth Employment Training

There are many new programs that have been implemented since the last Argus replication in the mid 1990s. This section focuses on describing components from programs that have been identified as strong or “top of the class.” As discussed in the methodology section above, the programs are included because they were either evaluated positively by a well regarded policy or evaluation organization, or were recognized by PEPNet for their use of best practices. It should be noted that while some of the programs have been positively evaluated for some outcomes, all programs are a comprehensive range of services. It is therefore not realistic to be able to attempt to pinpoint a positive outcome to the effect of one particular component. The components described here are split into two categories: those that are entirely new to the Argus program model and those that represent an enhancement or expansion of an existing Argus component. A summary chart is below, and more information about each component follows.

	Bank of America Youth Job Program	Career Academies*	Career Beginnings*	Casa Verde Builders	Center for Employment Training*	Genesee County Adolescent Vocational Center	Gulf Coast Trades Center	Job Corps*	Latino Stars Program	Los Angeles Youth Opportunity Movement	Moving Up	Project Opportunity	Project Paycheck	SoBRO Youth Development Center	Youth Career Program	YouthBuild
New Components																
Community Service & Civic Engagement	X				X		X		X						X	X
Leadership Training and Development						X	X	X	X		X		X			X
Logistical Help (transportation, child care)										X	X			X		
Mentoring	X	X							X	X						
Enhanced Components																
Family Involvement					X	X			X				X			
Financial Literacy/Budgeting								X				X	X			
Job Shadowing	X	X			X			X	X						X	
Parenting Education											X					
Specific vocational training programs	X		X	X				X		X						X
Ties and collaborations with local colleges	X			X									X			

*Indicates the program has had positive outcome evaluation(s), please see the Appendix for more information.

New Components

Community Service & Civic Engagement

A trend in employment training programs is to provide youth with an opportunity to connect with their communities through service. Perhaps the program that best embodies this component is YouthBuild, which views community service as something that can serve and satisfy the needs of both youth and neighborhoods. Community service is seen as a method of impressing upon the youth the idea that they can do something that affects change. As stated on YouthBuild’s website, “Young people in low-income communities want to rebuild their neighborhoods and lives, and will do so if given the opportunity. The desire to serve, to do meaningful work that is of value to other people, is universal. Community-based organizations need the resources to solve local problems and to mobilize local people, including neighborhood youth.” Also related to community service is the goal of civic engagement and teaching youth to be responsible citizens. Some programs do this

through their specific vocational training program, such as Casa Verde Builders which teaches youth about the importance of building energy efficient, environmentally friendly homes.

Leadership Training & Development

Leadership training is the new component that came up most frequently in the research. The inclusion of leadership training into many programs appears to have come out of the growing practice to base employment training programs on theories of youth development. Giving youth the skills and opportunity to practice their leadership skills gives them an advantage in the job marketplace that other prospective employees may not have. There are many programs that integrate leadership training into their programs. One of these is Job Corps which has a Student Government Association and formalized leadership training programs that students must meet certain criteria around maturity in order to participate.

Logistical Help & Support Services

Some programs provide services such as transportation, access to a food bank or child care to participants. These support services are seen as an integral part of removing barriers to participation. In the case of Moving Up, the program provides youth with subway passes so they can reach the program center in Manhattan. Project Paycheck, which targets parenting youth, provides many support services, including transportation and childcare. Argus provides youth with a small weekly stipend, which could be used for transportation or related services. These other programs however provide direct access to support services.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a component that many programs utilize. In the case of Career Beginnings, the mentoring is provided by adults from the local communities on a 1:1 ratio. In Bank of America's program, each participant is paired with a one-on-one mentor and a peer group mentor, both of whom are Bank of America employees. These mentors assist participants by encouraging academic achievement, staying in school and a positive work experience at the bank. Moving Up considers mentoring to be one of its hallmarks. Program staff provides intensive career mentoring during the program and for two full years after program completion.

Enhanced Components

Family Involvement

Increased family involvement was a part of the program that Argus expressed an interest in enhancing in its replication manual. It had found it challenging to get families to follow through on the commitments they made when the youth were enrolled because most parents were overburdened and struggling with their own issues. Programs have a variety of ways of keeping parents involved. The LA Youth Opportunity Movement and the SoBRO Youth Development Center invite parents to celebrations and on field trips. The Gulf Coast Trades Center, which is a residential program, pays for the costs to have families come visit. Other programs make special outreach efforts to include parents in program activities.

