

Outcome Goal 1.2

Increase the Number of Youth Making a Successful Transition to Work

In an effort to introduce youth to health occupations, Weld County Employment Services and Aims Community College collaborated with North Colorado Medical Center (NCMC), the University of Northern Colorado (UNC), Bonell Good Samaritan Center, and Medline to offer an extraordinary program: Gee Wiz Health Camp. The program was designed to familiarize youth ages 14-20 with health care occupations using a see, touch, experience, and share format. The twenty youth chosen for this program are high risk youth and were enrolled in either the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Summer Youth Programs. Occupations introduced ranged from Registered Nurse to Paramedic. The youth participated extensively in putting on casts, suturing, assisting with staged accidents, and science experiments. All twenty youth graduated successfully from this program with 90 percent of the youth interested in health occupations. In the older group, ages 16-20, three will begin Certified Nurse Assistant classes; one will begin prerequisite classes for Medical Assistant, one is completing a work experience through the WIA Program as a Dental Hygienist, one is continuing in high school; and one is currently working in another field. The program demonstrates that there is great value in hands-on career guidance.



Photo Credit: Employment Services Center of Weld County, Colorado

Overview

Studies reveal strong correlations among education levels, employment, and lifelong earnings. DOL administers youth programs under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), including the Job Corps program, the youth formula grant program and the Youth Opportunity Grant program, as well as research and demonstration projects that address the needs of at-risk youth, both in and out of school. Services to in-school youth help them remain in and complete secondary school, move into post-secondary education or advanced training, and ultimately transition into successful careers. Out-of-school youth receive services that provide the necessary skills to attain educational credentials (i.e., high school diploma or a GED), participate in vocational and post-secondary training opportunities, and transition into gainful employment or a career. The Women's Bureau GEM-SET program connects young girls with professional women who serve as mentors in the science, engineering, and technology fields. Through these programs, our nation makes a meaningful investment in at-risk teenagers and young adults that is necessary to help them become productive and self-sufficient members of the nation's workforce.

The WIA youth formula-funded program funds every local workforce investment area across the country to provide comprehensive employment and training services to disadvantaged youth in order to prepare them for the changing and challenging demands of the workforce. Services include academic preparation for both in and out-of-school youth with emphasis on high school diploma and/or GED attainment; employment and occupational training; supportive services; and one full year of follow-up services.

Job Corps is a nationwide network of residential facilities that provides a comprehensive and intensive array of training, career development, job placement and support services to disadvantaged young people. Job Corps offers residential living and support services; academic instruction that leads to a high school diploma or a GED certificate; competency-based vocational training; and life skills preparation that will enable students to make sound economic decisions for themselves and their families.

Youth Opportunity Grants, a demonstration program that is approaching its final year of funding, focus on the most disadvantaged youth in high-poverty areas. Youth one-stop centers within the high-poverty communities provide primarily out-of-school youth with academic preparation leading to high school diploma and GED attainment, employment preparation and occupational skills training, as well as supportive services and two full years of follow-up services to ensure a successful transition of youth into the workforce and/or post-secondary education.

Serving The Public

DOL's youth programs primarily serve eligible low-income youth between the ages of 14 – 24 who are out of school, and in-school youth who are at risk of dropping out, including youth with disabilities and others who may require additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment. In the most recent program year (PY 2002) ending June 30, 2003, the WIA formula-funded program served 396,470 youth, 26,000 more than the previous program year. In addition, performance increased in all three indicators of success: entered employment rate, employment retention rate, and

diploma attainment rate. In fact, the diploma attainment rate increased fourteen percent over the prior program year.

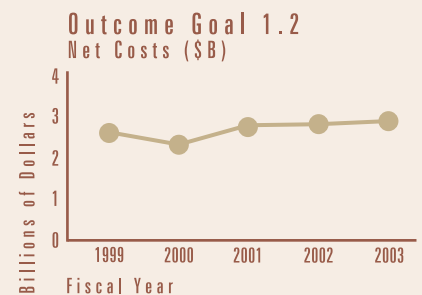
The Job Corps provides intensive, long-term training in a residential setting that includes a secure, drug-free learning environment, academic, vocational and social skills development, medical care, and career and personal counseling. Job Corps students come from economically disadvantaged families, are primarily high school dropouts and are considered the hardest-to-serve population. There are 118 Job Corps Centers located in 48 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. In PY 2002, the Job Corps program served 64,043 youth while achieving a 96 percent year-on-year increase in high school diploma attainment; a placement rate of 87 percent for graduates placed in jobs or entering advanced training/education programs; an average hourly wage of \$8.03 per hour for employed graduates; and a 63 percent retention rate for graduates still employed or enrolled in advanced education programs after initial placement. In April 2003, Secretary Chao announced the selection of Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Pinellas County, Florida as locations for two new Job Corps centers.