Financial Literacy

As personal debt continues to grow in the United States, some programs and schools have begun offering financial literacy components. The Latino Stars program has youth create different household budgets based on different income levels, and Project Paycheck also includes a budgeting

component. Argus' "World of Work" class does include a small personal money management component. However, it may want to consider adding a more substantial financial literacy component to the program. This could include actually taking students to a bank to open a checking account and teaching them how to complete a household budget. It is important to note that while there are many advocates of financial literacy and organizations devoted to providing services in this area, outcome evaluations have not demonstrated that financial literacy programs are having a large effect on this area. Jump\$tart, an organization dedicated to improving the personal financial literacy of young adults, administers a biennial survey to measure the financial literacy of 12th graders. They note that students who take a year long course in personal finance do not do any better on their exam than those who have not taken a class.

Job Shadowing

Argus does already provide some field trips to the sites of some businesses where its graduates are commonly employed. Some programs take the field trip idea a step further and offer job shadowing, where youth not only get to see what the work environment looks like, but also can shadow an employee for a day. At the LA Youth Opportunity Movement, the program has two "shadow weeks" a year for youth to participate in. The Genesee County Adolescent Vocational Exploration program spends time with youth developing very specialized career goals during the summer and then sets up individual job shadowing experiences for each youth based on their goals.

Parenting Education

Only one of the programs researched provides parenting education—Project Opportunity, which targets pregnant and parenting teens. Currently Argus provides pregnancy prevention and sexuality education classes. It also makes referrals for counseling and education for teen parents and pregnant women. However, given that many of Argus' participants are parenting, adding this component to its in-house services could be very useful to many of its youth.

Specific Vocational Training Programs

The existing Argus program provides training in two areas: Building Maintenance and Computer Literacy & Office Automation. When the Argus model was replicated at Capital Commitments, Inc in Washington, DC it included a telecommunications training program based on the needs of the local economy. Similarly, other programs have responded to their local economies and community needs by offering training programs that are relevant for their area. When Argus is replicated in a new site, it should not simply offer the Building Maintenance and Computer Literacy & Office Automation vocational training programs for the sole reason that it was offered at the original Argus. Instead, the local economy and current industry trends should be considered. For instance, many programs, such as YouthBuild and Casa Verde Builders, teach youth skills related to housing and building construction. Latino Stars has found focusing on technology careers to be worthwhile.

Ties and Collaborations with Local Colleges

Preparing youth for college is less of a goal for Argus than preparing them for employment, and Argus notes in their replication manual that "preparation for college entrance is provided and encouraged when appropriate." However, another potential area of program expansion would be to provide more targeted services to those students who may be interested in going to college. Increasing ties and collaboration with local colleges would enable Argus youth to go on tours, or potentially sit in on a class. The SoBRO Youth Development Center has a full time College Counselor who helps students prepare for college if they like and helps them navigate the admissions process.

Conclusions

LFA's research revealed there are very few youth employment training programs that have been rigorously evaluated and found to have positive outcomes. Career Academies, Career Beginnings and the Center for Employment Training in San Jose have found some positive outcomes, but Job Corps is the only program to consistently be positively evaluated. Therefore, the research was broadened to encompass a wider range of programs that are considered "top of the class" and utilize best practices. This review found many components the Argus model may want to adopt or enhance from the existing program. The new components include community service and civic engagement, leadership training and development, logistical help and support services; and mentoring. The components that Argus may want to enhance from the existing model are family involvement, financial literacy, job shadowing, parenting education, specific vocational training programs, and ties and collaborations with local colleges. Adding any of these components to the Argus model would strengthen its base of one-stop shopping services and allow it to provide an increased comprehensive set of supports to youth.

V. Appendices

Brief Descriptions of Cited Programs

Bank of America Youth Job Program

Description

YJP has five main components in which all students are engaged:

- Paid employment at the bank, with opportunities for advancement. Youth are provided a paid job in a professional business environment where they interact with Bank of America employees, customers and other program participants. Young people work approximately 15 hours per week while enrolled in school and 32 hours per week during vacation periods.
- Job training and career development. YJP participants receive general career development through resume writing and interviewing workshops as well as job-shadowing experiences and the paid employment at the bank. They are also provided opportunities for advancement within Bank of America. Some participants have continued as full-time Bank of America employees. College-planning assistance. Participants are guided in filling out college applications and applying for financial aid. Participants also take the PSAT and SAT. Once participants are in college, program staff members continue to assist them with questions regarding college, such as which classes to take. Participants receive assistance in balancing their school and work schedules and with scholarship sourcing.
- Intensive mentoring. Each program participant is paired with a one-on-one mentor and a peer group mentor, each of whom is a Bank of America employee. These mentors assist participants by encouraging academic achievement, staying in school and a positive work experience at the bank.
- Community service. In small groups of 5-6 students, led by a peer mentor, participants plan and execute a quarterly community service project, for example sending supplies to the victims of a hurricane. The objectives of community service are to develop participants' leadership skills while improving the lives of people and rejuvenating communities.

In addition to a National YJP Manager, two teams of bank employees provide a management structure for YJP that closely monitors individual student success and the success of the program as a whole. The YJP Management Team is responsible for day-to-day management activities and the implementation of program goals and objectives and is made up of the National YJP Manager, Program Officers, Coordinator, Norfolk Manager and Administrative Assistant. The YJP Support Team includes one-on-one mentors, peer group mentors, job-site supervisors and volunteer tutors. *(Description from PEPNet's website)*

Evaluation

Bank of America reports there has never been a formal evaluation of the program. On their PEPNet Awardee profile the program reports the following results from 1992 to 2003:

- 82% of students graduated from high school and YJP
- 55% of YJP graduates currently attend college (classes 1996-2002)
- 33% of YJP graduates have graduated from two- or four-year colleges, compared to a national average of one in 10 minority students receiving a college degree

- 67% of 2002 YJP graduates currently work for the Bank of America
- 40% of YJP graduates continue to work for the Bank of America after college graduation (classes of 1993-2002)

Career Academies

Description

The Career Academies program is designed to provide information, technical and academic skills, enhance engagement and performance in school, and, overall, enable participants to make a successful transition to postsecondary education and, later, a career. The program operates on the school level, with a specific type of structure and curriculum, and on the community level, through business partnerships and job opportunities with local employers. Target participants are high school students in schools and school districts with various high risk characteristics (e.g., high dropout and unemployment rates). Program components include a school-within-a-school structure, integrated academic and vocational curriculum and business partnerships and job shadowing provided by employers in the community. *(Description from Child Trends website)*

Evaluation

An experimental evaluation by Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation in 2000 showed that participants in Career Academies experienced several positive impacts, including a greater likelihood of graduating high school on time, more motivation to attend school, and having high-quality work-based learning activities while in high school. For youth at the most risk of dropping out of school, participation in the program also led to lower dropout rates, higher attendance, and appears to have forestalled their disengagement from school.

Career Beginnings

Description

Career Beginnings is a two-year program for at-risk 11th- and 12th-graders that is designed to enhance success in school and the workforce. It aims to increase the number of high school students from low-income families who complete their high school education and enter college, vocational training, or full-time employment. The initiative brings together high schools, businesses, and local colleges in partnerships that provide college preparation, career development, summer and school-to-work experience, special academic tutoring, mentoring, counseling, and supporting social services. Career Beginnings enrolls students for 18 months, from the beginning of their junior year through graduation. Most participants live in rural/small communities or in cities with populations greater than 100,000 and belong to minorities considered disadvantaged economically, socially, and educationally. The program matches each student with a mentor from the local business or professional community. The mentors, who are carefully selected, trained, and supported, help their students with planning their careers, applying to college, and understanding the professional work environment. In addition students attend workshops on: career planning; basic academic skills such as reading, writing, and mathematics; life skills such as money management, time management, and family planning; college financial aid; and resume writing and work-related issues. *(Description from US Department of Agriculture's website)*

Evaluation

An experimental evaluation by Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation in 1990 showed that participants experienced fewer unexcused school absences and an increased likelihood of attending college compared to those who were not in the program.

Casa Verde Builders

Description

Casa Verde Builders specializes in building energy efficient homes using environmentally friendly products. Participants commit at least six months to the program, spending half their time in on-site construction training activities and half in educational activities at AYW's Charter High School. The educational program for Casa Verde requires participants to gain competency in three broad areas: academic foundation skills, career preparation and project-based community service learning. Youth are assigned to crews of 8-12 members. The specific construction skills learned by members include: basic carpentry, masonry, roofing, drywall hanging and finishing, painting, concrete flatwork and foundations. Members also learn about sustainable building construction techniques; the program installed the first geo thermal heating system in the area and developed straw building materials for recent projects. *(Description from PEPNet's website)*

Evaluation

LFA was unable to locate any information on a formal outcomes evaluation of the program. The program reported the following results from 1999 on their PEPNet Awardee profile:

- The program enrolled 73 members, and 60% of enrollees completed the program.
- 20 members received either a GED or high school credit and there were 60 completions of either YouthBuild or AmeriCorps criteria.
- Upon graduation, 80% of the members were either enrolled in school or had been placed in jobs averaging greater than \$7 per hour.
- This is a 6 % improvement in Casa Verde's retention rate and a 10 % improvement in the placement rate since 1996.