Youth Opportunity Grants concentrate resources for a variety of youth services for all young people residing in 36 high-poverty areas, including 24 urban neighborhoods, 6 rural areas and 6 Indian Reservations, and in selected migrant and seasonal farm worker communities. The Youth Opportunity Grants served 49,995 youth, an increase of over 18,000 youth from the previous program year. The Youth Opportunity Grants increased the number of long-term placements in unsubsidized employment, post-secondary education, and occupational skills training by 125 percent from the previous program year. In addition to the increase in placements, the quality of job placements also increased with an average wage at placement of \$8.72 as compared to an average wage at placement of \$7.00 the previous year. The Youth Opportunity Grants also increased the number of credentials (GEDs, diplomas, and other credentials) by 138 percent from the previous program year.

Program Costs

FY 2003 program costs of \$3.0 billion supported ETA programs providing employment and training assistance to youth through formula grants to States, Job Corps, and the Youth Opportunity Grants program. Increased costs in this area resulted largely from spending on the Job Corps physical plant and buildup of the Youth Opportunity Grant program serving at-risk youth in needy areas.

Costs have trended upward over the last two years, given the rising cost of providing individualized and concentrated services to these hard-to-serve populations. Increased costs in the Job Corps program are associated with providing longer-term interventions which have led to more successful participant outcomes and better retention in the program. Both the WIA formula-funded program and the Youth Opportunity Grants lowered their cost per participant by increasing the number of participants served while expending approximately the same amount of resources. DOL is aware of the importance of measuring cost effectiveness in order to optimize the large investment in DOL youth programs. DOL will begin to measure efficiency as part of the implementation of the common performance measures for job training programs beginning July 1, 2004.



DOL Challenges for the Future

The youth population between the ages of 16 and 24 is increasing. Unemployment levels among these youth have risen over the past few years, accounting for a large portion of the Nation's job losses. Without the necessary marketable skills and experience to succeed in the workplace, these youth would not be able to compete effectively. DOL youth programs offer services that help turn challenges into opportunities for these youth, preparing them to adapt to and prosper in the ever-changing labor market.

To meet the challenge of serving young people most in need, DOL continues to focus its efforts on improving the effectiveness of services under the WIA formula grant and Job Corps programs. With the impending WIA reauthorization and the implementation of the common measures for employment and training programs, the Department will also focus its efforts on preparing States and local workforce investment areas for this transition. Three major focus areas in the coming year will include:

- *Implementation of the Common Performance Measures.* In 2004, all ETA programs, including the youth programs funded by the Workforce Investment Act, will implement the common performance measures for employment and training programs. The Department will provide extensive guidance and technical assistance in order to ensure a smooth transition to the new reporting system.
- *Recruiting and Retaining Out-of-School Youth.* Because the current WIA reauthorization proposal focuses on serving primarily out-of-school youth, recruiting, retaining, and providing increased services to dropouts and out-of-school youth will continue to be a priority for States and local workforce investment areas. WIA services for these youth will continue to focus on the provision of educational and occupational skills training that will prepare them for post-secondary education, advanced training, and jobs with a career.
- *Providing Technical Assistance and Identifying Effective Practices.* The Department will provide technical assistance to states and local workforce investment areas through academies, national and regional office conferences, policy guidance, and continued funding and dissemination of studies, reports, and other products that identify best practices in the field. Best practices will focus on evidence-based research in which data indicate successful youth outcomes.

Assist Youth In Making A Successful Transition To Work

Performance Goal 1.2A (Employment and Training Administration) – FY 2002

Increase entrance and retention of youth registered under the WIA youth program in education or employment.

Indicators

51 percent of the 14–18 year-old youth who enter the program without a diploma or equivalent will attain a secondary school diploma or equivalent by the first quarter after exit.

63 percent of the 19–21 year-old youth will be employed in the first quarter after program exit.

77 percent of the 19–21 year-old youth employed in the first quarter after exit will be employed in the third quarter after program exit.

Results

The goal was achieved. All three targets were reached. Fifty-five percent of the 14–18 year-old youth who entered the program without a diploma or equivalent attained a secondary school diploma or equivalent by the first quarter after exit as compared to a target of 51 percent. Sixty-seven percent of the 19–21 year-old youth were employed in the first quarter after program exit as compared to a target of 63 percent. Eighty percent of the 19–21 year-old youth employed in the first quarter after program exit were employed in the third quarter after program exit as compared to a goal of 77 percent.

Program Description

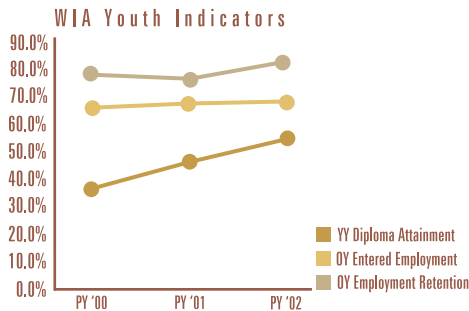
Title I of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) authorizes services to eligible low-income youth between the ages of 14-21 who have barriers to employment, including those who have deficiencies in basic skills or those who meet one or more of these criteria: homeless, a runaway, pregnant, parenting, an offender, school dropout, or a foster child. The program also serves youth with disabilities and other youth who may require additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment. Programs and services are offered to both in- and out-of-school youth. Service providers prepare youth for post-secondary education by stressing strong linkages between academic and occupational learning, and preparing youth for employment. Local communities create opportunities for youth by providing required program elements, including: tutoring, alternative schools, summer employment, occupational training, work experience, supportive services, leadership development, mentoring, counseling, and follow-up services.

The three performance indicators were selected from seven WIA youth measures. For the older youth population, entrance into employment and retention in employment are the most appropriate indicators of success. For the younger youth population, where services are geared toward academic achievement as a means of career preparation, achievement of a diploma or its equivalent is the most meaningful indicator of future success in the workforce.

Twenty-year old Noemi is a prime example of how the combination of initiative and the right opportunity can build the foundation for a promising future. Born in Guadalajara, Mexico and raised in Los Angeles, California, Noemi pursued her long-held curiosity about cars by enrolling in the local Automotive Youth Education Services program at Lassen Technical Institute in Susanville, California. Her knowledge and interest in cars continued to grow, as did her confidence in her social and leadership skills. From these beginnings, Noemi desired to increase her prospects by joining SkillsUSA, whose members elected her as their national secondary secretary. In a speech on Capitol Hill, she championed career and technical education. A scholarship award from DaimlerChrysler allowed her to enter their College Automotive Program with the promise of employment. Commenting on differences between SkillsUSA students and other high school students, Noemi says, “[SkillsUSA students] learn how to make more use of their time and talent.”



Photo Credit: Norm Reeves;
Norm Reeves Chrysler/Jeep/Dodge, Temecula, California



Analysis of Results

The results reflect performance reported by 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico through the fourth quarter of the Program Year ending June 30, 2003 (Program Year 2002). Performance against the three indicators has significantly increased compared to Program Year 2001. As illustrated by the corresponding chart, performance under all three indicators increased each program year, despite challenging economic circumstances.

Strategies

DOL's improved youth employment performance across the nation was the result of a variety of strategies undertaken to assist States and local areas in improving program performance. ETA implemented a performance enhancement project that provided specific technical assistance to States and local workforce investment areas that had previously not met their performance goals. States received training in areas such as youth program design and delivery, data collection and performance management, and how to understand, monitor, and analyze WIA performance. This training allowed States to tailor their performance-improvement strategies based on their specific needs and deficiencies. ETA also conducted State and local workforce investment area assessments in order to determine the effectiveness of local youth programs. These on-site assessments helped regional offices to tailor technical assistance resources and develop corrective action strategies to address programmatic weaknesses and improve program outcomes. Additionally, ETA implemented capacity-building initiatives for local workforce investment board staff, whose role is critical to the success of youth programs. ETA conducted eight peer-to-peer learning exchanges in the areas of recruitment and retention of out-of-school youth, strengthening the connection between education and workforce communities, and documenting competencies and gains through appropriate assessments and credentials.