Center for Employment Training

Description

CET integrates technical job skills training, basic academic skills instruction, leadership and human development, coordinated supportive services, job placement in local demand occupations and job retention services. CET training is full-time, intensive and job-oriented with a simulated employment environment that mirrors the real world of work.

Nationwide, CET offers vocational training in more than 30 areas, including childcare provider, retail specialist, commercial food service, medical clerk, carpentry, plumbing and electrical, truck driver, accounting and medical assistant. Centers are open year-round and students attend training classes five days a week, seven hours a day, working at their own pace. Training is competency based and highly individualized, with over 60 percent conducted in a hands-on environment. Each course requires between 30-50 work tasks and students remain in training until they achieve a score of at least 75 percent on the completion of each competency. Upon completing all the competencies, a student receives a CET Certificate of Completion in a specified job industry classification. Prior to completion students begin an aggressive job search activity.

Basic academic skills instruction is integrated into vocational instruction, with students learning the math, reading and writing they need in the context of a job. CET also offers GED preparation and vocational ESL classes. Students can earn a high school diploma from the CET Charter School and may also co-enroll in supplemental community college courses. *(Description from PEPNet's website)*

Evaluation

Two evaluations in the early 1990s reported that participants in CET-San Jose's programs achieved substantial and statistically significant gains in employment and earnings as compared to a control group not receiving CET services⁵. These results were particularly noteworthy in relation to the non-significant results of other programs that appeared outwardly similar. Among 16 employment and training providers participating in these two studies, CET-San Jose alone produced statistically measurable employment and earnings gains for its clients.

The CET-San Jose program has now been widely replicated and preliminary evaluation results from the replication sites are now available in a 2003 from MDRC. In an experimental design, the four sites that stuck closely to the CET-San Jose program model showed positive impacts for women on employment related outcomes (including employment rates and earnings). The impact was negative or negligible for men at the same sites. At sites that did not adhere closely to the program model, impacts were negative or negligible for the entire population and across all sub groups.

Genesee County Adolescent Vocational Exploration⁶

Description

The Genesee County AVE Program is a one-year program that provides students with real world experiences by integrating workplace skills, career exploration, academic skills, community service projects and other work-related activities into an intensive course of study.

The program begins with the spring module, with students attending AVE from 3:30-5:30 each school day. Students complete an Employment Development Plan, receive tutoring and basic skills instruction, go on a wide variety of career-oriented field trips, hear guest lecturers, and take part in lesson plans on respect, responsibility, values and teamwork. They also begin to get involved with community projects.

During the summer module, the students fully explore a specific career they are interested in, and begin developing a career portfolio. They conduct research on the Internet and by contacting colleges and trade schools and go on field trips and have job shadow experiences. They also have lessons to improve their employability skills such as interviewing and preparing resumes.

Students continue to attend AVE in the afternoons when school starts. They receive academic tutoring and counseling and participate in team building sessions. They will also conduct community interviews, hear guest speakers, go on career field trips and participate in community service projects (up to 10 in the year). (*Description from PEPNet's website*)

Evaluation

The staff member who used to be the program officer for this program reports that there was an evaluation done many years ago, but that the program is no longer in existence and he does not know how to track down a copy of the evaluation. The program reported the following results on their PEPNet Awardee profile:

⁵ Cave, Bos, Doolittle, and Toussaint, 1993; Burghardt, Rangarajan, Gordon, and Kisker, 1992.

⁶ This program was recently discontinued due to NY State budget cuts.

- 100% of the 1997-98 program participants were attending high school one year after their participation in AVE.
- 60% of participants reported improvement in their attitude towards school and 93% of parents supported that finding

Gulf Coast Trades Center

Description

Gulf Coast Trades Center, Inc. (GCTC) is a private, non-profit organization that began operations in 1971 through a cooperative agreement between the City of Houston, Model Cities, the AFL-CIO and individuals concerned with the welfare of troubled youth. It initially served troubled youth from the Houston-Galveston metropolitan area, providing a residential, vocational trade school. It is funded by state and local agencies, by some public education funds and by private donations and endowments. The Center's main campus is located 55 miles north of Houston in the Sam Houston National Forest. The program serves adjudicated young men and women, ages 16-19 from across Texas. Youth are referred by either a County Juvenile Probation authority or the Texas Youth Commission.