Management Issues

The reliability and accuracy of third party data (data from youth service providers) reported by States for the WIA performance measures are an ongoing management concern. This concern was raised by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) in their September 2002 report, *Workforce Investment Act Performance Outcomes Reporting Oversight*. In response to these concerns, DOL developed data validation handbooks, data validation software, and policy on the implementation of data validation to assist States and Local areas. DOL also issued Training and Employment Guidance Letter 3-03 entitled *Data Validation Policy for Employment and Training Programs* on August 20, 2003, which provides guidance for validating Program Year 2002 data, including the requirements that States conduct both report validation and data element validation by April 1, 2004. Already, it appears that reporting problems experienced in prior program years have mostly been eliminated and the majority of States are submitting more accurate and consistent data.

In another OIG report that reviewed the programmatic aspects of the WIA youth program, the OIG recommended that ETA ensure that the services provided and outcomes achieved are better documented, and that ETA encourage revisions to WIA that improve the youth program (see Study 7 in Appendix 3). In response, ETA revised a comprehen-

sive case management manual and distributed it to all youth workforce investment areas in November 2003.

The General Accounting Office (GAO) issued two reports pertaining to WIA programs overall. The first report examined spending and financial reporting by States (study 14 in Appendix 3), and the second report recommended the development of a research agenda for the integration of programs in One-Stop Career Centers (study 17 in Appendix 3). ETA is addressing these GAO findings and recommendations through issuance of clarifying reporting guidance; examination of methods and systems for adjusting analysis of performance outcomes to take into account economic, demographic, and other factors; commissioning an evaluation of the WIA performance measurement system (discussed below) and an evaluation of the WIA youth program; and development of a five-year research plan. Additionally, the WIA reauthorization proposal will address several of the recommendations in the GAO reports. ETA also commissioned independently conducted studies of two demonstration programs that provided findings applicable to youth programming (see studies 21 and 22 in Appendix 3). Details of these reports' specific findings, recommendations, and DOL actions taken can be found in Appendix 3.

ETA contracted with Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to conduct an evaluation of the WIA performance measurement system. SPR issued an interim report in August 2003 that recommended that DOL: improve the negotiation process for determining State levels of performance; develop adjustment models to account for differences in participant and economic characteristics; refine older youth measures to reflect emphasis on educational and skill attainment; provide a more standardized definition of credentials; focus on customer satisfaction; and provide additional technical assistance. ETA is incorporating the feedback and recommendations provided by SPR as it develops the new common performance measures that ETA will implement beginning July 1, 2004.

The Administration's Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) review of WIA Youth performance, conducted in 2002, included two recommendations: adopt common performance measures for employment and training programs, and plan and conduct an impact evaluation. In response, beginning in Program Year 2004, ETA is adopting the common measures, including a new measure to gauge WIA's Youth's cost-effectiveness. ETA will also conduct an impact evaluation beginning in Program Year 2005.

Goal Assessment and Future Plans

ETA will continue with the same three performance indicators for Program Year 2003 (FY 2004). Performance targets for these three indicators will increase for PY 2003, based on the improved performance in Program Year 2002. The older youth entered employment rate is targeted to increase to 65 percent, the older youth employment retention rate is targeted to increase to 78 percent, and the younger youth diploma attainment rate is targeted to increase to 52 percent. Beginning in Program Year 2004 (FY 2005), ETA will implement the common measures for employment and training programs, as developed through an interagency process. The common measures for youth include the following four indicators: placement in employment, post-secondary education, or advanced training; attainment of a degree or certificate; literacy and numeracy gains; and efficiency.

Maurice was a “challenging” teenager growing up in Charleston, S.C., when his mother sent him to the Brunswick Job Corps Center to save her son from a life leading nowhere. Maurice enrolled and studied welding, turned his grades around and graduated with a high school diploma. He commented, “Job Corps gives you room to grow and doesn’t tell you what to do or become.” He earned a scholarship, paid by Job Corps, to Vance-Granville Community College in North Carolina. After one semester of studying criminal justice, Hawkins joined the United States Coast Guard. After the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, a campaign ensued to find the sailor who best represented the organization; Maurice was selected from over 200 candidates. He spent a week in San Diego shooting commercials and posing for magazine and billboard ads. “I was honored to be doing it,” he said. Currently, Maurice is stationed in St. Petersburg, Florida. He is also preparing to become part of St. Petersburg’s local Partnership in Education program. Maurice, who plans to make a career of the Coast Guard, was recently promoted to the rank of Petty Officer First Class.