GCTC is a residential academic and vocational training program. It operates a 176-residential facility at its New Waverly campus and a 48-student transitional living program at its Independent Skills Learning Environment near Willis, Texas. It offers an intensive, highly structured but individualized program that includes assessment, personal and career counseling, occupational and life skills training, academic instruction, leadership development, work experience, transitional services and follow-up support. *(Description from PEPNet's website)*

Evaluation

LFA was unable to locate any information on a formal outcomes evaluation of the program. The program reported the following results on their PEPNet Awardee profile:

- Texas Youth Commission found that GCTC youth have a re-arrest record of 16%. This compares to study rates of 26.5 % in group home programs, 54.7 % at other contract programs, and 60.9 % at Texas Youth Commission state institutions.
- 84% of students enrolled between September 1999 and August 2000 completed the program and 70 % of the completers were employed when they left the program, at an average wage of \$6.25.

Job Corps

Description

Job Corps is a national training and employment program administered by the Department of Labor. It was created in 1964 under the Economic Opportunity Act and currently provides services at 119 centers throughout the country at a cost of more than \$1 billion per year. The population served and the core services provided are similar to the Argus program. Job Corps provides intensive education, training, counseling and health care to youth ages 16-24, most of who do not have a high school diploma. The average length of time in the program is 7 ½ months and it provides career counseling and transition support for up to 12 months after program completion. The overall goal is to make program youth more responsible, employable and productive citizens. Job Corps is a mostly residential program, with 80% of participants living at the Job Corps sites.

Evaluation

Due to the large amount of federal funding the program receives every year, Job Corps has been rigorously evaluated. An evaluation by Mathematica released in 2001 used an experimental design with random assignment to follow over 11,000 youth for 48 months to determine how effective Job Corps was at improving employability. Overall, the evaluation found that that after 4 years, program participants were more likely to receive a GED, be employed, and receive higher paying jobs with better benefits than control group youth. The evaluation also found the program to have positive effects on arrest and conviction rates and reliance on public assistance. Program impacts were particularly positive for youth who entered the program at 16 and 17. The evaluation did not find any significant effect of the Job Corps program on college attendance, receipt of public assistance, health status, or drug use. While the analysis was not able to compare residential and non-residential participants to each other, it not find any major differences in the outcomes between the two groups, suggesting that it effectively serves the group that cannot participate in the residential portion of the program.

Latino Stars Program

Description

The Latino Stars Program provides the skills, guidance and support needed to help the youth 1) pass failing academic classes, 2) learn work maturity skills, 3) learn essential computer technology skills and 4) identify career and post-secondary educational plans, thus preparing them to eventually graduate from high school and successfully enroll in college. By providing essential youth development activities within the context of a "total immersion experience" into the world of technology, the initiative offers educators and social workers a solution to the high dropout rate and low college enrollment rate of Hispanic youth.

Latino Stars students attend classes after school, three days per week for four hours per day for one year and are placed into technology-related jobs 20 hours per week during the summer. By emphasizing the computer technology activities (computer hardware and software skills classes), Latino Stars captures youths' attention, then provides: 1) homework assistance (peer tutors), 2) work maturity instruction (virtual-reality software, summer technology jobs), 3) career exploration activities (Myers-Briggs, career interest survey), 4) financial aid assistance, 5) leadership skills (goal setting, personality studies, anger management classes), 6) recreational activities (Latino Mural Arts Project) and 7) parental workforce services. After graduation, the program follows up with each student, providing longer-term support and guidance to enroll and graduate from college. (*Description from PEPNet's website*)

Evaluation

Although there is not an experimental study for this program, the Program Director has promised to send evaluation information, including data on educational gains and employments. Latino Stars reported the following results on the PEPNet Awardee Profile:

- 21 of 25 students (84%) showed at least one grade level increase on the post-TABE test; only two students had to attend summer school to re-take classes. From the TABE pre-test to the TABE post-test, students showed an average 2.3 grade level increase, attaining WIA's Basic Skills Competency
- 22 of 25 students (88 %) showed at least one grade level increase in the Math grades. The average Math grade of all students increased 13 points from the first report card to the last report card. The student's average English grade increased 14 points.

- 20 of 21 students (95 %) successfully showed competency in SCANS and WIA work maturity skills.
- 23 of 25 (92 %) students passed the Microsoft Word competency exam, passed the A+ competency computer hardware exam, completed the computer-building project and received WIA Occupational Skills competency.
- Seven seniors were enrolled in Latino Stars Program during its second year. Six of the seniors have secured PELL grants and other funding to attend college or trade school in the fall of 2003.

Los Angeles Youth Opportunity Movement

LAYOM is a vocational, educational, career and social support system involving 37 local community-based organizations that provide services under contract to LAYOM. In addition, about 100 non-financial partners provide in-kind services ranging from rent-free space to training, education, corporate support and volunteers. LAYOM programs operate in three communities: Watts, Boyle Heights and Pacoima/San Fernando Valley.

Upon enrollment, each youth develops a plan that details long- and short-term goals for education, employment and skill attainment. Program participation is structured by individual needs and goals, and all participants receive follow-up services for two years following placement. On average, youth participate in the program for about one year before they are placed in employment, long-term skills training or higher education.

Activities are divided into two categories: pre-placement and youth development, and take place at program sites, schools and partner agency sites within the community. Pre-placement activities include job readiness training, GED preparation, college/SAT preparation, internships/subsidized employment, short-term occupational skills training and reading/math remediation.

Youth development activities include community service, sports/recreation, support groups, peer-to-peer mentoring, alumni groups, life skills training, tutoring and secondary school extracurricular activities. Adult mentoring is provided for each youth from outreach to exit. (*Description from PEPNet's website*)

Evaluation

LFA was unable to locate any information on a formal outcomes evaluation of the program. The program reported the following results on its PEPNet Awardee profile:

- For the 3,700 youth served by YO! Boyle Heights and YO! Watts between September 2000 and June 2003:
 - 560 students earned their high school diploma or GED.
 - 444 participants have enrolled in two- or four-year college programs.
 - 2,579 youth (70 percent) remained in secondary or post-secondary school
 - 741 participants (18 percent) have been placed in unsubsidized employment for the first time.
- For the Rewarding Youth Achievement program for the period July 2002-June 2003:
 - 178 (94 percent) members of the senior class graduated from high school.
 - Of these, 82 entered two-year colleges, 108 entered four-year colleges or universities and six entered military or vocational training.

Moving Up

Description

Moving Up provides participants with a comprehensive program of job training and placement, soft skills training and two full years of career mentoring. Students have two opportunities per year to enter the program, in the fall and in the spring. The first phase of the Moving Up initiative begins with five months of training and instruction. Participants attend VFI every weekday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in a setting that simulates the business environment. Students spend three hours per day in the mornings in basic educational skills classes, taught by NYC Board of Education instructors. VFI also offers one-on-one tutoring and other remedial programs if necessary. In the afternoons, young people participate in three hours of job training in one of three training areas: Computer and Office Technology; Hospitality, Travel and Tourism; or Medical Billing and Office Assistance. They then attend an hour and a half of soft skills training. Upon completion of training, youth are placed in career related internships, followed by full-time employment. From day one of training, each student is assigned a Career Advisor and maintains contact with this individual through the end of the two-year retention period. The two-year job retention and career mentoring period begins on the first day a student is placed in a job. *(Description from PEPNet's website)*

Evaluation

LFA was unable to locate any information on a formal outcomes evaluation of the program. However, they do report that 63 percent of its clients are still employed after two years, and the program reported the following results on its PEPNet Awardee Profile in regards to the 806 participant served from 2001-2003:

- 79% completed training
- 94% of graduates were placed in full-time jobs
- 68% of these youth were continuously employed six months after placement
- 50% of these youth were continuously employed twelve months after placement
- 97% positively avoided substance abuse, pregnancy and/or criminal behavior

Project Opportunity

Description

The initiative serves approximately 140-160 pregnant and parenting young women a year, ranging in age from 12-22 years old. All students must take a life skills course, Child Development and Parenting, which focuses on assessing the impact of the parenting role in society and at work. Students at the appropriate age and grade level are enrolled in a comprehensive employability skills development program, Education for Employment, which includes classroom instruction, on-the-job training and participation in school-related activities that relate to civic consciousness. The comprehensive, academic support services required under WIA, such as tutorial assistance, academic monitoring, goal setting, academic assessments and alternative school enrollment are provided for all participants.