Photo Credit: DOL/ETA

Improve Employment Prospects for Disadvantaged Youth

Performance Goal 1.2B (Employment and Training Administration) PY 2002

Increase participation, retention, and earnings of Job Corps graduates in employment and education.

Indicators

90 percent of Job Corps graduates will enter employment or be enrolled in education.

65 percent will continue to be employed or enrolled in education six months after their initial placement date.

Graduates with jobs will be employed at average hourly wages of \$8.20.

The number of students who attain high school diplomas while enrolled in Job Corps will increase by 20 percent from Program Year 2001.

Results

The goal was not achieved. Two of the four targets were substantially reached or exceeded, while performance as measured by the other two indicators fell just short of their targets. Two indicators were slightly below their targets. In Program Year 2002, 6,381 high school diplomas were attained, compared to 3,260 in Program Year 2001, well exceeding the target of 20 percent increase over Program Year 2001 levels. The target average hourly wage rate of \$8.20 was substantially reached, with an actual rate of \$8.03. The initial placement rate was 87 percent, three percentage points below the target. The six-month placement rate was 63 percent, nearly reaching the 65 percent target.

Program Description

The Job Corps Program is an intensive, primarily residential training program for youth ages 16 to 24 who are economically disadvantaged and face other challenges, including multiple barriers to gainful employment. Job Corps provides occupational skills, academic training, social education, and other support to some 68,000 participants at 118 centers nationwide. The program also provides career support services such as housing, transportation, and family support resources for program graduates for up to 12 months after graduation.

Job Corps helps participants achieve the skills and credentials required to be successful, productive citizens, and to obtain placement opportunities that lead to long-term employment. Job Corps’ approach provides personalized services through a career development services system that includes outreach and admissions, career preparation, career development and career transition services. This continuum of experiences and services is tailored to each student’s needs to reinforce necessary skills throughout all phases of the program.

Analysis of Results

Job Corps' high school diploma attainment rate increased by 96 percent in Program Year 2002, significantly exceeding the 20 percent increase target. This outcome is attributed to a renewed focus on academic achievement and the establishment of new strategies designed to facilitate students' successful completion of diploma requirements.

The average hourly wage for Job Corps graduates continues to increase steadily. The average hourly wage of \$8.03 resulted in a seven cents per hour increase over last year's wage rate. However, since the target was significantly increased this year (by 95 cents), the actual wage improvement was below the \$8.20 target. Given slow economic conditions experienced in Program Year 2002, these are solid results.

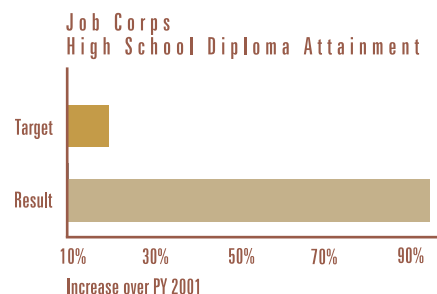
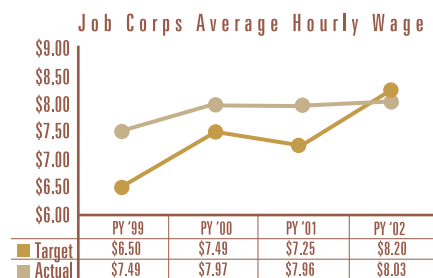
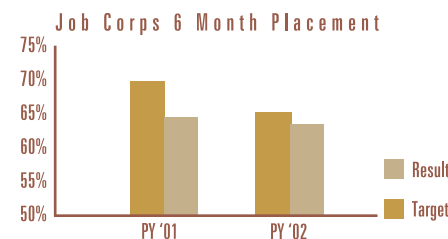
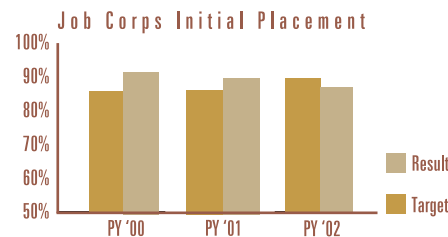
Initial placement and job retention at six months for Job Corps graduates were solid, given economic conditions. Eighty seven percent of Job Corps graduates found jobs or entered advanced education programs after graduation. Moreover, 63 percent were still employed or enrolled in advanced education programs six months later. Even though the placement indicators fell slightly short of their targets, the results are good for this hard-to-serve population.