Many program activities are tailored to the grade and age level of each young person. Students in the middle school program are placed in a self-contained classroom. Ninth grade students move through their daily schedule almost as a group and are in the life skills class with the middle school students. Tenth, eleventh and twelfth graders are in different life skills classes (generally pregnant youth in one section and parenting youth in another) to address their unique needs. All seniors are enrolled in the

"Jobs for Virginia Graduates" program that provides them with intensive job development activities, job placement services, post-secondary educational assistance and one-year follow-up services. The Employment Specialist works with students both individually and in groups. (*Description from PEPNet's website*)

Evaluation

LFA was unable to locate any information on a formal outcomes evaluation of the program. The program reported the following results from 2001-2002 on its PEPNet Awardee Profile:

- 133 young women served
- 103 youth completed credits and stayed enrolled in school
- 98 completed specialized classes and achieved the necessary competencies
- Of the 28 youth who left the program: 12 took a job, 10 entered another program and 6 moved or their whereabouts is unknown

Project Paycheck

Description

The initiative serves at-risk, primarily out-of-school youth, ages 14-25, who live in Laramie County, Wyoming. In 2002, 90 percent of the youth were substance abusers, 70 percent were in foster care, 75 percent were juvenile offenders, 70 percent were parents and 75 percent were deficient in basic academic skills. The initiative includes three programs: the Fleming Young Parent Program, which serves pregnant and parenting teens exclusively; LINK, a teen drop-in center with a variety of scheduled programs and services; and Project Paycheck, which serves non-parenting youth. Classes convene in September and January to roughly correspond with public school semesters. Additional group meetings and training opportunities at LINK are offered year-round.

From the very beginning of each class, youth are responsible for helping create rules and guidelines for attendance and participation and for facility maintenance and housekeeping chores. Following assessment and individual planning, youth attend GED preparation classes, take part in community activities, and take part in workshops on topics including family planning, substance abuse, budgeting, housing, work ethics, resume building, anger management and goal setting. They also have access to support services including transportation, medical and legal services, child care, housing and obtaining or reinstating a driver's license. During this time, participants are required to obtain employment, either on their own or with assistance from a case manager. (*Description from PEPNet's website*)

Evaluation

LFA was unable to locate any information on a formal outcomes evaluation of the program. The program reported the following results on its PEPNet Awardee Profile:

- Between January 2000 and April 2002, 248 youth participated in Project Paycheck.
- 100% established positive adult relationships as determined by life skills assessments and case management home visits.
- 85% had a stable address
- 95% increased their academic skills.
- 70% earned a GED
- 80% were employed and 80 percent had earnings gains.
- Participants had a 10% criminal arrest rate.

SoBRO Youth Development Center

Description

SoBRO is a community-based economic development organization founded in 1972 to reverse the flight of businesses and jobs from the South Bronx. It created the Youth Development Center in 1997. The community is the poorest Congressional District in the county, with more than 40 percent of the South Bronx population living below the poverty line. Within the school district, only about half of the entering high school freshmen graduate. Center program offerings vary from year to year. Currently, the Center offers several 10-month long, theme-based after-school programs for students in high school and middle school; a program for out-of-school youth; a new public high school; a satellite school for high school students with behavioral issues; and a summer youth employment program. At the heart of the Center's operations are three core activities: career exploration/work readiness; basic skills/education; and leadership. The core activities are incorporated into each of the Center's individual program areas and tailored to the goals of the individual programs. In addition, the Center provides age-appropriate life skills information and support services, including financial literacy seminars, pregnancy prevention workshops, a full-time college counselor and motivational presentations. The Center has a full-time staff of 30.

The Center's current programs are:

- *Excel and Achieve and Careers for Youth.* These are theme-based after-school programs for high school students ages 14-18. Current themes include web design; careers in graphic design, digital media, cartooning and animation; music and careers in the music field; video production; teaching; fashion and entertainment industry; journalism and magazine production; and organizing and conducting workshops for other youth. After-school programs operate from October to June for three hours a day, and most participants enroll for the 10-month period.
- *YouthBuild.* This program combines construction training, GED preparation and leadership development for out-of-school youth ages 17-24. YouthBuild runs for 10 months, five days a week for 6 hours a day, with participants alternating weeks in the classroom and at the construction site.
- *Advantage After-school Program.* This is a program for middle school students ages 11-14, offering activities ranging from sports and recreation to dance and music classes, computer literacy, academics and life skills.
- *New Beginning.* This satellite high school opened in Spring of 2003 for 40 youth with behavioral issues.
- *Summer Youth Employment Program.* The Center offers youth 14-19 years old seven weeks of paid work experience and support services. (*Description from PEPNet's website*)

Evaluation

LFA was unable to locate any information on a formal outcomes evaluation of the program. The program reported the following results for 2002-2003 on its PEPNet Awardee Profile:

- 98% of the high school participants (nearly 300) advanced to the next grade level.
- 80% (117) of students scoring below grade level of 8.9 on the TABE at entry increased their academic skills by at least one grade level, with an average improvement of nearly three grade levels.
- 99% of the 40 high school seniors graduated on time and were accepted to college.