Strategies

Job Corps helps youth compete for jobs by providing services that are tailored to their individual needs and aptitudes. Job Corps emphasizes strategies that focus on improving program quality and providing individualized services. For example, Job Corps maximizes every opportunity to collaborate with businesses, educational institutions, communities and workforce development partner programs, to ensure that training is relevant to the anticipated needs of the labor market and to reduce duplication of service delivery efforts.

Job Corps' competency-based education program helps students achieve the academic and occupational skills needed to remain competitive. Individualized services include academic and vocational training, work-based learning at employer sites, employability skills development, information technology skills training, counseling/support services, driver's education, childcare support, and placement and transitional services support. Concentrated efforts also focus on helping participants improve basic education skills, particularly the growing population of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students that Job Corps serves.

The quality and effectiveness of performance improvement strategies is evaluated through on-site assessments and rigorous monitoring of key activities, as well as detailed strategic planning at the service delivery level. Strategies for improving program quality include integrating performance accountability into the competitive procurement process, evaluating vocational training programs to maintain high quality training techniques that meet industry standards, and linking with employers to strengthen employment opportunities in high-growth industries.



Management Issues

Job Corps uses a rigorously designed and comprehensive data collection system, considered one of the most effective among ETA programs, to measure performance results. Job Corps' Student Pay/Management Information System serves as the source for this data. An independent research contractor retained by Job Corps national management stringently reviews the system to ensure data integrity. The Office of Inspector General also reviews the data and data collection system.

Goal Assessment and Future Plans

To provide a greater emphasis on long-term results, Job Corps' Program Year 2003 graduate placement indicator has been replaced with an indicator for six-month job retention. The new target, graduate average hourly wage at six months, will be \$8.27. The six-month job retention target will remain at 65 percent. The high school attainment rate indicator will remain at a target level of 20 percent over the previous program year. In Program Year 2004, ETA will implement the common measures for employment and training programs that include four indicators: placement in employment, post-secondary education, or advanced training; attainment of a degree or certificate; literacy and numeracy gains; and efficiency.

Increase Opportunities For Youth

Performance Goal 1.2C (Employment and Training Administration) – PY 2002

Increase entrance and retention of Youth Opportunity Grant participants in education, training, or employment.

Indicators

51 percent of the 14–18 year-old youth who enter the program without a diploma or equivalent will attain a secondary school diploma or equivalent by the first quarter after exit.

63 percent of the 19–21 year-old youth will be employed in the first quarter after program exit.

77 percent of the 19–21 year-old youth employed in the first quarter after exit will be employed in the third quarter after program exit.

Results

The goal was not achieved. Forty-six percent of the 14–18 year-old youth who entered the program without a diploma or equivalent attained a secondary school diploma or equivalent by the first quarter after exit as compared to a target of 51 percent. Fifty percent of the 19–21 year-old youth were employed in the first quarter after program exit as compared to a target of 63 percent. Seventy-eight percent of the 19–21 year-old youth employed in the first quarter after exit were employed in the third quarter after program exit as compared to a target of 77 percent.

Program Description

Youth Opportunity Grants (YOGs), which began operation in 2000, are a demonstration aimed at increasing the long-term employment of youth who live in Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, and other high-poverty areas. These grants are targeted to those urban and rural areas and Native American reservations most in need of employment assistance. Although the focus of the initiative is to increase youth employment, YOGs aim to reduce dropout rates and teen pregnancy, increase enrollment in post-secondary education, decrease crime, and improve existing systems in poor communities for serving at-risk youth. FY 2005 is the final year of funding for this demonstration program.

The three performance indicators were selected from seven WIA youth measures. For the older youth population, entrance into employment and retention in employment are the most appropriate indicators of success. For the younger youth population, where services are geared toward academic achievement rather than career preparation, achievement of a diploma or equivalent is the most meaningful indicator of future success in the workforce. Program Year 2002 is the first year in which DOL is reporting against these indicators.

Analysis of Results

Of the three performance indicators, only the older youth employment retention target was reached. More than three quarters of those 19-21 year old youth who were placed in

employment remained employed six months later. The younger youth diploma rate fell short of the goal due to a number of factors. The Youth Opportunity Grant (YOG) targeted population is a difficult population to keep engaged in the program to the point where they are able to attain a diploma or General Education Diploma. For example, the majority of exiters (participants who complete services or leave the program prior to completion) included in this measure are out-of-school youth. Sixty three percent of YOG participants are out-of-school compared to 28 percent in the WIA formula-funded program. The low diploma rate also reflects a greater number of out-of-school youth who leave the program prior to completion.