- Since YouthBuild started, in 1998, an average of 85% of program enrollees complete program requirements and move on to advanced training, or a job. In the last completed cycle, 35 students enrolled and 25 students (72 %) graduated 10 months later. Six participants were deemed eligible to pass the GED, after completion, based on their scores on the TABE.
- 73% of our New Beginnings students, students who are being asked to leave the traditional high school building for behavior/attendance issues, from our first semester successfully completed educational and life skills goals for the term and will return in September.
- 100% of Summer Youth enrollees (354) were placed in subsidized employment for the summer and maintained an overall attendance rate of over 85%.

Youth Career Program

Description

The Youth Career Program activities are designed around an intensive, seven-day-a-week community-based schedule that incorporates daily peer groups, weekly face-to-face visits with "family" members, drug and alcohol education and awareness groups and connections to positive adults and peers in the community. Monday through Friday, each youth is required to actively participate in a minimum one-hour peer group session which utilizes the Preparing Adolescents for Young Adulthood curriculum, addressing areas such as resume development, life skills assessment, substance abuse and anger management.

New participants enter the program on a daily basis. The program has a rolling enrollment policy that allows for services to begin within 24 hours of referral in emergency/crisis situations. Upon referral to the program, youth are immediately assigned a Youth Resource Specialist (YRS) with whom they create a Youth Development Plan outlining their personal needs and goals for program participation.

Workforce development activities are organized into 3 phases: Pre-Employment Assessment, which addresses career planning and job-readiness training; Job Development in which the youth learn how to do their own job development and cold-calling. Youth also go on a minimum of two company tours during this phase and are responsible to submit resumes and applications until they secure paid employment or volunteer work; and Training and Long Term Support which focuses on establishing positive adult relationships at work with their supervisor, fellow employees and other adults in the community.

The program also provides a range of support services, including weekend tracking of youth's activities, school attendance support, wake-up calls (by phone and in person), transportation, bi-monthly recreational activities, vocational assessment, and community service opportunities.

(Description from PEPNet's website)

Evaluation

LFA was unable to locate any information on a formal outcomes evaluation of the program. The program reported the following results on its PEPNet Awardee Profile:

- 172 youth participated in the program during the July-December 2002 period
- 85 % participated in the Career Planning Process
- 57 % obtained a job
- 54 % showed academic improvement

- Program participants had a recidivism rate of 15 %.

YouthBuild USA

Description

YouthBuild USA is a national organization whose primary goals are (1) providing training and technical assistance to organizations or groups interested in developing YouthBuild Programs; (2) organizing a YouthBuild coalition to advocate for funding for YouthBuild Programs and to link community groups together; (3) developing a national group of youth leaders; and (4) providing training to adults on the importance of youth leadership development.

The YouthBuild Program began as the Youth Action Program in East Harlem in 1988 and has since expanded nationwide. There are currently 15 operational YouthBuild Programs in the United States. The YouthBuild Program trains youths in construction skills for 12 to 18 months by renovating or building housing for homeless or low-income persons. In the program, youths attend academic classes to prepare for the high school equivalency diploma and to learn basic literacy education, culturally relevant history, and current events. The program also provides individual counseling, peer leadership and support groups, and sports/recreational and cultural activities. Driver's license training is also provided to assist in increasing employment opportunities. Youths in the program are urged to take a leadership role through involvement in a youth advisory committee and community activities. (*Description from US Department of Agriculture's website*)

Evaluation

The 2003 evaluation of the YouthBuild program is not an experimental outcomes measurement. Instead, it compares the YouthBuild program to four other federally funded programs that have been rigorously evaluated through randomly assigned control and participant groups (Job Corps, JOBSTART, Supported Work Demonstration, and the Job Training Partnership Act). The authors note that of these programs only Job Corps is still operating and was found to have significant impacts on educational achievement and earnings. The major conclusion from the evaluation is that the GED rates and employment rates of YouthBuild participants are, on average, closer to the control group in the Job Corps study than the Job Corps participants. The evaluation included the following results from 18,000 youth from 20 sites who participated between 1996 and 2002:

- 29% of participants who entered without a high school degree either finished high school or earned a GED
- 36% of participants were employed as they left the program
- 12% of participants pursued higher education when they left the program

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