The older youth entered employment rate fell short of the target for similar reasons. Out-of-school youth are a difficult population to place successfully in employment, especially given the economic circumstances over the past year. In times of recession, the youth workforce typically experiences greater unemployment rates than the population as a whole, and this year has not been an exception. The low entered employment rate also reflects the large number of out-of-school youth who leave the program prior to completion. These youth tend to be highly mobile, and often face many environmental factors that result in these participants leaving the YOG program prior to completion.

Because DOL had little prior experience serving a largely out-of-school youth population, baselines from the WIA youth formula-funded program, a largely in-school youth program, were used. Performance targets set for the YOG program were almost identical to those set for the WIA formula-funded program. These targets have proven difficult to meet in the YOG program, owing in part to the greater proportion of more difficult to serve out-of-school youth.

DOL continues to emphasize to program operators the importance of regular participation for youth, especially out-of-school youth, and the importance of educational services that will lead to GEDs and diplomas. DOL also continues to emphasize the importance of pre-employment services, as they lead to successful entrance into the workforce. Both of these efforts will help to improve performance on the diploma rate and entered employment rate.

Strategies

Highly capable staff working directly with youth is critical to the effectiveness of the program. To that end, ETA conducted peer-to-peer workshops for Youth Opportunity grantee staff in the areas of increasing youth job placement, serving youth with learning disabilities, serving youth with emotional problems, implementing quality case management, and providing vocational training opportunities. ETA also conducted three separate one-week sessions of the Youth Development Practitioner Institute, where front-line staff received intensive training. In addition, ETA continues to provide direct technical assistance to grantees for performance measurement and management. To improve program performance, ETA convenes quarterly meetings with program directors, and closely monitors monthly program progress measures.

Management Issues

Data for the older youth entered employment rate and older youth employment retention rate include data from only half of the Youth Opportunity grantees, due to problems with local grantees obtaining access to State Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records.

The ability of grantees to report on the employment-related indicators—older youth entered employment rate and older youth employment retention rate—continues to be a challenge. Local grantees have experienced difficulty in working with State agencies to access State UI wage records, which are necessary to calculate the employment-related indicators. Due to these difficulties, not all grantees have been able to report on the two employment-related indicators. Grantees who have not submitted this data continue to work with their respective States, and ETA anticipates data submissions to continue over the course of the year. ETA is confident the data that have been submitted are reliable and accurate. ETA is addressing these data issues for future discretionary grant programs.

Although grantees have struggled with reporting the employment-related WIA outcome measures, they continue to report the additional monthly progress measures required by the Department. These additional measures, which include process and interim measures such as participation and completion rates, have been critical to ETA and grantees for management purposes.

The Office of Inspector General issued a Youth Opportunity Grant program audit entitled *Summary of Educational Services and Vocational Training Provided to Out-of-School Youth* on March 31, 2003. The OIG recommended that ETA consider strengthening educational and vocational training activities, establish procedures for exiting inactive participants, assess the accuracy of performance reporting and correct inaccurate reporting, and provide a clearer definition of out-of-school youth. In response, ETA has emphasized the importance of educational and vocational training activities through a variety of means including training, goal setting, and grant requirements. ETA has procedures in place for exiting inactive participants and has conducted an audit of Management Information System (MIS) specifications. Additionally, ETA has a variety of MIS training available to assess and correct inaccurate reporting. ETA will address the lack of a clear definition of out-of-school youth through the WIA reauthorization process. More information about this audit can be found in Appendix 3 (Study 5).

Goal Assessment and Future Plans

ETA will continue with the same three performance indicators for Program Year 2003.

Quentin was a Molokai High School drop-out at the age of 15. Out of school for two years and four grades behind his peers, Quentin enrolled in Myron B Thompson's E-Charter Academy last year, and made up two years of school work in five months. He was enrolled in the Youth Corps Program where he learned important life skills. As a result of his perseverance in the E-Charter Academy and the Youth Corps Program, Quentin caught up with all of his classes. In July 2003, he achieved his high school diploma and graduated in a Myron B Thompson graduation held at Kamehameha Schools. He was accepted and enrolled at Kapiolani Community College for the 2003 Fall semester, and strives to achieve an Associate Degree in Liberal Arts. Quentin's dream is to run his own business.



Quentin in the Youth Corps at Pelekunu Valley
Photo Credit: DOL/ETA